

## **A Semester of Choice: A Differentiated Approach to Online Learning**

JARED J. PEO

*Nagoya University of Foreign Studies*

### **Abstract**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020, a small private university in the Tokai area transitioned from face-to-face learning to online instruction. While it may have been deemed a success in many ways, it was challenging to meet diverse learning groups' needs on such short notice. To assist students who learn effectively in different ways and have varied learning preferences and multiple intelligences, the author modified one online course's design to offer flexible forms of participation and flexible assignments with various modes of completion. While the primary goal behind the changes was to improve students' language development, the teacher additionally set out to foster student motivation and autonomous learning. This article will explore three participants' experiences with differentiated learning in an online environment.

### **A Semester of Choice: A Differentiated Approach to Online Learning**

The COVID-19 pandemic that started in the spring of 2020, placed an enormous burden on the education system in Japan. In response, a small private university in the Tokai area transitioned from face-to-face learning to online instruction. During the first semester of this study's course, most classes took place synchronously online via Zoom. The decision was made with limited time to prepare an online curriculum, so while it may have been deemed a success in many ways, it was challenging to meet the diverse learning groups' needs. In response to the obstacles of the first semester, the author implemented a differentiated approach to learning based on the principles of adult education, motivation, and universal design for learning.

### **Adult Education**

In 2005, Phillip Ozuah provided a commentary on adult learning. He proposed ten principles concerning how adults learn best. While some of the principles reflect similar ones of pedagogy, five stand out for this study: "adults learn best when they want or need to learn something, when they are in a non-threatening environment, when their learning styles are met, when their previous experience is valued and utilized," and "when there are opportunities for them to have control over the learning process" (Ozuah, 2005, p. 86). He argues that adult education should be more focused on immediacy and a need to learn and promote autonomous learning. As university students are young adults and choose to continue their education and what they study, this argument seems applicable to higher education.

Ozuah (2005) suggests that adults are more knowledgeable about their learning preferences due to having much experience in and out of the classroom. Moreover, adult learners are more likely to be looking for practical solutions to immediate problems. The course's benefits and goals need to be clear and personal to meet the students' expectations. Adult learners of languages often have some specific goals, and they will be more driven to study and improve if they see the required tasks as useful and effective. A great way to meet these expectations is to offer options so adult learners can control how and what they learn. Keeping these recommendations in mind can help improve motivation and engagement.

### **Motivation**

Motivation is often discussed as a quantifiable characteristic that students have or do not have or something they can gain or lose. How to improve motivation has been a significant area of EFL research as motivation has been connected to achievement (Fan, 2012; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Pan & Wu, 2013; Peacock, 1997). Greeno, Collins, and Resnick (1996) categorized prominent theories on motivation into three groups: extrinsic motivation (the Behaviorist/Empiricist view), intrinsic motivation (the Cognitive/Rationalist view), and engaged participation (the Situative/Pragmatist-Sociohistoric view). Although the groups are not all-encompassing, adherents to these theories have used them to shape research and data interpretation. The goal of their research is to find interventions teachers can implement to get immediate and measurable results.

Olmanson (2016) proposes that these perspectives sometimes ignore moments in classrooms that are not easily measured or described. Instead, motivation might be better expressed as moments of acceleration and deceleration where individuals, small groups, and entire classes can experience changes in motivation either together or alone. These moments are unpredictable and complex, influenced both intrinsically and extrinsically, but not necessarily exclusively. Following this line of thought, rather than limiting interventions based on one theory, it would be better to design a course that allows for as many opportunities for acceleration as possible.

Acknowledging that motivation may be too complex to define with one theory, Williams and Williams (2011) focus on five key ingredients for improving student motivation: “student, teacher, content, method/process, and environment” (p. 122). Teachers’ and students’ roles should go beyond traditional views of consumer and producer as students should be seen as necessary materials for educational success. How and when content is delivered is important and should be easily accessible. The authors are quick to explain that no one motivational theory is necessarily better than the others. Instead, they are pieces of a bigger puzzle. Thus, teachers should consider them when designing courses, trying to include as many of these ingredients as much as they can.

