Information Sciences Letters
An International Journal

http://dx.doi.org/10.18576/isl/130309

The Impact of Using a Differentiated Instruction-Based Program on Developing Egyptian EFL Preparatory School Students' Oral Reading Fluency

Wafaa M. E. Badawy

Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Technology, Faculty of Education, Arish University, Arish, Egypt

Received: 5 Dec. 2023, Revised: 22 Feb. 2024, Accepted: 9 Mar. 2024.

Published online: 1 May 2024

Abstract: The current study aimed at investigating the impact of using a differentiated instruction-based program (DIBP) on developing oral reading fluency in the EFL preparatory stage in Egypt. The study was quasi-experimental of pre/post one group design and thirty 2nd year preparatory students were randomly selected to be the study participants. The study instruments included: a list of EFL oral reading fluency skills, and a differentiated instruction -based program. Besides, an EFL oral reading fluency pre/ post test was designed to measure the students' oral reading fluency skills. Data were obtained from administering reading fluency post test. The results of the study showed that there was a statistically significant difference at 0.05 level between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- post administrations of the EFL oral reading fluency skills test, in favour of its post-administration. As such, it can be concluded that the differentiated instruction-based program had a significantly positive effect on developing the EFL oral reading fluency skills for Preparatory school students.

Keywords: A Differentiated Instruction-Based Program, Egyptian Preparatory School Students, EFL Oral Reading Fluency.

1 Introduction

Language has a social value through which people can communicate, achieve their aims, exchange their ideas, feelings and emotions. English, as the first world foreign language, is used among all people all over the world for international communication, science, commerce, advertising, diplomacy and transmitting advanced technology. Furthermore, in the age of "globalism" we live nowadays the interdependence of nations and countries that creates a need for a global language, and no language qualifies for this better than English. The status of English on the international level is a major factor that contributes to the increase in the importance of English in Egypt. Thus, eventually the need for equipping Egyptian EFL students with language skills among prep. stage students has become a critical issue.

It's known that the four language skills in need to be developed for effective communication are reading, listening, speaking and writing. Reading is one of the most important skills in the language learning process. It is the first skill that students should develop as it is an essential source for language input (Badawy, 2018). There are five reading components that are fundamental for literacy instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, vocabulary instruction, reading fluency, and comprehension strategies (The National Reading Panel, 2000). Phonemic awareness is the ability to create and identify individual sounds. Students demonstrate phonemic awareness when they recognize the sound each letter makes. Also, they are able to complete rhyming sentences and compare different ways to combine sounds to make words. Once vocabulary is developed, the focus moves to reading fluency. Reading fluency is the ability to read with speed and also accuracy. In order to be a competent reader, each of five reading skills must be mastered to ascertain meaning from text (Johns, 2010 &Fuchs, 2007).

Dambacher (2010), affirmed that in order to be fluent reader, there must be these four important principles to help educators and curriculum designer to develop the effective fluency instruction as follows: (a) Teachers or a fluent reader must be as a model of fluent reading to other students; (b) Oral support should be provided for students during their readings; (c) Repeated reading should be practiced on text given to the students; and (d) Attention must be focused on reading syntactically appropriate and meaningful phrases. In other words, teachers should work to develop the language of fluency with students, which includes concepts of expression, word stress and phrasing. Readers need to know that fluency is an important goal of their reading instruction, and what is fluency (Reutzel&cooter, 2008).

It's obvious that one of the main goals of any reading instruction is to ensure that students become fluent readers.



However, the expected reading level of Egyptian students isn't achieved due to some obstacles prevent them from being able to read fluently such as (1) Their reading rate is slow as they read word –by-word, (2) They focus most of their attention on decoding or figuring out how to pronounce the words so this has a negative impact on comprehension, (3) They read without paying attention to stress, intonation, punctuation, and (4) Some students read the same passage over several times to attain comprehension. Consequently, many students suffer from being dysfluent readers because of reading fluency neglect (Ebrahim, 2020; Helwa, 2014; and Zaza, 2014).

Apart from the above, reading activities are often focused on checking vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension, but these tasks are unlikely to encourage preparatory schoolers to become fluent readers. In addition, during the researcher's work as English supervisor, she noticed that preparatory schoolers – especially the second year dealt with the language through rules and vocabulary without paying attention to language fluency. Surveying a number of studies that investigated reading fluency at the preparatory level in the Egyptian context (e.g., Abd-Elwahed,2022; Ismael, 2020; & A bdu,2019), the researcher revealed that EFL preparatory schoolers encounter different problems in reading fluency.

