

The English Teachers' and Students' Perception on the Differentiated Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Typically, teachers are expected to meet the diverse needs of students in the classroom through appropriate teaching strategies. Differentiated instruction (DI) is one such approach that aims to address students' diverse readiness levels, interests and learning profiles. However, the implementation of DI can be affected by how teachers and students perceive its implementation. The objectives of this study was to describe the English teachers' perceptions and the students' perception on the differentiated instruction. The research method was descriptive quantitative. The researcher used a questionnaire in collecting data. The respondents of this research were three English teachers and seventeen eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Banyuwangi. The researcher analyzed the data of questionnaires by using statistical analysis with this formula: $P = n/N \times 100\%$. The results of the study showed that the English teachers had a positive perception on the differentiated instruction. The result was 77,8%. The students also perceived differentiated instruction positively. It was 74,5%. Content and process differentiation received favorable ratings from both teachers and students. The findings suggest that differentiated instruction effectively supports student engagement and personalized learning. Future studies are recommended to include qualitative data to gain deeper insight into the students' engagement and other factors affecting the teaching and learning process.

Keywords: *Differentiated Instruction; Perception; Teacher; Students*

A. Introduction

Indonesia education system has long been characterized by frequent curriculum changes, often coinciding with shifts in political leadership. These adjustments are not merely an administrative exercise but a continuous effort to improve the quality of education and prepare students for the complex demands of the 21st century. The latest significant reform is the Merdeka Curriculum, introduced in 2020. This new curriculum shifts the educational paradigm from a one-size-fits-all model to a student-centric one, where individual capabilities, interests, and potential are recognized and nurtured (Pratikno et al., 2022; Sukirman, 2022). To effectively implement this vision, a more

flexible and responsive pedagogical method is required i.e. one that can accommodate the diverse learning needs of a heterogeneous student population.

One such method is called Differentiated Instruction (DI), a long-established and widely discussed pedagogical approach in various educational sectors, including inclusive education (Celik, 2019; Chamberlin, 2011; Chen & Chen, 2018; de Graaf et al., 2019; Kousa & Aksela, 2019; Mertoglu, 2020; Strogilos et al., 2020). DI is designed to meet students where they are, providing tailored learning experiences to support their individual progress. It acknowledges that not all students learn at the same pace or in the same way. By varying teaching strategies, content, and assessment methods, the teachers can ensure that each student remains engaged and learns to their highest potential. To implement DI, there are three aspects to consider, namely content, process, product (Tomlinson, 2014). This approach places the teacher in the role of a facilitator, who must first understand the unique characteristics of each student to design and implement appropriate learning activities.

In the context of modern education, particularly in subjects like English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesian secondary schools, the challenges of catering to a wide range of skill levels and interests are growing. Differentiated Instruction offers an innovative solution to this problem (Aldossari, 2018). By using diverse teaching methods and strategies, teachers can accommodate differences in learning styles and preferences (Purnawanto, 2023), thereby ensuring that every student is actively engaged in the learning process. The teachers' role as facilitators is crucial in this environment, as they must be able to adapt their approaches based on individual student differences to find the most effective tactics for each learner (Behouse et al., asmcited in Suwastini et al., 2021).

Given the heterogeneous capacities of Indonesian students, the application of Differentiated Instruction is of critical importance, especially within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum (Aprillia et al., 2023). In this case, A positive perception toward English learning method plays a key role in its effectiveness. When students view a learning method positively, they tend to be more motivated and engaged. Negative perceptions, however, can hinder learning and reduce confidence. Similarly, teachers' perceptions are equally important, as their understanding and attitude toward a learning method affect how well it is implemented. Richards & Lockhart (1994) postulated taht

positive perceptions often lead to higher motivation, active participation, and improved language performance, while negative perceptions can hinder engagement and learning outcomes. Thus, studying both student and teacher perceptions helps them to achieve learning goals and ensure the method suits students' needs.

