



Differentiated Learning in Teaching English Subject of The Merdeka Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examines the implementation of differentiated learning in teaching English at the senior high school level, focusing on its strengths and challenges within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. Differentiated learning is applied through content, process, and product, allowing teachers to tailor instruction to students' needs. The findings highlight benefits such as enhancing student engagement, accommodating diverse learning styles, and fostering personalized instruction. However, challenges include complex lesson planning, inadequate school facilities, and inconsistencies in teaching approaches. The study emphasizes the need for teacher training, technical support, and infrastructure improvements to optimize its implementation. **Method:** This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach at Senior High School 1 Garawangi, Kuningan Regency, West Java. Data were collected through classroom observations and teacher interviews with 13 structured questions. The analysis explores how differentiated learning aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum, along with its practical challenges. **Results:** The study reveals that differentiated learning enhances student participation and learning outcomes but presents difficulties such as complex preparation, resource constraints, and varied teacher competencies. The study suggests enhancing teacher training, providing technical guidance, and improving school facilities. **Novelty:** This research provides new insights into differentiated learning within the Merdeka Curriculum, specifically in English language teaching, contributing to effective instructional strategies in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Curriculum, which was developed as a new strategy that theoretically incorporates both institutions and students in the learning process, is one of the solutions to the educational problems caused by the post-COVID-19 education crisis. It is intended that this curriculum will bring about improvements in Indonesian education that emphasize the growth of character and abilities based on learner competencies (Indarta et al., 2022). Rahina and Syamsi (2022) state that the Merdeka curriculum introduced by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, is a philosophy of change from the learning approach that has occurred so far. The Merdeka curriculum allows the educational environment to choose the optimal method to maximize learning. The implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in the 2022/2023 school year in education units is carried out through Merdeka channels. Based on the Decree of the Head of the Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 025/H/KR/2022 concerning the implementing education unit for the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum through Merdeka channels in the 2022/2023 academic year phase I, schools can implement a Merdeka curriculum with three categories, namely: a) Merdeka belajar; b) Mandiri berubah; and c) Merdeka.

Differentiated learning is a dynamic pedagogical approach designed to accommodate the diverse needs of students in heterogeneous classrooms. It considers variations in learning styles, interests, prior knowledge, and motivational levels, thereby fostering inclusivity and optimizing individual potential. This method aligns with 21st-century educational demands, emphasizing critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills. Differentiated learning strategies have significantly improved student outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Tailoring instructional methods to individual students' needs enhances engagement and understanding, allowing learners to progress at their own pace. Similarly, differentiated instruction effectively addresses misconceptions in literacy by providing tailored support, fostering deeper comprehension, and improving problem-solving capabilities.

Implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in Indonesia underscores the government's commitment to differentiated instruction. This curriculum promotes personalized learning pathways to bridge gaps in literacy and numeracy, particularly among underperforming students. Differentiation fosters concept mastery and enhances communication skills, essential for 21st-century learning. One of the critical advantages of differentiated learning is its ability to promote higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). By engaging students with tasks tailored to their readiness levels, differentiated instruction challenges them to analyze, evaluate, and create solutions, thereby nurturing critical and creative thinking. Moreover, this approach supports the development of digital and scientific literacy, equipping students to navigate the complexities of modern education and society.

Professional development is vital for the effective implementation of differentiated strategies. Keller (2018) emphasized that teachers trained in differentiated instruction are better equipped to foster student autonomy and engagement, ensuring the successful application of this approach. Teachers' ability to assess and respond to individual differences plays a crucial role in creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Despite its benefits, implementing differentiated learning requires careful planning, resources, and continuous teacher support. Effective differentiation involves adapting content and processes and modifying the learning environment to cater to diverse needs (Westman, 2023). As schools increasingly adopt this strategy, further research is needed to explore innovative practices and their long-term impact on student achievement (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2022). Blended learning models for professional development can enhance teacher effectiveness by offering flexibility and fostering collaborative learning environments (Reavis & McElderry, 2022). Furthermore, ongoing and active professional learning, as demonstrated in various programs, has been shown to lead to sustained improvements in teaching practices (Ferland, 2020; Hattie, 2021).

