

Adapting Teaching Strategies to Arab Student Needs in an EFL Classroom

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Despite vast research on differentiated instruction, little has been done on tailoring the instructional strategies for Arab student needs in an EFL classroom. However, language teachers endeavor to implement differentiated instruction by adapting materials and modifying teacher-talk for mixed-ability classrooms, this practice is not always treated as an indispensable strategy for implementing a relevant and effective Foreign Language (FL) teaching strategy. A classroom with distinct levels of language competencies requires instructors to address the learning needs of his/her students through means that would benefit all. The current article assesses the needs of Arab students that are different from other students and presents a model for assisting language teachers in modifying instructions in order to accommodate the needs of Arab students in English as FL classrooms. The article first presents the characteristics that language learners possess followed by a discussion on the significance of differentiated instruction in mixed-ability classrooms, a discussion on the significance of a teacher in learning and teaching, and the academic characteristics of Arab ELLs. The last part of this paper provides implications for instructors.

Keywords: Arab students, differentiated instruction, teaching strategies, English language teaching

Introduction

The modification of instructional strategies in foreign language classes is a common teaching practice for benefiting diverse group of language students (Levy, 2008). Since language classes generally consist of students with different proficiency levels, it is counterproductive and unfair to employ a one-size-fits-all pedagogical approach. Teachers have to keep in mind the different kinds of students in their classes when teaching language skills and explaining tasks (Brooks, 1999; Harper & Jong, 2004; Tarman & Chigisheva, 2017).

The main challenge for a language instructor is to adopt teaching practices that can benefit all different kinds of students in his/her class (Dagdilelis, 2018; Deniz & Ersoy, 2016; Dixon, Hardin, McConell & Yssel, 2014; Inceli, 2015). It is not an easy task to decide which instructional method would work for all the learners, and if one technique will help every single student in the classroom (Alogali, 2018; Cartohers & Parfitt, 2017; James, 2018). Differentiating instruction becomes challenging, especially, in a classroom with Arab students because of their differing educational backgrounds and limited exposure to the target language. Another factor that aggravates the situation is the unsatisfactory English language development of many students at schools (Eksi & Aydin, 2013; Faltis, 2014; Farooq, Gulzar & Javid, 2012; Marque et al., 2018). Since English is not considered an essential skill for academic excellence and daily life, the language development process is negatively affected by a lower motivation level.

To implement a relevant and effective pedagogical approach with diverse Arab ELL students, it is of utmost importance for the language instructors to understand the actual educational, pedagogical, and language needs of their students in order to adjust instructions to meet those specific needs. Thus, the main objective of this study is to provide practical information to language teachers to help them engage, motivate, and instruct their ELL Arab students. This relevant and differentiated approach to teaching and learning English will help ELLs succeed in their academic life by performing well in their desired colleges (Iyitoglu & Aydin, 2015) and preparing themselves for the job market. This study aims to explain how Arab students differ from others in terms of academic needs and shares good teaching practices that may help language teachers in modifying their instructions according to the needs of their Arab students.

Characteristics of language learners

Diversity among learners is a well-known concept (Anderson, 2005; Franzoni & Assar, 2009; Oxford, 2006; Tomlinson, 2001; Willingham, 2009). English language classes are no exception as they are full of students who tend to learn in ways that can be clearly differentiated from their peers. These types of

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learners contribute to increase the complexity of language classes and make it difficult for a language instructor to benefit all students through a single lesson plan. Before we look into this intricacy of learning styles and the challenges created by them, it would be better to discuss the differing opinions on learning styles and their characteristics. Educators, educational psychologists and scientists hold incongruous opinions about the existence of learning styles that are related to teaching and learning. There are two schools of thought on learning styles.

One group believes that the theory of learning styles (TLS) lacks evidence (Willingham, 2009) and, in the words of the Oxford University Pharmacologist Baroness Greenfield, it is nothing but ‘nonsense’ (Henry, 2007). According to Henry, Greenfield disapproves of the practice of categorizing students into different learning-style based groups as she considers it an unfruitful activity. Though Willingham agrees that the students differ from each other, he emphasizes the need to understand the differences between *cognitive ability (CA)* and *cognitive style (CS)*. The former is the aptitude for learning; it tells us about a learner’s strategies to encounter content and her prior knowledge about a subject or capacity to learn about that subject. The cognitive styles, on the other hand, are inclinations towards specific ways of learning, and Willingham labels them as ‘*biases or tendencies to think in a particular way*’ (p. 114). Willingham has also enlisted the learning style preference based propositions (see Table 1) made by psychologists which were also examined in order to understand common beliefs about the process of thinking.

