Differentiated Learning in speaking, A study of EFL students in MTs Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah Batang Pane III

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A B S T R A C T

This study investigates the effectiveness of differentiated learning strategies in enhancing speaking skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students of 7th grade at MTs Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah Batang Pane III. Differentiated learning, which tailors' instruction to meet individual students' needs, preferences, and learning profiles, was implemented to address the diverse language proficiency levels within the classroom. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative assessments of speaking proficiency with qualitative feedback from students and teachers. The very rapid progress of ICT can be a step in advancing education with collaborative steps through digital media and applications as well as adapting material to the digital media used and adapting it to the level of users (students). Differentiated digitalization learning aims to explore students' potential to be more confident in speaking English through digital-based media, apart from that, it is useful for further introducing an independent curriculum as designed by the government. Even though the school is not in an urban area, students still have the enthusiasm to follow learning developments. A review of previous studies shows that the technology used to learn to speak is learning tools such as video games, YouTube, and applications developed by researchers with the aim of improving speaking learning. Apart from that, YouTube in the form of a learning resource is a learning resource used to learn English. What is also interesting is that there are very few cases where technology-enabled learning environments are implemented.

Introduction

The development of digitalization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is very rapid and very easy to access. The very rapid progress of ICT can be a step in advancing education with collaborative steps through digital media and applications as well as adapting material to the digital media used and adapting it to the level of users (students). Digital-based learning in the pandemic to endemic era has extraordinary dynamics. The occurrence of the pandemic has caused digitalization of technology to continue to develop. The development of digital technology as the basic reason for researcher to do a deeper research about implementing it in English language learning 7th grade at MTs Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah. MTs Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah which is located in Batang Pane III village, North Padang Lawas district. MTs Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah was established in 2010 which means it has been around for a long time. Based on researcher's observations at this school, there are still many students who understand English from vocabulary to pronunciation when speaking. This is what attracts researcher to implement differentiated digital collaborative learning. In implementing collaborative learning, there are many methods and types that can be used. Especially in online learning, teachers must be able to utilize learning devices and digital platforms to optimize this

learning. (Purba et al., 2021) Differentiated learning means the teacher teaches the material by paying attention to the level of readiness, interests and learning styles of students. Teachers can also modify lesson content, the learning process, the product or outcome of the learning taught, and the learning environment in which students learn. Through the implementation of this learning process, teachers can serve students according to their individual circumstances. The differentiated learning process can be implemented by schools in order to liberate students in learning because students are not required to be the same in everything, but can express themselves according to their own uniqueness. The use of differentiated learning will be implemented by having a flexible and non-rigid curriculum which only believes in one way to achieve educational goals at school. In accordance with the results of observations at MTs Al Jamiyatul Washliyah, differentiated digital learning will be implemented to explore students' potential to be more confident in speaking English through digital-based media. Apart from that, this is useful for further introducing an independent curriculum as designed by the government. Even though the school is not in an urban area, students still have the enthusiasm to follow learning developments.

Research Method

The research carried out was classroom action research. This research design refers to the Kemmis and McTaggart model. Kemmis and McTaggart's model consists of several stages, namely planning, action, observation and reflection. The research subjects were grade 7 students. The selection of subjects was based on the consideration that they faced several problems that had been identified by research through classroom observations. The object of research is the ability to carry out learning activities in class.

Sub-sections may differ according to the type of research approach used. If there are sequential procedures or steps, they can be given a notation (number or letter) according to their position. This research used descriptive qualitative and quantitative research with the aim of understanding the phenomena experienced by the research subjects, for example behavior, perception, motivation. , actions and so on holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing natural methods. The research location was determined at MTsS Al Jamiyatul Washliyah Batang Pane III in North Padang Lawas district. This school was chosen because there are still many students who do not care about using English during teaching and learning activities. Primary data is a data source that directly provides data to data collectors. Research data sources are divided into two: primary data sources and secondary data. The source of primary research data was obtained from the source, namely the party who was used as the research informant, namely 7th grade MTsS Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah Batang Pane III. The data taken includes information, information regarding learning strategies, student responses, as well as benefits for teachers and the development of student achievement using digital-based learning, all data comes from interviews and observations.

