

English Teachers' Perspectives Towards the Implementation of Differentiated Instruction in the Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the perspectives of junior high school English teachers in Kalimantan Barat on the implementation of differentiated instruction (DI) in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Using a descriptive survey method, data were gathered from 108 teachers through a validated closed-ended questionnaire. The findings reveal that while teachers generally possess a strong understanding of DI and hold positive beliefs about its effectiveness, its application varies, particularly in addressing students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Key barriers include limited resources, large class sizes, and insufficient administrative support. The study highlights the need for targeted professional development and resource allocation to support DI implementation. Recommendations include improving training programs and increasing support from school administrations. Limitations of the study include a focus on one geographic region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. These insights are relevant for enhancing DI practices in similarly diverse educational settings.

Keywords: *Differentiated instructions; English, Kalimantan Barat; teachers; perspectives*

Introduction

Today's classrooms are filled with students who come from all sorts of backgrounds and have different learning styles, skills, and abilities. This diversity presents both challenges and opportunities for teachers (Bernard et al., 2019; Rahmani, 2022). In EFL classrooms, the mix is even more noticeable since students have a wide range of linguistic backgrounds, levels of English proficiency, learning styles, and interests (Tomlinson & Moon, 2011; Akbulut & Çakmak, 2021). This implies that the traditional, one-size-fits-all approach to teaching often proves inadequate for addressing the diverse needs of learners. As a result, students may lose interest in learning, and worse, they are left behind. To avoid and solve this issue, an approach called differentiated instruction (DI) is needed. DI is a teaching method that adjusts lessons to meet each student's needs, helping to ensure that every student can engage and succeed (Rachman, Scaide, Yahya, & Jalil, 2015; Darra & Kanellopouloi, 2019; Tomlinson, 2021). By adjusting and modifying instructions to students' readiness levels, interests, and learning

preferences, DI can improve English language learning and create a more inclusive classroom (Akbulut & Çakmak, 2021).

Differentiated Instruction (DI) is a teaching approach that aims to adapt lessons and curricula to fit the unique needs of each student. It recognizes that even students of the same age can vary widely in their readiness to learn, interests, learning styles, and backgrounds (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000; Gregory & Chapman, 2007). By adjusting the curriculum, teaching methods, resources, activities, and how students demonstrate their learning, teachers can create more effective learning opportunities for everyone. Tomlinson (2014) emphasizes that beyond recognizing students' diverse needs, interests, and readiness levels, it's important to thoughtfully implement DI, assess and refine it, and tailor the content, process, and outcomes. Tasks should be designed to respect each student's learning journey. Similarly, DI involves making adjustments to what is taught, how it's taught, and the environment in which learning takes place, all to better meet each student's specific needs (Hall, Gottschall, & Dwyer, 2017). This approach helps teachers address students' readiness, preferences,

and learning styles, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment (Heacox, 2008).

Tomlinson (2014) outlines four main aspects of DI to help teachers address the diverse needs of students in their classrooms. The first is content, referring to what students learn and where the teacher should adjust the content of a topic from the syllabus based on students' readiness levels, interests, and profiles. The teachers may vary the materials taken from different sources or provide additional support to help students understand the topic or achieve the learning goals. The second aspect is process, which involves how students learn the content. Differentiating the process means using a variety of learning activities and strategies to engage students in the learning process. This encompasses the use of diverse teaching methods and a variety of activities, including group work and hands-on learning, among others. It can also be done by providing different levels of guidance to students (scaffolded). The third aspect was the product, in which the students demonstrate what they have learned. Teachers may allow students to select various learning products, such as essays, presentations, projects, or a combination of these, to showcase their comprehension of the subject matter, taking into account their interests, strengths, and learning styles. The last aspect is learning environment, which refers to the classroom's physical and emotional environment. Tomlinson emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive, flexible, and inclusive learning experience to cater to the varying needs of students. This might involve organizing seating plans or classroom space for different types of learning in order to ensure the students feel secure and valued, so a positive classroom atmosphere is fostered. By integrating these four aspects, Tomlinson ensures that teachers can create an adaptable and inclusive classroom environment that promotes the opportunities for all students to achieve the set goals.

