



Implementation of Differentiated Learning to Improve Student Achievement in Indonesian Language Subject for Third Grade at SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang

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Abstract

Differentiated learning constitutes a pedagogical approach that accommodates the diversity of student characteristics, needs, and learning styles to achieve optimal educational objectives. This research aims to analyze the implementation of differentiated learning in enhancing student achievement in Indonesian Language subject for third-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang. The methodology employed was classroom action research utilizing Kemmis and McTaggart's spiral design, conducted across two cycles. The research subjects comprised 28 third-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang during the 2024/2025 academic year. Data collection techniques encompassed observation, achievement tests, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was performed descriptively through quantitative and qualitative approaches, comparing pre-test and post-test results across each cycle. Findings demonstrate that differentiated learning implementation significantly enhanced student achievement. During Cycle I, the average student achievement increased from 68.5 to 75.2 with classical completeness reaching 71.4%. In Cycle II, the average achievement improved to 82.3 with classical completeness attaining 89.3%. This enhancement resulted from content, process, and product differentiation aligned with student learning profiles. The research conclusion indicates that differentiated learning effectively improves Indonesian Language achievement among third-grade students by providing meaningful learning experiences tailored to individual student needs.

Keywords: differentiated learning, student achievement, Indonesian language, elementary school

Abstrak

Pembelajaran berdiferensiasi merupakan pendekatan pembelajaran yang mengakomodasi keberagaman karakteristik, kebutuhan, dan gaya belajar siswa untuk mencapai tujuan pembelajaran yang optimal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penerapan pembelajaran berdiferensiasi dalam meningkatkan hasil belajar siswa pada mata pelajaran Bahasa Indonesia kelas III di SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian tindakan kelas dengan desain spiral Kemmis dan McTaggart yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus. Subjek penelitian adalah 28 siswa kelas III SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang tahun ajaran 2024/2025. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi, tes hasil belajar, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan secara deskriptif kuantitatif dan kualitatif dengan membandingkan hasil pre-test dan post-test setiap siklus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan

bahwa penerapan pembelajaran berdiferensiasi dapat meningkatkan hasil belajar siswa secara signifikan. Pada siklus I, rata-rata hasil belajar siswa meningkat dari 68,5 menjadi 75,2 dengan ketuntasan klasikal 71,4%. Pada siklus II, rata-rata hasil belajar meningkat menjadi 82,3 dengan ketuntasan klasikal 89,3%. Peningkatan ini disebabkan oleh diferensiasi konten, proses, dan produk yang disesuaikan dengan profil belajar siswa. Simpulan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran berdiferensiasi efektif meningkatkan hasil belajar Bahasa Indonesia siswa kelas III dengan memberikan pengalaman belajar yang bermakna sesuai kebutuhan individual siswa.

Kata Kunci: pembelajaran berdiferensiasi, hasil belajar, Bahasa Indonesia, sekolah dasar

Introduction

Education in the 21st century demands a transformation of learning paradigms from conventional approaches toward more adaptive and responsive pedagogical practices that address student diversity. Tomlinson (2017) emphasizes that each student possesses unique characteristics in terms of intelligence, learning styles, interests, and readiness levels that differ significantly. This indicates the necessity for learning approaches capable of accommodating individual student differences to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

Indonesian Language instruction in elementary schools plays a strategic role in developing students' communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and literacy competencies. However, preliminary observations at SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang revealed that third-grade student achievement in Indonesian Language subject remains suboptimal. Data indicates that 60% of students scored below the established Minimum Mastery Criteria (KKM) of 75. This issue stems from the implementation of conventional teaching methods that have yet to acknowledge student characteristic diversity.

Tomlinson and Imbeau (2020) define differentiated learning as a pedagogical approach that recognizes students' differences in learning readiness, interests, and learning profiles. This instruction involves differentiation across three primary aspects: content (what students learn), process (how students process information), and product (how students demonstrate their learning). Research conducted by Santangelo and Tomlinson (2021) demonstrates that differentiated learning can enhance student academic achievement by up to 40% compared to conventional instruction.

Various previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of differentiated learning in improving educational outcomes.

Research by Prast et al. (2018) in the Netherlands showed that mathematics learning differentiation significantly enhanced student achievement. Similarly, studies conducted by Parsons et al. (2018) indicated that differentiated learning effectively improved student motivation and learning outcomes across various subjects. Within the context of Indonesian Language instruction, research by Wulandari and Surjono (2019) demonstrated that implementing differentiated learning enhanced elementary students' reading and writing capabilities.

