

**THE EFFECT OF DIFFERENTIATED  
INSTRUCTION ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> GRADE EFL  
STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION  
ACHIEVEMENT IN JORDAN**

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ACHIEVEMENT IN JORDAN**

by

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for the degree of  
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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to the soul of my father who always encouraged me to continue my study. I also dedicate this thesis to my mother who always supports me in my study. I dedicate this work also to my wife and children who were very patient during my study. The dedication is extended to my friends and colleagues.

With my respect

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Ibrahim Suleiman Magableh

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANCOVA	Analysis of Covariance
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
C1	Male Control Group
C2	Female Control Group
CG	Control Group
D	Differentiation
DI	Differentiated Instruction
E1	Male Experimental Group
E2	Female Experimental Group
EFL	English as a foreign language
EG	Experimental Group
ESL	English as a second Language
JMoE	Jordan Ministry of Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
O1	Pre-test
O2	Post-test
PD	Professional Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RC G	Random Control Group
RE G	Random Experimental Group
SPSS	Statistical Packages of Social Sciences
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English for Speakers of other Languages
USM	Universiti Sains Malaysia
X1	Experiment

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# **KESAN PERBEZAAN PENGAJARAN TERHADAP PENCAPAIAN PEMAHAMAN BACAAN PELAJAR EFL GRED 9 DI JORDAN**

## **ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini mengikuti Reka Bentuk Urutan Penjelasan di mana model QUAN-qual kaedah campuran eksperimen kuasi diikuti. Tujuan kajian ini untuk mengkaji keberkesanan perbezaan pengajaran terhadap pemahaman bacaan Bahasa Inggeris pelajar tahun ke-9 di Jordan dan mengenalpasti faedah paling konsisten dari pelaksanaan pengajaran yang berbeza, serta untuk mengetahui halangan pelaksanaannya. Kajian ini mengikuti reka bentuk kaedah campuran yang menggunakan data kuantitatif dan kualitatif untuk pengumpulan data. Sebanyak 109 pelajar lelaki dan perempuan tahun 9, dipilih secara rawak menggunakan teknik persampelan rawak mudah dari empat sekolah yang berbeza, mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Responden dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan. Kumpulan eksperimen yang terdiri daripada 55 responden, 28 dan 27 untuk lelaki dan wanita, masing-masing diajar membaca teks pemahaman mengikuti strategi arahan pembezaan pengelompokan fleksibel, tugas bertingkat dan arahan berjenjang dalam bidang kandungan, proses dan produk. Walau bagaimanapun, kumpulan kawalan 54 responden, 27 untuk setiap jantina diajar membaca teks pemahaman mengikut cara tradisional, kaedah satu-ukuran-sesuai-semua. Dua instrumen digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data, ujian pra pemahaman / ujian pasca pemahaman dan temu ramah separa berstruktur dengan 12 responden dari kumpulan eksperimen. Data yang dikumpulkan dari kedua instrumen dianalisis secara kuantitatif menggunakan ANCOVA dan secara kualitatif menggunakan analisis metode tangan. Hasil ANCOVA menunjukkan bahawa kumpulan eksperimen, yang diajar pemahaman

membaca mengikuti strategi pengajaran yang berbeza, mengungguli rakan kumpulan mereka yang diajar secara tradisional. Arahan yang berbeza melebihi cara tradisional dengan ukuran kesan yang besar. Lebih-lebih lagi, penemuan menunjukkan bahawa tidak ada kesan interaksi arahan yang dibezakan kerana pemboleh ubah jantina. Kedua-dua responden lelaki dan wanita memberi respons yang sama terhadap arahan yang dibezakan. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan antara kumpulan dan tahap kecekapan yang memihak kepada responden di bawah purata. Hasilnya juga menunjukkan bahawa tidak ada kesan interaksi kumpulan, jantina dan tahap kecekapan pada pemboleh ubah bersandar. Hasilnya disokong oleh analisis data kualitatif dari respons wawancara. Analisis kualitatif menunjukkan bahawa arahan yang dibezakan meningkatkan skor pemahaman membaca pelajar dan rata-rata di bawah mendapat faedah terbanyak. Selain itu, ia menunjukkan bahawa arahan yang dibezakan mempunyai faedah yang konsisten seperti meningkatkan tingkah laku positif dan mengurangkan yang negatif. Lebih-lebih lagi, arahan yang dibezakan membantu merapatkan jurang di antara pelajar dan mengubah kelas kemampuan campuran menjadi lebih homogen. Walau bagaimanapun, ukuran bilik darjah, pengurusan bilik darjah dan bunyi bising adalah halangan utama pelaksanaan arahan yang dibezakan. Secara keseluruhan, terdapat perbezaan statistik secara signifikan antara kumpulan, tiada kesan interaksi yang signifikan antara kumpulan dan jantina, tahap dan jantina dan antara kumpulan, tahap dan jantina. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat kesan interaksi yang signifikan antara kumpulan dan tahap. Kajian ini juga memberi cadangan seperti memberi guru latihan dan pengalaman yang diperlukan mengenai arahan yang berbeza dan juga arahan kajian masa depan dan melaksanakan arahan yang berbeza pada pelajar kelas 9 EFL.