Recent research has consistently demonstrated the positive impacts of differentiated instruction (DI) on English language learners' motivation, engagement, and academic achievement. For instance, a study by Borg and Mifsud's (2011) found that when teachers differentiate instructions based on students' proficiency levels, students are more likely to succeed and develop a positive attitude toward learning English. Similarly, Kotay-Nagy (2023) found that teachers generally understand the goals of DI and have positive perceptions of this approach; however, they often rely on intuitions rather than well-planned strategies

because they feel comfortable and have space to modify the activities as needed. Furthermore, the study reveals that teachers maintain their belief in the effectiveness of DI, even in the absence of a detailed plan, due to its powerful ability to aid students in language acquisition. A study by Ouyang and Ye (2023) found that English teachers who made more adjustments based on learner differences helped students engage more actively in the learning process, showing better motivation than those who made only minimal adjustments. Additionally, studies by Smale-Jacobse et al. (2019) and Jager (2017) shared similar suggestions to reinforce the benefits of DI, particularly in secondary English education. Jager's research found that by addressing students' needs, DI led to better engagement and learning outcomes. Similarly, Smale-Jacobse et al. supported this finding by outlining that DI implementation can bring at least moderate positive impacts on students' English achievements since it can apply various practices such as grouping or individual learning.

In Indonesia, differentiated instruction (DI) is becoming much more important in classrooms, particularly with the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum as part of the country's latest educational reform. The Merdeka Curriculum focuses on student-centered learning, and DI helps teachers adapt their teaching methods to meet the unique needs, learning styles, progress rates, and interests of each student (Ndari, 2023; Aji, 2023; Hadi et al., 2023; Rohimajaya & Hamer, 2023). This approach is especially important in Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language in classrooms filled with students from a wide variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Indonesia is home to thousands of ethnic groups, each with its own language, adding complexity to learning English (Coleman, 2017). Additionally, the socioeconomic differences among students mean that access to educational resources can vary widely, making DI an essential tool for ensuring that all students have similar opportunities to succeed. Research by Maulana and Oktavia (2023) shows that DI has brought a positive impact on students' learning outcomes and engagement in English lessons despite the diverse background of students. Similarly, Sujarwati (2023) found that DI strategies used within the Merdeka Curriculum have improved English learning outcomes. Although implementing DI presents challenges, Suryati et al. (2023) emphasize its benefits in meeting the diverse needs of junior high school students, which is critical in a country as culturally rich and varied as

Indonesia, where students' financial backgrounds differ widely.

While these studies offer valuable insights into the benefits and challenges of DI, they focus either on broad instructional strategies or on pre-service teachers (Rahmani & Riyanti, 2022). There is a lack of research on how current practicing English teachers, particularly in diverse regions like Kalimantan Barat, view and implement DI in their classrooms. Kalimantan Barat presents a unique linguistic and cultural landscape where local languages and dialects dominate, and students come from a wide range of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the real-world experiences and perspectives of practicing English teachers in Kalimantan Barat. Understanding how these teachers apply DI will provide much-needed insights into the effectiveness of DI in such diverse settings and offer practical guidance for other educators facing similar challenges.

As a result, this research was conducted not only to fill the gap in the present state of literature but also to offer insightful information to educators, whether they are English teachers or researchers with similar interests. This study poses the research question: “What are the English teachers’ perspectives on differentiated instruction implemented in their classrooms?” The researcher anticipates that the findings will contribute to enhancing the pedagogical landscape of English language education, particularly in diverse contexts such as Kalimantan Barat, as well as provide practical direction on the efficient implementation of differentiated instruction. Furthermore, the findings will deepen the understanding of how to modify DI to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, thereby enhancing learning outcomes and fostering an effective English teaching and learning experience.

Method

The researcher employed a descriptive survey study to gather comprehensive views on differentiated instruction among junior high school English teachers. Experts believe that a descriptive approach provides valuable insights by focusing on the current status of phenomena and identifying patterns or trends within the data (Creswell, 2014). Initially, the study defined its objectives and theoretical framework based on a literature review and observation of educational gaps. The researcher purposefully recruited 108 junior high school English teachers to gather information from those who teach at a critical stage of student cognitive and language development. Junior high is

when students’ English skills are being formed, and these teachers deal with a wide range of English abilities, learning styles, and cultural backgrounds. Their experience makes them well-suited to provide important input on how differentiated instruction (DI) is used in diverse classrooms. By focusing on these teachers, the study aims to understand the real challenges and benefits of applying DI during this important phase of student learning.