In conclusion, differentiated learning is a transformative strategy that aligns with the goals of modern education. Emphasizing personalized instruction enhances literacy, numeracy, and other essential 21st-century skills, preparing students to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Learning English involves diverse beliefs and approaches, with traditional and modern methods used worldwide. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education aims to equip graduates with fluent language skills, supporting teachers and students in foreign language learning despite linguistic differences. The Merdeka Curriculum offers flexibility in addressing these challenges, granting schools autonomy to design curricula that suit their students' needs (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). It fosters student engagement through a learner-centered approach (Oktoma et al., 2023), encouraging

independent study, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary learning, preparing students to navigate complex real-world problems with creativity and adaptability (Zidan & Qamariah, 2023).

The Merdeka Curriculum leverages technology to enhance learning, fostering collaboration, digital literacy, and an international mindset. It prioritizes enjoyable learning experiences, increasing student engagement through flexible methods tailored to individual interests (Nasution, 2022). Key advantages include a focus on core competencies, autonomy for teachers and students, and opportunities for independent learning, strengthening critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Maharani, 2022). In alignment with "Merdeka Belajar," differentiated learning accommodates student diversity by adjusting content, process, product, and learning environments based on readiness, interests, and learning styles (Herwina, 2021). This approach nurtures independent learners while fostering Pancasila Student Profiles, ensuring holistic development in faith, independence, collaboration, and creativity (Wahyuningsari et al., 2022; Setyaningrum et al., 2023).

Differentiated learning employs various teaching methods to accommodate students' individual needs, including knowledge levels, learning styles, and interests, ultimately enhancing motivation and learning outcomes (Setyaningrum et al., 2023; Sufyadi et al., 2021). In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, differentiated learning aligns with its principles by fostering student autonomy and adaptability in the learning process (Jasiah et al., 2024; Sianturi, 2025). However, its implementation faces limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and insufficient support from parents and the community (Ramadhan et al., 2023). Teachers' ability to understand and implement the Merdeka Curriculum remains a concern due to minimal face-to-face training and the reliance on digital platforms, which can be difficult for educators lacking digital literacy (Barlian et al., 2023). Additionally, adequate facilities, such as English labs, play a crucial role in supporting differentiated learning, particularly in language subjects (Maulana & Oktavia, 2023). Despite these challenges, the curriculum allows teachers to design instructional strategies that cater to students' individual needs, enabling them to develop according to their potential (Nafisa & Fitri, 2023).

According to Pendi et al. (2024), challenges in Implementing Differentiated Instruction in English Classes :

a) Teacher's Knowledge of DI Concept

The interview results showed that they understand the basic concept of DI, which deals with student differences such as different needs, interests, and learning styles. Teacher A, for example, confirmed the need to implement DI by referring to Ki Hajar Dewantara's quote that every child has a different character.

b) Challenges Facing Teachers in Implementing Differentiated Instruction

The data analysis results revealed several challenges teachers faced in implementing, including a big class size, a lot of time and energy in designing, creating, and preparing a lesson, and a lack of support among fellow teachers. The data analysis found that the main problem in implementing DI is when the number of students in the class is large. The teachers reported that they found it challenging to manage a class with many students in DI implementation, as it was hard to give equal attention to all students. Teachers also stated that the effect of too many students in the class makes it difficult for teachers to provide diverse students' needs because each student has a different learning style and a different level of student understanding

According to some sources above, it can be concluded that differentiated learning has several strengths and weaknesses, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The strength and weakness of differentiated learning in teaching.

| No. | The Strength | The Weakness |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | Increases learning motivation | Needs more intensive planning and preparation. |
| 2. | Maximize learning outcomes | Need extra time |
| 3. | Encourage creativity and innovation | Requires extraordinary skills and knowledge from the teacher |
| 4. | Build positive relationships between students and teacher | Requires supporting facilities |
| 5. | Developed social skill | Not serve the same standard for all students |

Teachers must assess whether differentiated learning suits their class and prepare accordingly. Understanding each student's unique needs is crucial for effective implementation. Marantika et al. (2023) emphasize that curriculum, learning, and evaluation are interconnected; thus, teachers should conduct diagnostic assessments to map student learning profiles. This mapping helps determine appropriate teaching materials, methods, media, and evaluation indicators, ensuring a structured and effective learning process. as we can see in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Three indicators in differentiated (Marantika et al., 2023).