On this basis, A pilot study was conducted to make sure of the lack of reading fluency. The results of the pilot study revealed that most of the students were not fluent when they read aloud. Finally, students have to acquire fluency in the skills of oral reading fluency to become fluent and proficient in the English language. On the other hand, teaching foreign language in Egyptian classrooms is considered more complex than ever due to an increasing population in the same classroom. Therefore, each learner differs from another one in many ways, such as learning styles, multiple intelligence, previous experience and individual preference in the same classroom (Gregory & Chapman, 2004). Hence, teachers can recognize these individual differences by using differentiated instruction strategies that fulfill each learner's various needs in the same class (Ziebella, 2002). This means that differentiated instruction is as recent educational strategies through which EFL teachers can modify content, process and product to meet the different students' levels, needs and abilities in an appropriate learning environment.

Gregory and Kuzmich (2004, p. 2) clarified that differentiated instruction is a philosophy which aims to meet the diverse learning needs of students. They added that "students don't all learn the same thing on the same day in the same way". As such, teachers contend with how to effectively meet the learning needs of students who vary in learning readiness, interests and experiences (Tomlinson & Dockerman, 2002). In doing so, there are key principles for an effective differentiation: (a)The teacher is clear about what is essential for students to know, understand, and do in the subject matter; (b) Goals of a differentiated classroom must be effective individual growth and success; (c) The teacher modifies content, process, and products in response to student readiness, interest, and learning profile; (d) All students participate in respectful work; (e) Flexibility is the hallmark of a differentiated classroom and (f) Assessment and instruction are inseparable (Tomlinson and Cooper, 2006).

To sum up, there is a certain need for various techniques and strategies to improve reading fluency skills among preparatory schoolers. Therefore, the researcher decided to conduct this study to develop preparatory school students' oral reading fluency skills using differentiated instruction.

Statement of the Problem

Having reviewed some related literature and some previous studies, it can be claimed that the problem of this study is twofold: Second year preparatory school students lack reading fluency, and there is a research gap – to the best knowledge of the researcher – investigating. The impact of using a differentiated instruction-based program on developing preparatory school students' EFL Oral Reading Fluency

Questions of the Study

The problem of the study can be formulated in the main question as follows:

How can a differentiated instruction-based program develop EFL oral reading fluency among preparatory school students?

Based on this main question, there are some sub – questions:

- What are the EFL oral reading fluency skills that may be necessary to be developed among preparatory school students?
- What are the features of the proposed program based on differentiated instruction for developing EFL oral reading fluency among preparatory school students?
- How effective is a differentiated instruction-based program for developing EFL oral reading fluency among preparatory school students?

ENSP

Hypotheses of the Study

- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study group students in the pre-post assessment of EFL oral reading prosody in favor of the post assessment.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study group students in the pre-post assessment of EFL oral reading accuracy in favor of the post assessment.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study group students in the pre-post assessment of EFL reading automaticity in favor of the post assessment.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study group in the pre-post assessment of overall EFL oral reading fluency in favor of the post assessment of oral reading fluency test.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study lies in what it may offer for:

- Curriculum planners: The study may draw their attention to the efficacy of differentiated instruction strategies in reading fluency and teaching these strategies in the EFL curriculum.
- **EFL teachers:** The study may attract the attention of English teachers to use the program for teaching reading fluency at any grade level.
- **EFL students:** It will encourage and motivate students to use a differentiated instruction-based program for developing their English reading fluency.
- **Researchers:** This study directs the attention of those who are interested in this field to further studies related to the study variables.

Literature Review

This part covers a review of RF, DI and the impact of DI on RF; it also sheds light on previous studies related to such variables.

(I) Reading Fluency

Reading fluency is defined as the ability to read smoothly and quickly with freedom from the word recognition problems, (Bramuchi, 2009). In addition to Bouguebs (2007) whose definition of reading fluency based on the LaBerge and Samuels's 1974 theory is defined as "the ability to recognize written words in a connected text accurately, with an appropriate speed and with a proper expression "(p. 31). Conversely, reading fluency is not reading speed or oral reading expression, but the ability to decode and comprehend text at the same time (Samuels , 2006). This means that reading fluency is the ability to perform simultaneously both decoding and understanding the written text. Sargent (2003) agreed on that definition of Samuels and added that reading fluency is as an essential dimension of proficient reading, consisting of three distinct components: effortless or automatic, reading appropriate phrasing, and use of the prosodic features of language (pitch, stress, intonation) to appropriately convey the meaning.

According to (Kuhn, Schwanenflugel, & Meisinger, 2010 & Samuels, 2006) the central concept of the fluency construct is automaticity. As such, LaBerge and Samuels (1974) proposed the theory of automatic information processing in reading to explain how reading fluency develops. In his research, Bramuchi (2009), clarified that the development of automaticity is characterized by three important phases, that readers should process to accomplish the degree of fluency. The first stage entitled non accuracy involves the readers' complete attention to word recognition without any attention devoted to the accuracy of reading. The second stage is the accuracy that involves the perfect recognition and attention to decoding. The last stage is automaticity, in this stage the reader has the ability to read and to recognize words without attention to decoding. It is clear that automaticity theory points out that it is necessary to decode automatically in order to be fluent. Hence, rapid automatic decoding allows the reader to direct his attention to comprehending the text.