Data collection was executed using closed-ended questionnaires, with subsequent validation and reliability checks. The quantitative data were analyzed using statistical techniques to identify trends and relationships, providing a clear and concise understanding of the teachers' perspectives on differentiated instruction. This approach allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data, aligning with the principles of descriptive research by offering a snapshot of the current state of differentiated instruction practices among junior high school English teachers (Creswell, 2014). The demographics of the participants is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1.
Participant’s Demographics

Aspect	Sub-aspect	Result
Gender	Male	30
	Female	78
Age	20-30 years old	12
	31-40 years old	28
	41-50 years old	32
	51 or older	36
	1-5 years	6
Years of teaching	6-10 years	18
	11-15 years	24
	16 years or more	60
Level of education	Bachelor’s	92
	Master’s	12
	Doctoral	0
	Diploma	4

The table above reveals that the distribution of 108 teachers, consisting of 78 females and 30 males, spans from under 30 to over 50 years old. The majority of participants are 51 years old or older, with 41 to 50-year-olds following closely behind. In terms of teaching experience, approximately 60 participants have been teaching for 16 years or more, followed by those with 11–15 years. Educationally, most hold a bachelor's degree, a few hold a master's, and a smaller number hold a diploma 2, with no participants having a doctoral degree.

The researcher collected data using a closed-ended questionnaire consisting of 12 questions aimed at investigating teachers' perspectives on differentiated instruction. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the researcher used the Scale Content Validity Index (S-CVI), with two raters determining that the items

were "highly relevant," resulting in an average score of 0.866 (86%). The Cronbach's alpha value of 0.76, which falls within the acceptable range of 0.60-0.80, was classified as "reliable." The researcher distributed the questionnaire to the participants using Google Form, with the help of the English teacher communities in each region.

The data analysis for this descriptive survey followed a systematic process, focusing on descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean score, and standard deviation. The quantitative responses were tabulated and analyzed to provide a clear understanding of the teachers' perspectives. The findings were presented in a structured way using charts and tables to display the statistical results, offering insights into the current state of differentiated instruction practices among junior high school English teachers.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The analysis shows that the participants generally have a positive perception of differentiated instruction, with high mean scores across items related to understanding, confidence, and belief in its effectiveness. The mean score for confidence in planning and implementing differentiated instruction is relatively high (3.88). However, there is some variability in how often the participants differentiate instruction based on readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles.

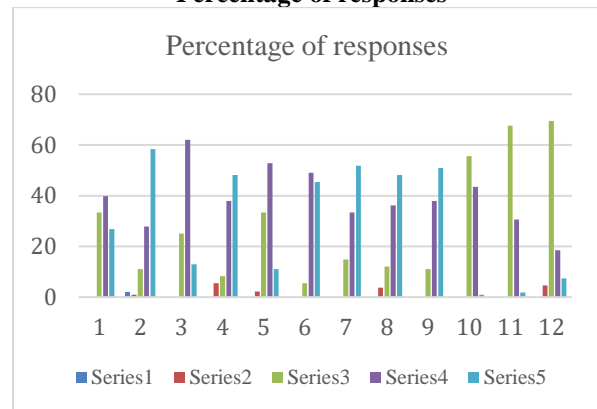
English teachers perceive differentiated instruction (DI) favorably. They understand its value in meeting the several needs of students and think it will help to increase student enthusiasm, involvement, and general academic performance. Most of the teachers feel qualified to design and apply DI techniques in their classrooms; they also show great confidence in their grasp of DI ideas. The findings also draw attention to some difficulties with DI application, though. Although educators recognize the need of DI, there are differences in how often they vary instruction according on the learning profiles, interests, and degree of student preparation. This implies that practical elements may affect how regularly DI is used even with good attitudes and confidence. The detail of the findings is presented below.