Differentiated learning has been proven effective in addressing diverse student abilities (Magableh & Abdullah, 2020), particularly in English classrooms, as it accommodates varying readiness levels, interests, and motivation. However, challenges in its implementation have also been noted. With the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum, English teaching strategies have undergone significant changes, emphasizing the need for teachers to map students' learning needs and design instruction accordingly. Given its potential benefits and challenges, this study explores the implementation of differentiated learning in English teaching, examining its principles, success factors, and impact on student learning outcomes.

This research provides a novel contribution by investigating how differentiated learning aligns with the autonomy granted by the Merdeka Curriculum, offering insights into its practical implementation, effectiveness, and challenges. Unlike previous studies focusing on general applications of differentiated instruction, this study examines explicitly its role within Indonesia's evolving educational framework. By identifying best practices and potential obstacles, this research aims to support teachers in optimizing differentiated learning strategies. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the

implementation of differentiated learning in English teaching under the Merdeka Curriculum, highlighting its impact on student engagement and learning outcomes.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study focused on the accuracy level of the quality of implementing differentiated learning in teaching English. Differentiated learning is an essential approach in education that seeks to address diverse student needs by modifying content, process, and product based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. This study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how educational strategies, specifically differentiated learning, can be effectively utilized to enhance the teaching and learning of English. The research will be conducted at Senior High School 1 Garawangi, Kuningan Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia. This school was chosen because it has been implementing the Merdeka curriculum since 2022. The participants in this study include an English teacher and 33 tenth-grade students at Senior High School 1 Garawangi.



Figure 2. Research framework.

A case study was used as a research design to describe the accuracy level of implementing differentiated learning. The researcher selected the English teacher in the tenth grade based on several criteria. First, she is a certified teacher. Second, she is an active member of the MGMP (re: subject teacher meeting) forum for English teachers. Third, she has taught English for more than six years. Most importantly, she has implemented differentiated learning in her teaching practices in the tenth grade at Senior High School 1 Garawangi.

In this research, data collection is crucial in gathering information about the phenomenon under study. The researcher employed two techniques for data collection: observation and interviews. The observation sheet was developed based on Marantika's framework and consists of three main aspects: 1) Content (3 items), 2) Process (3 items), and 3) Product (2 items). A description box was also included to allow the researcher to document specific phenomena observed during the classroom sessions. This descriptive component provides an alternative way for the researcher to capture details that may not be explicitly included in the observation sheet, ensuring more comprehensive data collection.

Furthermore, a semi-structured interview was used to collect data from the teacher. The advantage of using a semi-structured interview is that it provides flexibility while

maintaining a structured framework, ensuring that the interview remains focused on relevant topics. The researcher developed an interview guideline comprising 13 questions for the teacher to explore how she applies differentiated learning in her English teaching practices and to assess its strengths and weaknesses. The interview sessions lasted between 20 to 35 minutes and were conducted in Indonesian to ensure clarity and accuracy in responses.

