

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the research conducted at SMAN 2 Kuala Kapuas. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and documentation related to the implementation of differentiated instruction in English Language Teaching (ELT) under the Independent Curriculum. The results of this study are presented according to the research questions, namely teacher's perceptions of the implementation of differentiated learning strategies and the strategies used in implementing differentiated learning in the classroom.

A. Findings

This section outlines the findings obtained from an English teacher at SMAN 2 Kuala Kapuas through semi-structured interviews, two days of classroom observations, and documentation. The findings focus on the teacher's perceptions on differentiated learning strategies and the strategies implemented during the implementation of differentiated learning in the classroom. The data are presented descriptively in accordance with the research questions in this study.

1. Teacher's Perception toward Differentiated Learning

This section presents the empirical findings regarding how the

participant perceives the implementation of differentiated learning within the English language classroom. Based on the semi-structured interviews, the teacher's perspectives are systematically categorized into two primary thematic dimensions. First, it explores the teacher's core conceptual knowledge and awareness regarding student diversity. Second, it examines the teacher's evaluation of the practical value, flexibility, and outcomes of this approach in daily instruction.

a. Teacher's Understanding of Differentiated Learning

The participant is a teacher who had about 27 years of teaching experience since 1998, according to the results of the interview. According to the teacher, since the Independent Curriculum was put into place three or four years ago, differentiated learning has been used. Though they weren't officially acknowledged as differentiated learning at the time, the teacher clarified that some elements of differentiated learning had really been used before.

In terms of professional preparation, the teacher told of experiences of professional growth related to differentiated learning. The teacher was involved in a training held at SMAN 2 Kuala Kapuas with school supervisors and specialized speakers as presenters. This training helped the teacher a lot in realising that every student has different capabilities, therefore

boosting pedagogical awareness to purposefully categorise students on the basis of their capacity level.

During the interview, the teacher described differentiated learning as an art of teaching in which teachers are supposed to change learning strategies based on students' individual skills and background. The teacher said that the features and levels of comprehension of the students in one classroom are varied. Therefore, the teachers should adjust the learning process based on these variances. The teacher said to clarify this perspective: "Differentiated learning is the art of teaching, when teachers adjust their teaching strategies to meet the different skills and backgrounds of students."

Based on this statement, it is clear that the teacher views differentiation as a personalized "art" that requires a high degree of pedagogical flexibility. She further explains that because students' characteristics and levels of understanding within a single class vary greatly, teachers must intentionally adapt the learning process based on these individual differences, rather than applying a single, uniform method.

b. The Importance and Effectiveness of Differentiated Learning

The teacher emphasised that differentiated learning is very important because students in a classroom have diverse backgrounds and learning abilities. herefore, teachers must

dynamically adapt classroom activities to ensure that all students can effectively understand the subject matter in a way that meets their individual pedagogical needs. The teacher explicitly expressed this view during the interview: “Since there are students with different abilities and backgrounds in a single class, teachers need to adapt their teaching so that all students can understand the material.”

From this perspective, teachers need to adapt classroom activities to ensure that all students can learn the material effectively according to their individual needs, so that no student is left behind due to a rigid pace of instruction.

The teacher said that, concerning the individual needs, students who have greater abilities can help students who have lesser abilities in group activities. The teacher said that putting students of different skill levels together can help the learning process and struggling students can learn from their peers. This collaborative method was anticipated to foster a helpful learning environment among peers, as classroom observation data indicated students participating in engaging group activities. The teacher said “By grouping students based on their varying abilities, students with lower abilities can learn from their more capable peers.”

Regarding the implementation of this strategy, the phrase "based on their varying abilities" implies a practical form of student readiness mapping conducted by the teacher. In this high school context, the grouping process did not rely on formal, rigid diagnostic assessment toolkits. Instead, the researcher analyzed that the teacher's ability to categorize student proficiency levels was largely driven by continuous formative observation during daily classroom interactions.

With an extensive teaching background spanning approximately 27 years, the teacher had developed a highly intuitive pedagogical awareness. This long-standing experience allowed her to implicitly analyze student needs and readiness through their active participation and language performance in regular sessions. Consequently, this implicit need analysis served as her primary baseline to intentionally pair lower-readiness students with more advanced peers (*peer-tutoring*), ensuring the collaborative groups could function interactively without requiring standardized, state-mandated assessment instruments.

