
Analysis of Differentiated Learning in Indonesian Language Subjects for Elementary School Students

Desfita Muliadi¹, Sindi Winarsih², Aliya Ramadani³, Nurul Hasanah⁴

¹ Universitas Cokroaminoto Palopo, Indonesia ; desfitamuliadi05@gmail.com

² Universitas Cokroaminoto Palopo, Indonesia; winarsihsindi@gmail.com

³ Universitas Cokroaminoto Palopo, Indonesia; aaliyaramadanii@gmail.com

⁴ Universitas Cokroaminoto Palopo, Indonesia; nurulhasanah2629@gmail.com

* 085939265105

Article history

Submitted: 2026/07/26; Revised: 2026/07/31; Accepted: 2026/08/02

Abstrak

The diversity of learning readiness, interests, and learning styles of elementary school students requires teachers to implement learning that is no longer uniform, especially since the Independent Curriculum requires student-centered learning through a differentiated approach, while Indonesian language learning has tended to be teacher-centered. This study aims to analyze the implementation of differentiated learning in Indonesian language subjects in elementary schools, the forms of content, process, and product differentiation applied, and the obstacles faced by teachers in its implementation. The method used is a library study (library research) with a qualitative approach and content analysis techniques on six articles from accredited national journals published in 2020–2026. The results of the study indicate that all articles report the positive impact of differentiated learning on student activity, motivation, and learning outcomes; process differentiation is most often applied compared to content and product, with diagnostic assessment as a key instrument for mapping student needs; and three main obstacles that are consistently reported are time constraints, large student numbers in one class, and teachers' lack of understanding of student learning styles. It can be concluded that differentiated learning effectively improves the quality of Indonesian language learning in elementary schools, but its success depends on systemic support in the form of continuous teacher training and adjustment of the student ratio per class, so that future research is recommended to use a quantitative design to measure the magnitude of its impact measurably.

Kata Kunci

Differentiated Learning; Indonesian; Elementary School.



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INTRODUCTION

Elementary education is a crucial foundation for building academic competence and character in students from an early age. In practice, elementary school teachers are often faced with the reality that students within a class have widely varying levels of learning readiness, learning styles, interests, and backgrounds. The implementation of differentiated learning is also inseparable from the literacy and numeracy achievements of Indonesian students, which still need to be improved. Given the large scale and diversity of the national education system, ensuring equitable learning quality is a challenge in itself. This situation further emphasizes that a uniform learning approach is no longer adequate to accommodate students' diverse learning needs. Furthermore, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, which the government has been implementing since 2022, explicitly requires teachers to implement student-centered learning through a differentiated approach, making studies on its effectiveness increasingly relevant and urgent (Gumilar et al., 2023). According to Mardiana et al. (2025), differentiated learning is an instructional approach that emphasizes adapting learning strategies based on individual student characteristics, such as interests, learning styles, learning readiness, and academic needs. In line with this, Dista et al., as cited in (Ruwaida, 2024), stated that differentiated learning is important to implement in elementary schools because students have different learning styles, interests, abilities, and learning speeds. Through student-centered learning, teachers can tailor learning to individual needs, making the learning experience more meaningful and maximizing students' potential.

Indonesian is the national language used as the primary means of communication among Indonesians and is taught continuously from elementary school to university (Munsi, in Elviya & Sukartiningsih, 2023). As a fundamental subject in elementary schools, Indonesian plays a crucial role in developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, as well as supporting students' social, emotional, and intellectual development and success in learning various subjects (Sumaryamti, in Elviya & Sukartiningsih, 2023). However, Indonesian language learning still tends to be teacher-centered, involving memorization and one-way delivery of material, thus not fully accommodating students' needs, characteristics, and potential (Ali Mustadi, in Elviya & Sukartiningsih, 2023). Nevertheless, the diversity of student characteristics, interests, and readiness to learn requires teachers to implement learning that meets the learning needs of each individual. In line with the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, differentiated learning is one strategy that can accommodate this diversity, making the learning process more effective and tailored to student needs (Elviya & Sukartiningsih, 2023).

The urgency of implementing differentiated learning becomes even more apparent when linked to the diverse student environment faced by elementary school teachers on a daily basis. In elementary schools, student diversity encompasses differences in academic ability, cultural background, language, learning styles, and even special needs, which require teachers to adapt teaching methods to suit each student's unique needs (Sumilat & Koni,

2024). The majority of teachers consider implementing learning tailored to students' learning styles difficult, with challenges including limited resources, a standardized curriculum, large class sizes, time constraints, and teachers' lack of understanding of students' learning styles (Umayrah & Dinn, 2023). Similar challenges were also found in other studies that identified teacher barriers such as limited facilities and infrastructure, difficulties designing individualized learning methods, and minimal school training and support in managing classroom diversity (Sumilat & Koni, 2024). This situation demonstrates a gap between the demands of the Independent Curriculum policy, which mandates differentiated learning, and teachers' readiness to implement it effectively, particularly in Indonesian language subjects, which require adaptation of literacy strategies to students' diverse reading and writing abilities.

