

The Implementation of Differentiated Learning: An Effort to Address the Challenges of Arabic Language Learning

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Differentiated Learning Learning Arabic Language	Arabic language learning continues to evolve in line with the times. However, the challenges remain the same over the years: students struggle to understand what they are learning. To date, students still rely on memorization as a learning strategy, leading to difficulties when applying the vocabulary they have memorized in communicative contexts. Specifically, Arabic language learning for university students, which should be a continuation of what was learned at previous levels, often faces the issue that many students have never studied Arabic beyond the basic alphabet (a-ba-ta). This problem also affects students at the Faculty of Economics and Islamic Business (FEBI) at UIN Walisongo, where the majority of students are non-Islamic boarding school alumni. To address this issue, and as a manifestation of implementing the independent curriculum, lecturers have applied a differentiated learning approach. This study uses a qualitative method, incorporating observation, interviews, and documentation. Some of the strategies employed in differentiated learning include conducting initial assessments to group students according to their educational backgrounds to tailor learning needs, adopting various approaches to accommodate the diverse profiles of students, preparing engaging and varied teaching materials, and conducting final assessments.
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INTRODUCTION

In this era of technological sophistication, learning remains an interesting topic of discussion. Although any knowledge can be obtained through existing technology, the learning and teaching process cannot be replaced by the sophistication of the technology. There are values transferred by teachers to learners so that not only knowledge is conveyed. In the learning process, both teachers and learners have important roles. Teachers are expected to be able to convey messages and knowledge and values to learners, as well as

learners can receive information and knowledge from teachers.¹

Learning Arabic is still a problem for students at Islamic universities, both state and private. Although, in reality Arabic is the language of the Qur'an and the language of worship that is carried out every day. In addition, Arabic is also an international language like English. However, many students still find it difficult to speak Arabic.

Arabic language learning problems are elements that hinder the success of Arabic language learning. These problems include: language problems, namely problems in terms of sound, vocabulary, Qawā'id and Tarāḳib. And non-linguistic problems, including elements of student motivation, facilities and infrastructure, teacher competence, which of course have different social conditions and learning methods used during the Arabic language learning process.²

Furthermore, Arabic itself has been a learning material since the elementary madrasah level to the high school level. At this formal education level, language learning uses *Nazhariyyah al Wahdah*, namely the approach that language is a closely related entity, not as separate and different branches. Each lesson unit discusses one topic that is described in several sub-topics, one topic/discussion title covers all aspects of language competence.³ If calculated, Arabic language learning in madrasahs in the independent curriculum is 12 years. However, in reality, the Arabic language achievement of students with a formal educational background is not so happy, even though the time and learning experience obtained are not short. This is reinforced by Novita Rahmi's research which explains that Arabic language learning has not achieved its maximum goals. This is indicated by students in the Arabic Language Education Department of IAIN Metro still having difficulty understanding Arabic language lecture materials, they also tend to use Indonesian language references compared to Arabic language references.⁴

In addition to elementary to high school madrasahs, there are non-formal educational institutions that focus on Arabic language learning, such as Islamic boarding schools. Arabic

¹ Dede Novita Jumiarti, M. Fakhruddin, and Nur Aeni Marta, "Implementation of Differentiated Learning in History Subjects: Case Study at SMAN 23 Tangerang Regency," *Fajar Historia: Journal of History and Education* 8, no. 1 (April 30, 2024): 64–77, <https://doi.org/10.29408/FHS.V8I1.25021>.

² Luthfia Nur Khasanah and Yusuf Ali Tantowi, "Problems of Learning Arabic in General Graduate Students in the Arabic Language Education Study Program, Indonesian Education University," *Tadris Al-'Arabiyyah: Journal of Arabic Language Education and Arabic Language* 2, no. 1 (2023): 113–23, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ta.v2i1.23072>.

³ Novita Rahmi, "Problems of Implementing the *Nazhariyyah Al Wahdah* System in Arabic Language Learning in Islamic Senior High Schools in Metro City in 2018," *An Nabighoh* 21, no. 01 (July 24, 2019): 61–76, <https://doi.org/10.32332/AN-NABIGHOH.V21I01.1253>.

⁴ Rahmi.

language learning in them uses *Nazhariyah Al Furu'*, which is a separate language learning approach by dividing the language into several separate parts, each branch of the language has a certain syllabus, books, methods, and time allocation.⁵ Learning Arabic at Islamic boarding schools is more focused and has a longer time compared to formal institutions. As a result, graduates have good language skills, both in reading and writing.