The data analysis technique employed in this study follows the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The collected data, including interview transcripts and observation notes, were processed systematically. Data reduction involves selecting, simplifying, and focusing on relevant data. Data display was conducted by organizing and presenting data in a structured format to facilitate analysis. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified based on patterns and themes emerging from the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Implementation of Differentiated Learning in Teaching English Subject

The section presented the findings about implementing differentiated learning in teaching English and the strengths and weaknesses of implementing differentiated learning in teaching English. The study data was taken from the observation (observation sheet) and interview process, which had been done with an English teacher at SHS 1 Garawangi. Researchers conducted research and obtained complete data from all research instruments, such as observation and interview sheets. The researcher analyzed the data systematically and accurately to achieve the research objectives. The data were analyzed to draw conclusions about the research objectives. The researcher describes the findings in this chapter in two parts. They will be described as follows:

The first part shows how the teacher implements differentiated learning in teaching English subjects; the second part is the strengths and weaknesses of differentiated learning in teaching English subjects. The writer conducted the research in 4 meetings and three meetings. In the first meeting on Thursday, March 14th, 2024, the teacher used differentiated learning in teaching English subjects based on the students' Learning interests. In this meeting, the teacher focused on the product. In the second meeting on Friday, May 3rd, 2024, the teacher used differentiated learning in teaching English for the new material analytical exposition text; the teacher gave the diagnostic assessment and then divided students based on their readiness to study; teacher grouped student base on the score that they got from diagnostic assessment, for the learning process the teacher focused on the content, the last meeting on Friday, 15 May teacher differentiated students based on their Learning interest of the student, so in this meeting, teacher focused on the product.

In order to find out the research question, the researchers used observations as the primary data and found several things related to the process of implementing learning. The first is the implementation of differentiated learning to group students based on interests and readiness. From the observation findings, researchers found the process of implementing differentiated learning. This can be seen from the teaching process carried out by the teacher. In terms of integrating the differentiated teaching process, the teachers classify students based on their learning profiles, which have been analyzed with the diagnostic assessment by the teachers. In this case, the researcher observed that teachers

successfully categorized students based on their interests and learning readiness. This is reflected at the beginning of the learning process implemented by the teacher.

After conducting the observation, the researcher found that the teaching process implemented by the teacher applied systematic differentiated learning. This is reflected in the learning activities. Teachers divide students into learning groups, which are adjusted to teach students' profiles. From the data obtained by the researchers, the teacher classifies students in the class into five learning groups, which are classified based on learning interests.



Figure 2. The observation.

The researcher used observation to conduct the observations. There are three components: 1) Content, 2) Process, and 3) Product. Regarding the content, the researcher focuses on three items: (1) teachers must use actions, concepts, generalizations, principles, attitudes, and skills; (2) align tasks with learning objectives; and (3) the content of instruction should address the same concepts in all students, but the level of complexity must be adapted according to the diversity of students.

The first item of the content is that teachers must use actions, concepts, generalizations, principles, attitudes, and skills. The teacher began the lesson by greeting the audience. After greeting the class, the teacher asked one of the students to lead the prayer, and then the teacher checked the students' attendance. Before continuing the lesson, the teacher brainstormed about the material. The teacher explained the purpose of the study during the day.

The second item of the content is aligned tasks with learning objectives; in the class, the teacher asked the students to pay attention; the English class at this meeting learned about the report text, and the teacher emphasized to students the use of differentiated learning in teaching English subjects. The teacher invites one by one of the groups to come forward. Then, the students are asked to present their work, and the teacher corrects the words that are miss pronunciations; after the students present their work, the teacher gives some questions to be discussed together, and after that, each group also has a chance to ask them one question related to the topic. The teacher helps the students who find it difficult to answer the questions.

The third item is that the instruction content should address the same concepts in all students. However, the level of complexity must be adapted according to the diversity of students. Before the teacher implements differentiated learning, the teacher gives them a diagnostic assessment based on the learning readiness of the students. The diagnostic assessment is in the form of quizzes; ten questions related to the topic have been explained before. The students are given 15 minutes to do the assessment, and after that, the teacher knows the result; from the result of the diagnostic assessment, the teacher will know about the student's readiness, the students that got high scores until the very low

score of the student. Therefore, the teacher grouped the students into three groups: (a) high-achieving students, (b) moderate-achieving students, and (c) low-achieving students) The first group got 70-100 points. Then, the second group got 50-70, and the last group got 10-50 points; they were all given the same material, but their task or questions differed. So, the number of questions and the complexity of the questions is distinguished.