Accuracy, automaticity, and prosody are the main skills of EFL oral reading fluency. Accuracy is the skill that the reader is able to read almost every word in the text accurately. The reader's level of automaticity can be determined based on the reading rate. The ability to perform fast reading is the reflection of automaticity in the word recognition (Abd Ghani, Muslim, & Zakaria, 2020). Finally, prosody refers to intonation, stress pattern, loudness variation, pausing, and rhythm. It is expressed by varying pitch, loudness, and duration. Consequently, prosody plays an essential role in English language as it allows the reader to read with proper phrasing, intonation and stress on words. Moreover, it enables the reader to understand what he/she is reading (Kuhn & Rasinski, 2011). The earlier three different skills of reading fluency: word accuracy, the rapid word recognition, and prosody play a major role in promoting an effective fluent reading. Perhaps this is why Pikulski, (2006, p. 73) stated that "all three are important as indicators of fluency



progress because fluency is manifested through them". Hence, all three of these skills need to be mastered in order for reading to be fluent. Moreover, reading fluency with appropriate speed, accuracy, and prosody enables EFL learners to understand the text.

According to Jefferson, Grant, and Sander (2017) a fluent reader has word analysis skills and levels of automaticity that ease reading comprehension. In contrast, dysfluent readers spend too much time decoding words rather than focusing on the content of the reading. Thus, a lack of reading fluency skills can lead to reading difficulties for students and slow down their reading progress. Consequently, Nichols, Rupley and Rasinski (2009) asserted that it is the teacher's responsibility to model expressive readings that show both automaticity and prosody as well as provide a scaffold for students who need additional support in developing fluency. Many studies (e.g., Calo, Woolard-Ferguson, and Koitz, 2013 & Nichols etal., 2009) proved that modeling has an effective role in improving students' fluency. Students might not be aware of what fluent readers mean. They think that reading fluently means to read quickly, which is not right because reading speed indicates only the automaticity. Therefore, students need to listen to a fluent reading by fluent readers. This method increases students' phonological awareness and helps them to understand the meaning of texts (Berg & Lyke, 2012).

There are several studies explaining how we can develop reading fluency. Abd-Elwahed's study (2022) attempted to investigate the effectiveness of game-based assessment in developing English oral reading skills of primary stage pupils. The results revealed that game-assessment was effective in developing English oral reading fluency skills of primary stage pupils.

The study of Ebrahim (2020) aimed at examining the usage of educational broadcasting in improving EFL oral reading fluency skills for first year preparatory school students and their attitude towards learning English as a foreign language. The findings revealed that there is a difference in oral reading fluency skills improvement for the post administration of the EFL oral reading fluency test. There was also an evident and positive change in the attitudes of the experimental group members towards English as a foreign language.

Diab's study (2015) aimed at investigating the effectiveness of a suggested program based on Engelmann's Corrective Reading in developing reading fluency skills among EFL students at the Faculty of Education, Benha university. The findings indicated that the suggested program was effective in developing students' EFL reading fluency skills.

The article of Jasmine & Schiesl, (2009) described an action research project designed to improve reading fluency of first grade students by investigating the use of word walls and word wall activities during station time over a four-weeks period. Results revealed that word wall activities might have been one factor that strengthened high-frequency word recognition resulting in an increase of words read per minute.

Having reviewed the above studies, the researcher found that they are similar to the current study in their interest in developing EFL oral reading fluency, but these aforementioned studies used different strategies such as game-assessment, corrective reading strategies and educational broadcasting. Hence, the researcher thinks that more studies are needed to be investigated on developing reading fluency skills.

(II) Differentiated instruction

There are various definitions of the concept of differentiated instruction in literature. For Tomlinson, Brimijoin, & Narvaez (2008), differentiated instruction is defined as a teaching method in which teachers can meet the individual needs of students by using ongoing assessment and flexible grouping to accomplish differentiation in the learning environment. Hence, differentiation is as "the attempt of the teacher to address the needs of each individual student in the classroom" (DeWeese, 2018, P.6).

In the view of VanTassel-Baska (2012), differentiation essentially means tailoring teaching to meet a specific student's needs and the way they learn. It could be said that differentiation is a way of thinking about teaching and learning (Tomlinson, 2008). And hence, one of the current trends in the theory and practice of teaching is giving special instructions and organizing teaching in which teachers respect learners' individual abilities (Ismajli &Imami, 2018). This means that in differentiated instruction, teachers should take into consideration both the subject they teach, and the learners.

