
DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION: BENEFITS AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES IN ENGLISH CLASS

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Abstract- *This study aims to describe the benefits and implementation of Differentiated Instruction by teachers in English classes. Qualitative methods are used to extract information from sources. Data was collected using interviews which consisted of several questions referring to indicators from the theory used. Then, Data analysis is carried out in three ways, including organizing and categorizing data, compiling the context of information that has been obtained, and abstracting key ideas that have been expressed. As a result, teachers implement Differentiated Instruction according to the curriculum and student needs. Students are divided into three types according to differences in students abilities, and teachers provide different treatment according to students' abilities. Then, an assessment will be carried out using observations based on student performance. Meanwhile, the benefits of DI can accommodate student needs and be more effective in involving students in the learning process. Students can get a fair opportunity from the teacher based on the level of ability obtained from the pre-assessment for learning objectives to be achieved. It is feasible to apply DI in the teaching and learning process for educators. Teachers can quickly ascertain the learning capabilities and preferred learning styles of their students.*

Keywords: *differentiated instruction; implementation; benefits, English classroom.*

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INTRODUCTION

In the implementation of learning, the teacher found problems that occurred, including the classroom atmosphere, learning environment, student interest, and differences in ability gaps in the students themselves. Therefore, teachers need to find the right teaching strategies to overcome these problems. Of the several approaches or strategies that can be used for teaching, Differentiated Instruction (DI) is recommended. DI is needed because it can assist teachers in maximizing the implementation of learning in class with the diversity of students in terms of talents, intelligence, interests, culture, learning styles, or others while still adjusting to the curriculum, learning resources,

activities, and learning methods, as well as other activities so that student needs can be fulfilled (Aziz et al., 2019). In its implementation, the teacher adjusts the pace of teaching according to the learning styles, interests and needs of students to achieve learning goals (Aziz et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2014). Thus, in the application of DI, teachers have a terrific opportunity to change students who focus on achieving the same student's academic goals even with different teaching media so that the process of achieving these goals becomes something unique for each student (Lauria, 2010; Levy, 2008). Moreover, DI is a teaching approach that focuses on curriculum, classroom environment, teaching, class management, and assessment (Tomlinson, 2015).

DI is an approach that is used by teachers to maximize the student's potential in learning. Tomlinson (2015) defines a teaching philosophy known as DI based on the idea that students learn best when teachers assist the difference in preparations, interests, and learning profiles of their students. According to Hall (as cited in Subban (2006), DI is to differentiate knowledge of various backgrounds, preparations, languages, interests, and learning profiles. Tomlinson (2014) also mentioned that DI is a response by teachers to diverse learning needs in class. Gadzikowski (2013) stated that DI alters the instruction, strategies, or resources to meet all learner's unique needs. She also stated that DI has been favored in education for special needs, but developing research further supports the fact that DI is also effective in mixed-ability classes at both primary and secondary levels. Bajrami (2013) refers to DI as a primeval idea that increases the civilizing humanity that continues to profile the practice in the classroom where the basis of every vocation is formed by critical thinking and problem-solving.

According to Tomlinson (2001), there are three ways to DI: 1) content, the lesson content should cover the learning standards set by school or state educational standards. However, some students may be completely unfamiliar with the lesson concepts, having partial mastery or familiarity with the content before the beginning of the lesson. 2) Process, each student has a variety of styles in learning. A successful differentiation includes the material delivery to each style (visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic) and through words. This means that in this process, not all students require the same amount of support from the teacher and students could choose to work in pairs, groups, or individually. Teachers were still able to enhance students' learning by offering support.

3) Product, is what the student creates to show the results of study at the end of the lesson. It can be in the form of tests, projects, reports, or other activities.

The researchers aimed to describe and to know how the implementation of DI was used by teachers at SMPN 10 Pontianak as well as to find out the benefits of differentiated instruction at SMPN 10 Pontianak. The researcher believes this research can be very useful for teachers who want to implement DI in the teaching and learning process. This approach also asked to be used in this new curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) in Indonesia, which makes this research very useful for teachers or other researchers. The researchers used a descriptive qualitative method to describe the data of this research. The data was taken by interviewing the English teacher. After receiving the data, the researcher describes the data in words and concludes the objective of this research.