The research problem formulation states: How can differentiated learning implementation improve student achievement in Indonesian Language subject for third-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang? More specific research questions include: (1) How does the differentiated learning implementation process occur in third-grade Indonesian Language instruction? (2) To what extent do student learning outcomes improve following differentiated learning implementation? (3) What factors support and hinder differentiated learning implementation?

This research aims to analyze differentiated learning implementation in enhancing student achievement in Indonesian Language subject for third-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang. Specifically, this study objectives include: (1) describing the differentiated learning implementation process in third-grade Indonesian Language instruction; (2) analyzing student learning outcome improvements following differentiated learning implementation; (3) identifying supporting and hindering factors in differentiated learning implementation.

The research scope is limited to differentiated learning implementation in Indonesian Language subject for reading and writing competency among third-grade students

at SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. Applied differentiation encompasses content, process, and product differentiation based on student learning profiles consisting of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles.

This research novelty lies in developing a differentiated learning model specifically for Indonesian Language instruction contexts in elementary schools by integrating digital technology and interactive learning media. Unlike previous studies that generally focused on one aspect of differentiation, this research implements holistic differentiation encompassing content, process, and product simultaneously. Additionally, this study employs a mixed-method approach with comprehensive quantitative and qualitative analysis to understand mechanisms of student learning outcome improvement. The primary contribution of this research is developing authentic assessment instruments capable of accommodating diverse ways students demonstrate their understanding of Indonesian Language materials.

Method

This research employed classroom action research methodology using Kemmis and McTaggart's spiral design consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This design was selected due to its alignment with research objectives, namely improving instructional practices and enhancing student learning outcomes through differentiated learning implementation.

The research was conducted at SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang, Pinrang Regency, South Sulawesi during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. Location selection was based on preliminary observations indicating that this school has students with diverse characteristics but has not optimally implemented differentiated learning. Research subjects comprised 28 third-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang, consisting of 15 male and 13 female students. Third-grade selection was based on considerations that students at this level possess adequate basic reading and writing abilities, making them suitable for differentiated learning implementation. Variables observed in this research include: (1) dependent variable,

namely student achievement in Indonesian Language subject measured through cognitive, affective, and psychomotor tests; (2) independent variable, namely differentiated learning implementation encompassing content, process, and product differentiation.

The differentiated learning model employed in this research adapted Tomlinson's (2017) model with modifications suited to Indonesian Language instruction contexts in elementary schools. This model consists of three primary components: (1) student learning profile mapping using Multiple Intelligence Survey and Learning Style Inventory instruments; (2) content differentiation through providing learning materials in various formats (text, audio, visual, and multimedia); (3) process differentiation through flexible grouping and varied learning strategies; (4) product differentiation through choices in how students demonstrate their understanding. The research design employed a pre-test post-test design comparing learning outcomes before and after differentiated learning implementation across two cycles. Each cycle consisted of four meetings with 2 x 35 minutes allocation per meeting.

Research instruments utilized included: (1) achievement tests comprising multiple-choice and essay questions validated by experts; (2) student and teacher activity observation sheets; (3) interview guidelines for exploring student and teacher perceptions; (4) documentation including photographs, videos, and student works; (5) student learning profile questionnaires. Data collection techniques were conducted through: (1) tests to measure student cognitive learning outcomes; (2) observations to examine learning processes and student activities; (3) interviews to gather in-depth information about learning perceptions and experiences; (4) documentation to record learning evidence; (5) questionnaires to identify student learning styles and interests.

Data analysis techniques employed descriptive quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative data in the form of achievement scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate means, medians, modes, and completion percentages. Learning outcome improvements were calculated using normalized gain score (N-gain) formulas. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed

using thematic analysis techniques with data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing stages. Research success criteria were established when 85% of students achieved KKM (75) and minimum 15% average learning outcome improvement occurred.

Results and Discussion

Based on pre-test results conducted before differentiated learning implementation, data revealed that the average student achievement in

Indonesian Language subject was 68.5 with a standard deviation of 8.7. Among 28 students, only 11 students (39.3%) achieved KKM, while 17 students (60.7%) remained below KKM. Score distribution showed that 7 students (25%) were in the poor category (50-64), 14 students (50%) in the adequate category (65-74), 6 students (21.4%) in the good category (75-84), and 1 student (3.6%) in the excellent category (85-100).