The findings above were in line with Marantika et al. (2023) argument that Before drawing up a learning plan, teachers need to map the student learning profile through a diagnostic assessment. The mapping results will help teachers determine the teaching material, learning resources, methods, and learning media to be used, as well as indicators-access indicators and measurements that will be used to evaluate processes and outcomes and the action plan to be done.

Regarding the Process, the researcher focused on three items: (1) providing alternative ways of exploring the concepts of material, (2) illustrating the concept of material so that it can be understood, and (3) modifying the complexity of the illustration of the various levels of the students' cognitive.



Figure 3. Evaluation process.

The first item of the Process is providing alternative ways of exploring the concepts of the material; the teacher gives some questions related to the topic to stimulate the students, some students can answer the questions, and then the teacher starts explaining the topic through Analytical exposition text, social functions, generic structure, and language features of the topic, that the teacher is doing implementing the differentiated learning the teacher give them diagnostic assessment based on the learning readiness of the students.

The second item in the Process is illustrating the concept of material so that it can be understood; in explaining the topic about Analytical exposition text, the teacher illustrates the concept with an actual situation in daily life so that it can be seen on the video (04.03) the teacher explains about material in the following excerpt:

Teacher : “ ... topik nya berangkat dari mana? Berangkat dari suatu problem, atau masalah, dalam kehidupan sehari hari, kan selalu ada masalah, misalnya di bidang Pendidikan nih, what is the hottes issue that is happening in our education world ?....”

(...“ Where did the topic start from? Starting from a problem, or problem, in everyday life, there is always a problem. For example, in the field of education, what is the hottest issue that is happening in our education world?....”)

The third item in the Process is modifying the complexity of the illustration of the various levels of the students' cognitive. The teacher has one topic to discuss with the students: "The Dangers of Oversharing on Social Media." in this topic, teachers and students try to use their critical thinking to discuss it. The students are asked based on their learning readiness, so the questions are from different stages and have different

difficulties; these options are consistently available to cater to the students' diverse levels of ability and readiness. In this session, the teacher can know how far the students understand the topic because the teacher treats them with their learning readiness so it can be different from one other student; after finishing the learning process, the teacher asks the students to finish this topic with answering and discussing all the questions in the (student worksheet) that have been given from the teacher.

Regarding the Product, the researcher focuses on two items: (1) design the product as meaningful activities for participants as learning experiences in the classroom; (2) design the product as meaningful activities for participants as learning experiences in the classroom

The first item of the Product is distinguishing products, students can choose from a variety of tasks, before began the class teacher gave the diagnostic assessment to the students; the teacher divided students into five groups to present their work in front of the class based on the Learning interest of the student, so in this section teacher focused on the product, teacher give the kind text of topic, there are five topics (fruits, flower, animal, technology, sport). For example, if the students in the group are interested in fruits, the group can choose that topic.

The second item of the Product is designing the product as meaningful activities for participants as learning experiences in the classroom; the teacher invites one of the groups to come forward. Then, the students are asked to present their work, and the teacher corrects the words that are miss pronunciations; after the students present their work, the teacher gives some questions to be discussed together, and after that, each group also has a chance to ask them one question related to the topic. The teacher helps the students who find it difficult to answer the questions.



Figure 4. Learning experience.

This evidence corroborated the previous research conducted by Marantika et al. (2023), which in the same way explained that Differentiated learning connects the points between curriculum and the learning stages as illustrated above, explaining the correlation between Diagnostic assessment, learning process, and evaluation. Before drawing up a learning plan, teachers must map the student's profile through the diagnostic assessment. The mapping results will help teachers determine the materials, learning resources, methods, and learning media to be used, the indicators of access and measurement tools used in evaluating processes and outcomes, and the plan of action to be taken.