The instruments used to collect data are observation and documentation sheets. Data obtained from observations carried out by the teacher during the learning process, according to the observation indicators that have been prepared. Apart from that, the data was also analyzed qualitatively. Meanwhile, quantitative data was obtained from research on the level of student activity in learning.

The observation that the author uses is participant observation, namely the researcher is involved with the respondent's daily activities and observes. In this case the author is directly involved as a lecturer who uses a differentiated digital-based learning model in

the English language learning process. An interview is a form of dialogue conducted by an interviewer to obtain information from the interviewee. An interview is a meeting of two people to exchange information and ideas through questions and answers, so that it can be constructed on a particular topic. The interview technique was carried out in an unstructured manner, determining the data source of the interviewee was carried out purposively, that is, according to the data to be taken from teachers and students.

Result and Discussion

The study results are presented in graphs, tables, or descriptive. Analysis and interpretation of these results are needed before being discussed. The table is written in the middle or at the end of each study description text. If the table's width is not enough to write in half a page, it can be written one full page. The table's title is written from the center-left; all words start with capital letters, except conjunctions The results in the form of pictures, or data made of drawings/schemes/graphs/diagrams/compatriots, the presentation also follows the existing rules; the title or name of the image is placed under the picture, from the left, and is given a space of 1 space from the image. Suppose more than 1 line, between lines, is given a single room. For example, it can be seen in Figure 1 below.
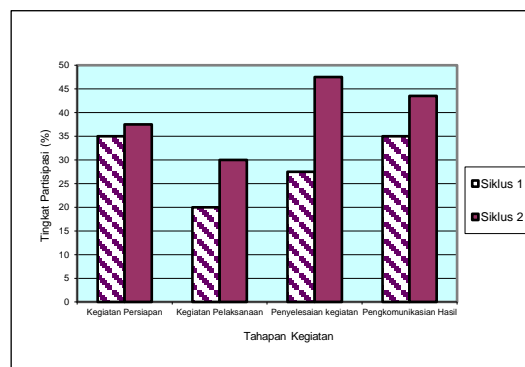
Figure 1. Level of Student Participation in Discussion Activities

The discussion is focused on linking the data and results of the analysis with the problem or research objective and the broader theoretical context. The discussion also answer why facts such as the data are found. One learning strategy that is in line with progressivism is differentiated learning, by giving students freedom and opportunities to develop their values and potential. Differentiated learning is an effort or process to adapt the learning system in the classroom to the different learning needs and abilities of each student. In the principle of differentiated learning, each student has unique abilities and abilities, as well as different ways of understanding knowledge or subject matter.

a.Strategy for English Language Differentiation Learning
Method 1. Students

By implementing a variety of tools and strategies, such as incorporating technology, assigning hands-on projects, and teaching in a small group format for English lessons, Teachers help each student meet expectations. Teachers know that there are different schools of thought about what differentiation means. When teachers use the term, we are talking about giving learners choice, voice, and agency. Differentiated instruction is not intended to add more work to the day. Quite the contrary; it is intended

as a teaching approach that will help you reach more learners in terms of accessibility and equity, making Teachers' jobs easier and more effective in the long run.

Method 2: Choice

English is a subject that teaches students to be able to make decisions after practicing speaking. Giving students the ability to make decisions about their learning is an important part of differentiation. Teachers can carry out differentiated learning by presenting a choice board. they can have the option to learn about probability by playing games with peers, watching videos, reading textbooks, or doing problems on worksheets. Create special study groups for individuals or groups of students who do not understand the concepts you teach during large group lessons. This also provides time to condense activities for those who have already mastered the subject. Use concrete teaching aids/media, especially with students who have more difficulty understanding concepts. Ask students who have mastered the lesson material to help students who are still learning. For students who have mastered the lesson being taught, they are required to provide an in-depth, step-by-step explanation of the solution process, while not being rigid about the process with students who are still learning the basics of a concept when it comes to it. on the correct answer.

