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Contextualized Differentiated Instruction in Virtual Language Classrooms

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Abstract
This study investigated the senior high school language teachers' understanding and use of differentiated instruction in virtual language classrooms focusing on Content, Process, and Product domains, leading to the development of a digitized primer. Using Concurrent mixed method, both QUAN (teacher survey) and QUAL (focus group discussions) data were collected and analyzed. QUAN findings revealed that virtual language teachers have high understanding of differentiated instruction and consistently used it. Seven themes emerged from the transformed QUAN data, including across curriculum in teaching, responsive teaching, promoting flexible classroom, personalized instruction, adaptive learning. layered curriculum, and authentic learning experiences. QUAL findings identified nine emergent themes, including understanding DI as tailoring instruction to students' needs, using layered curriculum, implementing varied strategies, and viewing DI as a product of professional development. Additionally, teachers used DI for ongoing assessment, flexible content delivery, flexible groupings, allowing student choice, and found DI both challenging and rewarding. Four integrated themes emerged from both QUAN and QUAL findings. These themes include cross-curriculum instruction, modifying curriculum, respectful differentiation, and fostering ownership of learning. The study implied that virtual language teachers integrate curriculum across subjects for deeper learning. It concluded that content, process, and product domains can be varied in virtual language classrooms. The study recommended that there should be a compendium of teaching strategies on DI with sample lesson exemplars which can be accessed digitally.

Keywords: Differentiated instruction, Virtual Classroom, Digitized Primer

Introduction

Teachers create a great deal of classroom decisions every day. They adjust their instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of those students. Perhaps, the rapid change in the teaching landscape today challenge educators to contextualize instruction by incorporating differentiated activities to reach students' optimum learning.

Unarguably, adapting teaching student diversity is not easy. Parsons et al. (2018) state that adapting instruction is a gold standard that teachers should strive for. When global pandemic occurred, it changed the delivery of instruction. As a solution, educators thought of innovative options even if students are at home, such online learning.

According to Spencer (2023), even if world's educational institutions have moved back to traditional education from online learning, this does not mean that online education will be useless most especially

during unprecedented times.

In an interview with the Asst. Senior High School (SHS) principal for Academics of Koronadal National Comprehensive High School (KNCHS) and the SHS principal of Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges - Marbel Inc. (RMMC-MI), both in Koronadal City, they commonly stated that even if the classes are already face-to-face, they still shift to online when the need arises just like during changing weather condition (C. Bernabe & L. Debolgado, personal communication, March 18, 2024).

However, online teaching presented new challenges to already challenged educators back in the classroom days (Quevillon, 2021). This created a higher demand for computer skills and upskilling (Canonizado, 2021). Zhang et al. (2020) detailed those technological skills supplemented the competencies needed in online teaching; even so, many teachers were challenged integrating suitable pedagogies in their online classes. Moreover, it is virtually difficult for teachers to acclimate their instruction tailored to suit all the students' abilities in a classroom (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). This tested the educators to find for ways to adapt several approaches such Contextualized Differentiated Instruction (CDI). Through CDI, educators believe that students flourish in class when provided with opportunities to explore based on strengths.

In general, Differentiated Instruction (DI) is an inclusive, intentional, systematically planned and reflected instructional practices that enable teachers to meet the needs of all learners (Pozas, Letzel, & Schneider, 2020) and helps teachers adjust their teaching methods accordingly (Griful-Freixenet et al., 2020).

However, despite increase in student diversity, the practice of DI is very low (Tadesse, 2021) and it is still a timely concern (Tadesse, 2021) even in the virtual classrooms. Lunsford (2017) showed that before DI can be fully implemented, teachers need professional development to train them on how to implement it.

To note, one participant from the focus group discussion even revealed that, "Honestly, it's very challenging, especially on my part, kasi I'm not really that um, I'm not an expert in terms of using these gadgets, in using technology." p.353

Internationally, Halverson and Graham (2019) found that there is little research on the use of DI practices in online education and how these address the individual needs of students. Also, less attention is given in incorporating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in engaging DI to expedite English language learning (Eslit, 2019).

In the Philippines, Department of Education (DepEd) accentuates the use of CDI in the observation checklist when teachers are evaluated during class demonstration. In fact, the Detailed Lesson Plan (DLP) provides teachers instructional assessment strategies with suitable educational technologies (DepEd Order 42, s. 2016).

However, Aranda and Zamora (2016) mentioned that it is always a problem to address the different learning preferences and styles of the students in Philippine education. It is observed in the Philippine classroom that one lesson is designed to meet the needs of all learners, and these teachers think they are using differentiation but actually not.

Rodriguez et al. (2018) further explored the obstacles teachers confront when implementing DI such as the need for more planning time, limited opportunities for professional development, and the difficulty of managing differentiated instruction within the existing curriculum frameworks.

According to Lee (2017), accessibility to research on differentiated instruction (DI) remains limited due to the multifaceted nature of DI strategies. More so, few studies were found on the use of differentiation in virtual classrooms (Valiandes, 2015).

Notably, there were apparent reasons why DI is still needs to be studied on most especially in the local context. First, since the beginning of KNCHS-SHS, there was no conduct of DI seminar and training

during the Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions of the school. Second, in the City Schools Division of Koronadal, DI is subsumed through the Early Language Literacy and Numeracy (ELLN) for K to 3 and through Pedagogical Retooling in Math, Language and Science (PRIMALS) for grades 4 to 6 down to grade 7. However, despite using DI, no sufficient data showing the implementation of DI through a sophisticated monitoring since the practice is cascaded through the supervision school principals. Also, there were no available compendium of teaching resources like the ELLN and PRIMALS for Senior High School. Third, the consolidated results of Electronic Self-Assessment Tool (E-SAT) answered by the 90 teachers of KNCHS-SHS, the Core Behavioral Competency objective 2.3, focused on DI show that 2.90 or average level still considers DI as a priority assessment. Lastly, in online modality, Workweek Lesson Plan (WLP) does not indicate the features of K to 12 BEP curriculum (e.g. constructivist, inquiry-based, collaborative, differentiated, appropriate, and integrative) which makes the WLP as one-size-fits-all.

To bridge the gap in the current body of knowledge, this study shed light on the necessity to extend how teachers understand and implement DI in virtual language classrooms and to delve deeper on the various experiences of virtual language teachers that impact on understanding and implementation of DI. Moreover, this study hoped to design a digitized primer on differentiating language instruction through online platform.

Literature Review

Differentiated Instruction

Instruction is a deliberate attempt to structure a learning environment so that learners will acquire specified knowledge or skill and its purpose is to promote learning (Merrill, 2013). In a traditional classroom, teaching often follows a one-size-fits-all approach. Some students thrived, while others struggled. Instructors would make adjustments quickly if it becomes apparent that a lesson is not quite working.

Fundamentally, differentiated instruction is a term that has been in use for many years and its practice has been valued greatly by educators worldwide (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Goddard et al. (2015) further defined Differentiated Instruction (DI) as teachers' commitment to planning for academic diversity with the aim of facilitating students succeed by appearing to their interests and needs.

The current study finds Tomlinson's (2014) definition of differentiated instruction something valuable. Also known as differentiated learning, differentiated instruction is a teaching philosophy that ruminates the needs of all students, even if they are in the same classroom.

The current study acknowledges the framework of DI by Carol Ann Tomlinson which shows some varied approaches through instructional and management strategies applicable for differentiation guided by salient principles. This is related to the current study since differentiation is the teacher's response to diversity (Alstete et al., 2021). Even in the virtual classroom, teachers are still encouraged to respond to students' diversity to avoid giving activities without addressing the learners' needs.

In the study of Kovtiuh (2017), participants perceived differentiation as an approach that enables them to accommodate their students' learning needs. In implementing differentiation in their practice, they recognize that their students are diverse and that their learning needs are likely to differ. This is a similar take on how differentiation should be understood in the virtual classroom, that it should accommodate varied learners to adjust instruction in the new normal situation.

Philosophies and Principles of Differentiated Instruction

While Tomlinson (2014) recognize there is no magic or recipe for making a classroom differentiated, they have identified guiding principles, considered the pillars that support effective differentiation. First, DI

imposes a responsibility on the instructor. Identifying their learning styles is considered a teacher's responsibility (Shenoy & Shenoy, 2013). Additionally, being aware about the learning styles of individual students allows students to become better learners (Sarabi-Asiabar et al, 2014). Second, DI attempts to meet the needs of a diverse student community since DI addresses a pluralistic student community where all students equally have the right and ability to learn. Third, although DI presupposes that there are models that describe varied learning styles, there is no consensus on which model of varied learning style to use.
The principles that shape differentiation include— (1) creating an environment conducive to learning, (2) identifying a quality foundational curriculum, (3) informing teaching and learning with assessments, (4) designing instruction based on assessments collected; and (5) creating and maintaining a flexible classroom (Tomlinson, 2014).
Furthermore, Tomlinson (2014) mentioned that teacher practices are also essential to differentiation, highlighted as— (1) proactive planning to address student profiles, (2) modifying instructional approaches to meet student needs, (3) teaching up (students should be working just above their individual comfort levels), (4) assigning respectful tasks responsive to student needs—challenging, engaging, purposeful, and (5) applying flexible grouping strategies (e.g., stations, interest groups, orbital studies).