Besides requiring specific strategies, determining learning outcomes or evaluating students in differentiated learning is also different. Suppose, in conventional learning, the measure of student success is achieved using the minimum achievement criteria. In that case, differential learning success indicators are in the presence of a student's feeling of comfort in learning, there is an improvement in skills both in terms of complex skill or soft skills, and there is a student's learning success the student can reflect his ability

starting from the starting point of learning to self-improvement during the learning process and at the end of learning. This differentiated learning does not prioritize the achievement of the student's minimum achievement criteria as the final goal of students, but the existence of added value in a better direction. Suppose initially a student earned 40 after going through a differentiated learning process, increased to a score of 50 or 60. It indicates the student's learning progress so that the teacher does not have to force the student to reach the minimum achievement criteria target.

The teacher consistently uses a variety of formal and informal ongoing or formative assessments to follow student progress with the unit's essential knowledge, understanding, and skill. The teacher provides a variety of ways for students to show what they know, understand, and can do at the summative assessment stage. The teacher consistently uses pre-assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment data related to readiness, interest, and learning profile to inform instructional plans in the near term and to communicate more effectively with students and parents about student progress.



Figure 5. The teacher views assessment.

The teacher views assessment as a vehicle to teach for success rather than predominantly to judge students. The teacher helps students develop the perspective of assessment as a vehicle to support their effort and achievement. The teacher helps students become increasingly proficient in assessing their growth toward important goals. The teacher seeks student input and feedback on how the class works for them and ideas for making it more effective.

The Strengths and Weakness of Differentiated Learning in Teaching English Subject

In order to find out the research question, the researchers used interviews as the primary data source. They found several things related to the strengths and weaknesses of implementing differentiated learning in teaching English subjects in Senior High School 1 Garawangi. As a form of advancing and improving the quality of education, the government in Indonesia is currently taking a significant step by promoting the concept of "Merdeka Belajar" as one of the innovations in the advancement of education in Indonesia. Although this Curriculum concept has become much discussed and has brought up the concept of positive change in the education system in Indonesia, many opinions explain that the implementation process is not easy.

The researcher used the interview guide in Table 3 to conduct the interview. There are 13 questions about (1) define the concept of differentiated learning in the Merdeka Curriculum, (2) process of implementing differentiated learning (3) things should be prepare while implementing differentiated learning in teaching English (4) teachers teach material by considering the level of readiness, interests and learning styles of students (5) conducting the diagnostic assessment (6) steps do teachers take to adjust the

content, processes and products of each class based on student readiness, (7) frequently implementing differentiated learning in 1 semester (8) the strengths and weaknesses of differentiated learning based on POV (9) obstacles when implementing differentiated learning (10) facilities and infrastructure for implementing differentiated learning at SHS 1 Garawangi (11) the effectiveness implementing differentiated learning (12) the implementation of differentiated learning in Senior High School 1 Garawangi by the teacher (13) things need to be considered regarding the challenges faced by teachers when struggling to realize differentiated learning.



Figure 6. Teacher's interview process.

Regarding question number one, the teacher explained that, In concept, differentiated learning means that the learning process applied does not differentiate each student's ability level, but the teacher must apply a different learning process according to their needs. The teacher explained that the differentiated learning model is a learning theory used to implement learning and accommodate student needs in the Merdeka Curriculum. Regarding question number two, the process of implementing this differentiated learning can be started by preparing the diagnostic assessment. This is explained by the Participant in the following interview. After obtaining information from the diagnostic assessment, a teacher can determine and prepare differentiated learning in teaching the English subject.

Regarding question number three, a teacher must be prepared to implement a differentiated learning process. The variety of knowledge levels and the diversity of interests students possess cause learning strategies that must be prepared as well as possible by the teacher. In the process, teachers have the power to accommodate the needs of students. Regarding question four, I mapped students based on learning profiles after knowing each student's profile. The next step is to prepare a diagnostic assessment. After the results, we can give the material or task according to the results of those diagnostic assessments. Question number five, we set the standard for group A with a score of 8-10, group B with a score of 5-7, and group C with a score less than 5. They are all given the same material, but their task or questions could differ. It is distinguished between the number of questions and the complexity of the questions. Because do not let the students not understand this concept yet, but we have asked a difficult question. The point is, starting with the easy one, they can work on the hard one for longer.