In terms of flexibility, the teacher explained that differentiated learning does not replace or substitute other teaching strategies. Instead, all teaching strategies are seen as complementary and adaptable to the surroundings of the

classroom and the particular requirements of students. This adaptability allows teachers to select the most suited method for each learning session. The teacher explained “All learning strategies complement one another, so none is more flexible than the others, but they can all be adapted to the classroom situation.”

The teacher also considered differentiated learning is quite effective to let students understand the material based on their ability levels. This effectiveness is obviously evident when students are able to understand the material at a pace that is suited to their unique capacities. To emphasize the effectiveness of this learning strategies, the teacher stated “Differentiated learning is quite effective because it helps students understand the material at their own level.”

Based on the quotation above, the teacher perceived the effectiveness of differentiated instruction not merely from an academic standpoint, but deeply rooted in student-centered development. The researcher analyzed that this effectiveness manifested in two primary outcomes. First, by allowing students to process English materials at their own level, the instruction successfully enhanced the students' confidence, emotional well-being, and situational interest during the

learning process. Students felt more included and less intimidated by rigid classroom standards.

Second, the effectiveness was driven by the flexibility of the curriculum transition, which accommodates the students' individual developmental speed. Rather than forcing a uniform pace, the teacher's approach ensured that both struggling learners received proper scaffolding while advanced students remained appropriately stimulated. Consequently, this pedagogical approach minimized learning frustration and transformed student diversity into an instructional strength, making the English language delivery significantly more impactful.

In addition, the teacher explained that implementing differentiated instruction requires extra effort and a thorough process to understand students' characteristics and needs. Although developing instructional materials requires careful consideration, the teacher views this as an integral part of a teacher's responsibility in planning the learning process. This careful planning ensures that students' diverse needs are adequately met during classroom interactions, as documented in visual evidence of classroom learning activities. The teacher stated "Differentiated learning requires careful consideration

of students' characteristics, but this is part of a teacher's responsibility in designing lessons."

This reflection shows that despite facing significant demands for differentiation, the teacher maintained a positive professional attitude. She believes that developing teaching materials is a demanding process that requires careful planning, but that it is an integral part of a teacher's primary duty to design learning processes that meet the diverse needs of students in the classroom.

As for the challenges, the teacher noted that the biggest challenge faced in implementing differentiated instruction is identifying students' personalities and learning needs based on interview results. The teacher stated that one of the most obvious difficulties is the high level of student diversity, and that teachers need to understand each student as a unique individual throughout the learning process. This deep understanding of each individual requires teachers to remain vigilant and possess a high degree of pedagogical sensitivity.

The teacher explicitly emphasized that educators must develop a deep and sincere understanding of each student's specific needs, given their diverse abilities and backgrounds. The researcher analyzed that this perspective is directly correlated with the core dimensions of student readiness,

diverse personal interests, and unique learning styles present in the English language classroom. In the context of this study, the teacher recognized that without a deep conceptual understanding of these fundamental differences, any attempt to implement differentiated instruction would inevitably remain superficial or rigid, ultimately failing to address the actual gaps in students' understanding.

Furthermore, this perspective emphasizes the importance of shifting away from a conventional, teacher-centered mindset that views the classroom as a homogeneous unit. By actively acknowledging that students come from diverse developmental starting points, teachers become better prepared to design flexible learning activities and adapt instructional materials that respect each student's unique profile. Consequently, this internalized understanding serves as the primary pedagogical foundation that enables teachers to effectively transition to the student-centered philosophy mandated by the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

However, the teacher stated that classroom size is not a major obstacle or constraint in implementing differentiated instruction. The teacher also noted that there are no constraints related to instructional materials, as the school is equipped with adequate supporting facilities. The resources provided by the

institution minimize the challenges encountered in the learning process.