### **Universal Design for Learning**

Universal design for learning (UDL) is a framework that seeks to design all aspects of a course to maintain the curriculum goals and objectives while maximizing learning for as many students as possible (Coyne, Pisha, Dalton, Zeph, & Smith, 2012; Meyer & Rose, 2000; Rogers-Shaw, Carr-Chellman, & Choi, 2018; Staskowski, Hardin, Klein, & Wozniak, 2012). Staskowski et al. (2012) argue that instead of a one-size-fits-all design, the framework requires a flexible and customizable approach to learning. Although the basis of UDL was to make learning accessible for students with special needs, Coyne et al. (2012) posit that “designing for diverse learners results in better learning outcomes for all individuals.” The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) has identified three core principles of UDL: “multiple means of representation, multiple means of action, and multiple means of engagement” (as cited in Rogers-Shaw et al., 2018, p. 22). In other words, content for the course should be provided multimodally (e.g., audio, video, transcriptions, and images). There should be various ways of completing tasks or assignments (e.g., oral or written). Also, students should have opportunities to work in groups of various sizes or individually or to use a computer or a textbook. These options are a few examples of how UDL can be used. The key is to make these options available for all students to best match their learning needs and preferences.

### **Differentiated Learning**

Differentiated learning is a responsive teaching approach aimed at meeting increasingly diverse students' needs. It is a flexible, varied, and empowering approach that leads to sharing responsibility for learning with the learner. It encompasses activities and assignments and classroom expectations, assessments, content presentation, and environment. For example, instead of one timed writing task involving one prompt, a teacher may provide multiple methods for completing the task: 1. A timed writing task with a prompt and structured outline; 2. A timed writing response with a prompt; 3. A blank sheet of paper. Tomlinson, Brimijoin, and Narvaez (2008) present the approach as a necessary tool that should be used to enable students "to do more than would be possible without it" (p. 4). In the example provided, more students would be able to achieve and challenge themselves more.

Despite offering varied and sometimes leveled assignments, it must be clarified that differentiated learning is not tracking (Tomlinson et al., 2008). Teachers must balance how participation, group selection, and assignment choices are made. At times, this means teachers need to allow students to make their own choices. Using the writing task above, the students could choose their preferred writing task, even if it may be too demanding to complete. The belief is that students can learn from the experience just as well as the completion. Other times, the teacher may need to give some specific work to help students progress in critical areas. In other words, the teacher may guide a student toward one of the three writing tasks.

Differentiated learning is not a new approach to language education. Surfacing in the early 1990s, teachers and researchers viewed differentiated learning as a means of teaching "mixed-ability" classes (Convery & Coyle, 1993, p. 7). More recently, the approach has expanded from "mixed-ability" to include students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse interests and learning preferences (Borja, Soto, & Sanchez, 2015). Its student-centered focus makes differentiated learning a promising approach to language education.

### **Aims of the Study**

A few issues arose concerning the synchronous online classroom and assignments during the first semester of the course. The use of English and the amount of participation in small group work had been inconsistent. It was difficult for the teacher to manage the breakout rooms in a meaningful way. The teacher often had to play the role of an English or participation police officer moving between breakout rooms and reinforcing the class's expectations. Even students who could be considered more motivated to participate were found sitting silently with their groups in a breakout room. Additionally, many students were not completing assignments on time consistently. This issue was particularly a problem when the assignment work was used to complete small group tasks.

The author decided to use a differentiated approach to online learning to address these issues. The implemented approach's goal was to meet more students' needs by improving student participation, helping students take more responsibility for their learning, and offering a more flexible learning approach. Ultimately, this would help students improve their English proficiency development.

