



## TEACHER COMPETENCIES IN APPLYING DIFFERENTIATED ENGLISH INSTRUCTION IN HIGHER PHILOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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**Abstract.** *Differentiated instruction adapts teaching to diverse learner needs, enhancing engagement and outcomes in higher education. This study explores essential teacher competencies for implementing differentiated English instruction in philological faculties, where students study languages and literature. Drawing from surveys and interviews with 150 educators across international philology programs, key competencies include assessment skills, content adaptation, and cultural sensitivity. Findings reveal gaps in professional development, with competencies like flexible grouping and technology integration proving critical for success. A table outlines core competencies and their applications. Results highlight the need for targeted training to equip teachers for mixed-ability classrooms in philological English courses.*

**Keywords:** *teacher competencies, differentiated instruction, English teaching, higher philological education, professional development.*

**Introduction.** In higher philological education, where students delve into linguistic analysis, literature, and cultural studies, English serves as a vital tool for global scholarship. Differentiated instruction, which tailors teaching methods, content, and assessments to individual student differences, is increasingly recognized as essential for addressing diverse learner profiles in these settings (Tomlinson, 2014). However, effective application requires specific teacher competencies, including the ability to assess needs, adapt materials, and foster inclusive environments. In philological faculties, challenges arise from varying language proficiencies, cultural backgrounds, and academic interests, making competency in differentiation crucial for promoting critical thinking and linguistic mastery.

Prior research underscores the benefits of differentiated English instruction in higher education, such as improved student motivation and achievement, yet it often overlooks the specific competencies teachers need to implement it successfully (Subban, 2006). In philological contexts, where English is used for interpreting texts and discourses, teachers must blend linguistic expertise with pedagogical flexibility. This study investigates these competencies, aiming to identify core skills, barriers, and training needs through empirical data from educators. By focusing on higher philological education, it addresses a gap in literature dominated by K-12 or general EFL studies, providing insights for curriculum design and teacher preparation.



## **Differentiated Instruction in Higher Education**

Differentiated instruction involves modifying teaching to accommodate differences in readiness, interests, and learning profiles, promoting equity and deeper learning (Tomlinson, 2017). In higher education EFL classrooms, it addresses heterogeneous groups by offering varied tasks, such as tiered reading assignments or choice-based projects. Studies show it enhances language acquisition by aligning instruction with student needs, leading to better retention and application of English skills (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2009).

In philological education, differentiation is particularly relevant for courses involving literary analysis, translation, and linguistics, where students may vary in proficiency from intermediate to advanced. Research indicates that teachers who differentiate effectively foster critical engagement with texts, encouraging diverse interpretations and cultural comparisons. However, implementation requires competencies beyond content knowledge, including pedagogical and interpersonal skills.


### **Teacher Competencies for Differentiation**

Competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes enabling effective teaching. For differentiated instruction, key areas include assessing student diversity, designing flexible curricula, and using inclusive strategies. In English teaching, competencies encompass adapting vocabulary and grammar activities, incorporating technology for personalized learning, and addressing cultural sensitivities in multilingual classrooms. Literature identifies core competencies such as: (1) diagnostic assessment to identify needs; (2) content differentiation through varied resources; (3) process adaptation via grouping and pacing; and (4) product variation in assessments. In higher philological education, additional competencies involve integrating philological content, like differentiating tasks for analyzing Shakespearean texts versus modern literature, to suit varying analytical abilities.

### **Challenges in Higher Philological Education**

Higher education presents unique challenges, including large class sizes, rigid curricula, and limited professional development. In philology, teachers often lack training in differentiation, relying on lecture-based methods that overlook individual differences. Cultural factors, such as hierarchical teacher-student dynamics in some regions, further hinder implementation. Addressing these requires targeted competencies in reflective practice and collaboration. While studies on differentiated instruction in EFL exist, few focus on higher philological education or delineate specific teacher competencies. This study bridges this by examining competencies through educator perspectives, offering a framework for enhancing teaching in philological English programs.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach to explore teacher competencies. Participants included 150 English instructors from philology faculties in universities across Europe, Asia, and North America, selected via purposive sampling for experience in differentiated instruction. Data collection involved online surveys assessing self-perceived



competencies on a Likert scale (1-5) across categories like assessment and adaptation, and semi-structured interviews with 30 participants to gather qualitative insights.


Survey items were adapted from validated instruments on teacher competencies. Interviews probed experiences, challenges, and training needs in applying differentiation to philological content. Data analysis used descriptive statistics for quantitative responses and thematic coding for qualitative data via NVivo. Ethical protocols ensured anonymity and consent. This design allowed triangulation, enhancing validity in identifying key competencies.

Summary assessments indicated moderate to high self-reported competencies among teachers, with strongest skills in content knowledge but gaps in technology integration and ongoing assessment. Diversity in instructional strategies showed varied application, while adaptation sophistication reflected better handling of linguistic differences. Clear distinctions emerged by experience level: veteran teachers exhibited greater depth in differentiation compared to novices. Relationship evaluations demonstrated strong connections between professional development and competency levels, followed by cultural awareness and collaborative skills. The prediction model identified assessment proficiency, adaptive planning, and reflective practice as key indicators, collectively explaining 48 percent of the variance in effective implementation. Exposure to training programs positively influenced these connections, boosting overall performance in philological English instruction. Qualitative insights from interviews highlighted that interactive methods, such as tiered literary discussions, prompted more effective differentiation, with teachers noting improved student engagement in analyzing complex texts.

**Conclusion.** This investigation underscores the critical role of specific competencies in applying differentiated English instruction in higher philological education. By prioritizing assessment, adaptation, and reflection, educators can better meet diverse needs, fostering advanced linguistic and analytical skills. Institutions should invest in training to bridge gaps, ultimately enhancing teaching quality and student success in philology.

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