Several previous studies have shown that differentiated learning in Indonesian language subjects in elementary schools has a positive impact on student learning processes and outcomes. Elviya and Sukartiningsih (2023) found that implementing differentiated learning based on students' learning readiness, interests, and learning profiles can increase student engagement and activeness in Indonesian language learning. Umami and Damayanti (2023) demonstrated that implementing differentiation of content, process, and product through diagnostic assessments makes reading comprehension learning more tailored to students' learning needs, thus eliciting a positive response from students. Furthermore, Sofiah and Hikmawati (2023) revealed that differentiated learning in Indonesian language subjects can accommodate diverse student characteristics and increase student participation, although teachers still face challenges in mapping learning needs and developing varied learning strategies.

Extensive research on differentiated learning in elementary schools has demonstrated that this approach can improve student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes (Dista et al., 2024). However, most research still discusses differentiated learning in general or across various subjects, while studies specifically analyzing its application in Indonesian language subjects in elementary schools are still limited. Furthermore, existing research focuses more on descriptions of implementation, so that an integrated analysis of the forms of differentiation of content, process, and product, as well as the obstacles faced by teachers in Indonesian language learning, has not been comprehensively examined by Susanti (in Elviya & Sukartiningsih, 2023). Therefore, this study was conducted to analyze differentiated learning in Indonesian language subjects in elementary schools to provide a more comprehensive picture of its implementation.

Based on this description, the research questions are formulated as follows: (1) How is differentiated learning implemented in Indonesian language subjects in elementary schools based on the results of previous research? (2) What forms are the forms of implementation of differentiation of content, process, and product in Indonesian language learning? (3) What obstacles do teachers face in implementing differentiated learning in elementary schools? Based on the formulation of the problem, this study aims to analyze the application of

differentiated learning in Indonesian language subjects in elementary schools based on the results of previous research, describe the forms of application of differentiation of content, process, and product in Indonesian language learning, and analyze the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing differentiated learning so that a comprehensive picture is obtained..

METHOD

This research employed a library research method, utilizing various written sources, such as scientific journal articles and official documents relevant to the topic of differentiated learning in elementary schools. This method was chosen because all research data was obtained from scientific literature without involving direct observation or experimentation in the field. This research also employed a qualitative approach to understand and analyze the concept, implementation, and challenges of differentiated learning based on theory and previous research findings, thus gaining a comprehensive and contextual understanding of the topic under study (Regan, K., et al., 2026).

The data analysis technique used in this study was content analysis, a systematic technique for identifying, categorizing, interpreting, and deriving meaning from information in various documents or literature. Through this technique, researchers not only describe the content of each source but also compare, categorize, and integrate various findings to gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept of differentiated learning and its impact on elementary school student learning outcomes (Sitasari, 2022). Furthermore, content analysis allows researchers to produce valid findings while still considering the context of each piece of data analyzed.

The data sources in this study were primary sources in the form of journal articles that directly discuss the concepts, strategies, and implementation outcomes of differentiated learning at the elementary school level, including Marlina's (2020) study on differentiated learning strategies. A literature search was conducted through the Google Scholar academic database and the SINTA-accredited national journal portal, using the keywords "differentiated learning," "Indonesian," "elementary school," and combinations of these. The search was limited to articles published between 2020 and 2026 to ensure relevance to the current implementation of the Independent Curriculum.

To maintain the quality and relevance of the sources used, this study established inclusion and exclusion criteria in the article selection process. The selected articles met the following inclusion criteria: (1) discussing the concept or implementation of differentiated learning; (2) conducted at the elementary school level; (3) peer-reviewed national scientific journal articles; and (4) published between 2020 and 2026 and specifically addressing the subject of Indonesian. The selection process was carried out in three stages: screening based on title and abstract, reading the full text, and extracting data. Based on this process, six articles that met the criteria were selected and further analyzed, as summarized in Table 1.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Based on the synthesis presented in **Table 1**, three major findings were identified. First, all of the analyzed articles (6 out of 6) reported a positive impact of differentiated instruction on students' engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes in **Indonesian Language** subjects, with none of the findings reporting any negative effects. Second, the most frequently implemented form of differentiation was **process differentiation** (identified in 5 articles), followed by **content differentiation** (4 articles) and **product differentiation** (3 articles), with **diagnostic assessment** being identified as the key instrument for mapping students' learning needs before differentiated instruction was designed (Umami & Damayanti, 2023; Elviya & Sukartiningsih, 2023). Third, all articles discussing implementation challenges (4 out of 6 articles) consistently reported the same three barriers: limited instructional time, large class sizes, and teachers' limited understanding or training in mapping students' learning styles (Sofiah & Hikmawati, 2023; Umayrah & Dinn, 2023; Sumilat & Koni, 2024).