**THE EFFECT OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION ON THE 9<sup>TH</sup> GRADE  
EFL STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT IN  
JORDAN**

**ABSTRACT**

This study follows Explanatory Sequential Design where the quasi-experimental mixed-methods QUAN-qual model is followed. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of differentiated instruction on the 9<sup>th</sup> grade EFL students' English reading comprehension achievement in Jordan and identify the key benefits of differentiated instruction implementations as well as to find out the key obstacles of its implementation. This study followed the mixed-method design that uses the quantitative and the qualitative data for data collection. A total of 109 male and female grade 9 students, randomly selected using the simple random sampling technique from four different schools, participated in the study. The respondents were divided into two groups. The experimental group of 55 respondents, 28 and 27 for males and females respectively, was taught reading comprehension texts following the differentiated instruction strategies of flexible grouping, tiered assignments and tiered instruction in the areas of content, process and product. However, the control group of 54 respondents, 27 for each gender was taught reading comprehension texts following the traditional way, the one-size-fits-all method. Three instruments were used to collect data, reading comprehension pre-test/post-test, observation and a semi-structured interview with 12 respondents from the experimental group. The data which were collected from the instruments were analysed quantitatively using ANCOVA and qualitatively using the hand method analysis. ANCOVA results showed that the experimental group, which was taught EFL reading comprehension following

differentiated instruction strategies, outperformed their counterparts of the control group which was taught traditionally. Differentiated instruction outweighed the traditional way with huge effect-size. Moreover, the finding indicated that there was no interaction effect of differentiated instruction due to gender variable. Both male and female respondents did not interact when differentiated instruction implemented. The findings also showed that there was significant interaction effect between groups and the proficiency levels and the below-average has the biggest main gain. The results also illustrated that there was no interaction effect of the groups, gender and the proficiency level on the dependent variable. The results were supported by the qualitative data analysis from interview responses. The qualitative analysis revealed that differentiated instruction improved students reading comprehension scores and the below-average got the most benefit. Besides, it revealed that differentiated instruction has key benefits like increasing positive behavior and reducing negative ones. Moreover, differentiated instruction helped bridge the gap among learners and changed mixed-ability classrooms to be more homogeneous. However, classroom-size, classroom management and noises are the main key obstacles of differentiated instruction implementation. Overall, statistically significant differences existed between the groups, no statistically interaction effect existed between group and gender, level and gender and between group, level and gender. However statistically significant interaction effect between group and level existed with a simple main effect of the group. The researcher suggested providing teachers with the needed training and experiences regarding differentiated instruction implementation to teachers and implementing differentiated instruction on grade 9 EFL students.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

English reading comprehension is a main skill in learners' understanding performance (Afflerbach et al., 2020); Kent, 2005). Besides, students' ability to develop reading and read well is very essential because it widely influences students' achievements at all levels (Hall & Piazza, 2008). Tomlinson (2002) stated that traditional teachers are facing lots of difficulties when teaching groups of heterogeneous pupils and addressing individuals' diversity in mixed-ability classrooms. The way teachers teach in customary classroom or as Tomlinson (2014) described as one-size-fits-all is obsolete and should no longer be followed. Gregory and Chapman (2013) suggested that when improving EFL reading ability for students, teachers should apply different and varied instruction to fulfill the academic needs of individual learners. They explained that one-size definitely does not fit all learners. With the inserting of all learners in one mixed-ability classroom like having students with mixed-abilities, students with numerous educational backgrounds, enhanced learners as well as the ordinary students, educators like Tomlinson (2017) asks teachers to review their teaching and instructional approaches. The class similarity is shifted and converted into a widespread diversity. However, teachers have not adjusted and modified their methods to keep up with this diversity. Differentiated instruction is proposed to deal with this variety among students (Subban, 2006). So as to address the difference among learners, and to deal with students' dissimilarities, differentiated instruction is suggested to be the best philosophy (Tomlinson, 2017; Tompkins, 2014).

Differentiation is modifying a lesson or certain parts of it for one learner, some or group of learners (Anstee, 2014). Tomlinson (2000) proposed an inclusive and brief definition for it. She reflected that “differentiation includes all the labors of teachers to answer to adjustment among students in the classroom. Whenever a teacher addresses an individual or small group to alter his or her instruction in order to produce the best learning practice possible, that teacher is modifying learning” (p.1). Differentiated instruction (DI) is sometimes called differentiated learning or separated learning and sometimes distinguished education or modified learning which means tailoring instruction to encounter individual needs of students (Levy, 2008; Magableh & Abdullah, 2020a; Struyven et al., 2019; Tomlinson, 2017). Differentiated instruction as defined by Suprayogi et al. (2017) is an instructional approach which deals with the students’ diversity, employing specific teaching strategies, altering the learning activities, spotting the individual needs of students, and ensuing the potential learning outcomes.