Based on the result of observation that had been conducted at SMPN 10 Pontianak, the researchers found out that one out of four English Teachers use DI at SMPN 10 Pontianak. The teacher implements this approach by asking students to do a test to ensure the potential of the students. After getting the results of the test, the teacher divides them into groups. The group was created based on the results of the test. The smart group would help the other groups who do not understand the materials. By helping friends and asking questions in the classroom, the students could also improve their English-speaking skills. The teacher also used tests to know the ability of students and the test given every meeting.

Several previous studies have researched DI. First, conducted by Wulandari (2019), five indicators – the physical setting, lecturer conduct, blind students' engagement, tools or resources, and instructional strategies – were used by the researcher to examine the data. Researchers discovered that there are advantages and disadvantages to using DI for visually challenged students in English Translation programs. In terms of lecturer conduct, this method can meet the demands of blind students; nevertheless, it is less effective in terms of material or resources. The difference between the research conducted by Wulandari (2019) is the aim to know the implementation of differentiated instruction towards blind students in ELT mainstream classes while the researchers aimed to find the use of DI in the teaching and learning process through implementation and the benefits.

The second previous study was from Robinson et al. (2014). This study employed a case study methodology to examine the effective implementation of differentiated teaching by teacher participants from elementary, middle, and high schools. This article will address the notion that varied education is critical for student achievement and the results of how it fulfills the requirements of all students. The difference between the research conducted by Robinson et al. (2014) and this research is their research covers the curiosity of the perception of the use of DI in the process of teaching and learning while this research covers the curiosity of how to implement and the benefits in using differentiated instruction.

Next, the previous study was from Sibanda (2021), the research conducted by Sibanda used differentiated instruction to find the teacher's perspective in the teaching and learning process while in this research. The results showed that teachers thought DI was important because of the growing variety of learners. However, they believed that because of the various difficulties that many communities and schools were facing, DI was not living up to its promise. Last, a study from Tohn (2019). His study sought to ascertain if DI enhances English Language Arts performance for secondary-level pupils. Student engagement gains seen by the instructor imply that differentiation could help create a supportive learning environment in the classroom, which has been linked to higher achievement. Both studies show a positive point of view about DI. Meanwhile, this research will describe how teachers implement DI in terms of Tomlinson's theory and the benefits felt by teachers after implementing DI.

In hopes that this research can be useful in the future, the researcher provides several benefits. For readers, the result of this research can be used as a guideline to know the implementation of differentiated instruction and also to know the benefits of using differentiated instruction in the process of teaching and learning. For teachers, the result of this research gives information about the implementation of differentiated instruction and also the benefits of using differentiated instruction in the teaching and learning process. The researcher believes this research can be used as a reference to other researchers who want to conduct research in the same field.

METHODS

Research design

A descriptive qualitative approach was used to describe the research data. According to Joubish et al., (2011), qualitative research aimed to explain and provide reasons, rather than just summarizing the findings and study methodology. However, he said that this kind of study works with unstructured data and is dependent on people's actions, views, beliefs, worries, motives, goals, and cultural or lifestyle practices. Creswell (2012) states that the descriptive method's goal is to methodically uncover in-depth justifications and descriptions for the research target. The explanation led the researcher to the conclusion that the descriptive qualitative approach involves identifying causes and explanations before methodically outlining the unstructured outcomes of the study's findings.

Data Collection

For this study, the researcher collected data through interviews. Ary et al., (2010) state that gathering people's opinions, beliefs, or sentiments about a subject is a common practice in interviewing and one of the fundamental techniques for gathering qualitative data. To know how to implement DI in the teaching and learning process and to discover the benefits of using it to train students, the researcher conducted a structured interview with an English teacher at SMPN 10 Pontianak. A semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to change the style or questions as needed, using open-ended questions to elicit information that is crucial to comprehending the study's findings. These are the procedures the researcher used to get the data for this study, are: creating inquiries for interviews, interviewing with the SMPN 10 Pontianak English teacher, using a voice recorder or phone to capture the data, and transcribing the gathered material into a transcript.