According to Levy (2008) differentiation can be applied in the content, process and product. Tomlinson &Allan (2000) added the fourth element which is learning environment. Content means the knowledge and skills students need to master. When teachers differentiate or adapt the content according to the learner needs, they should take into account three things: (a) how they present the content; (b) how students learn the content and (c) how students respond to the content. Process means the activities students use to master the content. In other words, differentiating process is all about practice based on the content. Product means the method students use to demonstrate learning. Finally, learning environment means the way the classroom works and feels. Moreover, Tomlinson (2021) added that teachers should



recognize and understand students' levels of readiness, interests, and learning profile to enable effective and suitable differentiation. Readiness refers to the skill level and background knowledge of the student. Interest refers to topics that the student wants to explore. Finally, learning profile refers to the mode the student prefers to learn, and this can be affected by numerous variables such as, learning style, gender, and culture (Tomlinson et al., 2003).

In this sense, differentiated instruction has a major part in the learning process. In his research, Lawrence-Brown (2004) assured that DI benefits learners with a very wide range of ability levels, learning styles, and cultural/linguistic backgrounds. Firwana (2017) added that through differentiated instruction, motivation is recognized by students' interests. Consequently, through differentiated instruction, students will be able to hold responsibility for their learning. Magableh & Abdullah (2019) reached that differentiated instruction can help mixed-ability classrooms to be more homogeneous to reduce classroom diversity. Finally, Tomlinson& McTighe (2006, p.30) summarized the reasons for using DI strategy in learning as follows: (1) To know the poor points the gifted students suffer from; (2) To make sure that no learner is left without developing; (3) It is an opportunity for increasing special education students, and (4) It is a very appropriate strategy for teaching students who have diverse cultural and linguistic background.

Therefore, the researcher of this study thinks that there is a certain need for DI in the field of education especially, in Egyptian classrooms due to an increasing the number of students in one classroom. Hence, today's classrooms are more diverse than they have ever been. That's why, Egyptian teachers should understand students' needs, as well as their readiness, interests, and learning profiles, based on systematic pre assessments and formative assessments. In addition, teachers can respond to such diversity in the field of education by using differentiation strategies to maximize the learning of all students (Dahlman, Hoffman, &Brauhn, 2008).

There are several strategies through which teaching may be differentiated. According to Tomlinson (2013) there are many strategies that help in differentiation such as cooperative learning, Raft, compacting curriculum, tiered activities, learning centers, learning contracts, flexible grouping, think, pair, share and multiple intelligence theory. Moreover, these strategies are useful as they allowed students to become motivated according to their ability. In the current study, the researcher used DI in teaching the selected content to the experimental group on the basis of students' levels, interests, needs and learning preferences by using a variety of activities and instructional strategies.

There are many studies which refer to the importance of differentiated instruction in general and in language in particular, such as, Dabr (2021), Celik (2019), Malacapay (2019), Charles & Luard, (2018), El Masry (2017) McCullough (2012), and Dunphy (2010). In the light of the beforehand mentioned studies, the researcher found that differentiated instruction plays an essential role in the learning process and English language acquisition as (a) It develops reading comprehension skills; (b) It develops vocabulary learning of students' English as a foreign language; (c) It develops listening skills; (d) It helps students work cooperatively in groups, support each other and share their information; (e) It is a flexible strategy that can help students with any level of understanding; (f) It integrates on going assessment with instruction. Therefore, the researcher suggested investigating the impact of using a differentiated instruction-based program on developing preparatory school students' EFL oral reading fluency.

The impact of DI on RF

Developing reading fluency is very important in the language learning process. A turning point in the teaching of reading fluency was differentiated instruction. Differentiation instruction is efficient and has its effects in improving students' reading fluency as it deals with the nature of students and their diversity. Moreover, having students work in groups makes sense, as does having them use the appropriate level of reading materials to develop reading fluency. In addition, group interaction around reading topics enhance students' interest in reading (Adlam, 2007). Consequently, the strategy of cooperative learning with individualized roles helps the reader to be fluent. Specifically, cooperative learning has the power to enable learners to learn and work in environments where their individual strengths are recognized and individual needs are addressed (Sapon-Shevin, Ayres, & Duncan, 2002). Reading Buddy is another strategy to be used in DI that develops RF. According to Diller (2011) in reading buddy, two students are paired together to read the same passage or text and then complete activities in order to help build reading fluency and comprehension. It enables students to smaller groups. In the current study, the researcher helped students read aloud to each other. More fluent readers paired with less fluent readers, or students who read at the same level paired too together. Reading Buddy was a great way to help students gain fluency. Hence, using Differentiated instruction help students work best and collaborate (Tomlinson, 2001). This means that in differentiated instruction, students will be active in their learning, and produce high quality work.