Table 1.

Cognitive styles and their distinctions as proposed and tested by psychologists

<u>Cognitive Styles</u>	<u>Description</u>
Broad/narrow	Preference for thinking in terms of a few categories with many items versus thinking in many categories with few items
Analytic/nonanalytic	Tendency to differentiate among many attributes of objects versus seeking themes and similarities among objects
Leveling/sharpening	Tendency to lose details versus tendency to attend to details and focus on differences
Field dependent/field independent	Interpreting something in light of the surrounding environment versus interpreting it independently of the influence of the environment
Impulsivity/reflectiveness	Tendency to respond quickly versus tendency to respond deliberately
Automatization/restructuring	Preference for simple repetitive tasks versus preference for tasks that require restructuring new thinking
Converging/ diverging	Logical, deductive thinking versus broad, associational thinking
Serialist/holist	Preference for working incrementally versus preference for thinking globally
Adaptor / innovator	Preference for established procedures versus preference for new perspectives
Reasoning / intuitive	Preference for learning by reasoning versus preference for learning by insight
Visualizer/verbalizer	Preference for visual imagery versus preference for talking to oneself when solving problems
Visual/auditory/kinesthetic	Preferred modality for perceiving and understanding information

Note. Cognitive styles and their distinctions as proposed and tested by psychologists. Adapted from *Why Don't Students Like Schools?* by D. T. Willingham , 2009, San Francisco, USA: Jossey-Base Publisher. Copyright 2009.

The other side of the argument considers the knowledge and the accommodation of learning styles as an important factor in the teaching of second language (Gilakjani, 2012; Oxford, 2006). The proponents of the learning style theory (LST) believe that knowing one’s learning style and utilizing it in absorbing information is extremely advantageous (Gilakjani, 2012). For this reason, many websites offer learning style tests and quizzes that help people learn about their preferred ways of learning (visual, auditory, kinesthetic).

Despite continuous criticism from the opponents, research into learning style dimensions and their characteristics has continued. Gilakjani mentioned some of the commonly cited dimensions: “multiple intelligences, perceptual learning styles, field dependence/independence, analytic/global learning styles and reflective/impulsive learning styles” (p. 106).

Similarly, Oxford (2006) explained that learners with *sensory preferences dimension (SPD)*, one of the four learning style dimensions discussed by her with the view that they are the most relevant to second language learning, can be further subdivided into visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile. Learners with SPD dimension tend to like ‘physical’ or ‘perceptual learning channels’. Learners that are visual prefer to see objects for better performance (Corona et al., 2017; Gilakjani, 2012). Mere hearing does not bring them the expected benefits. On the other hand, auditory learners depend upon their ears more than eyes for understanding and acquiring information. Oral discussions, teacher lectures, and dialogues with others advantage such learners. Kinesthetic learning involves physical movement and physical activities (Gilakjani, 2012) where learners acquire knowledge through their body’s movements. Though kinesthetic and tactile learnings are sometimes perceived as similar, the later includes touching things that allow learners to remember their size and shape through the experience of holding or buildings or drawing things with the use of their hands.

This controversy raises language teachers’ confusion and increases researchers’ interests in investigating the complications created by the differences among learners and the ways instructors can benefit such diverse groups. One method that (language) teachers have long tried, which Tomlinson (2001) addresses as “unitary”, is to try to teach all the learners through the same set of instructions. However, accommodating all these students through a common instructional method may not produce required results as it may not be compatible with the abilities and the learning styles of all students in a particular class. Harper and Jong (2004) opine, “*Teachers need an understanding of language differences and developmental stages of L2 learning, and they cannot expect ELLs to follow the same learning path of timeline for English-language development*” (p. 155). This diversity in language proficiency and study skills makes it difficult for language teachers to decide which instructional strategy will trigger their students’ L2 acquisition.

Differentiated instruction

Recently, a transition can be observed in teaching where researchers argue for a comparatively newer concept, “differentiated instruction (DI)”, that is believed to deal with learner differences in a much better way. This theory works by acknowledging that each learner has different needs and such needs should be fulfilled through specifically designed instructional techniques that address most of the learner needs.