Curricular Elements of Differentiated Instruction

Essentially, content, process and product are considered to be the key pillars of differentiated instruction and are significant components in the current study. Teachers can make alterations or modifications in the content of the lesson, provide several ways for the learners to learn the content, and encourage students to show their understanding through diverse products (Suban & Round, 2015).
To differentiate the content of instruction requires that teachers judiciously modify lessons and materials in response to students' individual levels and academic goals. Teachers can utilize different levels of reading materials, increase access to visual supports, offer audio books, teach students one-to-one or in small groups, or differentiate the content based on the interest or readiness of the students. According to McCarty et al. (2016), teachers can also incorporate videos and hands-on activities into their lessons.
Conversely, there are many opportunities to differentiate the process of teaching with technology in which the study is related. One of the most common tools is Power Point (Stanford et al., 2010, as cited in Millen, 2016). This production software provides a good option especially for teaching students with visual learning styles. Power Point also offers great ways for students to present their book reports and to incorporate images into their schoolwork. In online modality in the new normal, power point presentations are now shown using online platforms like Google meet and Zoom.
The study also liked to get views on teachers' knowledge and implementation of product differentiation in the virtual classroom. Products are ways for students to demonstrate what they have come to know, understand, and be able to do after an extended period of learning (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2014). According to Carol Ann Tomlinson (2013), a synonym for a product is an authentic assessment. Differentiating the products that students use to show mastery of content knowledge or skills can greatly be enhanced with the use of technology (Stanford et al, 2010, as cited in Millen, 2016).

The Need for Differentiation

The current study recognizes that the need for differentiated instruction is evident in today's diverse classrooms. By scaffolding instruction and providing targeted interventions, teachers can address students' individual learning needs and facilitate mastery of essential concepts (Tomlinson, 2015). With the aforesaid concepts of differentiated instruction, there is an undeniable need for differentiated instruction knowing that diversity in classrooms is conspicuous.

Differentiation is neither revolutionary nor something extra. It is simply teaching mindfully and with the intent to support the success of each human being for whom we accept professional responsibility (Sousa &Tomlinson, 2018).

As a matter of fact, Heacox (2018) stated that differentiated instruction offers a variety of methods that provides support and supervision when learners are just starting to practice their instructional choices. Bondie, Dahnke, and Zusho (2019) also explained that differentiated instruction allows teachers to plan strategically to meet individual needs where they are, and provide numerous techniques to understand, gain, and employ learning, unlike the one-size-fits-all.

There were varied studies that the current study finds expedient since they prove that differentiated instruction is effective in improving students' performance and in enhancing their motivation and engagement. This is consonance with the present study as underscored how teachers engaged students in classroom tasks online.

In Burkett's (2013) study, a total of 11 participants who were highly qualified and who had been teaching for more than five years were asked about how they feel on using DI in their classroom. Analysis of participants' responses revealed that these qualified and experienced teachers had exceptionally positive thinking about the strategies believing that DI is essential for teaching and learning.

Also, Konstantinou-Katzi et al. (2013) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study with nine K-5 elementary teachers. These highly qualified participants who have at least eight years of experience in teaching portrayed positive perceptions about practicing of DI in their teaching.

In addition, Davis (2013) did a quantitative survey which indicated results of faculty teachers who were certified and had a minimum of a bachelors' degree, and who had the experience of five or more years ranked their beliefs about DI as highly positive.

Teacher's Knowledge and Implementation of Differentiated Instruction

The current study highlights the terms knowledge and implementation as to the extent to which differentiated is known and used by language teachers. As mentioned, implementing differentiated instruction has been inevitable – most especially when the need arises. Teachers' effectiveness in implementing differentiated instruction could be impacted by their understanding of differentiated instructional strategies (Coubergs et al., 2017).

According to Santangelo and Tomlinson (2013), effective differentiation is grounded on teachers' understanding of, and appreciation for students' unique needs by appropriately and creatively modifying important classroom elements such as curricula, instructional strategies, resources, learning activities, assessments, and the learning environment.

Teachers who employ differentiation attempt to attend to the differences among learners through a wide variety of approaches that adapt and enrich curriculum and teaching methods to meet students' needs (Tomlinson, 2014).

Remarkably, more recent research shows some positive effects of differentiated instruction. For example, in the study of Little et al. (2014), it examined differentiated instruction intervention implemented across four middle schools and found significant positive effects on reading achievement in two schools and no significant effects in two schools.

In addition, researchers have found that implementation of differentiated instruction can help not only in the students' achievement but also in the teaching performance of the teachers including their perceptions and attitudes. The current study discovered how differentiated instruction impacts teachers' performance

in the virtual classroom.

In a study conducted by Maeng and Bell (2015), they investigated the implementation practices of secondary science teachers who differentiated instruction and all the participants employed differentiated instruction (DI) in the delivery of their lessons. Based on the results, participants implemented a variety of differentiation strategies in their classrooms with varying proficiency.

The same study conducted by Robinson et al. (2014) which examined how teacher participants from an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school successfully differentiate instruction. Teachers' understanding and knowledge in a differentiating classroom are crucial in achieving students' success. The interviews explored participants' perceptions of how differentiated instruction has influenced their ability to successfully reach the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms.

On the other hand, some researchers also described the shortcomings of differentiated instruction. In relation to the current study, the researcher admits that despite positive perception on the value of implementing DI, there are still studies that prove that teachers understanding and use or implementation of DI in classrooms is basically diminutive.

Despite the potential benefits of differentiated instruction on student achievement, and the plausibility of the approach in catering for individual differences in inclusive education settings of today's classrooms, implementation of the strategies by the teachers is less frequent and inconsistent (Nedellec, 2015). This means that even though teachers may be able to provide in-depth explanation of differentiation, they struggle to execute it in daily practice and that includes the virtual classroom (West & West, 2016).

Chien's (2015) qualitative study, for instance, analyzed Taiwanese elementary school English teachers' perceptions and knowledge of differentiated instruction. The researcher concluded that teacher's reluctance to implement DI resulted from their lack of competence (in terms of knowledge) in the strategies.

The study conducted by Joseph (2013) was also similar to the current study since it focuses on teachers' understandings of differentiated instruction which also significantly supports the abovementioned studies. One can conclude that the majority of teachers demonstrate good understanding of the concept of differentiated instruction. However, upon closer examination of key components of differentiation, there is evidence to suggest that this understanding may be merely theoretical in some cases.

Virtual Classroom

The present study exposed the extent of knowledge and implementation of differentiated instruction in the virtual classroom. A virtual classroom is a type of electronic classroom that can be expandable in time, space, and content (Beatty, 2013). They are synchronous, meaning that they are live, and students engage in them at the same time and asynchronous which occurs with a time delay between steps in the dialog, allowing participants to respond at their own convenience (Çakýroglu, 2014).

Hussein (2016) emphasized that virtual classrooms have many of the same characteristics as physical classrooms but without the same limitations. They allowed interaction between students and teachers through several media, including oral communication, texts, video conversation, audio chat and PowerPoint presentations (Yadav, 2016). Such limitations were further explicated through the language teachers' experiences in the virtual classrooms.

In recent times, a global pandemic forced many educators to teach remotely. In addition, students accessing this technology are more diverse than ever. This has resulted in larger online classrooms with more diversity of students. Although there is much research on the effectiveness of differentiation in the brick-

and-mortar K-12 classroom and on the best practices of how teachers define and enact differentiation, there are few studies found on the use of differentiation in virtual schools (Valiandes, 2015).

A survey-based research has been done by Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020) with great emphasis on the transition to online learning in Georgia. Another study found that teachers struggle to find ways to differentiate instruction (Beasley & Beak, 2017), but beyond that, no research compares differentiation practices of teachers across different types of virtual schools. This could be a possible direction of future researches considering practices of online teachers in various schools handling online classes.

Chua et al. (2020) further claimed that there are no empirical studies related to the E-learning Classroom as an intervention in times of crisis, or studies related to determine the status of E-Learning Classrooms; however, there were several researches that discuss E-Learning as an effective tool or strategy in teaching. They suggested the use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) as a technical tool for promoting the process of teaching and learning. According Chua et al. (2020), teachers should be innovative in developing such an analytical learning atmosphere that will best fit the needs of today's generation of students.

Conspicuously, the study of Beck and Beasley (2020) helped to reveal the differentiation practices of teachers across different types of virtual schools. It also made clearer some of the differences between the differentiation practices of expert online teachers and those who are less than expert. This is significant because little research has been done to discover the expert differentiation practices of online teachers.

The study of Magayon and Tan (2020) concluded that differentiated instruction as practiced by the Filipino mathematics teachers is still “the road less taken”. The novelty of the teaching process using virtual classrooms is also less investigated as it only happened worldwide due to pandemic, thus, the current study wished to understand the path taken by virtual language teachers in differentiating instruction. Though Fullan (2020) reiterated that evolution could have wonderful things in store for us – but this only happens if teachers do their part to shape it and thus hints to take this pandemic positively.

Statements of the Problem

This study investigated the teachers understanding and their implementation of Contextualized Differentiated Instruction in the virtual language classrooms.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. To what extent do virtual language teachers understand the concepts of differentiated instruction in an online classroom in terms of the following domains:
1.1 content
1.2 process
1.3 product?
2. To what extent do virtual language teachers use differentiated instruction in an online classroom in terms of the following domains:
2.1 content
2.2 process
2.3 product?
3. How do virtual language teachers understand about differentiated instruction?
4. How do virtual language teachers use differentiated instruction?
5. What digitized primer can be designed to exhibit differentiated instruction in virtual classrooms?

Method

This part discusses the research design, research instrument, data gathering procedures, data analysis, procedural rigors and the ethical considerations used and observed in this study.