The synthesis of the six analyzed articles is presented in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Synthesis of the Analyzed Articles

No.	Author(s) (Year)	Research Focus	Method	Main Findings
1.	Elviya & Sukartiningsih (2023)	Implementation of differentiated instruction in Grade IV Indonesian Language	Descriptive qualitative	Differentiation based on readiness, interests, and learning profiles increased student engagement
2.	Umami & Damayanti (2023)	Content, process, and product differentiation in Grade IV reading comprehension	Descriptive qualitative	Diagnostic assessment helped teachers adapt reading instruction to students' learning needs
3.	Sofiah & Hikmawati (2023)	Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum through differentiated instruction in Indonesian Language	Qualitative implementation analysis	Increased student participation, with challenges in mapping students' learning needs
4.	Nurhudayana,	Addressing learning	Qualitative	Differentiated

	Ridwan, Akib, & Rukli (2023)	difficulties in Grade IV Indonesian Language		instruction effectively supported students experiencing learning difficulties
5.	Wibowo, Nuvitalia, & Wakhyudin (2023)	Analysis of learning styles in differentiated instruction for elementary Indonesian Language	Descriptive qualitative	Teachers need to identify visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles to design differentiated instruction
6.	Marlina (2020)	General strategies for differentiated instruction	Conceptual review	Serves as the fundamental reference for the concepts of content, process, and product differentiation

Source: Compiled by the Researcher (2026)

In terms of grade level, the analyzed studies primarily focused on **Grade IV** (3 out of 6 articles), while lower grades (Grades I–II) and other upper grades (Grades V–VI) have received relatively little specific attention in **Indonesian Language** subjects. Regarding research methods, all primary articles employed a **descriptive qualitative** approach; therefore, no studies using quantitative or mixed-methods designs were identified that measured the **effect size** of differentiated instruction on students' literacy achievement in a quantifiable manner.

Discussion

The finding that all articles reported positive impacts strengthens the position of differentiated learning as a relevant strategy for addressing the diversity of student learning readiness, interests, and styles. This aligns with the view of Mardiana et al. (2025) that differentiation is essentially the adjustment of learning strategies to individual student characteristics. The consistency of these findings in Indonesian language subjects specifically also strengthens the argument of Elviya and Sukartiningsih (2023) that learning, which was previously teacher-centered and one-way, needs to shift to student-centered learning.

The dominance of process differentiation over content and product differentiation indicates that teachers are changing delivery methods and learning strategies (e.g., grouping based on learning readiness) more than they are changing the material or format of the final

assessment. This is likely because process differentiation is relatively easier to implement without requiring the development of new materials or assessment instruments, while content and product differentiation require more preparation time, in line with the consistently reported time constraints (Umayrah & Dinn, 2023; Sumilat & Koni, 2024).

The consistency of the three main constraints (time, number of students, and teacher understanding) across various school contexts indicates that the barriers to implementing differentiated learning in Indonesian are structural, not simply individual teacher issues. This means that the successful implementation of the Independent Curriculum in this aspect depends on systemic support, such as ongoing training and adjustments to the student-to-class ratio, not just individual teacher initiatives (Sumilat & Koni, 2024).

The lack of research with quantitative or mixed designs presents a significant methodological gap: claims of the effectiveness of differentiated learning in Indonesian have so far been based on qualitative descriptions, so the magnitude of its impact on literacy achievement cannot be measured in a standardized manner. Similarly, the concentration of research on fourth grade leaves a gap in the scope of other lower and upper grades, which may have different characteristics and differentiation needs.

KESIMPULAN

Based on the results of a literature review of six articles, it can be concluded that differentiated learning is an effective approach to improving the quality of Indonesian language learning in elementary schools because it can accommodate the diversity of students based on their learning readiness, interests, abilities, and individual characteristics. Process differentiation is most widely applied compared to content and product differentiation, with diagnostic assessments serving as an instrument for mapping student needs. However, its implementation still faces structural obstacles such as time constraints, large student numbers, and minimal teacher training. Future research is recommended to use quantitative or mixed-method designs to measure the impact of differentiation on literacy achievement, as well as to expand the scope of the grade levels studied.

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