The research question and sub-questions guiding this study are:

- 1) What are students' perceptions of differentiated learning in a synchronous online environment?
  - a. How do students describe their experiences with differentiated breakout rooms?
  - b. How do students describe their experiences with differentiated assignments?

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

The course for this study was a compulsory course for non-English majors, offered to second-year students. During the fall semester, the classes met synchronously online for twelve weeks and asynchronously for three weeks. Classes met twice per week for 90 minutes. A differentiated approach was administered to two sections of the course consisting of 65 students (86% female), 33 students in one class and 32 in the other. Most of the students fit within the CEFR B1-B2 range upon entering the course. Despite seeming reasonably homogenous, the students had diverse backgrounds, learning preferences, English fluency levels, motivation, and confidence.

Three of the female students volunteered to participate in semi-structured in-depth interviews, which made up the primary source of data collection. The interviews took place at the end of the semester and were used to understand their experiences with the class's differentiated approach (see Appendix). The interviews were transcribed verbatim and then analyzed and coded for themes. Archival records, surveys, and participant observations were also used. Pseudonyms are used in all references to participants.

#### **Application of Differentiated Learning**

Two significant changes to the course were adopted to provide students with multiple options to develop their English skills and facilitate active participation during online classes. The first change took place with the Zoom breakout rooms. Zoom is a video communication application that allows a host to hold meetings with multiple participants simultaneously. One function available for hosts allows them to send participants into breakout rooms to interact privately in groups. During the second semester, students were often given a choice to join one of three styles of breakout rooms: all-English, mostly-English, and no-requirement. The style of the room was not a requirement but rather an expectation for that room. Participants who chose to join a room style would be expected to, and they would expect their group members to participate accordingly. Students would indicate their room style preference by adding a 1 for all-English, 2 for mostly-English, or 3 for no-requirement before their Zoom ID.

A maximum number of participation points were allotted to each style to provide some extrinsic motivation. The maximum number of points (10/10) could be earned by students who joined the all-English style, while fewer points could be earned for the mostly English and no requirement groups (8/10 and 6/10 respectively). Group sizes were limited to about 3-5 students per group, which meant there were often nine or ten breakout rooms. With so many breakout rooms in one class, students were required to complete participation surveys about their groups at the end of each class. The surveys asked students to compare their participation with that of their group members. Also, they commented on any issues or technical problems they may have had. The purpose of this change was to help improve confidence and speaking time, reduce anxiety, make the groups more enjoyable, and provide options that could match student motivation and interest in a topic. It was not a mode of tracking students as they could choose any room style no matter their proficiency level, and they could migrate between styles daily.

The second significant change to the class was a change to assignments and how they were completed. Each assignment was divided into three sections. The first section included the necessary work needed to participate fully in the next class. This section included tasks such as previewing reading sections, vocabulary practice, and some critical responses to the topic. Six out of ten points were awarded to this section. The second section added a research element.

## A DIFFERENTIATED APPROACH TO ONLINE LEARNING

Students were provided with a task that required research outside the textbook to complete it. The final section added a response or reflection. Students were often asked to record a Flipgrid video or write a reflective paragraph or two connecting the topic to their own lives. Two points could be earned for each of the final two sections. The first section of an assignment was the only section that students were expected to complete.

The additional sections of the assignments were diverse and multimodal to offer students more paths to the content. The purpose of this change was to make it easier to participate in class and connect with the content personally. The change also promoted autonomous learning by making students responsible for completing two sections of an assignment. It also allowed students to skip sections of an assignment due to a busy schedule, a lack of interest in the topic, or any personal reason. By completing these two sections, students would have more information to bring into small group conversations, and they would be doing more to improve their English.

It was important for the teacher to review the expectations and possible points before choosing a breakout room style and introducing assignments. During small group activities in breakout rooms, the teacher would move between groups to facilitate discussion, share ideas, and encourage students when necessary. During these short observations, the teacher would take notes to later compare with student surveys.

