

Exploring Differentiated Learning in the Independent Curriculum for English Subject at Islamic Junior High School

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ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran berdiferensiasi merupakan pendekatan pembelajaran untuk memaksimalkan potensi siswa dari berbagai latar belakang kecerdasan yang beragam dengan menyediakan variasi dalam hal konten pembelajaran, proses pembelajaran, dan produk yang harus dihasilkan oleh peserta didik dalam pembelajaran. Pendekatan ini menjadi salah satu metode Guru untuk mengakomodasi gaya belajar siswa yang beragam. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi penerapan pembelajaran berdiferensiasi dalam Kurikulum Merdeka pada mata pelajaran Bahasa Inggris di MTs As-Sholihuddin. Sekolah ini dipilih menjadi subjek penelitian karena di sekolah tersebut Guru yang bersangkutan telah menerapkan pembelajaran berdiferensiasi. Adapun data dalam penelitian ini diperoleh melalui observasi pada saat pembelajaran di kelas dan wawancara kepada Guru dan lima siswa. Observasi dilakukan dengan mengamati secara langsung proses belajar-mengajar, sedangkan wawancara dilakukan dengan mengajukan pertanyaan kepada Guru dan beberapa siswa. Data kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teori Milles dan Huberman melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Selanjutnya, kesimpulan hasil penelitian ditetapkan berdasarkan data yang telah diperoleh, dianalisis, dan diperiksa dengan detail. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa diferensiasi konten, diferensiasi proses, dan diferensiasi produk (hasil belajar) telah diterapkan oleh Guru. Selain itu, keterbatasan waktu dan masalah konsentrasi siswa pada pembelajaran merupakan salah satu kendala yang dihadapi Guru. Penelitian ini merencanakan adanya penelitian lanjutan dengan pendekatan metode yang berbeda misalnya menggunakan kuantitatif, *mixed-method*, atau *Classroom Action research* (CAR)

Kata Kunci: Exploring, Implementation, Differentiated Learning, Independent Curriculum, English Subject

INTRODUCTION

The development of education in Indonesia is inseparable from curriculum changes, which inevitably undergo a periodic evaluation process. The curriculum is a tool used to achieve educational goals; therefore, the curriculum can be said to be a reference for the process of implementing education in Indonesia (Angga et al. 2022). Nowadays, education also recognizes the importance of developing students' skills apart from academic aspects, such as collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. Hence, Innovating the curriculum is needed (Lailatul 2023). Yet, the Merdeka curriculum is an innovative initiative in the field of education in Indonesia that aims to provide flexibility for teachers in planning learning experiences according to the needs and characteristics of students (Nahdhiah and Suciptaningsih 2024). The goal of this curriculum is to give students more freedom in education and to develop their potential according to the interests and talents of the teachers and students themselves (Fauzia and Ramadan 2023). Concerning independent curriculum education, there are many different teaching methods that can be applied in the teaching and learning process, and one alternative teaching strategy that can be provided to students is differentiated learning. This is an approach or model for the development and implementation of education in schools that aims to maximize the potential and competencies of different student classes by providing various content, processes, and products to be created (Saputra 2020). Besides, differentiated learning is an attempt to improve learning outcomes, students' interests, and learning profiles (Solikhin, Seno, and Utami 2023). Also, differentiated learning aims at providing opportunities for students to get learning that suits their characteristics and needs. Therefore, differentiated learning is one way for teachers to adjust to their students' abilities, learning styles, and needs (Fauziyah and Rofiki 2024).

The implementation of differentiated learning at MTS As-Sholihuddin was as a form of effort to meet the diverse learning needs of students (Wahyuningsari et al. 2022). The teachers should implement differentiated learning in three aspects, the first, content, process and product, so teachers can identify these aspects to help students understand the subject matter (Aprima and Sari 2022). In this learning, there is an aspect of differentiated content, which refers to what students learn and relates to the curriculum and learning materials provided by teachers. They can use a variety of strategies to differentiate content (Adilah maulida 2024). In terms of process differentiation, which is the way of processing information, or any activity to gain understanding, knowledge, and skills related to the material. In terms of process differentiation, the activity is to gain understanding, knowledge, and skills related to the material and use various learning methods such as group discussions, collaborative projects which is done to adjust students' learning styles (Purwowododo and Zaini, 2019). The last step of product differentiation is the work or performance shown by learners in any form. Students are given the freedom to show their understanding through various forms of tasks such as presentations, writing, or videos (Purwowododo and Zaini 2019).