Table 2.
Data analysis result

Item	Frequency Percentage (%)					Mean	Std. Dev.
	1	2	3	4	5		
Item 1	0/0	0/0	36	43	29	3.94	0.78
Item 2	1.85	0.93	11.11	27.78	58.33	4.40	0.86
Item 3	0	0	27	67	14	3.88	0.61
			25	62.03	12.96		

Item 4	0/0	6	9	41	52	4.29	0.84
Item 5	0/0	3	36	57	12	3.72	0.69
Item 6	0/0	0/0	6	53	49	4.40	0.59
Item 7	0/0	0/0	16	36	56	4.37	0.73
Item 8	0/0	4	13	39	52	4.29	0.82
Item 9	0/0	0/0	12	41	55	4.40	0.68
Item 10	0/0	0/0	11.11	37.96	50.93	4.40	0.68
Item 11	0/0	0/0	60	47	1	3.45	0.52
Item 12	0/0	0/0	55.56	43.52	0.93	3.34	0.51
			73	33	2		
			67.59	30.56	1.85		
			5	75	20	3.29	0.67
			4.63	69.44	18.52		
					7.41		

Figure 1.
Percentage of responses



Based on statistical measures of mean scores, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages for all 12 questions, Table 2 and Figure 2 above present the English teachers' perspectives on DI implementation is positive. Having a mean score of 3.94, teachers show a strong grasp of DI ideas. Though the standard deviation of 0.78 reveals some variety, suggesting that while many teachers feel sure, a noteworthy amount may be less convincing. The distribution shows that 39.81% ranked their understanding as 4 and 26.85% as 5. With a mean score of 3.88, where 62.04% of respondents said their trust in using DI was likewise favorable. The lower standard deviation of 0.61 shows respondents' higher consistency in confidence level.

With 58.33% of teachers scoring the idea that DI enhances student motivation and engagement as 5 (mean score of 4.50) and 50% affirming its success across diverse learning styles (mean score of 4.50), beliefs about the efficacy of DI are especially high. Reflecting a solid consensus, these products have rather low standard deviations—0.64 and 0.68, respectively. With 48.15% of teachers ranking this item as 5, the practical difficulties connected with DI—such as the extra time and effort needed—show a mean score of 4.29. The higher standard deviation of 0.84

denotes different experiences, most likely connected to changes in workload, class numbers, or available help.

Regarding resources and support, the mean score falls somewhat to 3.72, with 33.33% of respondents rating it as 3, signifying conflicting opinions in this regard. The standard deviation of 0.69, which reflects reasonable response variation, supports this even more. With standard deviations around 0.67, the frequency of using DI techniques based on students' readiness levels (mean score of 3.72), interests (mean score of 3.60), and learning profiles (mean score of 3.65) demonstrates rather moderate consistency. For example, whereas 44.44% of teachers ranked their frequency of differentiating depending on preparation levels as 4, there is variation in how regularly these techniques are used among various classrooms.

Furthermore, strongly felt is a belief that DI helps close achievement disparities; with a mean score of 4.30 and 33.33% of teachers rating this opinion as 5. With a 0.71 standard deviation, this belief's strength seems to vary somewhat. With a mean score of 4.60 and 66.67% of respondents scoring this item as 5, the view that children gain from individualized learning experiences is also widely accepted; the low standard deviation of 0.59 indicates great agreement among teachers.

With a mean score of 4.39 and 51.85% of teachers scoring this as 5, the belief that DI is necessary for fulfilling the many requirements of pupils in the classroom is finally highly supported. Though somewhat greater, the standard deviation of 0.71 still shows general agreement despite considerable variance in the degree of this opinion. Although teachers are generally confident and optimistic about DI, the statistics reveal that there are notable variations in how often and consistently these strategies are used, presumably because of different levels of resources, support, and personal experience in the classroom.

Discussions

This study has presented that the implementation of differentiated instruction has been seen as positive by English teachers in Kalimantan Barat. The high mean scores across items related to their understanding, confidence, and belief in the effectiveness of DI reflect this result. This aligns with existing research, which often emphasizes that teachers recognize the importance of addressing diverse students' needs through DI, and believe in its potential benefits (Akbulut & Çakmak, 2021; Borg & Mifsud, 2011; Darra & Kanellopoulou, 2019; Hall, Gottschall, & Dwyer, 2017; Subban, 2006; Tomlinson, 2001). In Kalimantan Barat, especially, where students come from varied cultural backgrounds, speak different

local languages, and possess varying levels of competences, the positive attitude toward DI among the teachers is particularly significant. These diverse student profiles necessitate instructional approach that are responsive to differences in readiness and interest, especially in the content of learning English as a foreign language.