Unfortunately, not all students get Arabic language learning. Many of them did not attend madrasah or Islamic boarding school, so their Arabic language skills are very minimal. Based on a survey conducted on students of the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business UIN Walisongo Semarang, for intensive Arabic language learning experience, 46.2% of 314 respondents stated that they had never had it. Therefore, a learning strategy is needed that can accommodate all the different abilities of students in one class.

In Permendikbudriset no. 53 of 2023 article 14 it is stated that the implementation of the learning process is carried out by: a. creating a pleasant, inclusive, collaborative, creative, and effective learning atmosphere; b. providing equal learning opportunities without distinguishing educational, social, economic, cultural, linguistic backgrounds, student admission pathways, and special needs of students; c. ensuring the safety, comfort, and welfare of the academic community; and d. providing flexibility in the education process to facilitate continuing education.⁶ This Ministerial Regulation emphasizes the importance of providing fair and equal learning opportunities to all students, regardless of differences in various aspects. It also emphasizes the importance of creating a conducive and supportive learning environment for all students. One of the learning strategies that is currently in the spotlight is differentiated learning. The focus of this research is how to differentiate learning in Arabic language learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. This method is not processed using statistics that are changed in numbers but this method is interpreted with data obtained in the field.⁷ This study uses a descriptive approach that aims to reveal a

⁵ Radliyah Zaenuddin et al., *Methodology & Alternative Strategies for Learning Arabic* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Rihlah Group, 2005).

⁶ Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, "Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 53 of 2023 Concerning Quality Assurance of Higher Education," Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, no. 638 (2023): 1–45, <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/265158/permendikbudriset-no-53-tahun-2023>.

⁷ Izzudin Musthafa and Acep Hermawan, *Arabic Language Research Methodology: Basic Concepts of*

fact or phenomenon that is happening and can be interpreted by presenting appropriate data, relationships between variables, facts found, and interpreting the situation that is happening. The descriptive approach is one of the most basic forms of research. It is used to describe existing phenomena, both natural and ergonomic. This study examines the morphology, activity, characteristics, variations, relationships, similarities, and differences from other phenomena. Data were collected using data collection techniques, namely through in-depth interviews and observations. The objects of this study were students at the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, Walisongo State Islamic University who took Arabic courses. While the data analysis for this study used content analysis because it obtained recorded information, images and writing.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Arabic Language Learning

Arabic in Islamic universities is a basic course that must be taken by students, in addition to being a language used to understand Arabic literature, it is also a language of international communication. Walisongo State Islamic University guarantees its students' Arabic language skills with language tests. As stated in the Rector's Decree Number 137 of 2020 concerning academic guidelines, the Arabic language proficiency test is called IMKA (Ikhtibar Mi'yar al-Kafa'ah fi al-Lughah al-Arabiyyah), and the English language proficiency test is called TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). Both tests are conducted at the UIN Walisongo Language Development Center. Students can register themselves through the page <https://sim-ppb.walisongo.ac.id/>. The minimum score for IMKA graduation for students outside PBA is 300 and TOEFL 400.⁸ This is very important because both certificates are requirements for taking a diploma. This decision further increases the concerns of students who do not have previous knowledge of Arabic.

Based on this, the Arabic language course with 2 credits must be able to accommodate all student abilities and convey linguistic aspects and their competencies, be it listening, speaking, reading and writing at one time. In fact, the Arabic language course itself aims to equip students with comprehensive Arabic language skills. The main focus of this course is mastering the four language skills, and studying the basics of Arabic grammar (Nahwu) and Arabic morphology (Shorof) which are important components in understanding the

Strategy, Methods, Techniques (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2018).

⁸ Academic Guidelines, Academic Guidelines for Diploma 3 (D.3), Bachelor (S.1), Masters (S.2), and Doctoral (S.3) Programs (2020).

structure of the Arabic language.

Learning is a very important activity in both formal and non-formal education. Learning in question is an activity that requires interaction between students and educators with the presence of learning resources in a particular learning environment. In the learning process, an active role and reciprocal response from the teacher and students are needed because this can affect whether or not a goal in the learning is achieved.⁹

The diversity of students' knowledge also affects the success of learning, because it is related to their ability to understand the material being taught. Problems in learning that usually occur in adjusting initial abilities are the slow learning process caused by the diversity of student abilities in one class.¹⁰