In addition, word walls activity can be personalized and include the words or word families that individual students have difficulty with (Simmons, 2015). On the other hand, Rasinski, Rupley, & Nichols (2008) assured that Not only can the word walls be differentiated within this activity, but the level of readings and passages can be differentiated to match the appropriate reading level for each student. Moreover, in the tiered strategy, a teacher employs various levels of activities to ensure that students explore ideas at a level that builds on their background knowledge and prompts

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continued growth (Tomlinson, 2001). In the same line, Sofiati, (2014) illustrated that tiered activities are planning strategies for mixed ability classroom. It is a means of teaching one concept and meeting the different learning needs in a group. Tasks and or resources vary according to learning profile, readiness, and interest. In the current study, tiered activity played an important role in teaching reading and improved students' reading fluency skills based on their different levels of ability. Furthermore, Hartmann's (2016) study examined the effect of using differentiated instruction on developing Elementary Grade Levels' oral reading fluency. Results revealed that students' oral reading fluency was improved by using differentiated instruction. This means that differentiated instruction had a great impact on reading fluency. Consequently, Hartmann's (2016) results provide an additional support for the use of differentiated instruction as a strategy for developing students' oral reading fluency.

2 Methodologies

This study was a pre – post quasi –experimental study. It was conducted to investigate the impact of using a differentiated instruction-based program for developing EFL oral reading fluency among preparatory School students. The experiment was carried out at Fatima Al-Zahraa Prep. School for Girls, Al Arish, North Sinai Governorate, Egypt. It was administered to the second-year students. The experiment was carried out during the second semester of the scholastic year 2021-2022. The sample was composed of thirty female students. It formed one pre-post group design. Moreover, the preparatory stage was chosen because it is a transitional period between primary and secondary stages. It is a suitable period to enable the participants to develop their EFL oral reading fluency skills. The group was tested before conducting the experiment. During the experiment, the study participants were taught using the program based on differentiated instruction. At the end of the experiment, the study participants were tested.

In order to identify the reading fluency skills necessary for EFL students to help them read the reading passages fluently, the researcher developed a Reading Fluency Skills Checklist (RFSC). The skills were validated by professors, supervisors and teachers of English. The researcher also designed a Reading Fluency Skills Test (RFST) consisting of three parts, each part is specified to measure one of the EFL reading fluency skills (prosody, accuracy & automaticity).

To check the validity of the Reading Fluency Skills Checklist, a jury of specialists in the field of TEFL validated it. The researcher made all the recommended modifications and suggestions according to data collected from the jury members. To establish the content validity of the test a jury of nine TEFL methodology experts validated EFL oral reading fluency test. All of them indicted that the test instructions were clear and readable. Yet, they noticed that some questions needed modifications to suit the participants' level so the researcher modified the questions. Then it indicated that the test appeared to be valid to measure EFL oral reading fluency. Also, the validity of the EFL oral reading fluency test was estimated by Pearson correlation coefficients with the overall score of the test, which equalled to 0,78 for Prosody, 0,81 for Accuracy, and 0,88 for Automaticity. The correlation coefficients were higher which refer to consistency for inner construct.

The reliability of the test was computed by implementing it on a pilot sample of (30) students who were not included in the research study. Those students did the test for identifying Omega coefficient reliability whose equation was used. Internal consistency had been performed using Omega coefficient reliability for the reading fluency and was 0,76 and for Prosody was 0,73, Accuracy 0,80, and Automaticity 0,85. Hence, it can be said that the test was reliable.

The test reflected the scores of the three main oral reading fluency skills: accuracy, rate, and prosody. Accuracy was measured by dividing WCPM by the total number of words read in one minute and multiplying the result by 100. The reading rate was measured by counting the number of words read correctly in a minute. Finally, prosody was scored according to the scoring rubric (was designed by the researcher). The total score of prosody was 24 divided on six main criteria: phrasing, volume, intonation, stress, punctuation and pace. The performance rate of each criterion ranged between (1-4).

In order to tackle the EFL Oral reading fluency test results, the researcher used the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and for testing the study hypotheses. For comparing the initial and the final mean scores of the study sample in the overall EFL reading fluency skills and to find whether there was significant difference between them in the pre-post assessment of the test, the researcher used a paired sample t-test.

Differentiated Instruction-Based Program (DIBP)

The DIBP was designed to develop EFL reading Fluency skills for EFL preparatory school students.

Objectives of the Program

The program aimed at developing some of the EFL reading fluency skills for second year EFL preparatory school students at Fatima El Zahraa Prep. School for Girls, Al Arish. The researcher used variety of activities, quizzes and strategies to accomplish the program aims, so by the end of the program students will be able to:

- 1. identify the importance of Differentiated Instruction in general and in language learning in particular.
- 2. Grasp information about differentiated instruction strategies.
- 3. identify the importance of EFL Oral reading fluency skills to them as English language learners.
- 4. practice and acquire the basic reading skills: sounds, rhyming, pronunciation and rate building.
- **5.** read the isolated words correctly without errors, according to the order of the letters.
- **6.** read the text accurately, with an appropriate speed and with a proper expression.
- 7. read connected sentences perfectly in various reading passages.
- 8. read different reading passages and answer comprehension questions both orally and in written form.