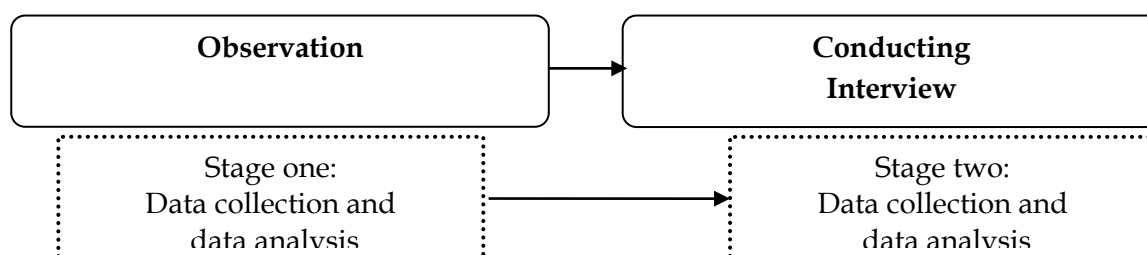
The implementation of this learning implementation can foster students' confidence in the results of their work. Besides, it can increase student potential, an active role, and find out the interests of students' talents in a field (Barlian et al. 2023). In its implementation, the teacher plays an important role, namely acting as a facilitator who actively assists students in achieving optimal learning goals. The purpose of implementing differentiated learning is to accommodate differences in students' abilities, interests, and needs to improve motivation, learning outcomes, and independence. In addition, this approach strengthens the positive relationship between teachers and students and encourages teachers to continue to develop professionally and become more innovative in teaching (Siska, 2024). Furthermore, the implementation of differentiated learning will be explored, which is focused on how the implementation of differentiated learning is used in the independent curriculum in English subjects. therefore, the researcher conducted

research with the title “Exploring Differentiated Learning in The Independent Curriculum for English Subjects”

METHOD OF RESEARCH

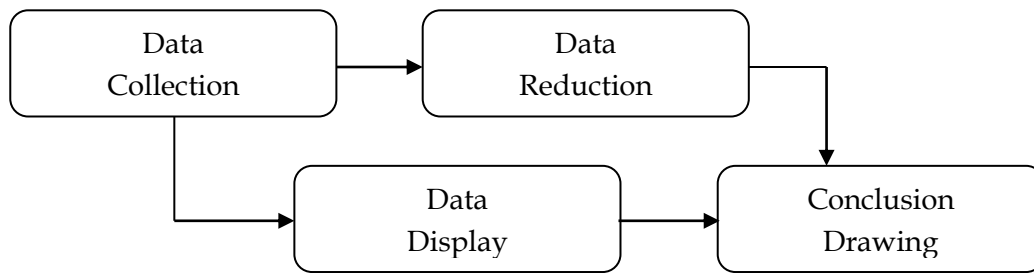
This research took a descriptive qualitative. This research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a human social problem (Creswell 2020). Specifically, the purpose of this research was to explore the implementation of differentiated learning of independent curriculum in English subjects at MTs As-Sholihuddin. This was addressed by focusing on the implementation of the differentiated learning applied by the teacher, and the students’ responses towards the learning. The participants of this study were an English teacher who actively implements differentiated instruction and all members of the class in the observation, and only five students chosen to represent academic styles, and classroom engagement involving in the interview activity. Those who were involved in the interview were selected purposively by some criteria such as the level of academic styles and classroom engagement.

Then, the data were obtained by observation (field notes) the teaching and learning activities and interviewing (open-ended) with the teachers and five students. The observation was done through direct observation of the teaching and learning process, while the interview was done by asking some questions to the teacher and students. The observation was the main data collection technique, and the interview was utilized to verify and recheck the data gained from the observation. In this phase, an iterative technique was applied. The data collection was described as below;



Data Collection Procedure

The data were then analysed in three phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing as proposed by (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Then, the conclusions were drawn from the data which have been obtained, analyzed, and checked based on evidence that was found at the research location. (Zulfirman 2022). The data collection was done by taking a field notes in the classroom observation and data from interview with the teacher and five students. Then, the data both of fieldnotes and transcript of interview were reduced to match with the themes of research. Further, the fixed data were displayed to show the finding matching the topic research. Then, the researchers made a conclusion based on the data. On the other hand, the data analysis was drawn as below;