Regarding question number six, in this process, students actively learn in their groups and work together to complete the assignment. The teacher usually maps students based on their readiness and interest. The product can be a video, for example, if the students want to tell a story, or it could also be writing if they are more into visuals. Regarding question number seven, the teacher's effectiveness in implementing differentiated

learning is difficult to determine; the teacher assessed the students' performance in the given project. However, the teacher also conducts summative assessments to measure students' understanding of the material they have learned; it can be seen whether the students' grades are good and whether they meet the minimum achievement criteria.

Regarding question number eight, the teacher implements differentiated learning only twice in a semester. This semester, there are three materials: narrative text, report text, and analytical exposition text. The teacher implements differentiated learning in the report text and analytical exposition text. Many opinions explain that the implementation process is not easy. Regarding question number nine, researchers found that there were several strengths and weaknesses in the process of implementing differentiated learning in teaching English subjects. According to the teacher's POV, strength means embracing children more. We can understand that children's interests are different. Children's readiness also varies. We cannot equalize all students' needs. In essence, students are more involved in class if we consider what was mentioned earlier, such as their interests, readiness to learn, and learning styles. They will feel more cared for and more motivated. If there is a weakness, perhaps the preparation is complicated compared to everyday learning".

Regarding question number ten, the obstacles are not found and can still be solved as long as the students want to study. However, there may be limitations in accessing learning resources. Not all classes have a projector because of limited stock. However, teachers can solve external challenges. An and needs more preparation regarding question eleven: when implementing differentiated learning, the teachers have limited facilities to support the learning process, such as books that do not match the level of students and limited stock. Then, there are those books that match the level of students, but only 10 books are available at the school. So, using existing technology, the teacher sends the student worksheet and the material via file and sends it to the WhatsApp group.

Regarding question number twelve, not all the English subject teachers at SMA 1 Garawangi have implemented differentiated learning in the teaching and learning process because every teacher has their own teaching method and teaching style. Regarding question number thirteen, things need to be considered regarding the challenges teachers face when struggling to realize differentiated learning. Teachers must continue to follow developments with the times. Now, differentiated learning is being promoted. Let us try our best to make differentiated learning a reality. Now there is PMM, the Independent Teaching Platform. We can learn from there. You can also ask more senior teachers or those who have attended a webinar or a seminar.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of differentiated learning in enhancing English language instruction at Senior High School 1 Garawangi. This approach enables educators to accommodate students' varying interests, readiness levels, and learning styles through content, process, and product differentiation, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment. The observations conducted in this study demonstrate how differentiated learning can be strategically implemented to optimize student engagement and academic growth.

In the first session, the teacher applied process differentiation by tailoring learning experiences based on students' interests. This approach aligns with the findings of Sapan and Mede (2022), who reported that differentiated instruction significantly improves

foreign language motivation and autonomy among English learners. The second session emphasized content differentiation, grouping students according to their readiness levels as determined by a diagnostic assessment. Previous research (Wu et al., 2021) confirms that such differentiation strategies prevent frustration among lower-achieving students while challenging more advanced learners. The third session implemented product differentiation, where students expressed their learning through creative projects. Studies by Asriadi et al. (2023) and Gheyssens et al. (2020) support that allowing students to choose their learning formats fosters critical thinking and deeper comprehension.

These findings are consistent with existing research on the effectiveness of differentiated instruction. A meta-analysis by Asriadi et al. (2023) found that differentiated learning strategies significantly enhance student achievement, with notable improvements in engagement and learning retention. Furthermore, studies by Santangelo and Tomlinson (2021) emphasize that modifying teaching strategies based on student's interests, readiness, and preferred learning modes lead to more personalized and effective instruction.