This difference in background is one of the causes of several other problems. Some students may already have basic skills in learning Arabic at their previous level of education, while others are new people who want to try learning Arabic. For example, a student who completed high school education at a boarding school that focuses on Arabic looks very capable of mastering all the material, will make students who only graduated from state high schools feel jealous, feel left behind and of course their enthusiasm for learning will be disturbed. So it can be a serious problem if students who do not have the basic knowledge do not want to continue their studies.¹¹

Therefore, the task of a lecturer in teaching Arabic is to design the learning to be a fun activity for every student, not only for students who have a pesantren educational background, but also students with a general high school background. Lecturers are expected to be able to present interesting learning and be able to make all students enthusiastic and have confidence that they will be able to understand Arabic well. It is also expected that the lecturers will be more aware of paying more attention to students who are slow to understand and feel less able to participate in Arabic learning activities that are carried out so that they regain their enthusiasm for learning Arabic and get maximum results.¹²

Differentiated Learning

⁹ Jumiarti, Fakhruddin, and Marta, "Implementation of Differentiated Learning in History Subject: Case Study at SMAN 23 Tangerang Regency."

¹⁰ Achmad Zaenudin, "The Effect of Implementing the Intensive Arabic Language Program on the IMKA Exam Scores of UIN Walisongo Semarang Students," *Bashrah Scientific Journal* 1, no. 02 (November 18, 2021): 84–100, <https://journal.stipemalang.ac.id/index.php/bashrah/article/view/318>.

¹¹ Humairoh, Arina Faiqoh, and Faisal Hendra, "Student Motivation in Learning Arabic Between Hopes and Challenges (Case Study of Arabic Literature Students, Al Azhar University Indonesia)," *Proceedings of the 4th National Arabic Conference*, no. 4 (2018): 378–87.

¹² Humairoh, Faiqoh, and Hendra.

One of the learning strategies in the independent curriculum is a form of differentiated learning. Differentiated learning itself was first coined by Tomlinson in 1999. Differentiated learning is a learning concept in facilitating students' interests and talents in the classroom with diverse needs and abilities. Differentiated learning is an effort to adjust the learning process in the classroom in order to meet the individual learning needs of each individual.¹³

Differentiated learning is learning that gives students the freedom to improve their potential according to their learning readiness, interests, and learning profile.¹⁴ Differentiated learning does not only focus on learning products, but also focuses on the process and content/learning materials. If we look back at the learning process in the past and perhaps until now, education in Indonesia has not changed much. Many still apply the old learning system that assumes that all children are the same, more teacher-centered, without providing opportunities for each student to actively participate and collaborate in learning.¹⁵

Education is not just about the transfer of knowledge. The development of a more humanistic educational paradigm, with the birth of independent learning education, provides opportunities for all children to get meaningful education. Providing attention and educational services according to the needs of each student.¹⁶

According to Tomlinson, Differentiated learning is an effort to adjust the learning process in the classroom to meet the individual learning needs of each student. Differentiated learning does not mean that teachers have to teach in 30 different ways to teach 30 students. Nor does it mean that teachers have to increase the number of questions for students who work faster than others. Differentiated learning also does not mean that teachers have to group the smart with the smart and the less with the less. Nor does it give different assignments to each child. Differentiated learning is not a chaotic learning process, where teachers then have to make several learning plans at once, where teachers have to approach

¹³ Carol Ann Tomlinson, *Differentiated Classroom*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, vol. 37, 1999.

¹⁴ Mei Indra Jayanti et al., "Differentiated Learning in the Perspective of Richard I. Arends and Kilcher: Concepts, Strategies, and Optimization of Student Learning Potential," *EL-Muhbib Journal of Elementary Education Thought and Research* 6, no. 2 (December 30, 2022): 91–108, <https://doi.org/10.52266/EL-MUHBIB.V6I2.1215>.

¹⁵ Fitriyah Fitriyah and Moh Bisri, "Differentiated Learning Based on Diversity and Uniqueness of Elementary School Students," *Journal of Elementary Education Review: Journal of Educational Studies and Research Results* 9, no. 2 (July 11, 2023): 67–73, <https://doi.org/10.26740/JRPD.V9N2.P67-73>.