Despite these positive perspectives, the study also indicates some variability in teachers' confidence in their ability to implement it effectively, particularly when faced with the challenges of limited training or resources (Brighton et al., 2005; Hertberg-Davis & Brighton, 2006; Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019; Suryati et al., 2023). In the diverse context of Kalimantan barat, where students' backgrounds can significantly impact their readiness to learn English, the need for tailored professional development becomes even more important. Teachers may require additional support and training to address the unique challenges posed by the region's linguistic and cultural diversity.

The study also highlights that teacher agree on the increased time and effort required for DI, with a mean score of 4.29. However, perceptions of having adequate resources and support for DI are less strong, with a mean score of 3.72. This reflects a common challenge noted in the literature where teachers often acknowledge the demands of DI but cite insufficient resources, large class sizes, and lack of administrative support as significant barriers (Coubergs et al., 2017; De Neve et al., 2015; Gregor & Green, 2021; Moon, Tomlinson, & Callahan, 1995; Robinson, 2020; Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2009). In Kalimantan Barat, where educational resources may already be stretched thin, these challenges can be worsened. The diverse linguistic and cultural needs of students mean that effective DI requires not only time and effort but also substantial support in terms of materials, training, and administration.

Teachers in the study strongly believe in the effectiveness of DI in improving student outcomes, motivation, and engagement, as indicated by high mean scores. This belief is in line with existing research, which frequently reports that teachers see DI as a key strategy for meeting diverse student needs, reducing achievement gaps, and catering to different learning styles (Housand, 2017; Tomlinson, 2005). In the context of Kalimantan Barat, where students' interests and readiness levels are deeply influenced by their cultural backgrounds and local languages, DI offers a promising approach to making English language instruction more relevant and engaging.

However, the study also reveals variability

in how often teachers differentiate instruction based on readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. This variability is reflected in the literature, where actual classroom implementation of DI can vary significantly depending on factors such as experience, training, and perceived feasibility (Dixon et al., 2014; Reis et al., 2011). In Kalimantan Barat, these challenges are likely compounded by the region's diversity, which makes it difficult for teachers to consistently apply DI strategies without targeted support and resources.

Overall, this study addresses a significant gap in the existing literature by focusing on the specific challenges and perspectives of practicing English teachers in Kalimantan Barat, a region characterized by its cultural and linguistic diversity. Unlike the study by Rahmani & Riyanti (2022), which examined the perspectives of pre-service English teachers, this research offers insights from practicing teachers who are actively engaged in the classroom. This distinction is crucial as practicing teachers face the day-to-day realities of implementing differentiated instruction in diverse and multilingual classrooms, where students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles are heavily influenced by their local languages and cultural backgrounds. The novelty of this study lies in its examination of how DI is perceived and applied by experienced teachers in a region where the educational landscape presents unique challenges that have not been widely explored. By focusing on the perspectives of practicing teachers, this research provides new insights into the complexities of implementing DI in real-world settings, thereby filling a gap in the current understanding and offering valuable implications for supporting DI practices in similarly diverse regions.

Conclusion

This study reveals that English teachers in Kalimantan Barat generally understand differentiated instruction (DI) well, feel confident in using it, and believe in its effectiveness for improving student outcomes. However, the study also highlights significant challenges, such as limited resources, time constraints, and lack of support, which hinder the consistent application of DI in the region's diverse cultural and linguistic context. By focusing on the perspectives of practicing teachers, this study fills a critical gap in the literature by offering real-world insights into the challenges of implementing DI in multilingual and diverse classrooms. The findings contribute to the field by emphasizing the importance of targeted professional development and better resource allocation to help teachers apply DI more

effectively. It also offers practical guidance for policymakers, administrators, and educators working in similarly diverse educational settings, helping them address the specific barriers to successful DI implementation.

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