### Findings

Five themes, three about the breakout room styles and two about the assignments, emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews: the breakout room styles provided a more comfortable environment for speaking English, increased speaking time and opportunities, and encouraged English use; the assignments were more interesting and useful than in the first semester, and they were flexible and promoted student responsibility. The following paragraphs will look deeper into these themes using the students' own words to support the findings.

### Breakout Room Styles Provided a More Comfortable Environment for Speaking English

All three participants commented on how the new breakout room styles provided a more comfortable speaking environment.

<i>"For breakout rooms, it is the best environment to practice English for me because other classmates are also willing to speak English." — Riko talking about the all-English breakout room.</i>
--

<i>"I like speak English, but my English is so bad...If I can't understand English, so my friends use Japanese to explain. So, I can understand my friends say." — Kanako talking about the mostly-English breakout room.</i>
---

<i>"I feel very comfortable choose the level because I want to use English a lot...this semester I can choose, so use the all English room and I can use a lot of English." — Tomoka</i>
--

<i>"So, I feel other member also tried harder, and they speak English so much, so I feel very comfortable, and also I can try to harder." — Tomoka</i>
--

Students commented that they were more likely to use more English when they could choose their breakout rooms. For Riko and Tomoka, this meant that they could use the amount of English they desired. Both students consistently chose the all-English breakout room style for small groups. Tomoka further explained that when her group members spoke English, it

encouraged her to participate more. On the other hand, Kanako had less confidence in her English ability and felt more comfortable without the pressure of only using English. Although Kanako typically joined the mostly-English breakout room style, she did try to join the all-English style once. By joining the other style, she realized that she was more comfortable in the mostly-English style room. This gained knowledge is an advantage of the differentiated learning approach. Students need to understand their proficiency levels to make more effective strides in their learning.

### **Breakout Room Styles Increased Speaking Time and Opportunities**

At times during the semester, students were not allowed to choose their breakout room styles. In these cases, students were grouped randomly. Riko and Tomoka discussed issues they had in these rooms compared with room styles they could choose.

*“In the breakout room, I noticed that some of them start to speak Japanese when the teacher don’t come to the small breakout room. But, in — after changing to the new activity, they speak more English than before.”* — Riko comparing the new style to randomly grouped breakout rooms.

*“I feel a little bit disappointed, and even though I try to focus on my way, but I tend to do the way they do...if I join such — those students, I tend to speak Japanese more even though I wanted to speak English all the time.”* — Riko talking about joining a randomly grouped breakout room with unwilling members.

*“So, I feel so happy because of — I can study harder, and also I don’t feel frustrated...because I want to study harder and use English more, but so other member don’t speak so I can’t speak English.”* — Tomoka comparing the new style to randomly grouped breakout rooms.

Both Riko and Tomoka talked about how members influence them in their groups. If group members were less interested in using English or participate less, Riko felt disappointed. In randomly-grouped breakout rooms, the students who want to speak English the whole time are more likely to be grouped with students who do not share their views. As Riko mentioned, students may perform in English while the teacher is in the breakout room, and teachers may be unaware of this situation. Riko elaborated that she felt awkward talking to her classmates in English if they were using Japanese. Instead of encouraging others to speak in English, she would use Japanese as well.

### **Breakout Room Styles Encouraged English Use**

All three members talked about using more English in the breakout room styles than in randomly-grouped breakout rooms.

*“For me, it is hard to balance the Japanese and English portions, and I guess that even though students are in the second level of the class, most of the students maybe — it is just a guess, but most of them speak Japanese than English. So, if I were in the breakout room, I would not practice English as much as I do..”* — Riko discussing why she joins the all-English breakout room.

*“I want to English better and more fluently, so we choose level class. So high-level class member is always speak English, so I am influenced good English feeling.”* — Kanako discussing choosing a breakout room.