Despite its benefits, this study also identifies several challenges in implementing differentiated learning at Senior High School 1 Garawangi. The primary challenges include complicated lesson preparation, limited school resources, and varying levels of teacher adoption. These findings align with a study by Smale-Jacobse et al. (2019), highlighting that teachers require additional time and effort to design multiple instructional strategies, making differentiated learning overwhelming, especially for educators handling large classes. Additionally, the availability of resources—such as access to technology and instructional materials—remains a significant constraint (Wu et al., 2021). Another critical challenge is teacher readiness and adaptability. Research by Suprayogi et al. (2019) indicates that not all teachers are equally prepared to implement differentiated learning due to differences in pedagogical training, teaching styles, or familiarity with the approach. As a result, some educators struggle to transition from traditional, one-size-fits-all teaching methods to a more flexible, student-centered approach.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including teacher training, institutional support, and policy adjustments. Continuous professional development is crucial to equipping teachers with the necessary skills to implement differentiated learning effectively. Schools should invest in training workshops, peer mentoring programs, and access to online educational platforms, such as PMM (Independent Teaching Platform), to ensure that educators remain updated on the latest instructional methodologies (Sapan & Mede, 2022). Future research should explore long-term studies on the impact of differentiated learning on student achievement, engagement, and retention. Investigating how technology-enhanced differentiation (e.g., adaptive learning platforms and digital assessment systems) can support differentiated instruction in under-resourced schools would also provide valuable insights (Gheyssens et al., 2020). Examining teacher mindsets and attitudes toward differentiated learning can help identify the most effective training models for educators in diverse educational settings (Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019).

This study proves that differentiated learning is a practical pedagogical approach to improving English language instruction in diverse classrooms. Teachers can address students' unique learning needs by incorporating process, content, and product differentiation, ensuring a more inclusive and engaging learning experience. However, successful implementation depends on adequate teacher training, resource availability,

and institutional support. While challenges such as complex lesson planning, limited resources, and teacher adaptability remain significant barriers, they can be mitigated through ongoing professional development, collaborative teaching strategies, and flexible curriculum adjustments. Ultimately, differentiated learning has the potential to transform traditional classrooms into dynamic learning environments where every student is allowed to thrive. By addressing current challenges and exploring innovative strategies—such as technology integration and personalized instructional methods—educators can maximize the benefits of differentiated learning and ensure students receive the support and challenges they need to reach their full potential.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: Implementing differentiated learning in teaching English at Senior High School 1 Garawangi has proven to be a practical approach to addressing the diverse needs of students, enhancing their engagement, and improving learning outcomes. Through a focus on content, process, and product differentiation, the approach allows students to interact with the material in ways that align with their learning styles, readiness, and interests. Additionally, the teacher's use of ongoing assessments provides a comprehensive understanding of student progress while allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge through various formats. This holistic approach informs instructional strategies and fosters a growth mindset, where assessment is seen as a constructive tool for personal growth and achievement.

Implication: The implications of this study suggest that differentiated learning can create a more inclusive and student-centered classroom environment. It empowers students by involving them in the feedback process and helps them take ownership of their academic journey. For teachers, this approach encourages using data to tailor instruction, ultimately enhancing engagement and ensuring that all students can succeed.

Limitation: Despite its benefits, implementing differentiated learning at Senior High School 1 Garawangi has limitations. Key challenges include resource constraints, lesson planning complexity, and teacher readiness variations to adopt this approach. These factors can hinder the full potential of differentiated learning, especially in large classes or schools with limited resources. **Future Research:** Future research should explore the long-term effects of differentiated learning on student academic achievement, motivation, and retention. Furthermore, investigating how technology-enhanced differentiation, such as adaptive learning platforms and digital tools, can support differentiated instruction in under-resourced schools would provide valuable insights. Research could also focus on examining teacher preparedness and identifying effective professional development models that equip educators with the skills to implement differentiated learning successfully. Lastly, future studies could expand on the impact of differentiated learning across various subjects, not just English, to assess its broader applicability and effectiveness in diverse educational settings.

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