Research Design

Briefly, this study used Concurrent parallel design. The term 'concurrent' indicates that both qualitative and quantitative data are being collected at the same time or with a time lapse. In this method, both quantitative and qualitative data provide different types of information, such as qualitative views of participants, quantitative scores on instruments, and results produced from both should be the same (Creswell, 2013). Data collected in this model should be the same or parallel variables, constructs, or concepts.

In gathering the QUAN data as regards the extent of knowledge and implementation of differentiated instruction in the virtual classroom, it used survey questionnaire. In gathering the QUAL data, a focus group discussion or FGD was used to uncover the experiences of language teachers in understanding and implementing differentiated instruction in the virtual classrooms.

In analyzing the QUAN data, descriptive statistics was used and in analyzing the QUAL data, it was transcribed and then thematically analyzed. In order to merge the QUAN and QUAL data, the QUAN data went through data transformation using narrative descriptions. In qualitizing the themes, it also employed stages based on Happ (2009); Bazeley (2009); Tashakkori and Teddlie in Warfa (2016), as cited in the study of Protacio (2019). First, the QUAN findings were presented. Next, narrative descriptions were formulated after the presentation of findings. Then, themes were reviewed based on narrative descriptions. Lastly, qualitized themes were defined and named. These qualitized themes were anchored on the pillars and principles of differentiated instruction.

The researcher followed the thematic analysis steps developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), as cited by Caulfield (2019). First, significant statements were familiarized, initial themes were then generated, themes were clustered, themes were reviewed, relevant themes were defined and named, and lastly, report was produced which served as the final chance for analysis.

After getting both the QUAN and QUAL data, they were consolidated schematically and were validated. The qualitized QUAN data and QUAL data were then integrated. The data were legitimized by the participants of the study. After getting the legitimized data, final integration was done. As an end product, the researcher designed digitized primer which provides mechanisms for online teachers in differentiating the key curricular elements – content, process and product.

Selection of the Respondents/Participants

The respondents and participants in the study were Senior High School (SHS) virtual language teachers who teach in K to 12 Basic Education Program schools in the City of Koronadal. Specifically, the study included teachers who teach Group I A subjects in the Senior High School based DepEd Order (DO) No. 3 series of 2016 on the hiring guidelines for Senior High School teaching positions. These subjects are Oral Communication, Reading and Writing, English for Academic and Professional Purposes, Practical Research.

Based on the record of the private schools and public schools' area coordinators, there were two publics schools offering online modality – Koronadal National Comprehensive High School – Senior High School (KNCHS-SHS) and Saravia National High School (SNHS). Further, out of the fifteen private schools,

there were nine (9) private schools offering senior high school and online modality The two private schools, out of nine, were included purposively, namely, NDMU-IBED and STI College of Marbel both of the schools offer online modality with a good number of teachers handling Group 1a subjects.

In this research, purposive sampling was used. According to Arikunto (2010), as cited in Alifia (2017), purposive sampling is the process of selecting sample by taking subject that is not based on the level or area, but it is taken based on the specific purpose. All teachers, both in the selected private and public schools, who are handling Group 1A subjects and who are teaching in the online modality, were considered as respondents of the study for QUAN data. Those teachers who had very high understanding and use of DI were then selected as part of the focus group discussion for QUAL data.

Generally, there were 21 online teachers, both from private and public schools, who took part in the study - seven (7) online teachers from NDMU-IBED, eight (8) of them from KNCHS-SHS, three (3) from RMMC-MI, and three (3) from Saravia NHS. After the respondents answered the teacher survey, data cleaning was done to select participants who were included in the FGD using inclusion criteria.

Out of the 21 respondents, 8 online class teachers had very high understanding of the differentiated instruction – three (3) from NDMU-IBED, two (2) from KNCHS-SHS, two (2) from Saravia NHS, and one (1) from RMMC-MI. They were invited to be part of the focus group discussion as part of gathering the QUAL findings. There were two attempts to make sure that eight of them were complete however, due to their unavailability and concern during the pandemic, only six (6) of them participated in the FGD – two (2) from NDMU-IBED, two (2) from KNCHS-SHS, one (1) from Saravia NHS, and one (1) from RMMC-MI. Looking at the composition of the participants, three came from private school and the remaining three came from public school. They were given letter of consent to participate and the FGD was initiated at KNCHS-SHS Room 102.

Research Instruments

This study used survey questionnaire in gathering answers from the respondents. For the quantitative part, an instrument adapted and modified was used. The research instrument was divided into two parts: Part I was about the Background Demographic Data and part II partitioned into two areas was a teacher survey. The part I used were adapted from the Teacher Self- Reflection on Differentiation for Staff Development Planning in the study of Kiley (2011) containing eleven areas to be filled out by the participants. This served as a background demographic profile of the respondents. The survey was developed by Carol Tomlinson and adapted by Summer Page in assisting teachers and leaders in evaluating the implementation of differentiated instructions in classrooms. It is specifically designed to have teachers self-evaluate.

Furthermore, the part II, which was a teacher survey, was also adapted from the study of Kiley in 2011 as regards extent of knowledge of differentiated instruction in the secondary classroom. It was used to gather information on the teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction, four (4) being the highest or very knowledgeable and one (1) being the lowest or not knowledgeable. Furthermore, the survey also identified the extent of the utilization or use of differentiated instruction with 4 being used intentionally and often and 1 being hardly ever or never do the DI based on Tomlinson's description of the foundational concepts needed for a differentiated instruction with six areas: student interest, assessment, challenging lessons, content, process, and product. For this study, it only focused on three areas – content, process and product. The adapted and added indicators of the instrument were gathered from the studies of Nelson (2017), Davis (2013), and from the notions of Differentiated Instruction Framework, Multiple Intelligence Theory, Triarchic Theory of Human Intelligence and Online Collaborative Learning Theory.

As mentioned, the content of the teacher survey was modified by the researcher through adding indicators. To deal with subjectivity, three experts in English language teaching and who have knowledge of differentiated instruction served as content validators of the instrument and who were experts since validating the survey questions is an essential process that helps to ensure that survey is truly a dependable one. Specifically, two DepEd EPS (Education Program Supervisors) and one Ph.D graduate validated the questionnaires.

For the qualitative part of the study, focus group discussion was done based on the survey instrument result and Tomlinson's description of the foundational concepts needed for a differentiated instruction. The interview questions were nested from the notions of the theories in the Theoretical framework. A quantitative analysis was done first to avoid potential influence between participants. The FGD occurred simultaneously or with a slight time lapse after the first phase. Participants were invited in their most convenient time and ethical issues were considered and addressed.

Upon the approval of the content experts, the interview questions and the survey questionnaire were given for their exhaustive scrutiny. Comments and suggestions were noted and integrated to improve the interview questions and survey instrument before it was conducted to the research respondents and participants.

After collecting the data derived from qualitative and quantitative analyses, they were then analyzed separately. For quantitative data, descriptive statistics was used while for qualitative data, procedures of theme and code development were utilized. After the analysis, the quantitative data were converted into qualitative data through data transformation using qualitative profiling. After which, consolidation, integration and reporting of the results were done which were explained point-by-point and presented through a schematic diagram.

Data Gathering Procedure

This study utilized stages of data gathering procedure which guided the researcher in the collecting or gathering data and in the conduct of study in general.

First, a clearance was secured from the Graduate school of Notre Dame of Dadiangas University to conduct the study. A letter, duly signed by the adviser and the graduate school dean, was sent to the DepEd Koronadal Division to gather data as regards the schools within the City of Koronadal conducting online classes.

After getting the data, a separate letter of permission, duly signed by the adviser and the Graduate school dean, was given to the school head or administrators of the different schools for the researcher to conduct the study. After which, the researcher got a list of teachers handling Group1A subjects based DepEd Order (DO) No. 3 series of 2016 on the hiring guidelines for Senior High School teaching positions. The approved letter of their administrator was handed-in to the invited participants.

The participants were asked to partake voluntarily. The researcher is responsible in explaining the purpose and procedures of the study, which should be understood by the participants. The information collected were kept confidential and not identified with the person who provided then. This entailed anonymity all throughout the conduct of the study. Further, the participants were also allowed to withdraw from participating in the study and at any instance of the study where they find discomfort in the questions to be asked. They were permitted to decline such. In reporting the data, rights and requests of the participants were considered.

The survey of the study took part at the schools where respondents were teaching to conduct the survey. Further, they were informed ahead of the time and day when the survey was conducted. The survey instruments were directed and retrieved by the researcher personally. The general instruction in answering the survey was explained to the participants. After the survey were answered, the researcher collected the papers and initially checked through skimming the papers. The data collected were then be presented and analyzed visually and all materials were secured for privacy.

After a week, a letter and consent form were sent to all the teachers who were part of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). A time and place convenient to the teachers was arranged. Teachers were asked to read and sign the focus group permission form. Teachers who completed the survey were asked to participate in the focus group. The administration or school heads were contacted to gain permission to survey teachers and to conduct the focus groups.

During the focus group discussion, protocols were set and employed such as the preparation, the orientation of the participants, the proper conduct of the FGD and the questions to address the problems of the study. They were informed that the FGDs were recorded for transcription purposes.

The researcher saved all the data. Ideally, the data were printed for transcription purposes. Transcribing is converting speech to text word for word (Streefkerk, 2019). There were invited people, preferably, language teachers as well, who were not part of the study, who transcribed the audio-recordings. Before the transcription, an orientation was done to ensure the confidentiality of the data and the transcription method that will be used. The researcher also provided a copy of procedures and mechanics in transcription writing to promote uniformity. After getting the transcribed data, the transcriber signed a certificate.