Data Analysis Steps

Yet, trustworthiness as methodological triangulation of this research was used with data collection triangulation by combining direct observation (field notes) semi-structured interviews (teacher and students). Further, credibility and confirmability related to trustworthiness were employed to decrease the bias of the researchers. The observation checklist was used to achieve credibility. Further, the result of the interview with the teacher and some students was done to confirm the confirmability or validity.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Differentiated Learning

Dealing with the findings, the data of observation results show that the teacher applied some aspects of differentiated learning, such as content, process, and product differentiation. The content differentiation was provided by the teacher in the form of videos, texts, and visual images to match students' learning styles. This was done to cover students' learning needs or style, such as visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic. Yet, process differentiation was employed by dividing the students into groups based on their ability (high, medium, low) to work on tasks of different difficulty levels. This was carried out to help the students achieve learning goals in a way that suits their abilities. In terms of product differentiation, the students were given a choice of making a presentation, writing a report, or making a poster to demonstrate understanding of the material. This was constructed to provide space for student expression and creativity according to their ability. Based on the results of the observation sheet that has been carried out, the researcher found that there are three aspects used by teacher in the classroom, namely differentiation of content, differentiation of process, and differentiation of product.

Observation Result

Observed aspect	Classroom Description	Practice	Objectives	Obstacles
Content Differentiated (What is taught)	Teachers provide materials in the form of videos, texts, and visual images to match students' learning styles.		Provide access to learning according to students' needs and learning styles (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic).	In this context, teachers experience time constraints in preparing materials that can accommodate student diversity.
Process Differentiated (How to learn)	Students are divided into groups based on ability (high, medium, low) to work on tasks of different difficulty levels.		Helping all students achieve learning goals in a way that suits their abilities.	Teachers said that lack of time and student concentration are challenges in implementing a varied learning process, while low student concentration causes the effectiveness of the differentiation approach to be reduced.
Product Differentiated (Learning outcome)	Students are given a choice: make a presentation, write a report, or make a poster to demonstrate understanding of the material		Provide space for student expression and creativity according to their strengths.	Teachers provide various forms of evaluation such as presentations, writings, projects or creative assignments which require more time in preparation and assessment.
Learning environment	The teacher creates a flexible classroom environment: discussion area, self-study area, and question and answer area.		Increase learning comfort and motivation with an adaptive environment	Students' lack of concentration is also related to environmental conditions in the classroom, such as an uncondusive classroom atmosphere, noise level, and inflexible seating.

Besides, the findings of observation were also verified by the results of interviews with the English teacher and students to strengthen the research results. The following are the results of interviews with English teachers about the implementation of differentiated learning used by teachers in the learning process in English subjects. "As a teacher, I conduct a diagnostic assessment at the beginning of learning to understand the level of student readiness. Based on

the explanation above, I design learning activities that are tailored to the needs of each student. Then in class, I use a mixture of individual tasks and group work, including content, process, and product learning to students' abilities and interests" (Mrs. S May). During the observation, the researcher found that they listened to the video that had been displayed on the projector and noted important points. After the video was understood, the teacher gave the questions to the students.

Further, during this activity, there were some students who had difficulty translating. The teacher helped with the students' difficulties. After completing the questions, the students collected them to be corrected, and at the same time, grouped the students' names according to their abilities. After that, at the second hour meeting (after the break) the teacher announced the results of grouping the names of group members according to their abilities, namely the visual review group (video review), narrative research (story analysis), and written response (question work) then the teacher asked to gather according to their respective groups. This grouping was included as process content. In this phase, the teacher asks students to listen carefully to the learning video and note down the points conveyed in the video. To adapt the learning approach to the needs of students, the teacher categorizes their learning styles into three main types, namely 1) narrative review 2) visual review 3) written response.

Yet, this approach reflects the teacher's efforts to accommodate the diversity of student learning styles to improve learning effectiveness. Next, the teacher makes adjustments to student content based on the level of knowledge and understanding of learners, presented with various learning styles of students. Then the teacher gives questions and corrects the results of the students' answers. Besides, the teachers also provide opportunities for students to actively participate in learning, to ask questions during the learning process. By doing this, the students' participation has an improvement in learning outcomes, and positive feedback from students. This activity was determining product content (student performance results). Then, after all groups came forward, the teacher conveyed some wrong answers and speech as a form of evaluation. Yet, the teacher gives awards to each group that has performed well, and conveys the results of their discussion.