Principles for the Program (DIBP)

There are several principles for the suggested program as follows:

- a. Balancing attention to individuals and to the class as whole.
- b. Presenting skills and strategies in an explicitly way.
- c. Controlling the amount of new information and connected them to prior learning.
- d. working alone, in groups and or in pairs, based on students' level and ability.
- e. Providing brief and frequent practice to ensure mastery of each of the processes and skills.
- f. Participating in respectful work.
- g. Organizing the materials to provide cumulative review of skills.
- h. Providing students with step-by-step monitoring and feedback.
- i. Integrating on going and meaningful assessment with instruction.

The Instructional Strategies Used in the Program (DIBP)

To differentiate reading fluency instruction, the following strategies were used:

- 1. **Reading Buddies:** In this strategy, two students are paired together to read the same passage or text and then complete activities in order to help build reading fluency and comprehension.
- **2. Know, Understand and Do (KUD):** This strategy aimed to raise the level of all learners based on previous experiences and individual characteristics.
- **3. Flexible grouping:** In Flexible grouping strategy, participants learned to know how to give and receive information during interaction.
- **4. Tiered Activities:** Based on teaching one concept and meeting the different learning needs in a group. Tasks varied according to learning profile, readiness, and interest.
- **5. Think, Pair, Share:** It was useful for all levels and class sizes and was particularly useful in making teaching and learning process interactive.
- **6. Word Cycle:** This strategy developed participants' reading fluency skills and helped them did best in their activities and tasks.

Role of the Instructor

The instructor acted as an observer, facilitator, guide and analyst. She considered the learners' motives, abilities, interests, and learning styles in order to organize and successfully implement differentiated teaching and learning. She differentiated instruction by recognizing students' varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preference in learning and interest. She was as the professional in the classroom, a suitably trained individual who assisted, mentored and led each learner with the appropriate techniques towards his or her potential within the learning context. She encouraged the learners to participate and make use of the skills learnt before to acquire new ones. The instructor was a co-communicator through the sessions of the program. She motivated them all to ask questions, give comments, take

notes and interact effectively

Role of Students

Students were active not passive learners in implementing the program (DIBP). They were directed to actively engaged in negotiating meaning of what they read. They were able to read with appropriate expression or intonation, read a cluster of words together before pausing to convey an author's meaning, produce language naturally, easily and clearly with appropriate rate, recognizing sight words automatically and identify words accurately, instantly and effortlessly. They interacted with each other to detect their understanding, giving feedback and predictions about the selected reading texts of the program.

The Evaluation Techniques of the Program

The researcher used two types of evaluation techniques in the program: formative and summative. Formative assessment the ongoing process of designing classroom instruction to meet students' learning profiles and making them confident learners. Moreover, the researcher gathered data during instruction to make informed decisions about students and their progress. Consequently, this ongoing formative assessment allowed the researcher to check student progress and receive information on how to instruct and to differentiate. On other words, it was used after each session to be sure that the study group learned the target skills. Whereas summative assessment was used after the administration of the program to identify the impact of using the program on developing EFL preparatory students' reading fluency and if the objectives of the program were achieved through the administration of the EFL reading fluency post test.

Students are also evaluated through many tools such as: assessing the reading rate, accuracy and prosody, accuracy of information, group participation, answering questions, all of these through reading some passages in SB and the sheets distributed among them. The researcher gives grades to the students' answers. This provides a mechanism for the assessment of student learning, and it enables students to improve their grade before the conclusion of the program. The discussions make students more productive and work with meaning.

3 Results

Results of the first hypothesis

Table 1 presents the students' mean scores, standard deviation-value and the level of the significance of the study sample in the pre-post assessment of the EFL oral reading prosody.

Table 1: Comparison of pre and post testing of EFL oral reading prosody skills of the study group.

Skill	Measurement	N	Mean	Std	t-value	Df	p-value	Cohen's ES
EFL oral	Pre-test	30	1.43	.50				.73
Reading prosody	Post-test	30	2.20	.41	5.77	29	<.001	Moderate

Significant at 0.05

The above table shows that the study group did better in the post administration of EFL oral reading prosody test than in the pre administration. As shown in the table 1, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores in the study sample in the pre-post testing of EFL oral reading prosody in favor of the post testing. In addition, The previous table shows that the size of the effect of the independent variable (differentiated instruction) on the dependent variable (prosody) is moderate because the value of (d) is greater than 0.05. This means that a large proportion of the total variance of the dependent variable is due to the effect of the independent variable, which indicates the effect of DIBP on developing oral reading prosody skills for preparatory schoolers as shown in their performance on the post-test as compared to their EFL oral reading prosody skills on the pre-test. Thus, the first hypothesis was supported.

Results of the second hypothesis

Table 2 presents the students' mean scores, standard deviation-value and the level of the significance of the participants in the pre-post testing of the EFL oral reading accuracy.