In transcribing the data, transcribers listened to the audio-recording and encode through Microsoft word. Transcript conventions were adopted. After which, the transcribed data was printed and was given to the participants for validation, legitimization and correction. If there were no corrections, the copies were then thematically analyzed which were also validated and legitimized by the participants.

Data Analysis

The study attempted to answer the major research questions. After arriving with the result of the quantitative analysis, teachers went through focus group to cross-validate the quantitative data. This qualitative check helped define whether the teachers' understanding and implementation of differentiation method is the same as those in the study. Furthermore, provided a deeper understanding of the influences and factors related to differentiated instruction. The comments from the teachers were used to help provide a fuller picture on then emerging themes.

The manner of implementation of data was concurrent with an equal orientation to both phases. Using Morse Notation, it was depicted as QUAN-QUAL. The em dash symbol signifies the concurrent implementation. The QUAN and QUAL phases occurred simultaneously or with a slight time lapse between each phase. The two parallel phases were independent of each other. The QUAN phase included QUAN questions, data collection, and data analysis, and QUAL phase included QUAL questions, data collection, and data analysis.

In order for the researcher to analyze the data collected, it is important to sort out the data which are relevant for the study conducted. The goal is to try to make sense of the data collected by segmenting them before putting them back together (Creswell, 2014). In analyzing the data, the researcher utilized the procedure of analyzing the concurrent qualitative and quantitative data by Creswell and Clark (2011).

First, the researcher prepared the data for QUAN data analysis through converting the raw data obtained from the results. Cleaning of the data was done to eliminate those who did not use DI or those who did not have knowledge of DI. For QUAL data analysis, the researcher prepared the data for transcribing the interviews and stored the transcribed data.

Second, the data were explored further. For QUAN data, the researcher conducted statistical descriptive analysis of the prepared data through the help of experts. Quantitative descriptive analysis characterized the world or a phenomenon by identifying patterns in data to answer questions about who, for what, where, when, and to what extent. Descriptive analysis is data simplification (Loeb et al., 2017). In order to explore the QUAL data, the researcher read all obtained data through observation forms and the transcripts prepared for the researcher to develop broad understanding of the context.

Third, the data were analyzed. The analysis of the QUAN data was done using the teacher survey divided into two parts – the teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction and the teachers' use of differentiated instruction. The results of the identified QUAN findings through Descriptive Statistical Analysis (DSA) were tabulated and consolidated through mean scores. The findings were presented, discussed and interpreted one after the other. A background demographic profile was taken so that the researcher could have a context of the teacher participants who have been using differentiated instruction. The QUAN data went through a qualitizing process or data transformation using narrative profiling so that QUAN and QUAL data were possibly merged. Qualitizing involves participants' profiling by theoretically grouping or typing participants based on their scores from the quantitative data collection tools. Specifically, it followed the stages based on Happ (2009); Bazeley (2009); Tashakkori and Teddlie in Warfa (2016), as cited in the study of Protacio (2019).

Successively, the QUAN findings were presented and were followed by the formulation of narrative descriptions through normative qualitative profiling. As Hathcoat and Meixner (2015) rightly argued, the researcher made subjective decisions to derive the narrative descriptions. In point of fact, the researcher used as subjective instrument to identify the latent variable. Next, themes were explored and reviewed. It was done in order to check whether the reviewed themes are in consonance with the narrative descriptions. Lastly, the qualitized themes were defined and named by refining the reviewed themes.

On the other hand, after the survey, the QUAL phase came to light through focus group discussion (FGD) to explore the results in more depth and to get a better understanding of what the survey data will indicate. According to Dzino-Silajdzic (2018), a focus group discussion (FGD) is a qualitative data collection method that engages 6 to 12 people—with shared characteristics pertinent to the specific discussion topic—and is led by a trained facilitator.

Moreover, after the FGD, to form the relevant themes of the virtual language teachers' knowledge and implementation of differentiated instruction, rigorous stages of Thematic Analysis (TA) were employed. In thematic analysis, the researcher closely examined the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly (Caulfield, 2019).

The data consolidated and merged from the FGD were sent to the participants for data legitimization and validation. Then, after legitimizing and validating the data, the last stage of the research design was the data integration and final reporting stage. In this particular, the consolidated themes were presented again in a three-column matrix to produce new integrated themes. As a final point, these integrated themes became the foundations of the final reporting of the study and after which, the researcher developed a digitized primer.

After the exhaustive analysis of QUAN and QUAL data, the final integration of the themes was done and the data were reported. The final results guided the researcher in designing a digitized primer in differentiating language teaching.

Results and Discussion

This part reveals the presentation of the key findings and presentation of themes into general findings on investigating the contextualized differentiated instruction in the virtual language classrooms.

QUAN Findings

The section dealt with the extent of virtual language teachers understanding and use of the concepts of differentiated instructions. The data were presented separately in terms of the three domains – content, process, and product. After which, it also included the general mean score to provide the general findings of the QUAN data.

Extent of Virtual Language Teachers Understanding of Differentiated Instruction in the Virtual Classroom in terms of Content, Process, and Product Domains

Relative to content, the extent of knowledge of the virtual language teachers was about 76%-100% which has a verbal interpretation of very high understanding ($\bar{x}$=3.70). The virtual language teachers understood that they need to use those major concepts, themes, and, generalizations as bases for planning differentiated lesson/activities in virtual classroom ($\bar{x}$=3.71). They also believed on the importance of connecting learning to various academic disciplines through integrated curriculum ($\bar{x}$=3.81). Finally, clearly articulating what they want for their students to know, understand and be able to do in the virtual classroom should also be considered ($\bar{x}$=3.86).

The findings also revealed the extent of knowledge of virtual language teachers in differentiating process domain. Relative to this domain, the extent of their knowledge in the virtual classroom was also about 76%-100% which has a verbal interpretation of very high understanding ($\bar{x}$=3.64). The virtual language teachers understood that they need to differentiate process in their virtual classroom when need arises ($\bar{x}$=3.71). Aside from that, they also considered multiple intelligences of learners when planning lessons and activities in the virtual classroom which generated a weighted mean of ($\bar{x}$=3.76). They also understood that in the virtual classroom, they have to design the classroom activities that require students to do something with their knowledge ($\bar{x}$=3.81).

In terms of differentiating product, the results yielded about 76%-100% which has a verbal interpretation of very high understanding ($\bar{x}$=3.61). The virtual language teachers understood that they need to give product assignments the balance structure and choice ($\bar{x}$=3.67). They also recognized the significance of providing opportunities for student products to be based on solving real and relevant problems with a weighted average of ($\bar{x}$=3.71). Finally, virtual language teachers found it important to provide a variety of assessment tasks in the virtual classroom ($\bar{x}$=3.86).

Generally, in terms of their understanding of differentiating content, process, and product domains, most of the virtual language teachers have high understanding of differentiated instruction. Overall, they have high understanding of the concept of differentiated instruction with an overall mean of 3.65.

Table 1 Summary Table of the Virtual Language Teachers' Understanding of Differentiated Instruction in terms of Content, Process, and Product

Domain	Weighted Average	Description
Differentiating Content	3.70	Very High Understanding
Differentiating Process	3.64	Very High Understanding
Differentiating Product	3.61	Very High Understanding
Overall Mean	**3.65**	**Very High Understanding**

The table displays the summary results of the virtual language teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction. In terms of their understanding of differentiating content, virtual language teachers have a very high understanding, with a weighted average of 3.70. Also, they too have very high understanding in terms of process which yielded a weighted average of 3.64. They also have very high extent of understanding in terms of product domain, with weighted average of 3.61.

Overall, the result shows that virtual language teachers have very high understanding of the concept of differentiated instruction with 3.65 mean.

Extent of Virtual Language Teachers Use of Differentiated Instruction in the Virtual Classroom in terms of Content, Process, and Product Domains

Relative to content, the extent of usage was about 76%-100% which is interpreted to always ($\bar{x}$=3.40). The virtual language teachers implemented varying curriculum and virtual classroom instruction from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract ($\bar{x}$=3.43), connected learning to various academic disciplines through integrated curriculum ($\bar{x}$=3.48), and clearly articulated what they want for their students to know, understand and be able to do in the virtual classroom ($\bar{x}$=3.90).

In terms of the extent of virtual language teachers use of differentiated instruction in terms of process, the extent of use was also about 76%-100% which is interpreted as always ($\bar{x}$=3.31). The virtual language teachers structured the virtual classroom environment to support a variety of activities group and/or individual work ($\bar{x}$=3.38), used tiered lessons, compacting or activities with varying levels of challenge in the virtual classrooms ($\bar{x}$=3.43), and designed activities that require students to do something with their knowledge ($\bar{x}$=3.52).

Lastly, relative to product, the findings illustrated that the extent of virtual language teachers' use is also about 76%-100% which is interpreted as always ($\bar{x}$=3.50). The virtual language teachers used products that connect with students' interest ($\bar{x}$=3.57), provided opportunities for student product to be based on solving real and relevant problems ($\bar{x}$=3.68), and provided variety of assessment tasks in the virtual classroom ($\bar{x}$=3.71). Over all, the extent of implementation of the virtual language teachers of differentiated instructions was at a high frequency ($\bar{x}$=3.40).

Completely, in terms of their use of differentiating content, process, and product domains, virtual language teachers always use differentiated instruction in the virtual language classroom.