Brown (2020) and Patricia (2018) posited that in differentiated learning, teachers should alter the pace, level of content, amount of support and organization to meet students’ diverse interests. While Earl (2012) defines differentiated instruction as making sure that the specific students get the correct learning experiences at the accurate time. In fact, children come to us -as teachers- with different life experiences, prior knowledge, different language skills, dissimilar degrees of home support, and diverse talented and attitudes (Roberta, 2008). So, students have innumerable starting points and numerous skills in relation to task and learn in several styles at varied paces (Dawson & Guare, 2018). Differentiation aims at taking these differences into consideration and provides the best method forward to each learner as well as to raise achievement for all (Tomlinson, 2014; Tompkins, 2014; Westwood, 2018).



Compared to the traditional teaching, one-size-fits-all, where all students are judged on one method of teaching, the same amount of teaching and support offered to them and the indifferent objectives should be achieved to all at the same time, differentiation gives all learners the chance to achieve the goals but in different methods and in varied amount of time in order that everybody can reach the targets (Williams, 2019). Through differentiation, the teacher needs to recognise each student's edge to ensure achievement is raised for all and no learner is left out. Modified learning is not limited to a one-type of students; rather it fits all learners. Algozzine and Anderson (2007) posited that differentiated teaching allows all learners to engage and acquire learning. It is the role of the teacher to confirm that every child is kept at the edge of their competence and pushed just enough that they can fly with strength, confidence and success.

There is not only one way of differentiation which can fit all learners. Distinction can be implemented in the content, process, product (Levy, 2008; Suess, 2012; Tompkins, 2014, Magableh and Abdullah, 2020b) and in learning classroom environment (Tomlinson, 2001, 2003, 2014, 2015 & 2017; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010) depending on readiness, interests and learning profile. There are certain rules for starting differentiated learning; however, they are not fixed (Tomlinson, 2006, 2017). Anstee (2014) explained that differentiation by content is what learners need to acquire or how they understand the material like putting the material on tape, or using buddies, using spelling or vocabulary or meeting with small groups. Differentiation by process means the way the students learn, and the way the teachers teach. It covers activities in which the student engages to master the content like varying the length of time, using manipulatives, providing blended stations or interest centers and using tiered activities. Differentiation by product is finishing projects which ask the learner

to practice, associate, and spread what they have gained in a component like motivating students to use their own products in writing or in speaking, permitting students to work alone or in a group, and giving students options on how to make it like puppet show (Heather, 2013). However, differentiation by learning environment is the technique the classroom works and classroom organization, like moving around, going out, and using the school premise.

In different publications, Tomlinson (1999, 2003, 2006, 2015 and 2017) stated that differentiation is based on students' readiness, interests as well as learning styles or learning profiles. Some pupils are prepared for various skills, concepts or strategies (Meadows, 2021); others may not have the grounds needed to develop to further levels. Individual interests supply information to organize several activities that address individual awareness. According to Strogilos (2019), differentiated education provides projections in diverse classroom that deal with readiness, interests and learning styles. Strogilos (2019) argued that not only instruction should be differentiated but also assessment.

Recognizing the importance of modified tutoring in today's dissimilar classrooms, the present study aims at exploring the impact of differentiated learning on Jordanian grade 9 EFL students' reading comprehension accomplishment. Teachers tend to defend the one-size-fits-all as fairness. For a fair selection, they claim that every single student has to take the similar exam. The one-size-fits-all teaching labels many learners as failures. There should be a different educational system that does not classify students as failures (Harter, 2013; Suess, 2012). Suess (2012) and Godor (2021) suggested a dissimilar education system through modified instruction to measure students' development differently. So, differentiation comes as the major solution to the so many learning styles and modes gathered in one class level.

Teachers should focus on strategies to move every pupil from where he or she is, to where they could be using differentiation (Kotob & Abadi, 2019, Magableh & Abdullah, 2021). In other words, the focus is on strategies for raising achievements for all. In the present study, the researcher is following a mixed-method design consisting of quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the outcome of differentiated instruction on Jordanian's grade 9 English students' reading comprehension achievement.

## 1.2 **Background of the Study**

Jordan is a kingdom officially named the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (HKJ) on 25<sup>th</sup>, May, 1946 after getting the independence (Amr, 2011). Iraq borders Jordan from the east and west, Palestine from extreme north and from the east. It is bordered by Saudi Arabia from the south and Syria from the north and the east. Jordan comprises of twelve governorates namely, Amman, Irbid, Zarqa, Karak, Salt, Ma'dabah, Mafraq, Tafelah, Ma'an, Aqaba, Ajloun and Jarash. Al Taibeh, where the study takes place is a district in Irbid Governorate and the hometown of the researcher. The reason to choose it as the context of the study, and to choose the sample from it is because it is more convenient for the researcher to data collection. Al Taibeh consists of seven villages, namely, Al Taibeh, Samma, Deir Al Sanah, Mandah, Mukhraba, Zabda and Ibsar Abu Ali. The kingdom is around 89.287 square kilometers (Department of General Statistics (DoGS), 2010). Compared Jordan to other countries, Jordan ranked the 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Arab level and 55<sup>th</sup> internationally in 2008 in providing education for all (Al Shourah, 2017). Jordan is considered an educated society, 89% of the whole population can read and able to write, 23% hold college of two-year degree and 25% are school learners (DoGS, 2008 & 2011).