Table 2: Comparison of pre and post testing of EFL oral reading accuracy of the study group.

Skill	Measurement	N	Mean	Std	t-value	Df	p-value	Cohen's ES
Reading	Pre-test	30	79.37	7.63				7.99
accuracy	Post-test	30	91.83	4	8.55	29	<.001	High

As shown in table 2 "there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores in the study sample in the pre-post testing of EFL oral reading accuracy in favor of the post testing. In addition, the effect size value of EFL oral reading accuracy skills shown (7.99) in the above table reveals that the DIBP had a large effect size on the study group

students' EFL oral reading accuracy skills as shown in their performance on the post-test as compared to their EFL oral reading accuracy skills on the pre-test. Thus, the second hypothesis was supported.

Results of the third hypothesis

For testing this hypothesis, a paired sample t -test was used to compare the mean scores of the study sample in EFL reading automaticity on the pre-post administration of EFL oral reading fluency test.

Table 3: Comparison of pre and post testing of EFL reading automaticity of the study group

Skill	Measurement	N	Mean	Std	t-value	Df	p-value	Cohen's ES
EFL reading	Pre-test	30	63.03	16.48				19.17
automaticity	Post-test	30	80.30	19.16	4.94	29	<.001	High

Table 3 shows that the mean scores are (63.03) for the pre testing and (80.30) for the post testing and the standard deviation is (16.48) for the pre testing and (19.16) for the posttesting. Hence, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores in the study sample in the pre-post testing of EFL reading automaticity in favor of the post testing. In addition, the effect size value of EFL reading automaticity shown (19.17) in the above table reveals that the DIBP had a large effect size on the study group students' EFL reading automaticity as shown in their performance on the post-test as compared to their EFL oral reading rate on the pre-test. Thus, the third hypothesis was supported.

Results of the fourth hypothesis

The fourth hypothesis states that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the study group in the pre-post testing of overall EFL oral reading fluency in favor of the post testing of oral reading fluency test.

Table 4: Comparison of pre and post testing of overall EFL reading fluency of the study group.

Test	Measurement	N	Mean	Std	t-value	Df	p-value	Cohen's ES	
Overall EFL	Pre-test	30	162.27	19.63				21.14	
reading fluency	Posttest	30	179.97	24.95	15.29	29	<.001	High	

Table 4 shows that the mean scores is (162.27) for the pre testing and (179.97) for the post testing and the standard deviation is (19.63) for the pre-testing and (24.95) for the post testing. As shown in the table 4 "there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores in the study sample in the pre-post testing of overall EFL oral reading fluency in favor of the post testing", where the (t= 15.29, P=<.001) which is statistically significant. In addition, the effect size value of the overall EFL reading fluency shown (21.14) in the above table reveals that the DIBP had a large effect size on the study group students' overall EFL reading fluency as shown in their performance on the post-test as compared to their overall EFL reading fluency on the pre-test. In other words, the DIBP proved to have a high effect on improving the EFL reading fluency skills of the experimental group. Consequently, it has been concluded that the differentiated instruction-based program is effective in developing the students' EFL reading fluency skills. Thus, the fourth hypothesis was statistically confirmed. This is represented graphically in figure 1 as follows:

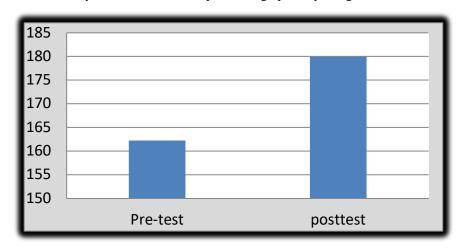


Fig. 1: Differences between pre and posttest of overall EFL reading fluency skills of the study group.

The figure shows that there are statistically significant differences between mean scores of the study group on the pretest and the post-test in overall EFL oral reading fluency and its sub-skills of (rate, accuracy and prosody) in favor of the post-test. So, the fourth hypothesis was confirmed. This result supports the results of Azah (2016); Cumbaa (2014)

&, Hartmann (2016) who stressed the positive effect of using differentiated instruction on the EFL fluency skills.

4 Discussions

Findings of the first hypothesis (prosody), indicated that the study sample achieved more improvements in their oral reading prosody where the t-value was significant. Thus, the DIBP proved to be effective in developing the participants EFL Oral reading prosody. At the beginning of the program the students faced difficulty in reading the reading passages of the program. The teacher (researcher) trained them by reading the reading passage using different voices for characters with higher pitches, lower pitches, louder pitches and softer voices and encouraged them to repeat after her or filled in the blank. Moreover, the teacher did some activities to work on prosody for example, (Ask and Answer "WH" Questions. The teacher said a simple sentence such as "The girl washed her cat." Then the teacher asked simple "WH" questions that could be answered by repeating the sentence while stressing different words in the sentence. For example," Who washed her cat?" "The girl washed her cat." "what did the girl do to her cat?" "The girl washed her cat." "What did the girl wash?" "The girl washed her cat." Then the teacher encouraged them to imitate phrases or sentences that the teacher said or read from the reading passage using different intonation, punctuation and stress patterns. By the end of the program, the participants became more skilled in oral reading expression and smoothness throughout reading connected reading texts. These results were consistent with the findings of other results such as Ebrahim (2020); Johnson (2018) and Diab (2015).