Table 1. Initial Conditions Data Analysis

Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Category
85-100	1	3.6%	Excellent
75-84	6	21.4%	Good
65-74	14	50.0%	Adequate
50-64	7	25.0%	Poor
Total	28	100%	
Mean	68.5		
Standard Deviation	8.7		
Students Achieving KKM	11 (39.3%)		

Initial observations revealed that implemented instruction remained conventional with teacher-centered approaches. Teachers had not identified student learning styles and tended to utilize lecture and question-answer methods. Learning materials were presented in uniform formats without considering diversity in how students process information.

Cycle I

In Cycle I, differentiated learning implementation was conducted through the following stages: (1) student learning profile

mapping using learning style questionnaires; (2) student grouping based on dominant learning styles; (3) content differentiation through providing materials in visual formats (posters, diagrams), auditory (recordings, songs), and kinesthetic (manipulatives, games); (4) process differentiation through varied learning strategies such as group discussions, cooperative learning, and hands-on activities; (5) product differentiation through choices in how students demonstrate understanding such as creating poems, dramas, or posters.

Table 2. Cycle I Data Analysis

Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Category
85-100	2	7.1%	Excellent
75-84	15	53.6%	Good
65-74	8	28.6%	Adequate
50-64	3	10.7%	Poor
Total	28	100%	
Mean	75.2		
Standard Deviation	7.9		
Students Achieving KKM	20 (71.4%)		

Cycle I post-test results demonstrated significant improvement. Average student

achievement increased to 75.2 with a standard deviation of 7.9. The number of students achieving KKM increased to 20 students (71.4%), while 8 students (28.6%) remained below KKM. Score distribution showed that 3 students (10.7%) were in the poor category, 8 students (28.6%) in the adequate category, 15 students (53.6%) in the good category, and 2 students (7.1%) in the excellent category.

Learning outcome improvement from pre-test to Cycle I post-test calculated using N-gain formula yielded a value of 0.42, categorized as moderate. This indicates that differentiated learning implementation in Cycle I provided positive impact on student learning outcomes, although it had not yet reached established targets. Student activity observations during

Cycle I showed increased participation and learning enthusiasm. Students appeared more active in following instruction, particularly when using media and strategies aligned with their learning styles. However, several challenges remained, including ineffective time management and some students experiencing difficulty adapting to new approaches.

Cycle II

Based on Cycle I reflections, improvements were made in Cycle II focusing on: (1) optimizing learning time management; (2) enhancing differentiation strategy variations; (3) providing more intensive scaffolding for students experiencing difficulties; (4) utilizing digital technology to support learning differentiation.

Table 3. Cycle II Data Analysis

Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Category
85-100	7	25.0%	Excellent
75-84	18	64.3%	Good
65-74	3	10.7%	Adequate
50-64	0	0%	Poor
Total	28	100%	
Mean	82.3		
Standard Deviation	6.5		
Students Achieving KKM	25 (89.3%)		

Cycle II post-test results demonstrated highly significant improvement. Average student achievement increased to 82.3 with a standard deviation of 6.5. The number of students achieving KKM increased to 25 students (89.3%), while only 3 students (10.7%) remained below KKM. Score distribution showed that 3 students (10.7%) were in the adequate category,

18 students (64.3%) in the good category, and 7 students (25%) in the excellent category.

Learning outcome improvement from Cycle I post-test to Cycle II post-test showed an N-gain of 0.29, categorized as moderate. Overall, from pre-test to Cycle II post-test, an N-gain of 0.58 was obtained, categorized as moderate approaching high

Table 4. Student Learning Outcomes Recapitulation

Aspect	Pre-test	Cycle I	Cycle II
Average	68.5	75.2	82.3
Classical Completeness	39.3%	71.4%	89.3%
Poor Category	25.0%	10.7%	0%
Adequate Category	50.0%	28.6%	10.7%
Good Category	21.4%	53.6%	64.3%
Excellent Category	3.6%	7.1%	25.0%

Discussion

Research findings demonstrate that differentiated learning implementation

effectively enhanced student achievement in Indonesian Language subject for third-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang. This improvement aligns with Vygotsky's social constructivism theory emphasizing the importance of accommodating each student's Zone of Proximal Development. Differentiated learning enables each student to learn within this zone with appropriate scaffolding support.