To better recognize the context of the study, the researcher provides the position of English as a foreign language in Jordan. First, Jordanian educational system consists of three major stages: pre-schooling stage of two years, the basic stage and the secondary stage. These three stages are free in all public schools of the kingdom (Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008). The pre-schooling stage is not compulsory. A student can directly go to grade one without going to kindergarten although most schools have public kindergartens and nursery departments. The second stage is the basic stage, which involves the elementary and the preparatory stages, and lasts 10 compulsory years from grade one up to grade ten (Ministry of Education, 2018), and no child is allowed to leave school in this stage. After grade 10, students are distributed based on proficiency level and choice into academic secondary education or vocational secondary education. The third stage is the secondary school which is two years and it is optional. After twelve years of instruction, learners should go to a summative, achievement exam called “Tawjihi” in order to categorize students for further education.

English as a foreign language is officially taught from grade one, and goes side by side with the first year of “Native” tongue education, the Arabic language. However, students up to grade 12 have no chance to practice English outside the classroom because Arabic language is dominant and English is not the means of instruction until the tertiary stage. All respondents are taught in Arabic language except English as a subject. Rababah (2003) stated that English in Jordan is not like English in the rest of the Arab world like the United Arab Emirates the -UAE - for instance, where English is the means of instruction even in the basic or elementary stage where most students are taught using English. Conversely, students of Jordan do not practice English outside school till university. Banihani and Abu-Ashour (2015)

stated that reading in English outside school is not common in Jordan, although you might find some students who read some EFL books outside the curriculum; this is as they say because they are competing in a kind of a contest. Adnan Badran, the former prime minister, and a former president of Petra University in Jordan, remarked that the educational system in Jordan is guilty for reading-unpopularity (The Jordan Times, 2014). Because reading, especially reading English, is not a priority, it is rare for students to read in public and so their reading comprehension is affected negatively. Primary students in Jordan are weak in reading comprehension and developing reading comprehension for the primary stage is important (Shunnaq, 2016)

Al-Othman (2013) remarked that Jordanian students as well as Arab EFL students are poor readers because they do not read for pleasure. Those who do not read for pleasure will have weakness in EFL reading comprehension as well specially in the EFL primary schools since the language of instruction is Arabic but the English subject is in English. Al-Mahrooqi and Roscoe (2014) reinforced Al-Othman in the suggestion that the Arab students are poor EFL readers because they lack reading in English. Al-Sawalha and Chow (2012) stated that EFL students in Jordan barely read things in English language, this leads to hindrance and inability to interpret English reading comprehension texts. Banihani and Abu-Ashour (2015) pointed that, EFL students in Jordan combine reading comprehension with the school activities, and they do not read unless reading is much related to school. Shunnaq (2016) stated that school children in Jordan are weak in reading comprehension because they do not read very often.

The present study will attempt to employ differentiated instruction in the basic stage, namely grade 9, aiming to improve students' EFL reading comprehension accomplishment so that all students in the same classroom will have the equal chance

to use English, knowing that they might not use it outside the English class. Education is one of the highest priorities that the successive governments of Jordan have been giving. Despite the high spending the Jordan governments put on education, (UNESCO, 2008) reported that the government of Jordan has a public expenditure amount of 20.6% of the whole budget on education and half of that 13% of this amount is spent on elementary and secondary education, still education should take a new form and new methods should be applied to enhance EFL learners reading comprehension.

In order to encourage Jordanian students to read English texts and to understand them, teachers should follow other strategies to motivate them to learn better than the existing ones. Amoush (2012) showed that EFL students in Jordan are not willing and reluctant to read English texts apart from the text taken in the school in English classes to pass the exam. Teachers are not urging students to read outside curriculum, and they should follow different techniques to recover EFL reading comprehension. The researcher is proposing a differentiated instruction style to investigate trying to improve EFL reading comprehension achievement. Teachers of Jordan enter a classroom with mixed-ability students. They should accept the idea that learners differ from many ways so that they can plan and implement the curriculum based on students' needs and ability, and present the lesson with varied difficulties.

In fact, teaching English in Jordan starts basically from grade one which started in 1999 (Ministry of Education, 2018). But how much do the Jordanian EFL primary students use English? In school, they take English as one period a day for 45 minutes and outside school, the language is Arabic, and English is not used in any form. Rababah (2003) indicated that the highest number of Arab pupils including Jordanians have restricted opportunities to practice or use English outside schools. But in certain countries like the UAE, where the multilingual nature of residents allows people use

English in everyday field of life is something different from Jordan (Rababah, 2003). The presence of English in the Arab world is still limited. Shunnaq (2016) attested that English is still required in the Arab World for education, communication, development and gaining technology.

Shunnaq (2016) stated that where English language is the means of instruction in college education, it is entirely the opposite in primary stage in Jordan where many students read English only for the aim of the test, and they scarcely use English beyond their examinations of their path of study. In fact, in Jordanian primary schools, pupils do not read sufficiently, willingly, or conveniently which adversely influences EFL reading comprehension attainment and academic success. So, if teachers start differentiating content, process and product, students may change their attitudes toward reading comprehension, and find it easy and this may affect their reading comprehension achievement positively. Differentiated learning researches are very crucial for TESOL or TEFL learners, but it seems to be something neglected in the Arab World or Jordanian context. Most researches on English reading comprehension regarding the effect of differentiated learning are done in native language context, English native tongue or English as another language or as foreign language except in the Arab countries especially Jordan.