*“So, I feel other member also tried harder, and they speak English so much, so I feel very comfortable, and also I can try to harder.” — Tomoka (used earlier, multiple themes).*

Riko assumed that students in mostly-English breakout rooms were not speaking as much English as she was in the all-English breakout rooms. Her assumption was based on previous experience, and it parallels responses from the previous theme. Kanako claimed that the all-English breakout room influenced her to speak English, while Tomoka used more English because she felt comfortable. Tomoka’s response hints at how she felt when she joined the all-English breakout room. When she joined the more demanding breakout room, she felt nervous about speaking because her self-efficacy diminished. Having multiple options allowed Tomoka to discover a comfortable environment and build confidence.

### **The Assignments Were More Interesting and Useful Than in the First Semester**

Riko and Kanako specifically commented that the assignments were more interesting and useful than the first semester. Tomoka also shared this sentiment, but she did not elaborate. When asked if there was anything they did not like about the assignment changes, all participants said they had nothing to share.

*“I think the homework became less than the first semester, but the content is more narrow and deeper. So, I could learn more deep into the topic.” — Riko*

*“Yeah, I like the video section, so it is very interesting homework and my video — my friends watched, so received comments. I am very happy friends comment.” — Kanako discussing the Flipgrid activities on assignments*

Riko makes a critical statement: the homework was less time-consuming yet facilitated further engagement with the content. She also shared a similar opinion to Kanako about using Flipgrid videos for assignments.

### **The Assignments Were More Flexible and Promoted Student Responsibility**

All three participants commented positively about having choices, and they claimed that these choices were not available in other courses. Being given choices made them feel more responsible for their learning.

*“And the new assignments, we can decide the homework by our responsibility so that some students are working hard to complete all of the steps and some of them just want — necessary thing.” — Riko*

*“But, so we can choose section — homework, so it is so good because video homework. Some people are bad at video, so we can choose video section, so it is so good.” — Kanako*

*“So, I feel that the change was so helpful for me because this semester also I had a lot of homework to do... So, I can choose according to my English level or my schedule. So, I can try to do my best.” — Tomoka discussing the flexible homework.*

Tomoka was the only participant to comment that she did not always complete all three homework sections. However, she emphasized this as a positive point as she was busy with other classes, which helped her avoid stress. Kanako may have often joined the mostly-English breakout rooms, but she completed all three sections of the assignments because she likes English and believes more opportunities to use English will lead to more significant improvement. Riko was the only participant to discuss the assignments in a slightly negative

way: *“I am a little bit stressed about the homework option because that’s my personality – I try to complete all of them to get full points even though I am busy.”* On the other hand, she was well aware of the choice, and she decided to complete the assignments.

### **Discussion**

Findings from this study should be considered carefully. The goal for this research was to interview five to ten participants, but only three volunteered. While the three participants were diverse in many ways, their congruent trait was being highly-motivated. While this does not discredit any of their answers, it does suggest that some students may not have been interested in sharing their opinions because they did not find the changes useful or practical. Despite this deficiency, some valuable insights were gained when interviews were compared to participant observations and surveys. These insights will be examined along with the discussion of the findings.

Concerning breakout rooms, there is potential with differentiated learning to improve motivation, speaking and learning opportunities, and student ownership of their learning, especially for highly motivated students. By offering students a choice, they can be in a more comfortable learning environment. All three participants discussed this, including Kanako, who preferred the mostly-English breakout room. Relevant to participant observations, the students who often joined the no-requirement breakout rooms seemed to lack confidence, not proficiency. It might be assumed that students would improve confidence, negotiation of meaning, listening skills, and speaking skills with more opportunities to speak. However, this research did not evaluate learning outcomes, so it is impossible to make this claim. One valuable point was that participants could recognize proficiency levels and learning preferences due to the options.

