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Differentiated Assessment in Negotiation Text Instruction: A Qualitative Study in Indonesian Senior Secondary Education

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ABSTRACT

The integration of differentiated assessment into subject-specific language instruction remains empirically underdeveloped, particularly within the Indonesian senior secondary context shaped by Kurikulum Merdeka. This study aimed to describe the implementation of differentiated learning assessment across the content, process, and product components of negotiation text instruction at the senior secondary level. A qualitative descriptive design was employed, with an Indonesian language teacher at SMAN 1 Sumatera Barat serving as the primary informant. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, then analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) framework of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Trustworthiness was ensured through instrument triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. The findings indicate that differentiated assessment was implemented effectively across all three components. Content differentiation was achieved through varied material formats and complexity levels responsive to students' readiness and learning profiles. Process differentiation was realized through negotiation simulation, group discussion, and multimedia presentation activities that promoted active and equitable participation. Product differentiation afforded students meaningful choice in demonstrating learning outcomes, enabling assessment that served both summative and formative functions. Key implementation constraints included time limitations, heterogeneous group management, and inconsistent student self-directedness. The findings offer subject-specific empirical guidance for Indonesian language teachers designing differentiated assessment practices aligned with the principles of Kurikulum Merdeka.

Keywords: *Assessment Practice, Differentiated Instruction, Indonesian Language Education, Kurikulum Merdeka, Negotiation Text*

INTRODUCTION

The paradigm shift brought about by Indonesia's *Kurikulum Merdeka* has fundamentally repositioned the role of the teacher in the instructional process (Priatmoko et al., 2024; Rustiyani & Mardiana, 2025). Rather than serving as the primary transmitter of knowledge, the teacher is now expected to function as a responsive facilitator who attends carefully to students' diverse learning needs, interests, and characteristics (Khairani et al., 2025). One pedagogical approach that aligns closely with this mandate is differentiated instruction (DI), a framework that systematically adjusts the content, process, and product of learning in accordance with students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles, so that instruction becomes more meaningful and genuinely student-centered (Gheysens et al., 2022; Pozas et al., 2020). The flexibility inherent in differentiated instruction has been widely recognized as a mechanism for strengthening student engagement and improving learning outcomes across diverse educational settings (Lindner & Schwab, 2025; Magableh & Abdullah, 2020).

Conceptually, differentiated instruction operates through three principal dimensions: the differentiation of content, which refers to what students are expected to learn; the differentiation of process, which concerns how students engage with and internalize the material; and the differentiation of product, which addresses the varied means by which students demonstrate their acquired knowledge and skills (Gheysens et al., 2022; Melesse & Belay, 2022). Within the context of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, teachers are encouraged to apply these dimensions innovatively so that students' individual talents and competencies can develop optimally. Research conducted across multiple educational levels confirms that the implementation of differentiated instruction is associated with measurable gains in student motivation, classroom participation, and academic achievement (Lindner & Schwab, 2025; Magableh & Abdullah, 2020). Nonetheless, translating DI principles into actual classroom practice remains a persistent challenge for many practitioners, particularly in relation to the design and implementation of assessment that is genuinely responsive to the principle of differentiation (Smets & Struyven, 2020; Widiastuti et al., 2023).

Assessment constitutes one of the most critical components of the instructional cycle, serving both to measure the attainment of educational objectives and to inform subsequent instructional decisions. Formative and authentic forms of assessment are regarded as particularly well-suited to supporting meaningful learning, as they evaluate student competencies through contextually grounded tasks rather than relying exclusively on standardized, uniform measures (Rafi & Pourdana, 2023). Within the framework of differentiated instruction, assessment practice must be adapted to reflect the varied learning profiles of students, a process typically initiated through diagnostic assessment at the commencement of learning (Yani et al., 2023). Despite this expectation, classroom assessment in many school

settings continues to favor conventional approaches that treat all students as having equivalent abilities and learning styles, thereby failing to accommodate the genuine diversity present within any given class (Widiastuti et al., 2023). This persistent gap between theoretical ideals and actual assessment practice warrants further empirical investigation, particularly within specific subject areas that demand adaptive pedagogical strategies.