However, despite its potential, the perception on the implementation of DI in ELT context have received scant research and evaluation. In light of this research gap and based on observations at SMA Negeri 1 Banyuwangi, where teachers and students have been utilizing DI in ELT since 2020, this study becomes essential. It aims to comprehensively describe the perception of both English teachers and students regarding the implementation of DI in terms of three aspects namely differentiating process, content, and product in the ELT classroom context at senior high school level.

B. Research Method

In this research, quantitative research was used in line with the research objective. This research aim to describe the teachers' and students' perceptions on the implementation of differentiated instruction. The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select respondents. Purposive sampling is a non-probability method where individuals are chosen based on specific characteristics that are pertinent to the research question (Palinkas et al., 2015). The respondents for this study were selected three English teachers and seventeen eleventh-grade at SMA Negeri 1 Banyuwangi who possessed a direct understanding and experience with Differentiated Instruction, ensuring that the collected data was rich and relevant to the topic.

This study investigates students' and teachers' perceptions of an English learning method, as these perceptions significantly influence the effectiveness of teaching and learning (Brown, 2001). Understanding how both groups perceive the method provides valuable insight into its strengths and areas for improvement. The data collected through questionnaires using the Likert Scale aimed to reflect the respondents' true perception on the implementation of three DI aspects: differentiated process, content, and product, ensuring the findings are valid and can inform future teaching practices (Sugiyono, 2013). The researchers adapted questionnaire items about perception and adjusted them to three aspects of DI i.e. 15 statements for student questionnaire and 15 statements for teacher

questionnaire (adapted from Astari, 2024). Then, the data was analysed by using statistical analysis with this formula: $P = \frac{n}{N} \times 100\%$ to know the percentage of the perception.

C. Research Finding and Discussion

In this research, questionnaire was given to English teachers and eleventh grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Banyuwangi on 23rd July 2024. There were 3 English teachers and 17 students. The results can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. The Result of Teachers' Perceptions

Teachers' Perception on the Implementation of DI	Real Score	Total of Maximum Score	Item Score Percentage	Tier
Differentiating Content	56	75	74,7%	High
Differentiating Process	57	75	76%	High
Differentiating Product	62	75	82,7%	High
Total	175	225	77,8%	High

Table 2. The Result of Students' Perception

Students' Perception on the implementation of DI	Real Score	Total of Maximum Score	Item Score Percentage	Tier
Differentiating Content	309	425	72,7%	High
Differentiating Process	334	425	78,6%	High
Differentiating Product	307	425	72,2%	High
Total	950	1275	74,5%	High

The results presented in the Table 1 and Table 2 revealed that both students and teachers held generally positive perceptions of differentiated instruction in English language learning. The perception score among students was 74,5%, categorized as "High," while the score from teachers was slightly higher at 77,8%, also falling within the "High" range. These results suggest that the implementation of differentiated instruction is recognized by both groups as a beneficial approach to meet diverse student

needs though variations exist in how specific components of differentiation are perceived. The detail description of the teacher and students' perception on the implementation of three DI aspects are presented in the figure below.

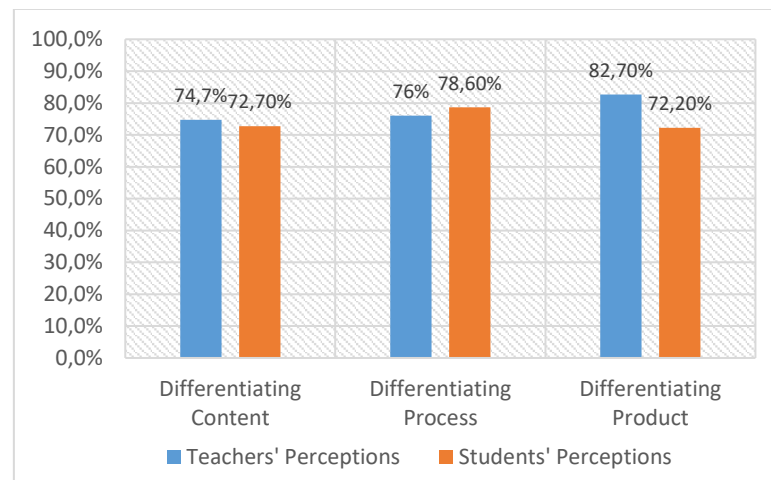


Figure 1. The Teachers' and Students' Perception on the Implementation of DI Aspects