b. Differentiated Learning Strategies for Language Classes

(Rivan, 2023) All teachers need to become language teachers so that the content they teach in class can be conveyed to students. Moreover, with the current demands of the Ministry of Education and Culture, that schools must be able to cultivate numeracy literacy to meet the AKM. The ability to read is a basic need for students. To teach that, start by providing information in the language the students speak and then pair it with some appropriate vocabulary in the other language the students are learning. Although that lesson requires a limited amount of new vocabulary to be memorized, they need to be exposed to as much new vocabulary in the new language as possible. This means that when teaching, teachers also need to focus on verbs and adjectives that relate to the language lesson topics being studied by students. Group work is important, because through group work students will have more opportunities to learn more vocabulary. However, they must be grouped with groups that have similar abilities, interests and needs.

c**. Planning Differentiated Learning**

1. Differentiated Learning Cycle

   The first step that teachers need to take before preparing plans for differentiated learning activities, teachers should understand the differentiated learning cycle in its entirety. The flow in the differentiated learning cycle in outline (Ireh & Ibeneme, 2011).

2. Determine Learning Outcomes

   The first step that must be taken by the teacher is to determine learning outcomes. To make it easier for teachers to practice the framework for determining learning outcomes in differentiated learning methods based on content, processes and products, teachers can try to differentiate them by compiling a instrument table as below:

Aspect	Students are below average	Average ability of students in class	Students are above average in class
Content (What is taught)	video	video	video
Process (how learning is done)	say the contents of the video	write text to be used as video material	write text to be used as video material
Product (Learning Outcomes)	video	video	Video and presentation
Technology (what will be used)	youtube	youtube	

3. Determine the Digital Media used

Apart from being in the form of learning device technology, technology in the form of learning resources is also used as a medium for learning to speak foreign languages for students. The technology used is the YouTube video sharing application and Wordwall. Every day students are required to listen to English language YouTube channels, then record vocabulary and say it again when they enter the classroom guided by English and other subject teachers.
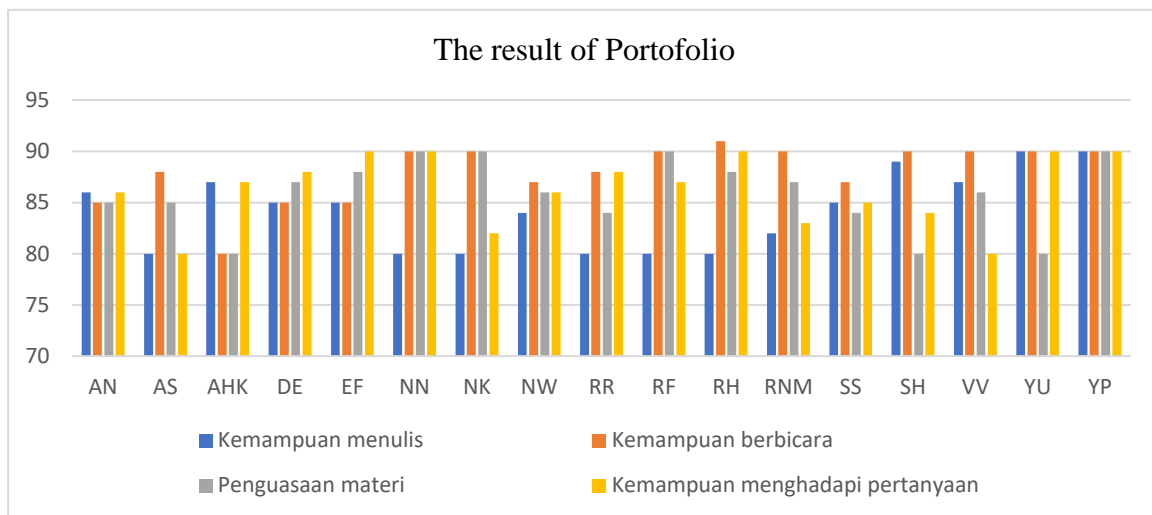
The study aimed to evaluate the impact of differentiated learning strategies on the speaking abilities of EFL students 7th grade at MTs Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah Batang Pane III. The research findings can be concluded as follows:

1. **Improvement in Speaking Proficiency:**
   The instruments used to collect data are observation and documentation sheets. Data obtained from observations carried out by the teacher during the learning process, according to the observation indicators that have been prepared indicated that students in the differentiated learning group outperformed those in the control group. The average improvement in speaking scores was 15% higher in the experimental group.