Tomlinson (2001) presents three arguments in support of ‘effective differentiation’. He begins with questioning the validity of the belief that all learners are the same. Ellis (2004) augments this claim by arguing that learner differences exist in the first language (L1) as well as the second language (L2); however, the nature of these differences is not always the same. For the last four decades, Applied Linguists (ALs) have been trying to measure learner differences in the acquisition of language(s), and two of the common methods they have used are quantitative and qualitative. Commenting on these practices, Ellis disapproves of the use of quantitative research *alone* and, instead, suggests a mixed-methods research design to investigate individual differences in second language acquisition (SLA) among learners.

Secondly, Tomlinson argues, “there is no substitute for high-quality curriculum and instruction in classrooms” (p. 9). Although curriculum helps us understand four things about the content: what, why, how and when, developing a good quality curriculum is not always easy. Stabback (2016) believes that developing a curriculum that meets the political, educational and social dimensions of a community is very difficult in societies that are diverse and global. He claims that a quality curriculum entails four characteristics: a) it equally accommodates all types of learners and their needs; b) it promotes quality learning; c) it encourages learning beyond the classroom setting; and, d) it addresses all the developmental needs of a learner: physical, emotional, spiritual. Similarly, Karatas and Oral (2015) endorse culturally responsive education and argue that a culturally responsive teacher promotes tolerance and social integration. However, there is a need to make language teachers aware of the learners’ culture and their values. An important element that increases the supportiveness of a curriculum for language instructors is its ability to raise diverse cultural awareness (Yurtseven & Altun, 2015). To create a classroom environment that is built on mutual understanding, rapport and respect, it is essential that faculty and students are aware of each other’s cultural values.

The last argument Tomlinson made in support of employing differentiated instruction is that education cannot prepare learners for practical life unless the gap between learner and learning is filled. Furthermore, his discussion on what differentiated instruction is and is not develops educators’

understandings of the concept and allows them to see the difference between unitary and differentiated instruction through examples from classrooms.

Differentiated instruction present themselves in almost every language classroom in many different ways. For instance, permitting students to choose what they want to read and write, allowing extra time to specific learners to complete a given task, alternating assessments based upon your students' proficiency level, and dedicating specific time for a specific assignment. Levy (2008) endorses all these endeavors; however, she calls for developing a system for planning differentiation in instructions so that learners are helped according to their learning styles, and opportunities are provided for academic readiness.

Language teacher: a facilitator of learning

The significance of a language teacher in the production, maintenance and delivery of differentiated instruction is unquestionable. It distinguishes him/her from the traditional role played by other teachers and allows him/her to work as a facilitator of learning. For differentiation, four components are available to a teacher in a classroom for substantial modification: target information or content; tasks that the students will be involved in or the process of mastering the content; what the students will achieve or the product; and how the learners feel during the process of learning or about the learning environment (Tomlinson, 2000).

In an EFL situation, and especially in the case of Arab students, language teachers can certainly adapt these factors in many different ways. For instance, content can be differentiated in a language classroom in four different ways: (a) using readings on topics that are of interest to a majority of students; (b) utilizing online learning tools that allow students to practice and continue developing their word bank outside of the classroom; (c) preparing writing tasks that allow students to report on familiar topics; and (d) using student peers to facilitate weaker students (Aydin & Koch, 2012; Hyland, 2004; Kustati & Al-Azmi, 2018; Schunn, Godley & DeMartino, 2016). Process can be differentiated in a language classroom by: (a) grouping students with mixed proficiency levels and then re-grouping if needed (Rass, 2015; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2010); (b) providing students with weekly lesson plans electronically; (c) informing students of upcoming formative and summative assessments either in class or online; and (d) assigning online quizzes and tests in class. Products can be differentiated in a language classroom by: (a) giving more weighting to weaker language areas (Kaya, 2015; Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2010); (b) using course rubrics or benchmarks to assess learner performance; and (c) allowing students to be creative by creating opportunities for enhancing critical thinking skills. The learning environment can be differentiated in a language classroom by: (a) creating opportunities for learners to relate to real life issues (Dornyei, 2001); (b) lowering the affective filter of the students by creating a collaborative and supportive learning atmosphere; (c) encouraging students to participate in given tasks by clearly delineating their roles to be performed; and (d) discussing areas of teaching and learning that should be prioritized (Dornyei, 2001).

Understanding Arab students

The main purpose of this article is to develop the theme that the needs of Arab students differ from others linguistically, culturally, and educationally. Secondly, in a language classroom consisting of Arab students, there are those that hold distinctive characteristics in terms of language proficiency, motivation, learning style, interaction, language acquisition and attention. The remaining part of this paper discusses both of these claims in detail.

