

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background Of The Problem

Education is the main key in creating a quality generation that can adapt to the times. (Tomlinson, Carol A 2001 in Aminuriyah et al., 2023:2) claims that each student is unique in terms of skills, interests, cultural background, and preferred learning styles. In the context of modern education, it is increasingly recognized that each student has different needs , interests, and learning styles. Learning style refers to the way a person processes, understands , and absorbs information. However, the traditional education system in many schools tends to apply a uniform approach to teaching, where learning methods often do not account for the diversity of students' learning styles. As a result, students whose learning styles do not match the methods applied in class tend to experience difficulties in understanding the material. This can lead to low motivation to learn, declining academic results, and dissatisfaction with the teaching and learning process, ultimately hindering students' optimal development.

To address this challenge, differentiated instruction is widely considered a solution in education. Differentiated instruction is a flexible teaching method where teachers adjust teaching strategies, learning materials, and evaluation methods based on the needs and learning styles of each student (Partami, 2019). This approach sees the teacher not

only as a conveyor of material but also as a facilitator who helps students reach their maximum potential through methods suited to their unique learning styles. The implementation of differentiated learning positively impacts teacher teaching quality, as teachers become more adaptable and creative when planning and executing instruction tailored to the needs and comprehension levels of their students (Wijaya et al., 2024)

Spite its recognized potential to improve learning effectiveness, implementing differentiated instruction is challenging. The lack of sufficient examples of differentiated instruction makes it even harder to apply in practice (Tomlinson, 1999 in Rifqi, 2024:52) . One major challenge teachers face is understanding and identifying each student's learning style within a limited amount of time (Ayu Sri Wahyuni, 2022; Pablico et al., 2017 in Noviska & Anastasia, 2023:60). Differentiated instruction based on diverse learning styles can lead to better learning outcomes, higher student engagement, and an overall enjoyable learning environment. However, the lack of studies that deeply explore how teachers perceive and experience differentiated teaching, especially in the Indonesian context, makes it difficult to understand the effectiveness of this method.

The teacher's perception of differentiated instruction is critical because teachers are the primary implementers of this

approach. Teachers' understanding of how to differentiate their teaching methods is essential to the successful implementation of this strategy. According to studies by Dalila et al. (2022), Magableh and Abdullah (2020), Sahril et al. (2021), and Ziernwald et al. (2022 in Rifqi, 2024:152), differentiated instruction has been shown to positively affect students' intellectual development, subject interest, and understanding of key concepts. However, many teachers in Indonesia, including those in the author's internship school, still struggle to implement differentiated instruction optimally. They face difficulties in identifying and adapting methods to cater to individual learning styles, and they need more understanding and support regarding how to differentiate effectively.

In this context, teacher perceptions of differentiated instruction are crucial, as they influence how effectively this approach is applied in the classroom. Teachers are the ones responsible for planning, adjusting, and implementing differentiated methods in their lessons. Their perceptions of differentiated instruction can provide valuable insights into the challenges they face, the barriers to effective implementation, and the resources they need to make this approach more effective. According to Tomlinson (2001), understanding how teachers perceive differentiated instruction helps identify their readiness and willingness to

adapt to the individual needs of their students. Teachers' perceptions can influence the success of differentiated strategies in real classrooms, where time constraints, student diversity, and resources may limit the extent to which teachers can individualize their teaching.

Moreover, the importance of teacher perceptions lies in the fact that it directly impacts the outcomes of differentiated instruction. Teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of differentiated instruction and their ability to implement it are linked to the success of this approach. Positive perceptions of differentiated instruction can lead to increased enthusiasm for adopting diverse methods that support students' varied learning styles. Conversely, negative or unclear perceptions can result in resistance to change, reluctance to adapt teaching methods, and overall ineffective teaching practices.

In addition, the integration of differentiated instruction in English language classrooms is particularly important. English, as a subject, often requires specific approaches to accommodate the different proficiency levels and learning styles of students. Tomlinson (2001 in Aminuriyah et al., 2023:2) states that every student has unique skills, interests, cultural backgrounds, and preferred learning styles. This uniqueness impacts the way students acquire language, which involves multiple skills—listening, Speaking, reading, and writing—that are influenced by individual learning

preferences. Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory (1983 in Daulay, 2023:23) explains that each student possesses different types of intelligence, including linguistic, visual-Spatial, and kinesthetic intelligence, which significantly affect how they learn English. For instance, visual learners may benefit from graphic organizers or videos, auditory learners may thrive with listening exercises or discussions, and kinesthetic learners may engage best through role plays or interactive activities.

Teachers' perceptions of how differentiated instruction can be adapted to the teaching of English will directly affect how effectively these various learning styles are accommodated in the classroom. According to Tomlinson (2001 in Rifqi, 2024:152), teachers' understanding and beliefs about differentiated instruction play a crucial role in determining its successful implementation.

Several studies have explored differentiated instruction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Research conducted by Yuniawati (2024) examined EFL teachers' perspectives on the challenges and strategies in implementing differentiated instruction. The findings indicate that teacher professional development plays a significant role in improving differentiated teaching practices. Similarly, Handa (2020) investigated students' and teachers' perceptions of differentiated instruction, revealing a gap between student

expectations and teachers' implementation strategies. Another study by Gibbs (2022) focused on barriers to implementing differentiated instruction in Australian secondary schools, identifying time constraints and lack of resources as key challenges. In Indonesia, Nurhayati & Handayani (2020) explored the implementation of differentiated instruction in English lessons under the Merdeka Curriculum, highlighting teachers' struggles with limited facilities and student motivation. These studies emphasize the critical role of teacher perception and institutional support in the successful implementation of differentiated instruction.