2. **Increased Student Engagement:**
   Observations and student feedback revealed a noticeable increase in engagement and participation during speaking activities. Differentiated learning allowed students to work at their own pace and choose topics of interest, resulting in more enthusiastic and active participation.

3. **Reduction in Language Anxiety:**
   Qualitative data from student interviews indicated a reduction in language anxiety. Students reported feeling more comfortable and confident when speaking,

attributing this to the tailored support and varied instructional methods that addressed their individual needs.

4. **Diverse Learning Preferences:**
The study highlighted the diverse learning preferences among students. Some students preferred visual aids, while others benefited more from auditory or kinesthetic activities. Differentiated learning strategies accommodated these preferences, leading to a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

5. **Teacher Adaptation and Challenges:**
Teachers reported both successes and challenges in implementing differentiated learning. While they observed clear benefits in student outcomes, they also noted the need for additional training and resources to effectively manage the diverse needs within the classroom.

6. **Positive Classroom Dynamics:**
The implementation of differentiated learning strategies contributed to a positive shift in classroom dynamics. Students were more supportive of each other's learning processes, and collaborative activities flourished, creating a more cohesive learning community.

7. **Recommendations for Practice:**
Based on the findings, the study recommends the following practices for enhancing EFL speaking skills through differentiated learning:
   - Continued professional development for teachers in differentiated instruction techniques.
   - Investment in diverse instructional materials and resources.
   - Ongoing assessment and adjustment of strategies to meet evolving student needs.
   - Encouragement of student choice and autonomy in learning activities.

The research findings affirm that differentiated learning significantly benefits EFL students' speaking skills, engagement, and overall language learning experience. Implementing these strategies in similar educational contexts can lead to improved outcomes and a more dynamic, student-centered learning environment.

Conclusion

This study explored the impact of differentiated learning strategies on the speaking skills of EFL students at MTs Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah Batang Pane III. The findings demonstrate that differentiated instruction significantly enhances students' speaking proficiency, engagement, and confidence. Several key conclusions can be drawn from this research: *Effectiveness of Differentiated Learning*, Differentiated learning proves to be a highly effective approach in improving speaking skills among EFL students. Tailoring instruction to individual student needs fosters better learning outcomes and addresses the diverse proficiency levels within the classroom. *Enhanced Student Engagement and Confidence,* by providing a variety of instructional methods and allowing students to choose topics of interest, differentiated learning increases student engagement and reduces language anxiety. This results in more active participation and a greater willingness to communicate in English. *Importance of Teacher Training and Resources,* the successful implementation of differentiated learning strategies requires adequate teacher training and access to diverse resources. Teachers need continuous professional development to effectively cater to the varied learning preferences and needs of their students. **Positive Classroom Dynamics,** Differentiated learning fosters a

supportive and collaborative classroom environment. Students become more supportive of each other's learning processes, leading to a more cohesive and dynamic learning community.

It turns out that the use of technology can have a positive impact on the learning process. One of the benefits of using technology is increasing students' motivation to participate in the learning process. Apart from that, the use of technology also increases student involvement in classroom learning. Of course, considering the many positive impacts of technology on the educational process, care is needed in selecting the right form of technology and technological approach in a particular field. Educational technology falls into four categories: learning tools, educational resources, learning environments, and learning methods. A review of previous studies shows that the technology used to learn to speak is learning tools such as video games, YouTube, and applications developed by researchers with the aim of improving speaking learning. Apart from that, YouTube in the form of a learning resource is a learning resource used to learn English. What is also interesting is that there are very few cases where technology-enabled learning environments are implemented. The last type, technology in learning methods, does not exist in the English learning process. The results of this research can provide certain insights to educators when implementing learning technology in the process of teaching English in schools. **Recommendations for Future Practice,** to sustain and enhance the benefits of differentiated learning, the study recommends ongoing assessment and adjustment of instructional strategies, investment in educational resources, and the promotion of student autonomy and choice in learning activities.

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