In addition, the teacher noted that preparing teaching materials typically takes about a week, depending on the lesson schedule. For the teacher, this preparation process involves additional workload and time spent understanding students' needs, but it is part of a teacher's responsibilities in lesson planning. Therefore, this timeframe is considered manageable and does not significantly disrupt the teaching schedule. The teacher stated:

“...There are no challenges related to teaching materials, as these are provided by the school. Class size is not a major obstacle to implementing differentiated instruction... There are no major obstacles in preparing materials. It takes about a week to prepare the materials, in line with the lesson schedule. And since the school provides the teaching materials, this is not a major obstacle either. However, it still requires effort to understand the students' needs.”

Based on this quote, the teacher explained that a one-week preparation period is manageable and does not disrupt the learning schedule, as the school has fully provided all the necessary physical materials and facilities. The efforts still

required during this preparation process are focused on understanding the students' specific needs.

2. Strategies Used in Implementing Differentiated Learning

Based on the results of interviews and classroom observations, the teacher implements differentiated learning through several strategies related to teaching methods, media materials, and assessment. These strategies are implemented to meet the diverse needs of students in the classroom. Detailed findings for each area are outlined below to provide a comprehensive overview of these pedagogical strategies.

a. Method

Based on the interview, the teacher explained that several teaching methods are used to accommodate differences among students in the classroom. The teacher stated that students with varying ability levels are grouped together during learning activities so that they can help one another through collaborative learning.

During the interview session, the teacher explained that by grouping students based on their varying abilities, those with lower proficiencies could actively learn from their more capable classmates. Within the context of teaching methods, this flexible grouping strategy functions as a collaborative learning technique designed to accommodate student diversity. The researcher

analyzed that this method allows the teacher to manage a heterogeneous classroom effectively without relying on rigid or formal diagnostic testing. Instead, the teacher utilized continuous formative observations during daily classroom interactions as an implicit need analysis to map student readiness.

In this statement, the teacher explained that the grouping system intentionally mixes students with varying levels of achievement so that peer-to-peer learning can take place in the classroom.

In addition, the teacher stated that the choice of teaching methods was closely adapted to the dynamic classroom situation. She explained that she systematically utilized lectures, small group discussions, and alternative instructional methods based on the immediate learning needs of her students.

This statement explains that the teacher applies more than one teaching method, alternating between lectures and facilitating group discussions according to the students' immediate needs. The classroom observations also showed the implementation of various learning activities during the teaching and learning process.

During the first observation, students were asked to write an essay about their personal experiences and present their work in

front of the class. The other students then participated in a class discussion and collaborative learning related to their peers presentation. The teacher also explained the material using the lecture method and gave students the opportunity to discuss their work with classmates to support varying levels of understanding.



Figure 4.1 Students Discussing Their Classmate's
Performance

During the second day of observation, which took place in the school's language lab, The teacher implemented a well-structured and varied learning process. The lesson began by using an interactive television as the primary teaching medium to play an educational video from YouTube on the topic of "Passive Sentences." After the video played, the teacher

delivered a comprehensive lecture to explain the grammatical formulas and rules of passive sentence structure in greater detail.

Then, the students were divided into small groups to engage in collaborative discussions on the material. After the discussion session ended, a representative from each group present and restate the material to the class, ensuring that group discussion learning took place. To conclude the session and assess individual understanding, students were assigned an individual writing task to construct original passive sentences, which were then collected by the teacher at the end of the lesson. These diverse activities provided various ways for students to engage with the learning material and collaborate effectively, as supported by visual documentation of classroom interactions.



Figure 4.2 The Students Were Divided Into Small Groups

b. Media

Based on the interview results, the teacher stated that there were numerous learning media used during the differentiated learning sessions, including YouTube, interactive television, computers, LCD projectors, PowerPoint presentations, and student worksheets. The teacher explicitly noted that she utilized this variation of media, such as YouTube, interactive TVs, laptops, LCD screens, and student worksheets, to address the different learning styles and interests of the students.

However, classroom observations revealed a distinct variation in how these media were practically implemented across different sessions. During the first classroom observation, no electronic devices or specific digital learning materials were used during the lesson. Instead, the teacher primarily relied on verbal explanations, writing activities, and in-class discussions. The interaction between the teacher and students throughout these activities demonstrated that meaningful learning was not constrained by the absence of digital media.