Very little empirical researches have been done in Jordan to study the effect of differentiated teaching on EFL primary stage learners. This present research seeks to investigate the effectiveness of differentiation on English reading comprehension taking gender and students' proficiency level into consideration using mixed methods of data collection.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

English reading comprehension for EFL learners is one of the hardest and the most problematic skills that Jordanian students face, and this is evident from the students' results in reading comprehension tests. Students of basic stage can read English or can sound English but face a big and great difficulty in decoding what they read (Magableh, 2007). In Jordan, most of the public schools engage students with the same curriculum in which all students of the same grade level read the same passages and texts. However, not all students in the classroom are able to deal with the given reading passage at the same time. Besides, they have to finish and complete the same assignments. Siam and Al-Natour (2016) found that in the majority of Jordanian public schools, Jordanian teachers employ the traditional way of teaching, the one-size-fits-all method of teaching and no differentiation takes place in EFL classes. Many researchers in Jordan like (Al Harafsheh, 2016; Magableh, 2007; Shunnaq, 2016; Siam & Al-Natour, 2016) searched for the ways in which reading comprehension can be developed. Recently, researchers have shown an increase interest in differentiated instruction in mixed-ability classrooms (Tomlinson, 2003, 2014) but not in Jordanian context, although you can find some studies dealing with differentiated learning in public Jordanian schools (Siam & Al-Natour, 2016, Magableh & Abdullah, 2020a). Siam and Al Natour findings indicated that teachers in Jordan do not differentiate, and they deal with all learners at the same way regardless of having mixed-ability classes.

PISA findings 2009 (OECD, 2010) discovered that the Jordanian students are very poor in English reading comprehension compared to the countries that participated in the PISA test. The report stated that EFL reading comprehension results are below the international standards. Jordan's position in EFL reading comprehension was 63 globally with 405 points. It was 401, 405, 399, 408 points in the years 2006,



2009, 2012 and 2015 respectively (OECD, 2018). Although there is an increase of 9 points from 2012 to 2015, still Jordan is numbered 63 globally and numbered 6 on the Arabic countries out of 80 countries participated and still deep below the international standards and regional standards. The report indicated that the English reading comprehension level in Jordan was very low. Moreover, the finding indicated that the female Jordanian students' results in reading comprehension are much better and statistically significant over male learners. Girls read more often than boys and they are willing to participate in EFL contexts more than boys (Khwaileh & Zaza, 2011). Since then, researcher searched why reading comprehension in Jordan is below standard level.

Belal (2010) pointed that there exists a gender gap between learners in Jordan. Khwaileh and Zaza (2011) talked about this gap saying that girls are performing better in reading comprehension than boys. The underperformance for male over female students in Jordan is significant and very much evident in Jordanian public schools in particular and in all schools of Jordan in general. They justified the girls over performance in that they read more, they participate in EFL context more, and they do not have to go outside the house in order to work or help families. Shafi and Loan (2010) found that the reason that the girls outperformed the boys in reading comprehension in Jordan is that because girls read more than boys. Shunnaq (2016) found that the Jordanian female EFL students are better in reading comprehension than the male because as the results showed that they have better reading comprehension achievement than the male students. Therefore, the researcher is motivated by the low reading comprehension level and the literature to conduct this research to discover if there is any meaningful difference exists between Jordanian male and female students' achievement in English reading comprehension when differentiated instruction is

implemented, and whether it will bridge the gap between males and females EFL learners in Jordan.

Teachers in Jordanian government schools tend not to differentiate, because they are covering the curriculum with the same learning experiences. Besides, due to the absence of precise guidelines on differentiation strategies and how to use them, teachers are less interested to implement differentiation on students (Siam & Al Natour, 2016). Al Harafsheh (2016) explained that teachers' traditional methods in Jordan do not encourage EFL students to read, and their traditional methods have no direct impact to develop reading comprehension. The present study aims at improving reading comprehension through following other ways, other methods to encourage students to learn English hoping to affect reading comprehension progress. Differentiated instruction is urgent to implement because students are at different levels in Jordanian classrooms.

Differentiated instruction has many features to overcome the problem in the mixed ability classroom as it deals with direct weak points of the below-average and strengthens the strong points of the above-average since teachers provide graded scaffolding leveled content based on students' proficiency levels. AlShoura (2017) stated that the Jordanian Educational System delivers full classroom's inclusion in all levels and in all grades. The Law on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities, 2007 has included all types of learners in one single classroom to implement inclusive education (The Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities, 2007). All students are intended to learn the same set of standards. With this full inclusion in Jordanian classrooms, the one-size-fits-all method which deals with all students at the same time is no longer a suitable way to deal with such classrooms. Because of this reason, there is an urgent need to use differentiated instruction to meet all students' diversity in one

single classroom. AlShoura (2017) findings indicated that the Jordanian teachers are not happy with this inclusion. This will make it hard for them to deal with all kinds of students in one single period of time, i.e., in one single class. AlShoura and Ahmed (2014) indicated that all students of Jordan are getting the same education, and teachers are applying the same procedures despite this inclusion. So, all students are within the same classroom; however, are they in the same level?