¹⁶ I Komang Dedik Susila and I Gusti Ayu Istri Aryasuari, "Implementation of Differentiated Learning in ESP Teaching in Learning Freedom," *Widya Balina* 8, no. 1 (2023): 585–92, <https://doi.org/10.53958/wb.v7i1.233>.

each child to help A, B or C at the same time.¹⁷

Differentiated learning is basically an approach that recognizes that each student has differences and dynamic characteristics. Therefore, teachers need to understand the unique character of each student. In general, the goal of differentiated learning is to adjust the learning process to students' interests, readiness, and learning preferences. Specifically, differentiated learning aims to: (1) Help all students in the learning process, so that teachers can better understand students' abilities so that all learning objectives are achieved; (2) Increase student motivation and learning outcomes, by providing materials according to the right level of difficulty, so that students' learning motivation increases; (3) Build harmonious relationships between teachers and students, by creating stronger relationships so that students are more enthusiastic about learning; (4) Help students become independent learners, by getting them used to learning independently and appreciating diversity; (5) Increase teacher satisfaction, because by implementing differentiated learning, teachers feel challenged to develop their teaching skills and become more creative.¹⁸

In differentiated learning, there are three main strategies that teachers can use to adapt instruction to students' needs, interests, and abilities. These three strategies are content differentiation, process differentiation, and product differentiation. Content differentiation is adapting what students are learning. This can involve delivering different materials to students based on their readiness level, interests, or learning styles.¹⁹ Process differentiation refers to how students learn material. It involves variations in the instructional methods used to accommodate different learning styles.²⁰ Product differentiation refers to the end result that students produce to demonstrate their understanding. This could be a project, presentation, essay, or other form that allows students to express what they have learned.

Differentiated learning is also implemented in Arabic language learning in heterogeneous classes such as in the Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business. Students with different backgrounds, as well as various learning tendencies can follow Arabic language learning well. Those who initially felt afraid and hated Arabic, with this differentiated learning, students began to like it. Starting to like reading Arabic texts, even though the texts

¹⁷ Tomlinson, *Differentiated Classroom*.

¹⁸ Fitriyah and Bisri, "Differentiated Learning Based on the Diversity and Uniqueness of Elementary School Students."

¹⁹ Jumiarti, Fakhruddin, and Marta, "Implementation of Differentiated Learning in History Subject: Case Study at SMAN 23 Tangerang Regency."

²⁰ Hetilaniar, Subyantoro, and Rahayu Pristiwati, "Implementation of Differentiated Learning on Student Announcement Materials for Semester III Indonesian Language Education Study Program, PGRI University of Palembang," *Wahana Didaktika: Journal of Educational Sciences* 20, no. 3 (2022): 385–97.

are light. Being able to answer questions in Arabic too. Here are some things that are done in differentiated learning.

1. Content Differentiation

Content is what is taught to students. Content differentiation is adapting what students learn. This can involve delivering different materials to students based on their level of readiness, interests, or learning styles. First, the lecturer maps the students, both from their background, interests, and learning styles. Then, provide a varied approach to each student. Provide materials with different levels of difficulty: For example, students with higher abilities can be given more complex reading materials, while students who need more support may be given simpler materials. For Arabic content or materials themselves, there are two types of hiwar, which can be used by lecturers as a differentiation of their learning, namely hiwar 1 for students with minimal provisions, because the hiwar text is a very simple text. As for students who have mastered the science of Rules and Nahwu, they will get the second material, which is more complex than the first. For student readiness, lecturers always ask opening questions, so that students always prepare what they have learned in the previous material. To accommodate differences in learning styles, lecturers use various media such as YouTube videos, PowerPoint or presentations to deliver the same content, but in a way that suits the students' learning styles.

2. Process Differentiation

A process is a series of actions, making, or processing that produces a product according to the requirements. desired. Process differentiation is how students learn Arabic language material. This activity involves variations in the learning methods used to accommodate different learning styles. In this case, lecturers do not always use the lecture method, but use a student-centered approach, which emphasizes how students can learn through various activities such as group discussions, projects, or independent learning. Group discussions are often practiced considering the very broad material of the rules, so that enrichment of the material is needed through the discussion. In addition, it also uses an approach that involves various senses, such as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learning, to help students understand the material in the way that suits them best.

3. Product Differentiation

Product differentiation refers to the end result produced by students to demonstrate their understanding. Products in Arabic language learning are portfolios, videos, and presentations that allow students to express what they have learned in the best possible way.

Students are given the option to choose how they want to demonstrate their understanding, such as through making videos, writing portfolios, or giving presentations. The criteria also vary according to the characteristics of each product chosen by the students.

CONCLUSION

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that differentiated learning can be a solution to the problem of language learning for students who are in heterogeneous classes. Differentiated learning in Arabic language learning can make students with a general educational background of Arabic confident and start to like learning Arabic. Some of the strategies employed in differentiated learning include conducting initial assessments to group students according to their educational backgrounds to tailor learning needs, adopting various approaches to accommodate the diverse profiles of students, preparing engaging and varied teaching materials, and conducting final assessments.

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