In the context of Indonesian language instruction at the senior secondary level, negotiation text occupies a strategically significant position. This material requires students not only to understand its structural components and linguistic conventions but also to develop critical thinking and communicative skills through interactive, dialogic processes (Rosidah et al., 2024). The nature of negotiation as a communicative act, which centers on exchange, persuasion, and the achievement of mutual agreement, demands a learning approach that is responsive to the varied communicative competencies students bring to the classroom (Nursolihah, 2020). By adopting differentiated instruction in this context, teachers can more effectively support students with different readiness levels to engage authentically with negotiation text and develop their language skills to their full potential. The relevance of this approach is further underscored by evidence that differentiated instruction, when applied in Indonesian language learning contexts, demonstrably improves student engagement and academic achievement compared to conventional instructional formats (Subandiyah et al., 2025).

Several prior studies have examined differentiated instruction from varied theoretical and empirical perspectives. Gheysens et al. (2022) investigated teachers' philosophies and practices of differentiation across student interests, readiness, and learning profiles in secondary classrooms and found marked divergences between stated beliefs and observed practice. Lindner and Schwab (2025) conducted a systematic review concluding that while differentiated instruction is conceptually sound, practical implementation remains inconsistent due to contextual and institutional constraints. Magableh and Abdullah (2020) further confirmed that differentiated instruction exerted a statistically significant positive effect on students' academic achievement in mixed-ability classrooms, particularly when content and process adaptations were applied simultaneously. In the Indonesian setting, research by Widiastuti et al. (2023) documented the challenges associated with differentiated assessment planning, noting that teachers frequently revert to conventional assessment formats under time and administrative pressures. Smets and Struyven (2020) similarly observed that teachers who received structured professional guidance demonstrated more consistent and effective differentiation practices compared to those who relied solely on personal instructional judgment.

A second strand of prior research has focused more specifically on assessment within differentiated and language learning contexts. Rafi and Pourdana (2023) demonstrated that diagnostic-informed, tiered oral assessment within a

differentiated instruction framework significantly enhanced second language learners' performance and autonomous participation. Within the Indonesian curriculum context, Fatmi and Fitriani (2025) reported that student learning independence improved substantially when learning media were designed to accommodate varied learning styles and readiness levels within a differentiated framework. Yasin et al. (2024) further demonstrated that student creativity developed more visibly when instructional products were varied and aligned with learners' individual interests and capabilities, affirming the importance of product differentiation within the independent curriculum context. Collectively, these studies establish that differentiated assessment, when thoughtfully designed and consistently applied, holds considerable potential for improving learning quality across diverse student populations.

Notwithstanding the growing body of scholarship in this area, a notable research gap persists. Existing studies tend to address differentiated instruction and differentiated assessment in general terms or within non-language-specific subject areas; scholarship that examines how DI assessment is specifically operationalized within the context of Indonesian negotiation text instruction at the senior secondary level remains scarce. Furthermore, most available studies do not simultaneously investigate the full spectrum of assessment differentiation across content, process, and product dimensions within a single subject-specific framework, nor do they consider the constraints that teachers encounter in implementing such assessment under the directives of *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Building on the theoretical and empirical foundations outlined above, and in response to the identified gap in subject-specific empirical documentation, this study is guided by the following research question: How is differentiated learning assessment implemented across the content, process, and product components of negotiation text instruction for senior secondary students at SMAN 1 Sumatera Barat? Accordingly, this study aims to describe the implementation of differentiated learning assessment within negotiation text instruction at the senior secondary level. The findings are expected to contribute both practical and theoretical insights to the development of assessment approaches aligned with the principles of *Kurikulum Merdeka* and responsive to the heterogeneous learning needs of students in Indonesian senior secondary education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Differentiated Instruction: Conceptual Foundations and Core Dimensions

Differentiated instruction (DI) is a pedagogical framework rooted in the recognition that students within any given classroom vary considerably in their readiness levels, interests, and preferred modes of learning, and that instruction must be proactively adjusted to address these differences if all learners are to reach their potential (Gheysens et al., 2022; Tomlinson, 2014). Rather than functioning as a single strategy, DI constitutes a philosophy of teaching that positions student

diversity not as an obstacle to be managed but as a fundamental condition to be responded to through flexible and purposeful instructional design (Eikeland & Ohna, 2022; Melesse & Belay, 2022). The theoretical underpinnings of DI draw substantially from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly the concept of the zone of proximal development, which holds that learning is most effective when instructional challenges are calibrated to the learner's existing competence and extended through guided interaction (Melesse & Belay, 2022). Within this framework, the teacher assumes a facilitative role, designing varied pathways through which students can engage with the same essential learning goals at different levels of complexity and through different modes of engagement.