Figure 1 indicated that in terms of content differentiation, students rated this aspect at 72,7%, and teachers gave a nearly equivalent score of 74,7%. This similarity suggests a shared understanding of the value of varied instructional content in supporting students of different abilities and interests. Content differentiation plays a vital role in accommodating students' readiness and preferences (Tomlinson, 2014). Teachers acknowledged their efforts to present content in multiple formats and use diverse materials, while students appeared to recognize these efforts in their classroom experiences. Differentiated instruction fosters a more meaningful, coherent, and personally relevant learning experience for students (Pertiwi, 2021).

For process differentiation, students gained 78,6%, while teachers rated it at 76%, indicating a slightly more favorable perception among teachers. This aspect refers to the strategies and methods used during learning, such as grouping, classroom activities, and use of learning technologies. The data suggest that teachers believe they are providing varied instructional processes to support student learning, though students may not perceive this differentiation as clearly. Process differentiation allows students to make sense of content through different modes of learning and is central to an inclusive

classroom environment (Hall et al., 2003). The slight discrepancy between student and teacher perceptions may point to a need for more transparent communication and scaffolding during instruction to ensure students recognize and benefit from the intended differentiation.

Interestingly, product differentiation received the highest perception score from teachers at 82,7%, classified as “High,” while students rated it at 72,2%, still within the “High” range. Product differentiation involves allowing students to demonstrate their learning in various formats, such as presentations, creative projects, or written assignments. The high score from teachers indicates strong confidence in their ability to provide flexible assessment options. The slightly lower student score may reflect differences in how effectively these options are implemented or communicated. Allowing students to make choices fosters greater commitment and ownership of their learning, which can lead to improved and more positive learning outcomes (Thibodeaux et al., 2019). Furthermore, the overall positive perception among teachers may also stem from the flexible nature of product differentiation, which allows for creative adaptation to student needs without bothering major alterations to the main lesson design (Kaplan, 2022).

Taken together, the data suggest that while both teachers and students perceive differentiated instruction positively across all components, teachers consistently rate their practices more favorably. This pattern may reflect a greater sense of control or confidence among teachers in managing differentiation, while students may experience variability in how consistently these practices are applied. The findings align with previous research highlighting that the lack of collaborative forums for teachers and limited policy guidance pose significant challenges to implementing the Merdeka Curriculum effectively in classroom settings (Wati, 2023).

In conclusion, the results indicate that both teachers and students hold a favorable view of differentiated instruction in English language classrooms, with particularly strong perceptions regarding product differentiation. However, slight discrepancies between student and teacher perceptions suggest the need for continued reflection and professional development to ensure that differentiated strategies are not only implemented but also clearly experienced by students. The success of differentiated instruction is strongly

influenced by the extent to which students actively participate in the learning process, as their engagement and involvement play a crucial role in ensuring that instructional strategies meet their diverse needs and learning preferences (Saputri et al., 2023). Moving forward, schools should focus on fostering collaborative dialogue between teachers and students to enhance shared understanding and maximize the benefits of differentiated instruction.

D. Conclusion

Based on the results, it can be concluded that both English teachers and students have a positive perceptions on the implementation of Differentiated Instruction (DI) in English learning at SMA Negeri 1 Banyuwangi. The overall perception score from students was 74.5%, and from teachers 77.8%. Both are categorized as “high.” It can be concluded that the teachers’ and students’ perceptions on the differentiated instruction are positive. In relation with the results, further research are recommended to use qualitative design to gain deeper insight into the students’ engagement and other factors affecting the teaching and learning process.

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