In contrast, during the second observation, the use of visual and audio media became clearly evident in the classroom. During a lesson on passive sentences, the media implemented by the teacher was specifically focused on YouTube videos displayed via an interactive television. The teacher combined

videos, audio, visual explanations, and written examples to accommodate the students' various learning preferences, which was also supported by the school's lesson documentation.

This preference for digital audiovisual media during the second session was strategically driven by the need to address the diverse learning styles, specifically Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic (VAK) approaches, present among the students. By utilizing YouTube content on the interactive television, the teacher combined moving graphics, clear animation, and real-world audio into a single instructional delivery, allowing different types of learners to process the English materials simultaneously.

Furthermore, this media selection strongly correlated with the students' varied abilities and backgrounds. For visual and auditory learners, the combination of onscreen visual contexts and spoken English narration aligned with dual coding pathways, making complex language structures like passive sentences easier to comprehend. Meanwhile, for students with lower proficiency levels, these dynamic digital resources served as essential visual scaffolding, helping them grasp vocabulary, pronunciation, and contextual meaning that might be lost in text-only delivery. Through this interactive media approach, the teacher successfully transformed conventional grammar

materials into highly engaging resources that matched the students' individual cognitive needs and readiness.



Figure 4.3 Teacher Use Interactive TV

c. Material

According to the interview results, the teacher highlighted that the instructional materials utilized in the classroom had been fully linked with the Independent Curriculum framework. The teacher noted that the textbooks, modules, and extra learning tools offered by the school served as the baseline foundation for crafting her daily lesson plans. In addition, the teacher explicitly stated that the core materials from the curriculum modules and textbooks were systematically integrated with collaborative group work, which allowed students to actively support one another in achieving a joint understanding of the lesson content.

This interview statement was confirmed during the classroom observations. The teacher carefully used the official textbook set by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology entitled '*Bahasa Inggris: English for Change untuk SMA/MA Kelas XI*' as the main reference for content differentiation.



Figure 4.4 Textbook Used By The Teacher

In the first observation, the teacher used this textbook frame to distribute worksheets on personal experience recount texts. This session provided students the opportunity to select their own personal experiences as the subject for their writing assignment. The method showed content differentiation by letting students select topics that were more relevant to their background and current language ability rather than forcing them to write on one topic that everyone else was writing about.

Similarly, in the second observation, the teacher had carried out the materials from the Independent Curriculum consistently, but the delivery was much improved by the addition of an educational YouTube video as another learning resource. This video content was a strategic supplement to the main textbook and classroom modules.

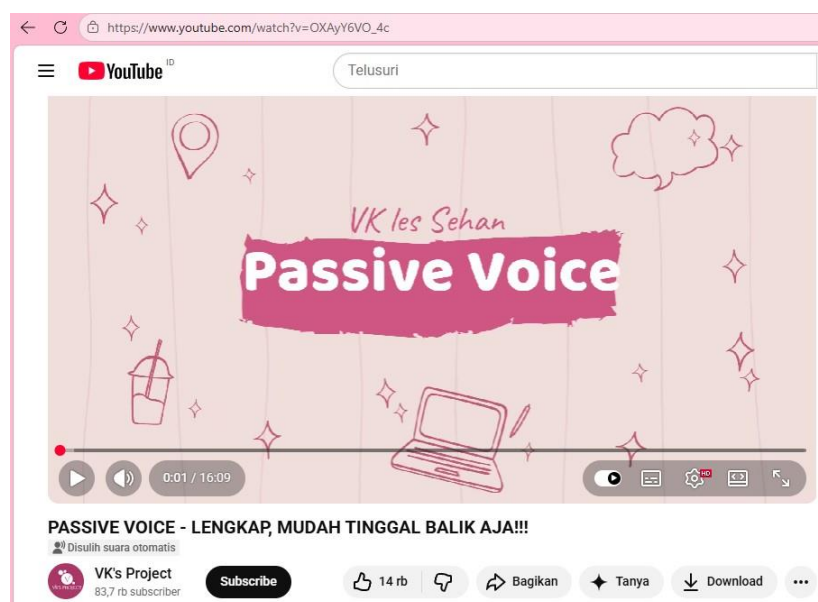


Figure 4.5 Youtube Video Played By The Teacher

d. Assessment

Based on the interview data, the teacher explained that various assessment methods were implemented to monitor the academic progress of the students. The teacher stated that formative and performance-based assessments were primarily conducted through student presentations and task-based evaluations.