Unfortunately, there were some negative observations with the breakout rooms. Participants in the study spoke of being more influenced by unwilling group members than positive role-models. In other words, they were more likely to use Japanese if their group members used it than asking group members to use English. This situation was especially evident in observations of mostly-English breakout rooms. It also seemed to progress throughout the semester, implying some novelty to the breakout room change. More consideration would be needed to balance accountability with flexibility. Also, this breakout room change was experimented with in smaller classes ranging from eleven to seventeen students. It was more likely that students could not join their preferred breakout room styles because no other classmates requested the same style. Finally, most students continued to use the same breakout room styles the entire semester. More migration between room styles would have been preferred.

Assignment changes were favorably welcome. All interviewed participants shared positive opinions about these changes. Additionally, many students in both classes had complained of being overworked and spending too much time online, so it was not a surprise that having less required work was appreciated. The more in-depth content that Riko talked about has the potential to boost motivation because it can help build a purposeful connection to the material. Multimodal tasks offer multiple paths to the content, increasing accessibility. While the responses to the assignments were overwhelmingly positive, some students continued to underachieve when completing them. This observation may not be unusual considering the students are non-English majors, but it does warrant more consideration.



## A DIFFERENTIATED APPROACH TO ONLINE LEARNING

As is expected with research, hindsight and more time with the relevant literature have led to possible alternatives for future courses. Regarding breakout room styles, variation in group sizes calls for more consideration. For convenience, most groups consisted of four or five students. However, this ignores students' learning preferences of smaller groups or independent work. Additionally, smaller groups could provide more opportunities for improving English skills and confidence. With more group possibilities, how to assess participation and survey students becomes an issue.

Assignments were provided as one assignment with three sections. However, it may be wiser to offer multiple smaller assignments of less value. For example, provide students with five or six multimodal possibilities and allow them to choose up to four to be completed. This adjustment would allow students to have more control of how and what they study.

The surveys conducted asked students to rank the group members based on participation, themselves included. There was an additional area for comments. Because they were limited in information, these surveys primarily served as aids to grade participation. However, one observation emerged. Most students tended to be more critical of themselves than group members. For example, one student ranked herself as the lowest participant in her group when the teacher felt she had been the most active. Furthermore, students were unlikely to criticize group members for not participating. This behavior implies that students were not developing group interdependence as much as anticipated. Perhaps, they did not want to be held responsible for a classmate receiving a low participation score and thus did not feel responsible for helping classmates improve.

### **Limitations**

This study's most significant limitation was its number of participants. While the insights gained should not be dismissed, the study would benefit from interviews with students having negative impressions of the changes or with less-motivated students. Differentiated learning aims to help all students do more than they could without it. Thus, alternative voices are possibly more crucial.

Another limitation of this study was the method of data collection being limited to English in interviews. More students may have participated in interviews, and participants may have offered more detailed answers if they were able to use their L1.

### **Conclusion and implications**

Differentiated learning is a rewarding and worthwhile approach, but implementing and researching it are time-consuming endeavors. Offering variation and choices in group activities and assignments can increase participation, facilitate more comfortable learning environments, and develop more interest in assignments. For participants in this study, the differentiated approach helped them take more responsibility for their learning.

Despite the benefits of the approach, some aspects of differentiated learning should be researched further. Large classes like those in this study can be challenging to manage and offer the timely feedback necessary for language development. With such demand required from a teacher, more research needs to be done on learning outcomes to understand its effectiveness in higher education better. More research should also employ classroom observations (online or in-class) to understand student engagement and motivation better. The author encourages teachers to learn more about this approach as diverse students are already present in classrooms and will continue to increase in the future.

## BIO DATA

**Jared J. Peo** has been teaching EFL/ESL at the university level for over 7 years. His time at NUFSA has helped him focus his research and personal development on intercultural competence, motivation, autonomous learning, extensive reading, and study abroad.