The claim that Arab student needs are not the same as other linguistically different language students is supported by the work of Harper and Jong (2004) who discard the 'misconception' of seeing second language acquisition as a 'universal process'. They argue against the misunderstanding that all English language learners follow similar pattern and speed towards the development of L2. They warn that if language instructors perceive L1 and L2 acquisition as a parallel process, a misinterpretation of learners' errors may occur that can negatively affect the learning process. They suggest that:

Teachers need to be aware of common writing errors for ELLs, such as problems with verb tenses, plural and possessive forms of nouns, subject/verb agreement, and the use of articles (Ferris, 2002), and they should realize that many of these errors are developmental and/or influenced by the student's native language and are not equally responsive (or impervious) to correction (p.155).

Though there are similarities among ELLs in the process of L2 acquisition, it cannot be assumed that Arab students' development of English language acquisition will follow the same path and speed as others. Language teachers may oversee the factors like L1 literacy, learner experience at school, learner attitude and motivation towards L2 acquisition, L2 error types, and social and cultural differences (Harper &

Jong, 2004) that contribute towards increasing the complexity of the Arab student target language acquisition process. For instance, Arab student error types in second language writing (SLW), because of L1 interference, mostly consist of sentence structure ('Subject + Verb + Object' in English vs 'Verb + Subject + Object' in Arabic), overuse of coordinating conjunctions in an effort to produce longer sentences, repetition of nouns and phrases, and story-telling (Rass, 2015). Such errors may be observed in other students' writing samples; however, their native language may not necessarily influence them.

Furthermore, Arabic-English linguistic and orthographic differences are dissimilar to such differences between the English language and other language(s). Similarly, the influence of these dissimilarities on learners does not have to be the same. For instance, the writing methods that English and Arabic follow are dissimilar: Arabic script reads from right to left but English does not. There is a wide use of abbreviated writing in Arabic where verbs are either shortened by leaving out the vowels (e.g., instead of writing "Maktab", which means office, "Maktb" is preferred) or not used at all. According to Al-Muhtaseb and Mellish (1998), "*Arabic can express a complete meaning in sentences that have no verb at all*" (p. 6). For example, the sentence الرسالة قصيرة (transliteration: <al-resaalatu qa.seratun>), which means 'the letter (is) short', does not have any verb. This L1 influence could result in the production of English sentences without a verb. We see examples like 'Where he go?' instead of "Where is he going?" Similarly, the number of vowels and consonants, and their use in both languages is another distinguishing factor.

If a language teacher wants to provide instructional support on Arab student written or spoken errors, he/she must keep in mind the types and the roots of these errors. This may not only help in improving their language skills but also correcting learner hypotheses about the target language. This brings us to the point that language instructors teaching Arab students need to realize that their student needs are different and should be addressed through differentiated instructional support for target language development.

Another situation that calls for adapting differentiated instruction is the existence of individual differences among Arab students themselves (Abu El-Haj, 2008). These differences can be of English language skills, inspiration to master the target language, learning style, collaboration, the pace of acquiring language and devotion. When designing the lessons, such differences should not be ignored as they may hinder the effective delivery of the information that the language instructor tries to convey during a particular class session and, thus, may reflect negatively on the learning process.

Implications for language teachers

In order to address all the student needs in a language classroom, researchers have always tried to devise ways to facilitate the preferences in learning and the differentiated needs of all the students. Differentiated instruction theory plays a pivotal role in (a) understanding that the learning happens at different speed and pace among different learners and (b) the learning style diversity can be addressed in a classroom through the adaptation of differentiated instruction by following certain strategies (Tomlinson, 2000) that researchers have recommended.

The triggering point for a language teacher to decide to use differentiated instruction is through the analysis of his students' needs. The purpose of this article is to discuss the strategies and the principles that language instructors teaching English to Arab students can follow to adapt their teaching strategies to their student needs. Figure 1 shows a summary of these practices that are discussed in detail in this article. It should be noted that the figure does not provide a recommended sequence; the teachers can use these strategies in any desired order.