Table 2 Summary Table of the Virtual Language Teachers' Use of Differentiated Instruction in terms of Content, Process, and Product

Domain	Weighted Average	Description
Differentiating Content	3.40	Always
Differentiating Process	3.31	Always

Differentiating Product	3.50	Always
Overall Mean	**3.40**	**Always**

In their entirety, the table presents an overview of the use of differentiated instruction by virtual language instructors. Regarding their implementation of differentiating content, process, and product domains, they predominantly exhibit a strong grasp yielding weighted averages of 3.40, 3.31, and 3.50 respectively. Overall, the frequency of implementation of differentiated instruction in the virtual language classrooms by virtual language instructors was notably high (mean = 3.40).

QUAL Findings

This section reveals the presentation and discussion of QUAL findings. The relevant themes construed from the experiences of language teachers in their understanding and use of

Based on the narratives of the participants during the focus group discussion, there were nine (9) themes that emerged.

Emergent Themes on Virtual Language Teachers' Understanding of DI

The language teachers' encounters with customizing instruction in virtual classrooms revealed five persistent themes outlined. These themes encapsulate their grasp of differentiated instruction, encompassing the adaptation of teaching to students' needs, the implementation of layered curriculum, the utilization of diverse teaching and learning strategies, and a focus on students' performance. The teachers expressed a sense of challenge and fulfillment upon gaining familiarity with differentiated instruction.

Table 3 Summary of Emergent Themes of Virtual Language Teachers' Understanding of DI

Theme clusters	Emergent themes
Understanding of DI Addressing Learners' Needs Highlighting Multiple Intelligences Utilization of Varied Strategies Factoring students' learning styles	Tailoring Instruction Based on Students' Needs
Evidences of DI in Virtual Instruction Varied learning activities Use of Virtual groupings Layering the curriculum Assignment submission options	Layered Curriculum
Types of DI Strategies Flexible Groupings Independent Learning Strategies Activating Prior knowledge Tiered assignments, Activating prior knowledge and language experience approach Strategies Aligned with the National Standards	Varying Teaching and Learning Strategies
Prior Experience of DI Competence	

Teaching experience, Collaborating Good Practices In-Service Trainings, Collaborating Good Practices In-service and Pre-service Trainings Pre-service training, Teaching experience	Professional Development
Feelings Using DI Challenging Gives Confidence Fulfilling Challenged to Motivate Learners Challenging yet fulfilling Challenged to Redirect Ways	Challenging and Fulfilling

The **Emergent Theme 1** is **DI is Tailoring Instruction Based on Students' Needs.** The consensus among virtual language teachers regarding differentiated instruction lies in its role as an approach to customize teaching methods for the diverse needs of learners. Recognizing the uniqueness of each learner, teachers perceive differentiated instruction as a means to emphasize the multiple intelligences present in their students. Additionally, DI involves taking into account students' learning styles, enabling the implementation of learner-centered activities even within the online classroom setting.

The **Emergent Theme 2** is **DI is the Use of Layered Curriculum.** In contrast to assigning a uniform activity for all students, the layered curriculum method aligns students with a variety of activities that cater to their unique needs and abilities. Hence, language teachers in the virtual classroom demonstrated the implementation of differentiated instruction, providing evidence that DI fosters inclusive learning for every student. The approach ensures that no student is marginalized or overlooked, as the learning environment is tailored to accommodate each child's individual level, allowing every student the opportunity to learn and progress at their own pace.

Another **Emergent Theme (3)** that was culled out is **DI is Implementation of Varying Strategies.** Contrary to common belief, differentiated instruction (DI) is more than just a compilation of teaching strategies, as the suitability of strategies depends on the specific assessment or measurement in question. Consequently, in the virtual classroom setting, language teachers perceived DI as the application of diverse strategies, including flexible groupings, independent learning, tiered assignments, and strategies aligned with national standards.

The next is **Emergent Theme 4** which is **DI is a Product of Professional Development.** Virtual language teachers believe that their proficiency in DI is cultivated through a blend of formal education, professional development, hands-on experience, and continuous reflection. Both before and during their teaching careers, educators engage in workshops, seminars, and courses dedicated to differentiated instruction at tertiary and professional levels. Additionally, their extensive teaching experience contributes to an enhanced comprehension of differentiated instruction. By collaborating with colleagues and exchanging best practices in DI implementation, teachers gained a deeper insight into the authentic essence of differentiation and its potential application, even within the virtual classroom.

Emergent Themes on Virtual Language Teachers' Use of DI

There were also four recurrent themes in Table 20 that emerged upon perusing the experiences of language teachers in using DI in virtual classroom. These themes are Flexible content delivery, flexible groupings, students' choice, and challenging yet rewarding journey.

Table 4 Summary of Emergent Themes of Virtual Language Teachers' Use of DI

Theme clusters	Emergent themes
Circumstances Leading to Differentiate Assessment Purposes Assessment Results Students' Inability to Answer Students' Limited Attention Span, Competency Reliant Students' Lack of Participation, Assessment Results	Ongoing Assessment
Differentiating Content Use of Guided Discussion Opportunities for Flexible options	Flexible Content Delivery
Differentiating Process Use of Groupings Use of Options Based on Students' Intelligence Use of Breakout Session for groupings Freedom to choose Flexible groupings	Flexible Groupings
Differentiating Product Varying Outputs Students' self-selected products Collaborative activities involving students' choice	Students' Choice
Overall Experiences in Using DI in VC Challenging yet rewarding Challenging yet helpful Challenging yet rewarding and fulfilling. Challenging yet meaningful. Rewarding Helpful	Challenging and Rewarding

Emergent Themes on Virtual Language Teachers' Use of DI

There were also four recurrent themes that emerged upon perusing the experiences of language teachers in using DI in virtual classroom. These themes are Flexible content delivery, flexible groupings, students' choice, and challenging yet rewarding journey.

Under virtual language teachers' use of differentiated instruction, the first **Emergent Theme 5** is that **DI is Basis for Ongoing Assessment**. When language teachers observe a decline in students' productive outcomes during assessments, they employ differentiated instruction to inform their instructional decisions. Continuous assessments serve as a means for language teachers to understand students and their needs, enabling the selection of effective teaching and learning strategies as well as interventions that optimize student achievement.

The **Emergent Theme (6)** is that**, Differentiating Content is Giving Flexible Content Delivery.** When tailoring content, educators take into account the lesson's objective and offer students adaptable choices regarding the material they study to achieve that objective, ranging from subject or topic to approach or presentation. In the virtual classroom, teachers personalize the specific content each student engages with to align with their comprehension of the course material. Through guided discussions, students collectively reach the same goal despite receiving differentiated content delivery.

Another **Emergent Theme (7)** is **Differentiating Process is Using Flexible Groupings.** Through process differentiation, virtual language teachers adapt the methods through which their students learn in the online classroom. One approach to achieving this is by grouping students based on their individual readiness or to complement each other. Moreover, diversifying the teaching of concepts, employing methods like visual, auditory, or other sensory approaches, have been implemented. Despite the physical distance, the use of breakout rooms in learning pathways serves as a medium for teachers to diversify the learning process.

The next **Emergent Theme (8)** is **Differentiating Product is Allowing Students' Choice.** In virtual language teaching, when differentiating product, teachers assess the same concept or skill for each student at the end of a unit but allow diverse ways of demonstrating knowledge, such as through videos or written reports. Despite the challenge in crafting assignments, providing students the freedom to choose how they showcase their learning fosters a transfer of learning that mirrors real-world applications.

In terms of virtual language teachers' use of differentiated instruction, the last **Emergent Theme (9)** is **Differentiating Instruction is Challenging and Rewarding.** In traditional classes, language teachers contemplate using differentiated instruction. Applying it in the virtual classroom poses difficulties, particularly in assessing student learning. Nevertheless, despite the challenges, they find it rewarding and meaningful, as it enhances instructional delivery and promotes active learner participation.