Based on the pre-observation conducted, it was found that SMKN 4 Kepahiang has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum, including the concept of differentiated instruction. However, in practice, its implementation still faces various challenges. Teachers have diverse experiences and perspectives regarding differentiated instruction, both in understanding the concept and applying it in the classroom. Therefore, it is essential to explore further how teachers perceive differentiated instruction, the extent to which they feel prepared to implement it, and the factors that support or hinder the process.

This research aims to explore how teachers perceive differentiated instruction, focusing on their challenges and experiences with its implementation. Understanding teachers'

perspectives is essential because they play a key role in translating theory into practice. By examining these perceptions, the study seeks to provide new insights into how differentiated instruction can be better adapted and improved, especially in English classrooms. This exploration will not only highlight the challenges teachers face but also offer recommendations for how the implementation of differentiated instruction can be enhanced in schools across Indonesia.

Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute to the development of more adaptive and inclusive teaching strategies in English education. By deepening the understanding of how teachers perceive the need for differentiated instruction, educators will be better prepared to handle the diversity of learners in their classrooms. This will lead to a more inclusive, effective, and equitable learning environment, where each student's learning needs are met, and their potential is nurtured.

B. Identification of The Problems

1. Lack of application of learning approaches that consider the diversity of student learning styles.
2. Challenges faced by teachers in implementing differentiated teaching.
3. Low student engagement in the learning process due to methods that do not suit their learning styles.

C. Limitation of The Research

The research is limited to analyzing teachers' perceptions of the implementation of Differentiated Instruction in English language learning, with a focus on:

1. Teachers' experiences in implementing Differentiated Instruction.
2. Challenges faced by teachers during the implementation process.
3. How teachers' perception in implementing differentiated instruction.

D. Research Question

Based on the background and problem identification above, the researcher formulated the following research question:

1. How is the implementation of differentiated instruction in English language learning in English classroom?
2. What are the challenges faced by teachers in implementing differentiated instruction in English classroom?
3. What is the teacher's perception in implementing differentiated instruction in English classroom?

E. The Objective of The Research

based on the research question above then the objective of the research is aimed to:

1. To analyze the implementation of differentiated instruction in english classroom.

2. To identify challenges faced by teachers in implementing differentiated instruction.
3. To explore teachers' perceptions of differentiated instruction in english classrooms.

F. Significance of The Research

1. For Teachers:

This research will help teachers understand how they perceive differentiated instruction. With this understanding, teachers can better adjust their teaching methods to suit the diverse learning styles of their students. It will also assist teachers in managing heterogeneous classrooms more effectively, thereby increasing student engagement and learning outcomes.

2. For Students:

For students, this research provides benefits in the form of a learning experience that better meets their individual needs. By understanding how teachers implement differentiated instruction, students can grasp the material more easily, feel more motivated to learn, and feel valued in the process. This can help them reach their full potential and improve their academic performance.

3. For Future Researchers:

This study provides an important foundation for future researchers interested in differentiated instruction in English language education. The findings can serve as a reference for

further studies on the effectiveness of differentiated teaching methods in various educational contexts. Additionally, this research helps researchers understand the challenges and solutions related to teachers' perceptions, providing useful data for future educational policy development.

G. Definition of Key Terms

1. Differentiated Instruction

Tomlinson (1999: 15 in Daulay, 2023:23)) provides the most well-known definition of differentiated instruction. Tomlinson (1999: 15) defines differentiated instruction as “a teacher’s response to learner’s needs guided by general principles of differentiation such as reSpectful tasks, flexible grouping, and ongoing assessment and adjustment. Tomlinson (1999) defines differentiated instruction as the way teachers respond to students' needs by following basic principles such as giving appropriate tasks, creating flexible learning groups, and conducting continuous evaluation. This means that teachers must understand the uniqueness of each student and provide tasks that honor their potential and interests. By dividing students into different groups and conducting continuous assessment, teachers can adjust teaching methods to make them more effective. Thus, differentiated instruction helps create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.

2. English Foreign Language

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the teaching and learning of English in countries where English is not used in daily life and is not the primary or official language. In the context of EFL, students learn English in schools or educational institutions, without many opportunities to interact or practice using English outside the classroom. EFL is often taught as a foreign language that must be learned for academic, professional, or international communication purposes.

3. Teacher Perception

Teachers' perceptions refer to teachers' views and understanding of differentiated instruction in teaching. These perceptions influence how teachers adjust teaching methods to meet the needs of diverse students. By understanding the different learning styles and interests of students, teachers can design more effective and responsive teaching strategies and create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.

4. Merdeka Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum is an educational framework designed to enhance the quality of learning by focusing on essential competencies and student-centered approaches. It provides flexibility for teachers to tailor instruction according to students' needs and encourages independent learning. This curriculum emphasizes deep understanding, critical thinking,

problem-solving skills, and contextual learning through project-based activities.

5. Guru Penggerak

Guru Penggerak refers to an educational leadership program aimed at developing teachers as instructional leaders who drive positive change in schools and communities. These teachers are trained to implement innovative and student-centered teaching approaches, mentor fellow educators, and foster a collaborative learning environment. The program equips teachers with skills to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and improve the overall quality of education.