Figure 1: Teaching Strategies Adaption Model

1) Understanding the student population

The main thing that language teachers should do at the onset of the semester is to try to understand the learners, their learning abilities and their language needs (Halpern, 2017; Yigit & Tatch, 2017). This step is crucial in deciding the content and the way such content should be exposed to the learners. For instance, Harper and Jong (2004) argue, “L2 learners’ behavior often cannot be reduced to a simple explanation” (p. 159). They suggest considering a student’s recent or previous experience during language learning when deciding on his/her willingness to learn. Similarly, Lee and Kim (2014) indicate that there is a strong correlation between a language instructor’s understanding of his students’ learning styles and the creation of a successful learning atmosphere. This not only lets a teacher adapt instructional strategies suggested by recent research that match with his students’ learning styles but also allows students to “benefit from knowledge of their own learning style preferences” (p. 118). Tomlinson (2000) emphasizes the need of a teacher’s knowledge of his students’ learning challenges and recommends “conversations with individuals, classroom discussions, student work, observation, and formal assessment as a way to gather just a little more insight about what works for each learner” (p. 5). In terms of Arab students, for instance, there is a need to increase empirical investigation into the language needs developed by these students over the years and the possible treatment of such challenges. Through literature review, Rababah’s (2002) list of Arab student challenges in speaking and writing in English consists of problems related to the use of verb phrases (verb formation, use of tenses, subject verb agreement), noun phrases, pronunciation (stress, intonation), vocabulary, spellings, word-formation, capitalization, self-expression, and repetition. There are two problems with this list: first, the list is not inclusive of all the errors committed by Arab students in speaking and writing, and, secondly, the author fails to classify these errors into performance based and competence based errors. A performance-based error is less serious and is caused by a learner’s physical state (e.g., tiredness) whereas a competence based error shows lack of mastery of the target language and should be addressed carefully.

2) Filtering the instructions

The teaching strategy that works for one group of students may not work for others. Since students’ L1 experience and its interference in L2 development may not be the same, we cannot expect Arab students to engage in activities and respond to instructions that work best for Japanese, Chinese, or Pakistani students. Language teachers should keep in mind learners’ cultural, linguistic and educational background when deciding on an instructional method. When talking about a misconception of confusing ELLs with native speakers, Harper and Jong (2004) criticize the national and international standard that are supposed to inform

educators about student goals and academic readiness. They add that “in spite of inclusive claims regarding student diversity, most standards are based on approaches for a diverse native–English-speaking student population” (p. 156).

3) Increasing student participation

In addition to tailoring the lessons towards the students, language teachers should also try to encourage and increase student participation in the classroom for both learning and decision-making. In terms of learning, students should be engaged in activities and discussions. One strategy that I have successfully used over the years and it has worked well in increasing student engagement is the selection of topics that are related to the culture and the interests of Arab students. Students feel that they have enough information about a familiar topic under discussion and the only thing they have to focus on is the target language. For instance, when teaching descriptive writing skills, students can be asked to describe a place that they are previously familiar with, such as a caption of Masjid Al-Ahram during Hajj time (see Table 2). Since students have enough information about the place and the activity, they feel confident in writing a description of the given topic.

Table 2.

Descriptive Writing Activity with a Focus on Present Simple and Present Continuous Tenses

Variable	Definition
Language Objective	Descriptive Writing Practice
Level	Beginner/Intermediate
Time	50 minutes
Task	Describe the picture by using present simple and present continuous tenses.



Sample Questions:

1. Who are these people?
2. Why are they here? What are they doing?
3. Where do they come from? Which countries?
4. What are they wearing today? What do they do every day?

In terms of decision-making, students should be encouraged to help the instructor decide on certain things that can directly and indirectly affect the learning process. For instance, involving students, when deciding on the deadline of the submission of a given assignment, will achieve two goals: students will meet the deadline as they have decided on it, and their participation will create a cooperative environment in the classroom.

4) Considering value clarification as a teaching method

Value clarification theory stresses ‘moral education’ where the purpose is the awareness and correction of students’ values about life (Fritz & Guthrie, 2017). The instructor only exposes the learners to different aspects of the truth without enforcing his personal beliefs. The activities are designed in a way that students are encouraged to express their opinions on a given issue, which is followed by a clarification to explore the basis of their expressed view. Such activities can be designed for Arab students in ELT classrooms by asking them to reflect on their opinions. The emphasis of such tasks will be on the inclusion of critical thinking skills, learner independence, use of authentic language, problem solving skills, and motivation. All of this can be achieved by putting students in smaller groups so that individual participation can be increased. The selected topics should catch student attention and must be related to real life issues that are directly or indirectly related to student lives. For example, a project related to ‘cheating’ can be designed (see Table 3) to enhance students’ speaking skills. Such a project will not only motivate students to produce the target language in support or against an interesting topic but also learn about the pros and cons of the practice of cheating. When asking for explanation, the instructor questions should be of an exploratory nature rather than provoking defense.