Siam and Al-Natour (2016) explained that a great number of pupils are unable to learn the anticipated knowledge and the planned skills unless a focus care is being made to their individual differences. Differentiated instruction in mixed-ability classrooms may lead grade 9 students in Jordan to have equal chances for development and improvement. They are in fact being taught following the traditional way, the one-size-fits-all method and as Gregory and Chapman (2013) state that one-size does not fit all. It is time for EFL teachers in Jordan to take part and to implement new methods to have direct impact on EFL learners. Differentiated instruction is proposed as a solution to deal with students' diversity. Teachers recognize how diverse a classroom is, and it seems only rational to deal with Jordanian classrooms by modifying strategies.

The lack for satisfactory approaches to deal with learners' requirements and satisfy their needs in Jordan, made an incentive to the research to find a way to help students' reading comprehension accomplishment. Differentiated instruction as an intervention has many features that makes it special to improve EFL reading comprehension because it stimulates creativity by helping students make stronger connections, realize relationships, and grasp reading comprehension concepts in a more intuitive technique.

From this perspective, the researcher tries to investigate an approach that may deal with the countless necessities of the learners. By using differentiated learning, the researcher hopes to participate, and contribute to improve students' reading comprehension achievement. Differentiated instruction helped improve achievements in Gaza (Firwana, 2017) in which the context is very near to the context of the present study because Gaza and Jordan are very near to each other, and they share many common backgrounds. Differentiated instruction helped the students of Iran (Aliakbari & Haghghi, 2014) which is another country in the region. El Kurd (2014) and El Raai (2014) proved the success of differentiated learning in Palestine and El Helesi (2015) scrutinized the efficacy of modified instruction in Saudi Arabia. Siam and Al-Natour (2016) found that teachers do not differentiate in Jordan and differentiated instruction is not applied. Therefore, if differentiated instruction enhanced learners in other parts of the world as well as surrounding countries, and helped grades 7 Jordanian students' English reading comprehension accomplishment (Magableh & Abdullah, 2019), it may help the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in Jordan. Implementing such strategy for grade 9 in Jordan may be regarded as a novel effort in one of the developing countries.

The diversity of students in the Jordanian classrooms is growing, so the researcher is seeking for instructional strategies which are suitable for meeting this diversity. It is not easy to teach such group diversity in Jordanian classrooms, the gifted as well as the strugglers and at the same time teaching a third group, average grade level. This current study deals with these issues concentrating on differentiated instruction to fulfill the variety of students' needs in the same classroom. Differentiated instruction is offered as the key solution to this classroom diversity. Driven by the reading comprehension's low results in standardized test over several years, disability inclusion law in Jordan 2007, having diverse classroom with mixed-

ability students, the lack of teaching and learning strategies that deal with or cater for individual learners, the traditional way of teaching that Jordanian teachers follow in teaching, the literature review about teachers in Jordan having no direct impact on teachers, the recommendations of previous studies, the successes of differentiated instruction in other part of the world and the researcher researches on differentiated instruction ( Magableh & Abdullah, 2019, 2020a, 2020b; Magableh & Abdullah, 2021), and the researcher's long teaching experience over 26 years in teaching English, the researcher sees that differentiated instruction becomes an urgent solution to develop students' reading comprehension achievement. The present research will contribute to the existing literature highlighting an awareness on how following varied teaching methods of differentiated instruction affects students' reading comprehension progress in Jordanian classrooms. Literature talked about a gap in the empirical studies regarding differentiated instruction (Ariss, 2017; Scott, 2012). Most of the studies were qualitative by nature, a few quantitative, but quite very few followed the mixed-method, the quantitative and the qualitative. In this current research, the researcher investigates the impact of differentiated instruction on English reading comprehension following mixed methods design, the quantitative and the qualitative data analysis to fulfill the objectives of the study.

It is hoped that differentiated instruction will increase reading comprehension achievement for both genders of grade 9 in Jordan and will bridge the gap between learners. Differentiated instruction strategies will benefit mixed-ability classrooms to be more similar in proficiency level and students of different proficiency levels will make use to alleviate their levels.

#### **1.4 The Objectives of the Study**

The research has the following six objectives.

1. To find out if there is any significant difference between the post-test's mean scores of the experimental group and the control group.
2. To find out if there is any statistically significant interaction effect in the post-test's mean scores between group and gender.
3. To find out if there is any statistically significant interaction effect in the post-test's mean scores between group and reading comprehension proficiency level.
4. To find out if there is any statistically significant interaction effect in the post-test's mean scores between group, gender and reading comprehension proficiency level.
5. To find out the key benefits of implementing differentiated instruction in the classroom on students.
6. To find out the key obstacles hindering differentiated instruction implementation in the classroom on students.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The research aims to answer the following six questions;

1. Is there any statistically significant difference between the post-test's mean scores of the experimental group taught by differentiated instruction and the control group's mean scores taught by the traditional way?
2. Is there any statistically significant interaction effect in the post-test's mean scores between group and gender?
3. Is there any statistically significant interaction effect in the post-test's mean scores between group and reading comprehension proficiency level?