## References

- Borja, L. A., Soto, S. T., & Sanchez, T. X. (2015). Differentiating Instruction for EFL Learners. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 5(8), 8.
- Convery, A., & Coyle, D. (1993). *Differentiation—Taking the initiative*. Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research.
- Coyne, P., Pisha, B., Dalton, B., Zeph, L. A., & Smith, N. C. (2012). Literacy by Design: A Universal Design for Learning Approach for Students With Significant Intellectual Disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education*, 33(3), 162–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932510381651>.
- Fan, J.-J. (2012). *A Study on Students' Learning Motivation of EFL in Taiwanese Vocational College*. 2(3), 10.
- Greeno, J., Collins, A., & Resnick, L. (1996). Cognition and Learning. In *Handbook of Educational Psychology* (pp. 15–46). Routledge.
- Masgoret, A. -M., & Gardner, R.C. (2003). Attitudes, Motivation, and Second Language Learning: A Meta-Analysis of Studies Conducted by Gardner and Associates. *Language Learning* 53(1), 123-163.
- Meyer, A., & Rose, D. H. (2000). Universal Design for Individual Differences. *Educational Leadership*, 58(3), 39–43.
- Olmanson, J. (2016). What does Motivated Mean? Re-Presenting Learning, Technology, and Motivation in Middle Schools via New Ethnographic Writing. *Middle Grades Review*, 2(2). <http://scholarworks.uvm.edu/mgreview/vol2/iss2/3>.
- Ozuah, P. O. (2005). First, there was pedagogy and then came andragogy. *Einstein Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 21(2), 83–87.
- Pan, C.-Y., & Wu, H.-Y. (2013). The Cooperative Learning Effects on English Reading Comprehension and Learning Motivation of EFL Freshmen. *English Language Teaching*, 6(5), p13. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v6n5p13>.
- Peacock, M. (1997). The effect of authentic materials on the motivation of EFL learners. *ELT Journal*, 51(2), 144–156. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/51.2.144>.

## A DIFFERENTIATED APPROACH TO ONLINE LEARNING

- Rogers-Shaw, C., Carr-Chellman, D. J., & Choi, J. (2018). Universal Design for Learning: Guidelines for Accessible Online Instruction. *Adult Learning, 29*(1), 20–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1045159517735530>.
- Staskowski, M., Hardin, S., Klein, M., & Wozniak, C. (2012). Universal Design for Learning: Speech-Language Pathologists and Their Teams Making the Common Core Curriculum Accessible. *Seminars in Speech and Language, 33*(02), 111–129. <https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0032-1310312>.
- Tomlinson, C. A., Brimijoin, K., & Narvaez, L. (2008). *The differentiated school: Making revolutionary changes in teaching and learning*. ASCD.
- Williams, K., & Williams, C. (2011). Five key ingredients for improving motivation. *Research in Higher Education Journal, 11*. <http://aabri.com/manuscripts/11834.pdf>.

### Appendix

#### A Differentiated Approach to Online Research: Interview Protocol

1. What changes have you noticed this semester?
2. How do you feel about the changes?
3. How do you feel when a teacher gives you options for homework, participation, etc.?
4. One major change you had this semester was the different breakout rooms: there were 3 styles. How did you feel about this change?
  - a. Which room did you usually join? Why?
  - b. Did you ever join another room style? Why/Why not?
  - c. Did you ever feel any pressure to join a specific group? Explain.
  - d. How did you feel about your group members' participation and English use?
5. Another major change was the options on the homework. How did you feel about this change?
6. How often did you complete all parts of the homework? Explain.
7. Do you feel these changes were useful for you? Explain.
8. Did you enjoy the changes to the class? Explain.
9. Was there anything you didn't like about these changes?
10. What did you learn from this new style (having options)?

## A DIFFERENTIATED APPROACH TO ONLINE LEARNING

11. What could be done differently?
12. What advice would you give students who have a class like this?
13. Is there anything you would like to say that I did not ask you about?