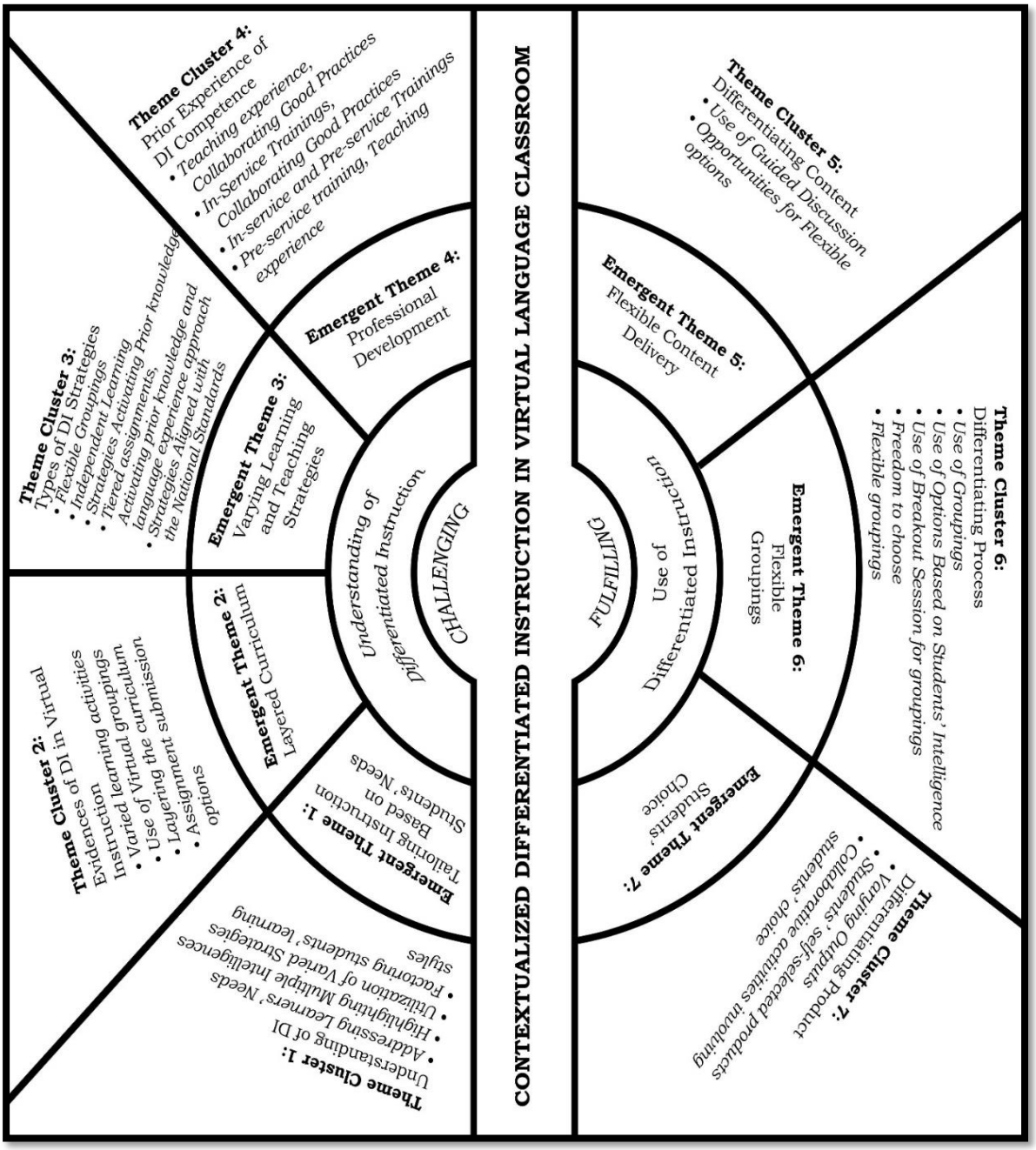

Diagram 1. Emergent Themes

Data Transformation of QUAN Findings

After analyzing the QUAN and QUAL data, themes and codes were developed for QUAL findings and on the other hand, QUAN findings went through data transformation using narrative themes. After which, the data were consolidated and integrated. After integrating the QUAN and QUAL findings, they were validated and legitimized and final interpretation and integration through narrative descriptions. The study employed the stages based on Happ (2009); Bazeley (2009); Tashakkori and Teddlie in Warfa (2016), as cited in the study of Protacio (2019) in qualitizing the themes. The QUAN findings were presented, narrative descriptions were formulated, themes were reviewed, and qualitized themes were defined and named. anchored on the pillars and principles of differentiated instruction.

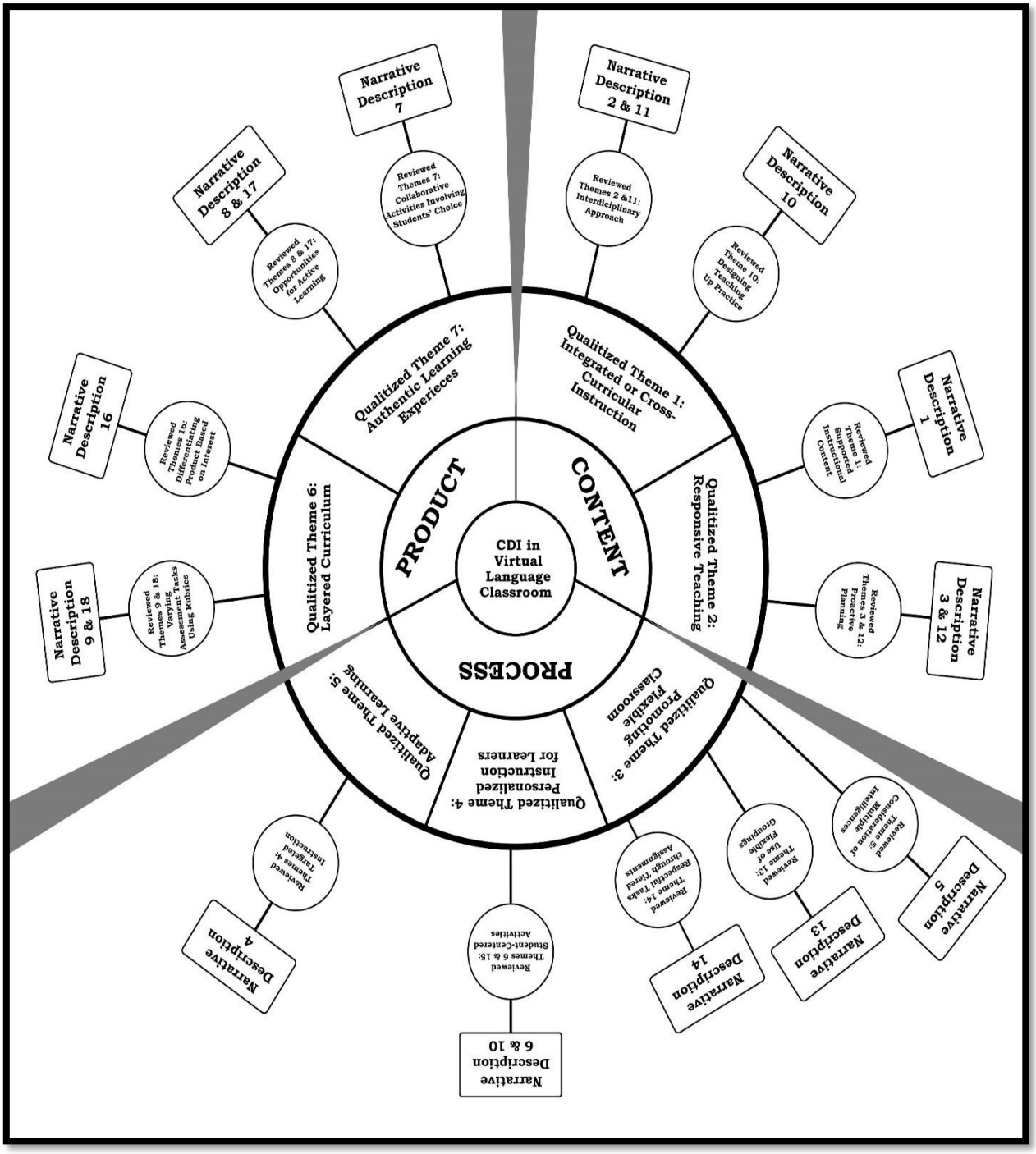

Diagram 2. Schematic Diagram of the Qualitized Themes

Results of Integrated Themes

With careful analysis and interpretation, anchored on the pillars and principles of differentiated instruction, there were four (4) integrated themes that reflected the language teachers understanding and use of differentiated instruction in the virtual classroom based from the QUAN and QUAL findings.

Integrated Theme 1: Integrative or Cross-Curriculum Instruction

The integrated theme 1 is integrative or cross-curriculum instruction. Fundamentally, the integration of curriculum, commonly referred to as cross-curricular or integrated curriculum, has become a significant

focus in educational research and practice. This approach seeks to break down traditional subject boundaries, providing students with a more holistic and interconnected learning experience. Within the realm of integrated curriculum, two key themes emerged: "Qualitized Theme Across Curriculum" and "Emergent Theme in Varying Teaching and Learning Strategies." This discussion explored the analysis and interpretation with these integrated themes.

Integrated curriculum often involves the identification and incorporation of key themes that transcend individual subjects. This qualitized theme served as overarching concepts that tie together diverse disciplines, fostering a deeper understanding of real-world connections. For instance, sustainability, global citizenship, or critical thinking may serve as qualitative themes. According to Jacobs (2015), incorporating such themes across disciplines can enhance students' ability to transfer knowledge and skills, promoting a more holistic and applicable understanding of content. This implies that virtual language teachers are responsible in extending their knowledge beyond their content areas so they could enhance critical thinking or learners.

Within the integrated curriculum, the emergent theme related to diverse teaching and learning strategies is a critical aspect. Different subjects and disciplines demand various approaches to instruction. As educators navigate integrated curriculum designs, they must be prepared to employ a range of teaching strategies that suit the emergent themes of adaptability, flexibility, and student-centered learning. Hattie and Timperley (2017) emphasized the importance of teachers being responsive to emerging theme in instructional strategies, ensuring that pedagogical approaches align with the diverse needs of integrated curriculum. This purports the idea that virtual language teachers should not settle for uniform approach in teaching.

In essence, the first integrated theme could be traced in the Classroom Observation Tool (COT) 1 of the Department of Education indicator 1 - Applies knowledge of content within and across curriculum teaching areas. This means that, in practice, teachers are really assessed by their supervising teachers or Master teachers to ensure that the aforesaid indicator is met and applied in the classroom instruction. The integrated theme of cross-curricular education, encompassing both qualitized themes across curriculum and emergent themes in varying teaching and learning strategies, holds great promise for fostering a more comprehensive and meaningful educational experience. As educators and researchers delve deeper into these integrated approaches, a better understanding of their impact on student learning outcomes and educational practices will likely emerge.