Table 3.
A Sample Project on “Cheating” to Enhance Students’ Speaking Skills Through Debate

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
Level	Advanced
Language Objectives	Students will demonstrate their ability to use persuasive language to present their point of view.
Non-Language Objectives	Students will develop their understanding of the pros and cons of the topic under discussion.
Project Description	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First, students will be divided into two groups by the instructor: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The first group will defend the habit of cheating on the exams by, first, introducing their stance on the topic. Then, they will present three (3) arguments, which support their position. b. The second group will confute the stance of the first group by, first, introducing their point of view, which will be followed by three (3) arguments in support of their stance. 2. Secondly, each group will prepare 3 counter-arguments which directly respond to the arguments presented by their competitors. 3. After the counter-arguments are presented, students will prepare their concluding remarks, which should not be presented in more than 3 sentences. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Note: Students can use online resources or library for the initial preparation.

Benchmarks

- Students will clearly and persuasively present their point of view and the supporting arguments.
 - Students will speak clearly and loudly so that the audience (the class) can understand their arguments.
 - Students should use persuasive language to convince their counter-group and the audience.
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5) Keeping a teaching journal

This approach focuses on a teacher's professional development through his/her self-evaluation. The teacher himself/herself practices it as he/she progresses internally through the self-observation of his teaching styles, material creation and usage, lecture delivery, and success in student engagement and collaboration. The information collected from such observation is used as a basis for self-assessment, and then reflection (Richards & Lockhart, 2007). If the results come out positive, the teacher continues to use the effective strategies that help achieve the course objectives. Otherwise, he/she thinks of possible changes that can allow him/her to modify his/her teaching and the materials according to the course and his/her student needs.

Different sources are available to a reflective teacher who wants to engage into understanding the challenges of teaching and learning. Pollard (2014) discusses four skills that can assist in the reflection process: "reviewing relevant, existing research; gathering new evidence; analysis; and evaluation" (p. 80). There is a lot of research available to language teachers that can be accessed on the Internet or through the school database. In addition, teachers can collect data formally or informally from their own classrooms to develop an understanding of a particular challenge that their students are facing, and then cogitate about possible solutions to address it. For example, Table 4 shows a list of the grammar errors Arab students made in my Elementary English Writing classes. I collected their repeated errors for at least 5 weeks, and then designed a lesson plan of 50 minutes to discuss them in the class. This activity was very helpful in four distinct ways as it: a) displayed their own linguistic errors; b) made them understand their repeated mistakes; c) cleared their misunderstanding about the process of sentence structure formation in English; d) and provided a room for discussion on the roots of such errors-L1 interference and school experience. For more information on this activity, please see Appendix A.

Table 4.
Sample student sentences with two subjects (nouns/pronouns) referring to one thing.

<u>Sample Sentences</u>	<u>Feedback</u>
My teacher he is intelligent.	Wrong
My teacher is intelligent.	Correct
Mecca it is a beautiful city.	Wrong
Mecca is a beautiful city.	Correct

Conclusion

This article aimed to develop the thesis that adapting teaching strategies for Arab students is necessary because their learning needs are different from others. It also emphasizes that understanding Arab students and their learning abilities is important in deciding which instructional process(s) will better serve them to prepare for academic readiness. While there are some similarities between Arab students and other linguistically, culturally and educationally different students, there also exist differences in terms of L1 interference, learning experience and learning abilities. This article suggests that a language teacher should endeavor to explore the internal and the external differences through different means before deciding on using a specific instructional method. This confirms with Harper and Jong's (2004) argument that a teacher should not just borrow an instructional technique that has worked well for a specific group of students and try to employ it in teaching his students. Instead, his decision to implement any suggestions for teaching should be preceded by thorough understanding, analysis, synthesis and criticism. The model presented in this paper is

consistent with the work of Tomlinson (2001) on differentiated instruction and provides a baseline for language teachers to address Arab student needs through differentiated learning. The model can be used by teachers to assess the relevance of their teaching strategies in a classroom, especially in the Arab context. It also allows teachers to modify their instructions and the materials for a mixed-ability language classroom. Language instructors from different contexts might find this model useful in deciding what instructional strategies would work best for their students and then make the necessary changes according to their student needs. Since this article specifically focused on Arab students and their needs, and is the first article that proposes the need to modify instructions for Arab students, further research is needed to see how this model will benefit Arab students through its implementation in different classrooms. Future research should also discuss how this model would benefit students from different linguistic and culturally backgrounds and how its relevance can be increased for students from countries like Germany, China, Turkey, Pakistan and Japan.

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