Furthermore, the teacher explicitly noted during the interview that these evaluations were systematically carried out in diverse ways, specifically focusing on classroom presentations and regular assignment evaluations.

However, while the teacher also mentioned the inclusion of peer assessment during the interview session, this specific evaluation method was not observed in actual classroom practice

During classroom observations, the teacher consistently used formative assessments to track students' progress during learning activities. For the first observation, the teacher observed students writing personal experience essays. Furthermore, performance-based assessment was used, where the teacher assessed presentations by asking the students to perform in front of the class.



Figure 4.6 Student's Individual Performance

During the second observation, the teacher also measured students' understanding during the discussion and practice

activities. Students wrote a writing assignment explaining the content and creating passive voice sentences. As in the first session, this observation session did not include any peer assessment activities, and students performed the same tasks according to their own knowledge.

B. Discussion

This section discusses the results of semi-structured interviews, classroom observation sheets, and documentation of differentiated learning in English Language Teaching (ELT) under the Independent Curriculum at SMAN 2 Kuala Kapuas. The observation sheets collected the data from classroom observations conducted over two days. This discussion is organized into two parts, corresponding to the research questions: teachers' perspectives on various learning strategies and pedagogical strategies used in the classroom.

1. Teacher's Perception toward Differentiated Learning

A teacher's understanding of differentiated instruction refers to how they view and interpret differentiation as a systematic approach to addressing the diverse levels of readiness, interests, and learning styles of students in the classroom (Langelaan et al., 2024). Supporting the above idea, research findings indicate that the teacher possesses strong conceptual knowledge because she describes differentiated learning as the "art of teaching," in which

instructional strategies need to be modified to suit the diverse skills and backgrounds of individual students. This conceptual maturity was further reinforced in the semi-structured interviews, which were substantially supplemented by insights derived from initial observation sheets resulting from classroom observations. Observation data indicated that the teacher paid close attention to the mixed-ability classroom environment; therefore, the interviews included specific questions exploring how the teacher successfully balanced these student differences without neglecting any individual.

In addition, Bi et al. (2023) note that teachers with more than five years of teaching experience appear to have a better understanding of differentiated learning concepts and practices compared to those with less experience. This theoretical perspective explains why the teacher has a deep understanding of student diversity due to her extensive teaching experience spanning 27 years since 1998. The data gathered from two days of classroom observation indicate that the teacher does not teach in a rigid and monotonous way, which is a common characteristic of conventional teacher-centered classrooms. In an interview, the teacher explained that her long career and formal training at the school with supervisors have enabled her to develop her pedagogical awareness to view student diversity not as an obstacle,

but as a dynamic reality that requires strategic adaptation.

Gheysens et al. (2023) and Smale-Jacobse et al. (2019) state that the strength of this approach lies in the fact that a uniform teaching method is completely ineffective for academically diverse classes, where students' readiness levels and preferences vary greatly. The two days of classroom observations provided real evidence of this perception, as recorded in the classroom observation sheets, where the teacher constantly monitored students' progress, writing processes, and active participation during group discussions. This was confirmed in an interview with the teacher, who stated that adjusting the level of difficulty and assisting with the implementation of the Independent Curriculum are important responsibilities of a teacher.

Gheysens et al. (2023) highlight that differentiated instruction offers a high degree of teaching flexibility, as teachers can adapt strategies, resources, and learning activities to the dynamics of the classroom as they unfold. This argument is supported by field data, as the teacher views differentiated instruction as a complementary strategy, not a rigid substitute for existing methodologies. The results of classroom observations on the first and second days reflect how effectively the teacher transitioned from brief lectures to collaborative arrangements without disrupting the flow of learning. When asked during a semi-

structured interview, the teacher stated that all learning styles naturally complement one another, and the success of their implementation depends heavily on the teacher's ability to read the actual classroom situation.