4. Is there any statistically significant interaction effect in the post-test's mean scores between group, gender and reading comprehension proficiency level?
5. What are the key benefits obtained from the implementation of differentiated instruction on students?
6. What are the key obstacles hindering the implementation of differentiated instruction on students?

### **1.6 Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses are going to be tested at and below 0.05 level of significance, if they are failed to reject, we go for the alternative hypothesis;

H<sub>01</sub>. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the post-test due to differentiated instruction.

H<sub>11</sub>: There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the post-test due to differentiated instruction.

H<sub>02</sub>. There is no statistically significant interaction effect in the post-test's mean scores between group and gender.

H<sub>12</sub>: There is a statistically significant interaction effect in the post-test's mean scores between group and gender.

H<sub>03</sub>. There is no statistically significant interaction effect in the post-test's mean scores between group and reading comprehension proficiency level.

H<sub>1</sub> 3. There is a statistically significant interaction effect in the post-test's mean scores between group and reading comprehension proficiency level.

H<sub>0</sub> 4. There is no statistically significant interaction effect in the post-test's mean scores between group, gender and reading comprehension proficiency level.

H<sub>1</sub> 4. There is a statistically significant interaction effect in the post-test's mean scores between group, gender and reading comprehension proficiency level.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This current research gives useful information on the outcome of differentiated learning on English reading comprehension and whether differentiated instruction has the same impact between and within the groups. The significance of this study is pertinent to the fact that teachers are striving to a method of teaching that develops EFL reading comprehension and gets satisfactory results. Besides, it was the first study in Jordan according to the researcher information that deals with differentiated instruction compared to traditional method of teaching for grade nine students in one of Irbid districts and takes gender and proficiency level as independent variables.

### **1.7.1 Significance to Students**

The researcher expects that through the present study, students of below-average ability may no longer see themselves as inferior to others because through differentiation, their confidence might increase. Through differentiation, the researcher hopes that students of above-average ability will no longer wait all the students to finish in order starting a new task (Firwana, 2017). Besides, the researcher hopes to bridge the gap between genders so that both boys and girls benefit from DI since they have the same backgrounds (Belal, 2010). This study is significant to EFL students in that their reading comprehension skills may improve because they will be



exposed to varied differentiated techniques which will help them improve their English achievement.

### **1.7.2 Significance to Classrooms**

From this research, the researcher hopes that differentiated instruction will be a successful method to deal with mixed-ability classrooms and increase classroom interaction and engagement (Al Harafsheh, 2016). The researcher anticipates that the results of this research will add understanding by giving experiential evidence about the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in the highest level of the basic stage of education in Jordanian schools. The researcher hopes that the study will bridge the gap among the group levels in each classroom and will make the class look more homogeneous. Because of differentiated instruction, classrooms will be busy all the time and they will have no time for misbehaviour.

### **1.7.3 Significance to Community**

The study will benefit the Jordanian community in that it will add to the literature another teaching strategy that might help improve reading comprehension and bridge the gap between learners. This study finding may benefit the community by giving them information about one of the most important strategies to deal with classroom diversity (AlShoura & Ahmed, 2014). When publishing the results of this experiment, the Jordanian community will ask to apply different teaching methods to match different students' abilities.

### **1.7.4 Significance to Teachers**

Differentiated instruction provides teachers with all opportunities to deal with difficulties in EFL reading comprehension and helps teachers to meet students' individual differences (Siam & Al-Natour, 2016). Differentiation will allow the

Jordanian teachers to deal with the all levels of students in one common classroom, and through modification, Jordanian EFL students may achieve progress in English reading comprehension and may improve at least one or more level up. Differentiated learning is supported by theories impacting teaching globally which affected many changes in the methods that teachers apply and practice (Valiandes, 2015). This study will help the teachers of Jordan to implement the most suitable strategy to help their students. This study is significant to teachers to know their learners better so that they can plan different activities to meet the diverse needs of students.

#### **1.7.5 Significance to Decision-Makers**

The present study will also help educators and educational decision makers to take decisive actions to train teachers on the best methods to address the individual differences in heterogeneous classrooms. Jordan Ministry of Education will benefit from this research to train teachers on differentiated instruction strategies in order to implement to solve Jordanian-mixed ability classrooms heterogeneity (Al Harafsheh, 2016; Magableh, 2007; Shunnaq, 2016; Siam & Al-Natour, 2016). This study will invite the ministry of education and the decision makers to reconsider modifying the curriculum of grade 9 to be differentiated to meet all students' levels.

#### **1.7.6 Significance to Universities**

This study finding will benefit universities by describing differentiated instruction strategies in their curriculum. It will encourage them to train the new expected teachers on how to use differentiated instruction in mixed-ability classrooms. Universities will benefit from the results by conducting several courses about meeting individual needs in mixed-ability classrooms.

Moreover, the researcher trusts that when modifying the curriculum, the team should take into consideration to make it differentiated. However, literature lacks practical research proof which documents differentiated teaching in Jordanian's mixed-ability classroom. So, when applying DI, many stakeholders will benefit, like teachers in the classrooms, administrations by applying effective strategies to overcome reading comprehension problems, educators and teacher trainers by planning and implementing plans to train teachers and finally students in one mixed-ability classroom to bridge the gap among learners. Besides, DI bridges the gap among gender so that when dealing with English reading comprehension text, both will have the ultimate benefit.