Findings of the second hypothesis (Accuracy) indicated that the DIBP proved to be effective in developing the participants EFL oral reading accuracy. This significant result might be devoted to different reasons. The researcher followed some strategies of the program such as pair work strategy. In this strategy, the researcher asked each pair to read with each other and if someone made a mistake, the other (her partner) would correct it. Besides, reading activities and tasks were tiered to give students the opportunity to choose the activity that helps them to move to a higher reading level.

Findings of the third hypothesis (Automaticity) revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the study sample in the EFL reading rate the pre-post assessment, in favor of the post assessment. Moreover, using repeated readings played a major role in this study. During this research, students were given passages to read repeatedly. Students that read a passage as least five times, read the passage more fluently than students that read the passage two or three times. Besides, fluent readers paired with a less fluent reader (Reading Buddies). The stronger reader read a paragraph or the page first, providing a model of fluent reading. Then the less fluent reader read the same text aloud. This enabled them to read the text with appropriate rate and speed.

Findings of the fourth hypothesis confirmed that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the study sample in the overall EFL oral reading fluency skills in the pre-post testing. In addition, the effect size value of the overall EFL reading fluency was (21.14) revealed that the DIBP had a very large effect on the study group students' overall EFL reading fluency as shown in their performance on the post-test as compared to their overall EFL reading fluency on the pre-test. In other words, the DIBP proved to have a high effect on improving the EFL reading fluency skills of the experimental group. The result was consistent with many researcher's findings such as Abdu (2019), Hartmann (2016) & Helwa (2014).

In brief, the findings of the current study revealed that the differentiated instruction-based program had a significantly positive effect on developing the reading fluency skills in English for preparatory schoolers. This improvement may be due to the fact that while using the program of DIBP , students were interested in practicing the differentiated instruction strategies such as (e.g.Think, Pair, Share, flexible grouping, tiered Activities, Know, Understand and Do (KUD), and Reading Buddies) and they were given the secure environment of learning and the opportunity to interact freely in the class room with the teacher (the researcher) and , also , with their colleagues . This result supports the results of Azah (2016), & Cumbaa (2014) who stressed the positive effect of using differentiated instruction on the EFL fluency skills.

5 Conclusions

Based on the study results, the researcher could reach some conclusions:

The current study concluded that differentiated instruction was effective in enhancing second year EFL preparatory school students' reading fluency skills as they became better able to read fluently after teaching the program of DI. And hence, the present study provided an idea about what the differentiated instruction means and stimulated EFL teachers to develop it in their classes. Besides, the program (DI) motivated students and encouraged them to interact and participate effectively in the reading fluency activities.

Applying DI strategies to oral reading fluency tasks enabled students to read passages orally and control how to react to

different reading situations. Students overcame their lack of confidence to reach the baselines of rate, accuracy, and prosody.

Differentiated instruction-based program helped students to practice and acquire the basic reading skills: sounds, rhyming, pronunciation and rate building. Furthermore, differentiated instruction-based program helped students to read different reading passages and answer comprehension questions both orally and in written form. Thus, it can be concluded that the differentiated instruction strategies should be integrated in teaching reading fluency skills.

6 Recommendations

In the light of the results obtained in the present study, a number of recommendations can be drawn:

- 1. Reading in general and reading fluency in particular should be developed in an encouraging and non-threatening environment through which students can read text at a conversational pace with appropriate vocal prosody and expression.
- 2. In the implementation of differentiated instruction, students' ability levels should be taken into consideration.
- 3. More attention should be paid on creating a good fluent reader.
- 4. Using differentiated instruction strategies in developing reading fluency skills in the Egyptian Universities.
- 5. Immediate positive feedback throughout the reading process is recommended.

Acknowledgment:

First of all, all praises belong to Almighty ALLAH for His countless blessings, the strength and patience He has granted me to accomplish this work.

My deepest thanks should go to my husband Mr. Hesham Rashad Badawy who supported me with all his efforts. Special Thanks and gratitude are extended to my family. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors for their continuous and unsparing support and encouragement without which it would have been impossible to complete this work. I am most grateful to them. I would also like to thank my best friend Miss Shaimaa Elsharawy for her guidance and constant support throughout this study. Special thanks go to the study participants and everyone who gave me support and encouragement.

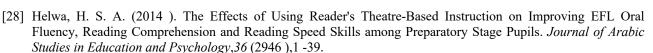
Conflicts of Interest Statement

The authors certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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