Data analysis

In the process of data analysis, the researcher organizes the data and categorizes the data patterns, to decide which data suits the objective of the research. Afterward, compiling the context from the information gleaned from the arranged data. Lastly, abstracting the crucial comprehension of the facts while expressing the participant's

words and behaviors. Three phases are involved in data analysis, according to Ary et al., (2010), these steps include: (1) Data organization and familiarization: To get well-organized and identifiable data, the researcher first classifies the data, looks for patterns in the data, and determines which data should be analyzed in light of the study's goals; (2) Coding and reduction: categorizing the code to summarize, pick the highlights, concentrate on what matters, and eliminate extraneous information; (3) Interpreting and portraying entails taking the study participant's words and actions and abstracting key ideas that have been expressed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Benefits of Differentiated Instruction

The researchers were able to find the benefits of DI based on data collected from the interview with the English Teacher. According to teacher perception, the benefit of DI is DI accommodates the student's needs. The process in the classroom includes greater student engagement and greater confidence for students and teachers. Then, the teacher makes customized adjustments to accommodate each student's individual preferences and requirements. This personalized approach ensures that our teaching method aligns with what works best for each student. In using DI, students received different approaches from the teacher according to students' competence in learning comprehension. In the context of differentiated learning, students receive distinct teaching approaches tailored to their levels of competence. Lower-achieving students are provided with assignments that are less complex to support their foundational learning, while concurrently, the teacher introduces more advanced material to medium and high-achieving students during their exercises.

Furthermore, DI can be beneficial for teachers when differentiating students through early assessment because it can help teachers to know the students' competence and understand students' learning styles. Through these assessments and observations, teachers will be able to know the best way to share and teach the material to the students equally. The process of differentiating students through early assessments serves as a valuable tool for teachers to gain insight into students' capabilities and early

comprehension, while also considering their learning styles. Lastly, DI gave teachers a variety of options in sharing their material and gave the students the option to choose how the material could be presented. The teacher also believes that by implementing DI, the learning process becomes more effective by involving students in it.

The Classroom Practices of Differentiated Instruction

In this case, DI is only used by one English teacher at SMPN 10 Pontianak. To find out how teachers implement DI, this research refers to Tomlinson (2001), who said that DI has several ways, including "content, process, products". Content includes what students are learning, the process of how students will learn it, and the product of how students will demonstrate what they have learned (Ismajli & Morina, 2018). Furthermore, the findings of each indicator are described as follows:

Content

For this indicator, the researcher identified the teacher's plan and how to deliver learning content using DI. Based on the results of the interviews, the teacher delivered content according to learning standards that referred to the curriculum. Then, it is related to the type of material used by the teacher taken from the previous curriculum and refers to students' abilities. In practice in class, the process of delivering material using DI includes differences in the level of difficulty of the content to be given according to the abilities and competencies of students. Before starting the learning process, the teacher conducts a pre-test to determine the level of student ability. Furthermore, based on the results of the pre-test, students were divided into three groups: low, medium, and high-achieving students. Teachers provide content that is easy for students who have low achievements. Meanwhile, for students who have high achievement, the teacher will give them a challenge, and for students with medium achievement, the content level is moderate. The teacher's main focus is on students who have low achievement. For example, if the teacher teaches about "simple present tense" in the text "Scripted text", for example. For students with low achievement, the teacher will give them only the "to be, am, is, and are" things. Then, for moderate achievers, students might start by giving them besides "to be, am, is, are" and also about action verbs with an auxiliary verb like

"do and does". Lastly, the teacher will give the high-achieving students a challenge. The teacher gives them a challenge by making a text, for example.