Integrated Theme 2: Modifying Instruction Curriculum

Modifying instructional curriculum as the second integrated theme represents a contemporary approach to education, emphasizing the need for responsiveness, personalization, and layering of curriculum elements. This discussion explored the integrated theme and its components, including "Qualitized Themes" such as responsive teaching, personalized instruction, and layered curriculum, as well as "Emergent Themes" such as tailoring instruction based on needs and further layering of curriculum elements.

Responsive teaching involves educators adapting their instructional methods based on students' needs, interests, and feedback. This approach aligns with the concept of dynamic and flexible teaching practices (Tomlinson, 2013). This suggests that integrating responsive teaching into instructional curriculum ensures that educators are attuned to the evolving needs of their students.

Personalized instruction centers on tailoring educational experiences to individual students, considering their learning styles, abilities, and preferences. This theme emphasized student agency and engagement in the learning process. Thus, this infers that integrating personalized instruction enhances the relevance and effectiveness of the curriculum.

On the other hand, layered curriculum involves the incorporation of multiple levels of complexity and depth within a curriculum, allowing students to progress at their own pace and delve into topics more deeply (Kulik, Kulik, & Bangert-Drowns, 2014). This shows that integrating layered curriculum accommodates diverse learning needs and promotes a more enriched educational experience.

An emergent theme within modifying instructional curriculum is the practice of tailoring instruction based on individual student needs. This involves ongoing assessment and adjustment of instructional strategies to address specific learning requirements (Guskey & Link, 2018). This study believes that the emergent theme of tailoring instruction ensures a more targeted and effective teaching approach.

The emergent theme of further layering involves adapting the curriculum to introduce additional complexity or depth based on student progress and mastery. This approach extends the layered curriculum concept, allowing for continuous challenge and growth (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Incorporating further layering, as this study points, ensures that students are consistently engaged at their optimal level.

Critically redefining the instructional curriculum via integrated themes, which include elements such as responsive teaching, personalized instruction, layered curriculum, and emerging practices like customizing instruction and incorporating additional layers, represents an advanced educational strategy. This comprehensive framework fosters flexibility, personalized learning, and in-depth educational experiences, ultimately amplifying student engagement, comprehension, and achievement. As educators persist in investigating and incorporating these principles, continuous research will yield crucial insights into their influence on teaching methodologies and student results.

Integrated Theme 3: Respectful Differentiation

The third integrated theme Respectful differentiation underscores the importance of recognizing and valuing the diverse needs of learners. This discussion explored the application of this theme, delving into the "Qualitized Theme" of promoting fluid groupings and the "Emergent Theme" of flexible groupings, aiming to create an inclusive and adaptable learning environment.

Promoting fluid groupings as a qualitized theme within respectful differentiation, emphasized the dynamic nature of student groups. This approach, as proposed by Tomlinson (2013), suggests that students may benefit from being grouped based on their specific learning needs and strengths. This anchors the idea that fluid groupings allow for a more nuanced understanding of student abilities, fostering collaboration and ensuring that learners engage with content at an appropriate level.

An emergent theme within the context of respectful differentiation is the use of flexible groupings. This involves the ability to adapt group configurations based on the evolving needs of students and the learning objectives. According to Tomlinson and Imbeau (2015), flexible grouping enables educators to respond to individual student progress, allowing for timely adjustments that enhance the effectiveness of collaborative learning experiences.

The integration of respectful differentiation, with its qualitized theme of promoting fluid groupings and emergent theme of flexible groupings, offers several benefits. It allows educators to tailor instruction to diverse learning needs, promoting a sense of inclusion and equity. However, challenges may arise in terms of logistical considerations and the need for ongoing teacher professional development to effectively

implement these approaches (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie, 2016). This means that teachers should not stop themselves from involving in professional development activities to widen their understanding of differentiated instruction.

Critically recognizing diverse learning needs, respectful differentiation employs the integrated concept of encouraging adaptable and flexible student groupings enable educators to establish an educational setting that values individual distinctions, cultivates collaborative efforts, and adjusts to the changing requirements of students. The ongoing exploration and implementation of these methodologies, informed by research and sustained professional development, will significantly enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of the educational experience for all students.

Integrated Theme 4: Ownership to Learning

The concept of ownership to learning, as the fourth integrated theme, represents a fundamental shift in education, emphasizing students' active engagement and responsibility in their learning process. This discussion ventured the integrated theme of ownership to learning, encompassing "Qualitized Themes" such as adaptive learning and authentic learning experiences, as well as "Emergent Themes" like varying options and students' choices, with a focus on fostering a more empowered and meaningful educational experience.

Adaptive learning, as a qualitized theme, highlights the importance of tailoring educational experiences to individual learners' needs. It involves the use of technology and personalized approaches to adjust the pace and content of instruction based on students' progress (Morrison, Ross, Kalman, & Kemp, 2017). Hence, this ascertains that integrating adaptive learning empowers students to take ownership of their learning by allowing them to progress at their own pace, promoting autonomy and self-direction.

Authentic learning experiences, as another theme, involve providing students with tasks and activities that mirror real-world contexts. This qualitized theme emphasizes the relevance and applicability of learning to students' lives, enhancing their sense of ownership over the material (Herrington & Oliver, 2016). This establishes that integrating authentic learning experiences connects theoretical knowledge to practical applications and fosters a deeper understanding and personal investment in the learning process of the students.

An emergent theme within the ownership to learning framework is the provision of varying options for students. This involves diversifying the ways in which content is presented, assessed, and demonstrated. Allowing for multiple pathways to mastery accommodates diverse learning styles and preferences, enabling students to exercise ownership by selecting the most effective approaches for their understanding (Meyer et al., 2013). This hints at virtual language teachers' responsibility in making sure that options are provided because diversity of intelligence is existing.

The emergent theme of students' choices emphasizes giving learners the autonomy to make decisions about their learning paths. This comprises involving students in decision-making processes, such as selecting topics for projects or determining assessment formats. Allowing students to make meaningful choices fosters a sense of ownership, motivation, and responsibility in their educational journey (Reeve, 2016).

The consolidated concept of promoting ownership in learning incorporates essential elements like adaptive learning, authentic experiences, and emerging features such as diverse options and student autonomy. This plays a crucial role in cultivating an educational atmosphere centered on students and empowerment. Persistent exploration and application of these principles, guided by ongoing research and adaptive

teaching strategies, will continually refine the effectiveness and personal significance of the educational process.

Other Themes

Apart from the themes that were identified, the study yielded several other noteworthy aspects that were not comprehensively incorporated into the analysis. One of these themes is the ongoing assessment concept, which is essential to differentiated instruction. Continuous assessment is a dynamic tool that can be used in the virtual language classroom to measure student progress and pinpoint specific needs. Moreover, teachers' narratives of professional development emerged prominently, mirroring their learning and comprehension journeys regarding differentiated instruction. This theme emphasizes how important it is for teachers to continue growing and receiving training in order to successfully apply differentiated instruction. Finally, the experiences of virtual language instructors revealed a deep sense of satisfaction and difficulty related to using differentiated instruction in an online setting.

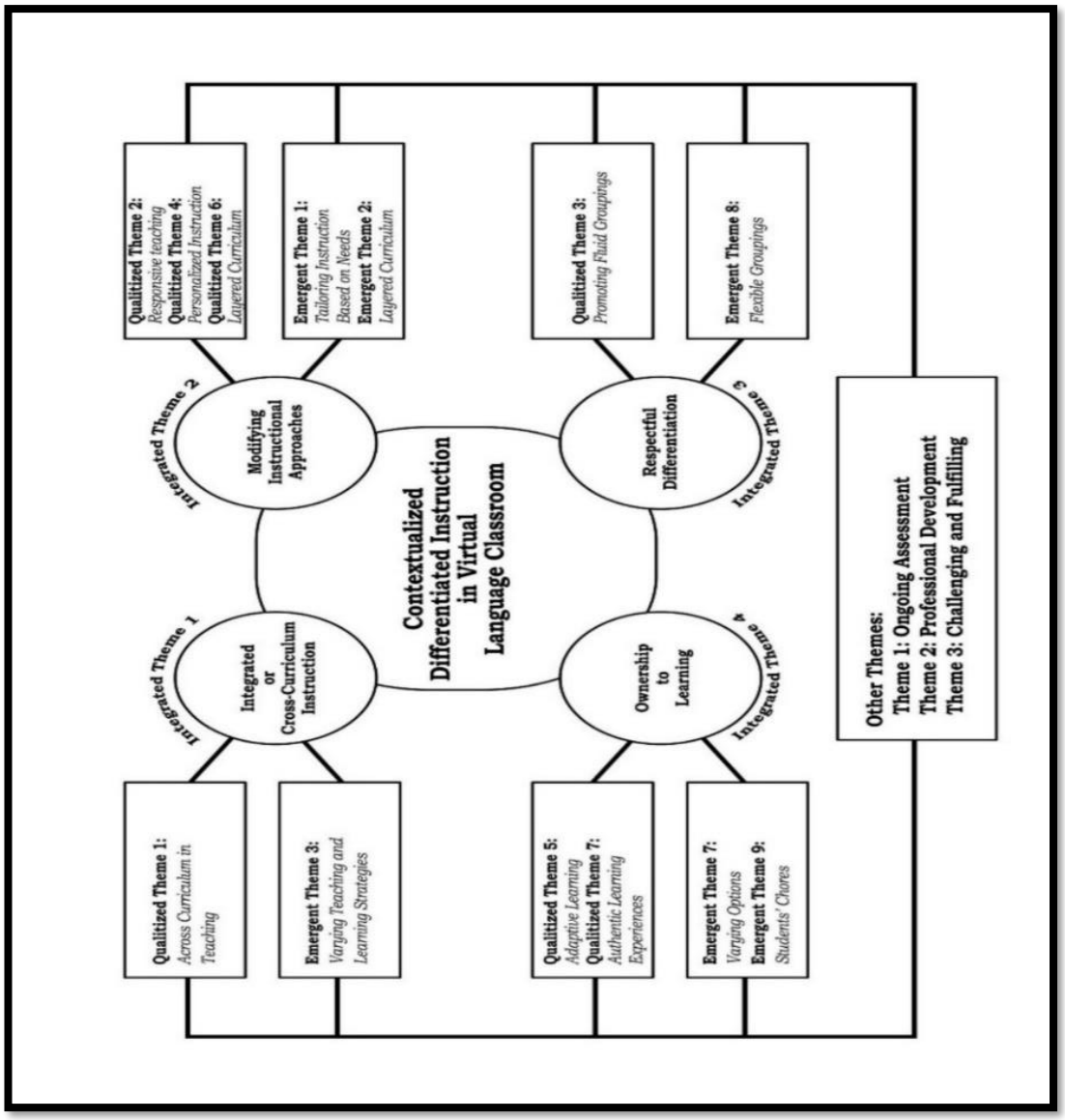

Diagram 3. Integrated Themes

Digitized Primer

Implications of Findings

This study sought to explore the teachers understanding and use of Contextualized Differentiated Instruction in the virtual language classrooms.