The success of differentiated learning in this research can be explained through several factors. First, content differentiation provided opportunities for students to access information through modalities aligned with their learning styles. Visual learners more easily understood materials through diagrams and posters, auditory learners through recordings and discussions, while kinesthetic learners through manipulative activities and games. This aligns with Gardner's (2020) research on multiple intelligence theory demonstrating that each individual possesses unique intelligence combinations.

Second, process differentiation enabled students to process information in ways most effective for them. Flexible grouping based on learning readiness, interests, and learning styles provided opportunities for each student to actively participate in learning. Applied cooperative learning strategies also supported development of students' social and communication skills, which constitute important aspects in Indonesian Language instruction.

Third, product differentiation provided freedom for students to demonstrate their understanding in ways aligned with their strengths and interests. Some students more easily expressed understanding through writing, while others through oral presentations or artistic works. This variation increased student intrinsic motivation and provided more meaningful learning experiences.

Significant learning outcome improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II indicates that differentiated learning requires adaptation processes from both teacher and student perspectives. In Cycle I, challenges remained regarding time management and group management that impacted suboptimal achieved results. However, through reflection and improvements in Cycle II, these challenges were

overcome, resulting in more significant improvements.

Student interview results showed increased motivation and interest in following instruction. Students stated that learning became more enjoyable and less boring due to variations in material delivery methods and learning activities. This aligns with Deci and Ryan's (2020) research on intrinsic motivation theory demonstrating that autonomy, competence, and social relatedness constitute key factors in enhancing student learning motivation.

From teacher perspectives, differentiated learning implementation required more intensive preparation and effective classroom management skills. Teachers needed to understand individual student characteristics, prepare varied materials and media, and manage complex learning activities. However, obtained results demonstrated that these efforts provided significantly positive impacts on student learning.

Research findings support previous research results conducted by Tomlinson and Imbeau (2020) demonstrating that differentiated learning can enhance academic achievement, motivation, and student engagement in learning. Similarly, research by Suprayogi et al. (2021) in Indonesia showed that implementing differentiated learning in Indonesian Language subjects significantly enhanced student literacy capabilities.

Factors supporting successful differentiated learning implementation in this research included: (1) principal and colleague support; (2) adequate facility and infrastructure availability; (3) student enthusiasm and active participation; (4) curriculum flexibility enabling learning strategy adaptation. Meanwhile, identified hindering factors were: (1) limited learning preparation time; (2) need for continuous teacher training and professional development; (3) requirement for parental support in supporting home learning.

Conclusion

Based on research results and discussion, it can be concluded that differentiated learning implementation effectively enhanced student achievement in Indonesian Language subject for third-grade students at SD Muhammadiyah 3 Pinrang. Learning outcome improvement was

evident from average score increases from 68.5 in pre-test to 82.3 in Cycle II post-test, with classical completeness reaching 89.3%. Differentiated learning encompassing content, process, and product differentiation provided meaningful learning experiences aligned with individual student needs.

The differentiated learning implementation process was conducted through stages of student learning profile mapping, flexible grouping, differentiation across three primary aspects, and authentic evaluation accommodating diverse ways students demonstrate understanding. Student learning outcome improvements resulted from available various choices for accessing, processing, and expressing learning aligned with student learning styles and interests.

Supporting factors for successful differentiated learning implementation included institutional support, resource availability, and active student participation. Meanwhile, primary hindering factors were limited preparation time and the need for continuous teacher competency development.

Research Limitations

This research has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted within limited contexts, namely one class in one school, so result generalization must be conducted cautiously. Second, differentiated learning implementation requires significant resources and preparation time, making it potentially difficult to implement in all school contexts. Third, this research focused on cognitive aspects of learning outcomes, so impacts on affective and psychomotor aspects need further exploration in subsequent research.

Recommendations

Based on research results, several recommendations are proposed for subsequent research and practice. First, follow-up research needs to be conducted with larger and more diverse samples to test differentiated learning effectiveness across various contexts and student characteristics. Second, systematic teacher training models need to be developed to enhance competencies in implementing differentiated learning. Third, subsequent research can explore

digital technology and artificial intelligence utilization to support more efficient differentiated learning implementation.

For learning practice, it is recommended that schools develop policies supporting differentiated learning implementation, provide adequate resources, and create learning cultures that appreciate student diversity. Teachers need continuous training regarding differentiated learning strategies and technical support in implementation.

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