Process

This indicator is related to the material delivery method that can cover all students' different learning styles. At the beginning of the meeting, the teacher gives a non-cognitive test. In this test, the teacher asks questions about the learning styles students have, the social media students use, student learning readiness, and their initial knowledge of the material to be provided. Suppose the test results show that students have a learning style that tends to be visual and auditory, so the teacher will deliver the material using audio-visual such as video. In addition, the pre-test or assessment is carried out to determine student competencies, learning styles, and interests. After that, based on the test results, the teacher divided the students into 3 study groups, namely students with low, medium, and high achievements. In learning activities, the teacher gives personal projects and also group projects. In one group, there are three types of students. So that high-achieving students can help low or medium-achieving students. Thus, in this case, the teacher's role is as a facilitator, and the teacher is not the only one who can help students.

Product

Product is related to the learning outcomes demonstrated by students at the end of learning, which includes projects, reports, tests, and other activities. In this case, teachers can find out the development of student performance by conducting tests and observing the student's character and performance. Furthermore, at the end of the lesson, the teacher gives a written test and an oral test, as well as making observations on the student's character. From the results found, sometimes students get poor achievement results, but they have a positive attitude towards the material the teacher conveys, so there is progress from tests and reflection. After teaching one meeting, the teacher gives students a test. However, sometimes teachers can also give formative tests after several meetings. Then, the teacher will give a summative test after teaching several chapters. The aim is to determine the progress of student knowledge and determine student performance. Furthermore, teachers not only carry out tests to determine students'

cognitive abilities but also check students' character regarding the way students collaborate with friends, students' religiosity, attitudes towards global diversity, collaboration abilities, ability to solve their problems, critical thinking, and creativity.

Discussion

Based on teacher perception, DI accommodates the student's needs. Stated by Tomlinson (2014) about DI being learner-centered by nature. Meaning it focuses on students' needs. The process in the classroom includes greater student engagement and greater confidence for students and teachers. In line, Djatmika & Astutik (2023) stated that classroom practices of DI prioritize the learning process which is carried out by adjusting student characteristics and student needs to realize an increase in the quality of learning outcomes. In addition, they also stated that directing learning to the characteristics of different students, will create a positive environment and increase academic achievement, students will become more active, and be able to form their study groups.

Furthermore, teachers also believe that by implementing DI, the learning process becomes more effective by involving students in it. Students get fair opportunities and teachers treat students based on the level obtained from the pre-assessment so that learning objectives can be achieved. In this case, teachers have an important role in controlling learning activities to develop the student learning environment, and student interaction, and even encourage student academic motivation so that learning activities are completed (Djatmika & Astutik, 2023; Maulana et al., 2016). Additionally, DI also offered teachers a range of choices for presenting their content and offered students the freedom to select how it would be presented. This information supports the findings of Strogilos (2018), who claimed that diversified teaching enhances students' learning experiences by presenting the material in several ways and giving them a choice to pique their interest. Strogilos's statements also supported by Weselby (2014) stated DI triggers strong curiosity because the students will explore more.

Then, based on the findings in terms of the implementation of DI, it appears that teachers refer to the curriculum before carrying out learning. This is in line with what was stated by Tomlinson (2001) in implementing DI, learning content must include learning standards that have been set by the school. In this case, the learning standard that is the

reference is the curriculum that is currently being used. Teachers are supposed to be adept at giving students access to the curriculum for learning, which comprises content, flexible task appropriateness, extensive, collaborative research tools, and continual reflection, for students to succeed in their learning activities (Brimijoin, 2010). Furthermore, the teacher will give an initial non-cognitive test to students to determine students' learning styles, competencies, and interests, to ensure that the content delivered matches the students' character so that learning objectives can be achieved. Then, even though the material presented is the same, the method of delivery is still adapted to the diversity, complexity, and needs of students (Kamarulzaman et al., 2017; Huebner, 2010). It is important to know the student's learning style at the beginning so that the learning method or approach used by the teacher matches the student's character so that learning outcomes can be achieved as expected. This statement follows a review conducted by Nicholls (2002) which states that if learning styles and teaching methods are compatible, students can achieve high academic achievement. Thus, it can be recommended that teachers need to know students' learning styles before determining the teaching methods to be used and carrying out learning activities. However, there are still challenges for teachers to implement learning that is classified based on student learning styles (Tulbure, 2011).