Related to content differentiation, it should be employed to meet students' learning activities, interests, and learning profiles (Sitorus et al. 2022). This learning process should adjust and meet the students' needs (Tomlinson, 2014). Further, applying content differentiation is one of the ways to address the students' diversity capacity on the subject matter in a teaching and learning process in one class (Astuti and Afendi, 2022). By designing content differentiation, the students can feel enjoyable during the learning process (Fatmawati *at all*, 2023). On the other hand, this differentiated learning strategy has a significant effect in improving student learning results because this learning strategy requires students to be active in seeking knowledge according to their respective learning styles. In the learning process, students learn based on their respective groups of learning styles, which are guided directly by the teacher. In brief, the implementation of differentiated learning consisted

Advantages of implementing differentiated learning

One of the main benefits of differentiated learning is that it increases students' motivation to learn. The classroom atmosphere becomes more inclusive, and students feel valued and more active in the learning process. This was as stated by the interview result with the English teacher. *"One of the main benefits is that most students become more motivated and the classroom atmosphere becomes more inclusive, and students feel more valued and actively participate in the learning process; they are more excited because they feel that the material provided is within their abilities"*. From the above information above the teacher said that by using this learning, students not only gain knowledge

about the material that has been delivered, but students can also actively participate in the learning process, and they understand the material according to their abilities, so they feel happy and comfortable during the learning process.

Obstacles in differentiated learning

Besides, the teacher also found the obstacles faced by English teachers. Based on the interview with the teacher, the obstacles encountered by English teachers in differentiated learning in English subjects are time constraints and concentration. This learning requires more time for implementation and evaluation. Furthermore, the teacher needs to prepare a variety of materials, methods, and forms of assessment to suit students' diverse needs, interests, and learning styles. The second is concentration; time constraints hinder the flexibility and depth of the differentiation approach, while concentration constraints affect the effectiveness of implementing varied learning. Therefore, teachers need efficient time management strategies. *"Yes, the obstacles faced when implementing this learning are time and concentration, because this learning requires more time and concentration, so that each child is comfortable learning according to their abilities"*. According to the description of the English teacher above, it explains that two main obstacles were faced by the teacher in implementing differentiated learning in the classroom: teachers have constraints on limited time and concentration. differentiated learning makes teachers have to work more than usual, and teachers must continue to pay attention to various groups of students simultaneously. this is because there are demands in varying learning.

Differentiated Learning on Students' Activity in the Classroom

Applying differentiated learning brings a positive impact on the students. They feel happy with the implementation of differentiated learning. Students think that this learning has a good impact on them, starting from learning that is fun, because while playing to their active participation skills increase, and students easily understand because of the game when the learning process takes place. This was expressed by a number of students in interviews. *"In my opinion, differentiated learning is a teaching method where the teacher adapts his teaching methods to the needs and abilities of each student through videos, some read, some prefer to discuss in groups. So this learning is very helpful and makes us all happy"* (Interview Z.A.S). *"Yes, I feel helpful and comfortable and I understand English more easily"* (Interview P.R.M). *"I feel that I participate more actively in the implementation of differentiated learning, because the methods used are in accordance with my learning style, and I feel that the teacher understands my individual needs better."* (Interview F.A.S).

Further, differentiated learning is very important to meet the needs of students in learning and find what students need for further learning. This result supported by several previous studies which also revealed similar to the research (Hidayati and Sujarwati 2023). Further, differentiated learning strategy is learning process that emphasize' diversity, make teacher understand what are differentiation of students. Besides, differentiated learning strategies help students in the learning process, improve students' abilities and learning objectives can be achieved by all students (Komang Arie Suwastini 2021). Also, by differentiated learning, the students can be adaptive and independent learners (Cahyanto 2022). Overall, differentiated learning is effective to improve students' academic achievement (Sitorus et al. 2022)

CONCLUSION

This research revealed the implementation of differentiated learning in the independent curriculum in the English Subject such differentiation content, differentiation process, and differentiation product. This learning was used to address for implementing and practicing, and making students a more active role in the classroom. Besides, the researchers found the barriers faced by the teacher during applying the differentiated learning the classroom such constraints of

time and concentration. Further, this learning requires more time for implementation and evaluation. Hence, the concentration constraints affect the effectiveness of implementing varied learning. Further, this research recommends future educational research to consider such as Mixed-Methods or Experimental Designs to directly evaluate the statistical impact of differentiated instruction on specific English language skills such reading comprehension, speaking fluency. Besides, Action Research (CAR) is also recommended for Practical Interventions to develop and test concrete pedagogical interventions specifically designed to mitigate time constraints and maintain student concentration during differentiated activities.

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