### **1.8 Operational Definitions of Key Terms**

To ensure homogeneity and consistency of the key terms which are used all through the study, the succeeding definitions are provided:

**Differentiated Instruction (DI):** is a strategy in which students' learning requirements are measured as the central topic of teaching. Teachers modify lessons and alter them based on learners' learning styles, benefits, and individual necessities (Heacox, 2009). Differentiated learning is a process to approach education for individuals of various levels in the one class. The purpose is to maximize each pupil's growth and achievement by addressing each learner where they are instead of supposing learners to adjust themselves for the curriculum (Hall, 2002). Differentiation is modifying a lesson or parts of it to one, some or group of learners (Anstee, 2014). It is tailoring instruction for individual learners (Tomlinson, 2001).

In the present study here DI means that teachers of EFL learners follow different methods of education in the areas of material, procedures, outcome and

learning class environment depending on students' proficiency level including modifying the content, forming flexible groups and giving varied products. Differentiated instruction is referred here also in different expressions like modified learning, modified teaching, modified education, adjusted teaching, adjusted learning distinguished learning, separated learning, differentiated learning or differentiated teaching.

**One-size-fits-all method:** It is a way of teaching to assume that students learn at the same way and teachers stand in the front to explain the concepts to all students at the same time and in the same way without tailoring instruction to suit individual learners (Strauss, 2016). In the current study the one-size-fits-all is where teachers of Jordan use to teach reading comprehension in which they follow the same process and teaching the same content and product to all learners in a mixed-ability classroom.

**Content:** What teachers teach and how pupils get access to that form of experience (Tomlinson, 2003). It includes the independent reading, text on tape, images with the text, partner reading, online research, listening comprehension, and group demonstration (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). In this research it means grade 9 students' English text books in Jordan Action Pack 9 (Paris, 2013) modified to the experimental groups as well as some additional texts to suit students' levels. It contains the cassette or the C.D, the teacher's book, the student book, the activity book, the supplementary materials provided by the researcher as well as some short stories from the experimental group school libraries.

**Reading comprehension in EFL Achievement in Jordan** is the method of creating meaning from text in EFL context. The aim is to gain a complete comprehension of what is designated in the text rather than to attain gist from separate

words or detached sentences. It is the learners' ability to read, understand, practice, and remember what they read (Woolley, 2011). The ability to comprehend, remember, get meaning from spoken or written texts, and communicate with others about the text (Boges, 2015; Snow et al.,1998). In this research it means Grade 9 EFL students' understanding of the passages given to them, decoding and getting the message of the English reading comprehension texts by answering the comprehension questions and doing the activities following each passage.

**Reading Comprehension Proficiency Level** is the learners' ability to comprehend and understand text and the ability to process information. It is students' ability to use English to make and communicate meaning from written texts usually decided by a test. It is the capability to use academic contexts, which is mainly essential for longstanding success in school (Hakuta et al.,2000). In this study, EFL reading comprehension proficiency level means students ability in reading comprehension based on the last years' results. It is whether students are below-average scores from 0 to 17, average scores from 18-32 or above-average scores from 33 to 50 based on what they gain in last years' results.

**Reading comprehension achievement** is the level of EFL reading comprehension associated with scale assessments of reading at the ninth grade in Jordan (Muliawati, 2017). In this research it refers to the pre/post-test that is prepared by the researcher and being validated and became reliable which was used as the quantitative instrument to measure EFL grade 9 students in reading comprehension. It was a valid and reliable tool used to measure students' success and expected to bring accurate, dependable and reliable information (Özdemir & Akyol, 2019)

## **1.9 Limitations of the Study**

The study will be limited to grade 9 male and female students in Al Taibeh district in Irbid in Jordan and to any similar samples. The research findings may not be generalizable to different sample in the cities or other public areas. Besides, it will be limited to the instruments which are developed by the researcher for the sake of this study and consisted only of pre/post achievement test, a semi-structured interview to and classroom observation to collect data. It will be better to have more tools like survey to cover more sample. The study is limited to the small number of the sample. In the future studies, a bigger sample will be better to use. Moreover, the period of the study is only 12 weeks, it will be better to be taken during a longer period. The generalizability of the study findings will be within the context of these restrictions.

Finally, the scope of this research is restricted to investigate differentiated instruction effectiveness in the areas of flexible grouping, tiered assignment and tiered instruction on reading comprehension for grade 9 students. Other differentiated instruction strategies like learning styles, background knowledge, supplementary materials and the use of multiple intelligences are not within the scope. The study differentiated the content to suit levels but did not differentiate content to match gender. If content is differentiated to match gender, we might get different gender results.

## **1.10 Delimitations of the Study**

Delimitations are selections made by the investigator which should be declared. They describe the restrictions that the researcher has set for the study. The research is delimited on grade 9 as representative to the primary stage. Grade 9 students are the last grade in the primary stage in Jordan. Moreover, the study is delimited in the choice of Taibah District to represent Irbid district, this is because it is the district