Finally, Smale-Jacobse et al. (2019) highlight the positive impact of differentiated instruction on student achievement and engagement. However, this also takes time and places an additional cognitive burden on teachers in terms of preparing lessons and instructional materials. This theoretical perspective aligns with the practical difficulties faced by the teacher, who recognized that differentiated instruction requires significant effort and careful attention to students' specific characteristics. The results of the classroom observation sheet indicate that learning resources were organized in accordance with the Independent Curriculum and had been adapted to students' needs. In the interview, the teacher agreed that further thought and careful preparation are necessary for the development of such adapted instructional materials. However, she views this complex procedure as a necessity in carrying out her professional duties as an English teacher under the framework of the Independent Curriculum.

2. Strategies Used in Implementing Differentiated Learning

a. Method

According to Tomlinson (in Eikeland & Ohna, 2022), in a

mixed-ability classroom setting, the process-oriented aspects of differentiated instruction need to be adapted to accommodate student diversity in terms of teaching methods, pace, and monitoring. Findings from the two-day classroom observation sheets indicate that the teacher consistently applied this principle by combining video-based training, lectures, and group discussions. During the observation, it was evident that the teacher did not teach the entire class simultaneously but rather divided students into small, mixed-ability groups to accommodate varying levels of understanding. This is a direct application of interview data in which the teacher stated that teaching methods must be highly responsive to students' immediate needs, rather than relying solely on a single, fixed teaching style.

Furthermore, Rahmawati and Al-Muayyad (2024) state that differentiated instruction in the Independent Curriculum can be effectively implemented through strategic group discussions, collaborative learning, and project-based activities in which tasks are assigned according to students' learning needs. This concept explains the grouping technique applied by the teacher during the observed English learning sessions. Classroom observations showed that students with varying ability levels were intentionally mixed into diverse small groups to encourage

peer-to-peer learning. In the interview data, the teacher explained that this collaborative method was intentionally implemented so that students with higher academic abilities could actively help and guide their peers who were struggling, thereby creating an inclusive and mutually supportive classroom environment.

b. Media

Students have their own learning styles based on their learning interests, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic styles (Suryati et al., 2023). Therefore, teachers are required to use a variety of learning resources so that all students are engaged and play an active role in the learning process. In response to this, Risnawati et al. (2018) argue that digital presentations are highly effective in many learning situations, as they can integrate various media elements such as text, graphics, animations, videos, photos, and audio into a single delivery platform. This theoretical framework is strongly supported by the teacher's pedagogical approach. Classroom observations revealed that the teacher utilizes multimedia resources such as interactive television and YouTube videos as teaching methods when instructing on themes in English language learning. This finding aligns with interview data, in which the teacher revealed that she uses various learning tools, such as YouTube, interactive

television, and PowerPoint presentations to support the learning process. The integration of these resources naturally combines the teaching process with video, audio, visual explanations, and written examples, thereby accommodating students' diverse preferences for learning in the classroom.

c. Material

Under the Independent Curriculum, schools are provided with standard curriculum guidelines, teaching materials, and textbooks; however, Kamila et al. (2023) note that teachers are fully encouraged to modify, adapt, or create their own learning resources in accordance with the characteristics of their classes. This is reflected in the teaching strategies implemented by the teacher at SMAN 2 Kuala Kapuas. From classroom observations, it was found that the learning materials used during the two days of observation consisted of regular textbooks combined with supplementary materials such as YouTube videos and writing activities. During a semi-structured interview, the teacher explained that she utilized the flexibility of the Independent Curriculum to adapt learning resources based on the material schedule and students' needs. This allowed

students to complete writing assignments based on their personal experiences and individual levels of understanding.

d. Assessment

According to Begum and Ambreen (2021), formative assessment approaches such as class discussions, pair work, and interactive reflection allow teachers to gather direct evidence of learning and then adjust their teaching in real time to address students' learning gaps. In this regard, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2022) emphasizes that diverse assessments within the Independent Curriculum are essential tools for measuring student progress in alignment with their developmental stages. Classroom observations confirmed that the teacher actively participates in formative assessment by monitoring students' progress as they work on writing assignments and engage in collaborative group discussions. Semi-structured interviews provide a more detailed picture of this approach. The teacher stated that she uses various assessment tools, such as presentations and assignment evaluations, to track student progress and ensure that students have a solid grasp of the learning material.