As revealed through the integrated themes, the results of this study implied that:

1. Virtual language teachers recognize the importance of integrating the curriculum in varied disciplines in order to broaden the students understanding of concepts in the virtual classroom. Integrative curriculum is essential in differentiated instruction as it supports personalized, holistic, and engaging learning experiences. Hence, it implies that virtual language teachers should focus on the enhancement of student learning experiences in the virtual classroom to help them meet the diverse needs of their students while promoting deeper understanding and critical thinking, making education more meaningful and effective while associating the content to other fields such as Health, Economics, Geography, etc. based from DepEd's Classroom Observation Tool indicator 1. Teachers should also meticulously and thoughtfully define the interconnected concepts of transdisciplinary, fusion, and multidisciplinary approaches within integrative curriculum. This careful consideration ensures clarity and coherence in both curriculum design and execution, thereby fostering more impactful and meaningful educational experiences for students within the virtual classroom.
2. As designers of differentiated instruction, virtual language teachers modify the instructional approaches inside the classroom using responsive teaching and learning mechanisms, layering of the curriculum which challenges the learners depending on varied levels, and personalized tailored instruction to ensure learning while meeting the needs of the learners. Through differentiation, appropriate levels of challenge are provided for all students, including those who lag behind, those who are advanced and those right in the middle. Furthermore, this implies that teachers should refrain from adopting a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching. Instead, they should recognize that teaching is not a linear or unidirectional process. By embracing the principles of differentiation, teachers can adapt

their instructional methods to suit the individual learning styles, abilities, and needs of their students, ultimately leading to more effective and engaging learning experiences in the virtual classroom.

3. The tasks in the virtual classroom are respectfully differentiated. Differentiation allows for flexible grouping with a variety of peers. In order to develop the students' individual capacity and potential, activities for differentiation require meaningful, powerful and engaging work. This implies that learners are given chances to interact and work together as they develop knowledge of new content. They can also initiate comprehensive class-level discussions on key concepts, followed by collaborative work in smaller groups or pairs. The flexible nature of grouping arrangements in differentiated instruction allows for dynamic adjustments based on the content being taught, specific projects, and ongoing assessments. This ensures that students receive tailored support and opportunities for interaction that best suit their learning needs and preferences, ultimately contributing to a more effective and inclusive virtual learning environment.
4. The learners in the virtual classroom have sense of ownership to their own learning. This entails the idea that teachers provide authentic learning experiences which are real-world scenarios adaptive to their kinds of students. By designing learning activities that mirror real-world scenarios and cater to the diverse needs of students, teachers can empower learners to take control of their own learning journey. Empowering students with varied options and the opportunity to choose tasks where they excel enhances their motivation and engagement in the learning process. By acknowledging that each student's learning journey is unique, teachers can provide specific alternatives tailored to individual needs, thereby facilitating deep and rapid learning without assuming a one-size-fits-all approach. This suggests that teachers implementing differentiation should offer tailored alternatives that enable each student to achieve deep and rapid learning, recognizing that each student's learning path is unique and may differ from others.
5. The competence of virtual language teachers in terms of differentiated instruction is a product of professional development. Teachers do not just differentiate because of convenience or boredom. They differentiate to leverage the unique learning characteristics each student brings to the classroom to deliver a more effective education than a so-called "one-size-fits-all" approach. This underscores the importance of teachers actively engaging in continuous training and professional development opportunities that enhance their understanding and application of differentiated instruction. By investing in their own growth and knowledge expansion, educators can refine their skills, adapt to evolving educational landscapes, and ultimately better meet the diverse needs of their students in the virtual classroom.
6. Differentiated instruction is an ongoing adjustment based on the results of a variety of assessment for learning practices throughout the teaching and learning cycle. The results of the assessments and even engagement levels of students would provide data for teachers to proactively develop supporting learning targets in variety of ways. To effectively implement differentiation, teachers must engage in frequent adjustments to their instructional strategies, ensuring that all students receive the necessary supports or challenges to maximize their learning potential. This requires an intensive level of preplanning, where teachers anticipate the diverse needs of their students and plan accordingly. In doing so, it will lessen the need for significant remediation or intervention.
7. As language teachers endure the implementation of differentiated instruction, they find the task both challenging and rewarding. Differentiated instruction is challenging because it requires teachers to juggle various needs and resources. However, it is fulfilling and rewarding as it leads to improved

student outcomes, increased teacher satisfaction, and a positive classroom atmosphere that celebrates diversity and individual growth. In this case, the study highlights that DI does not necessarily entail developing separate lesson plans for each student level or diluting the curriculum. Instead, it emphasizes the importance of responding to student needs as they arise, thereby integrating differentiation seamlessly into instructional practices. Therefore, a practical implication for language teachers is to approach DI as a responsive and dynamic process rather than a rigid framework. By understanding that DI occurs organically in response to student needs and learning contexts, teachers can feel empowered to implement differentiation effectively and confidently. This shift in mindset can lead to more positive outcomes for both teachers and students in the language classroom.

Conclusions

Based on the findings on the understanding and use of differentiated instruction by the language teachers in virtual classroom, the following are concluded:

1. Content, process, and product domains are varied in virtual language classrooms.
2. Differentiated instruction is designed to tailor the instruction based on the needs of learners.
3. Layered curriculum is used as evidence in differentiating instruction.
4. Tiering assignments and giving varying strategies activate the prior knowledge of learners in virtual classroom.
5. Professional development and teaching experiences help deepen teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction.
6. Students' responses in their learning guide teachers' differentiation.
7. Using differentiated instruction in virtual classroom is fulfilling and challenging.
8. Differentiating content, process, and products domains in the virtual classroom requires consistency.
9. Giving the learners options allows content differentiation to happen.
10. Use of flexible groupings paves the way in differentiating process.
11. Allowing students to choose how will they demonstrate their understanding of the lesson increases productivity.
12. A digitized primer can assist teachers in putting differentiated instruction strategies into virtual classroom practice.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions on the understanding and use of differentiated instruction by the language teachers in virtual classroom, the researcher recommends:

1. Despite high understanding, the researcher still recommends to hold workshops and training courses for teachers on how to implement the differentiated instruction strategy, and provide them with practical models for the application of this strategy in virtual environment based on the tenets, principles, pillars, and philosophies of DI.
2. Teachers are suggested to update themselves about the proper use and integration of Audio-Visual Presentation during virtual classroom teaching.
3. The researcher also recommends to Department of Education SDO to invest and produce more content-based educational videos which should available online or offline.
4. It is recommended to educate principals and public education supervisors to encourage their teachers to use modern teaching strategies in classrooms.

5. It is important to remember that while teachers play the primary role in the utilization of differentiated instruction in the classroom, school principals and supervisors should also understand differentiated instruction and receive training designed to improve staff development practices by higher education officials.
6. It is evident that the partnership between technology and education is going to stay forever. Teachers need to regularly update their technical knowledge. Schools can also support their teachers by providing training related to technology and education and providing funds for enrolling in courses that focus on online teaching perspectives.
7. School administrators should provide all means of support to encourage teachers working in the field of education, both private and public, to use modern teaching strategies, especially the differentiated instruction strategies incorporated in their DLPs.
8. Schools should use strategies like peer coaching, action research, study groups, and workshops on a continuous basis for teachers' development of DI competence.
9. Subject group heads should intensify classroom observation and monitor the use of differentiated instruction of the teachers.
10. The researcher also recommends that there should be a compendium of differentiated instruction teaching strategies with sample lesson exemplars highlighting content, process, and product.
11. Since not all online classes are created the same way, teachers are encouraged to study what constitutes effective instructional design in online contexts to understand how different modes of teaching and learning are related to students' experiences and learning in online classes.
12. Other researchers should conduct further studies on differentiated instruction in the virtual classroom and its application in higher education as DI is mostly studied in primary, elementary, and secondary levels.
13. Other researchers should conduct comparative studies on wise application of differentiated instruction in the virtual classroom and face-to-face classrooms.
14. There should be more studies on the potentials challenges of implementing DI in virtual classrooms.
15. The researcher also recommends further studies that complement the limitations of this study like including classroom observations in virtual classrooms.

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