Furthermore, the DI learning model by Tomlinson describes that teachers in planning learning need to know several components (readiness, interests, and learning styles) to determine the pedagogical components of student involvement during the learning process (Kamarulzaman et al., 2017). As explained above, the teacher asks questions about learning styles, readiness to learn, social media use, and basic knowledge. Then the teacher also carries out a pre-test which is used as the basis for dividing student groups based on the abilities and competencies they have. The level of readiness and interest of students is also a consideration in grouping students (Kamarulzaman et al., 2017). Teachers must consider these elements to guide their pupils toward realizing their potential (Tomlinson, 1999). Dividing groups according to students' ability levels can help students learn at their own pace and in their way of learning (Bajrami, 2013). In this context, teachers can create variations in terms of complexity by considering the uniqueness of students so that they can motivate them (Taylor, 2015; Bajrami, 2013). In addition, the purpose of these groupings is for students to collaborate, cooperate, and interact as they develop the knowledge gained from the content being studied (Huebner,

2010). This grouping also has a positive influence in encouraging student involvement, a learning environment, and building new knowledge for students (Brimijoin, 2010).

It can be seen that the teacher tries to organize and control his class so that learning activities can cover the needs of students with various student abilities. Conceptually, the teacher's role is as an information facilitator while students are the main actors in developing their knowledge through the activities carried out (Robinson et al., 2014). However, Robinson et al., (2014) in their study stated that for teachers to be able to effectively implement DI successfully, it requires time and teacher professional development to meet the needs of each student in a comprehensive learning environment. Thus, in this case, the teacher must be really careful in managing his class in implementing effective DI, and teachers need to consider strategies in delivering content to operate the class effectively by implementing DI (Huebner, 2010). From the research results, teachers also use several technologies in delivering material, and the choice of technology has been adjusted to the characteristics of students' learning styles. Using technology can divide groups into more flexible groups and using videos can enrich the learning environment to make it look more professional and make students more comfortable (Rasheed & Wahid, 2018; Sibanda, 2021).

After the learning process has been carried out, in the context of the "product" it is time to see and show what students have learned (Taylor, 2015). In this stage, teachers can also determine the various types of assessments that will be used to assess student performance (Taylor, 2015). Based on the findings, teachers carry out several types of assessments, both cognitive and non-cognitive, such as character and attitude by making observations. Teachers who understand the concept of differentiation use sustainable assessment patterns that are appropriate to content, processes, and products (Brimijoin, 2010). Furthermore, Huebner (2010) stated that assessment can be carried out in several forms, including interviews, work assessments, surveys, formal assessments, and informal assessments. The assessment is designed to determine students' overall level of understanding regarding linear functions and to be a link between teaching and assessment in the application of DI (Davis & Autin, 2020). But behind all the series of assessments, designing assignments, and learning sequences carried out by teachers, this is a time-consuming and very challenging endeavor (Westbroek et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

Primarily, Differentiated Instruction starts from the characteristics, interests, readiness, and learning styles of students. With this diversity, teachers take a learning approach that can deliver the same material but adapt it to student needs, student learning speed, and student achievement. A non-cognitive pre-test needs to be carried out to identify this diversity. Then, the teacher designs learning using DI starting from planning, implementation, and assessment. These three elements are known as "content, process, and product". In short, the researchers concluded that it is possible to implement DI for teachers to use for the teaching and learning process. Teachers can easily find students' capability in learning and students' preferred style of learning. DI gives more options for the students in learning because, in DI, other students can become another source of knowledge besides the teacher. The use of DI also focuses on the students' needs in learning because the teacher conducts an early assessment to observe and gather information about students' learning abilities and preferred learning styles. This part can be very beneficial for both teachers and students because low-achieving students can be prioritized more with the help of higher-achieving students which may create equal understanding for all students in the class.

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