Operationally, DI is organized around three principal dimensions: the differentiation of content, process, and product. Content differentiation refers to adjustments in what students are expected to learn or in the materials through which they access that learning. Process differentiation concerns the activities and instructional strategies through which students engage with and internalize the content. Product differentiation addresses the varied ways in which students are permitted to demonstrate their learning outcomes (Melesse & Belay, 2022; Tomlinson, 2014). These three dimensions are applied in direct response to students' readiness levels, individual interests, and learning profiles, which are patterns of how a student learns most effectively based on cognitive style, cultural background, and preferred modalities (Gheysens et al., 2022). Research consistently affirms that when these dimensions are thoughtfully applied, DI contributes to gains in student motivation, academic achievement, and inclusive participation across educational levels and subject areas (Lindner & Schwab, 2025; Magableh & Abdullah, 2020). In the Indonesian educational context, the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* has further reinforced the relevance of DI by placing student agency, individual learning pathways, and teacher flexibility at the center of curriculum design and delivery (Fatmi & Fitriani, 2025; Yasin et al., 2024).

The theoretical framework underpinning this study draws primarily on Tomlinson's (2014) differentiated instruction model, which provides the operational structure for examining how assessment is adapted across the content, process, and product dimensions in response to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. This framework is further informed by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, particularly the concept of the zone of proximal development, which holds that learning is most productive when instructional and evaluative tasks are calibrated to the learner's current competence and extended progressively through guided interaction and feedback (Melesse & Belay, 2022). Together, these two theoretical perspectives provide a coherent analytical lens through which the implementation of differentiated assessment in negotiation text instruction can be examined, interpreted, and evaluated. Tomlinson's model offers the structural categories through which classroom practice is described, while Vygotsky's

framework provides the learning-theoretical rationale for why differentiation at the level of assessment is not merely a logistical accommodation but a pedagogically principled response to the developmental diversity present within every classroom.

Differentiated Assessment: Principles, Practices, and Challenges

Assessment within a differentiated learning framework must be understood as a dynamic and iterative process that both informs and is informed by instructional decisions. Differentiated assessment refers to the practice of designing evaluation activities that vary in format, complexity, and mode of response in accordance with the diverse learning profiles of students, so that each learner has a genuine opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do (Smets & Struyven, 2020; Widiastuti et al., 2023). This conception stands in contrast to conventional assessment practices, which tend to apply a single, standardized measure uniformly to all students regardless of their individual learning characteristics, thereby systematically disadvantaging those whose learning profiles fall outside the dominant norm (Rafi & Pourdana, 2023). Differentiated assessment encompasses both formative and summative modes, with formative assessment occupying a particularly significant role as a real-time feedback mechanism that allows teachers to monitor learning progress and adjust subsequent instruction accordingly.

The diagnostic dimension of differentiated assessment is equally fundamental, as it provides the evidentiary basis upon which teachers identify students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles prior to instruction (Yani et al., 2023). Diagnostic assessment enables teachers to move beyond assumptions about student ability and to make instructional decisions grounded in actual learner data. However, translating these principles into consistent classroom practice remains a documented challenge. Studies indicate that teachers frequently encounter difficulties in planning and executing differentiated assessment, citing constraints related to time, class size, administrative demands, and limited professional preparation (Smets & Struyven, 2020; Widiastuti et al., 2023). Rafi and Pourdana (2023) found that when diagnostic data were used deliberately to tier assessment tasks in a language learning context, learner autonomy and performance improved significantly, suggesting that the relationship between diagnostic practice and assessment design is critical to the effectiveness of differentiated learning overall. These findings collectively point to the need for more empirically grounded and subject-specific guidance on how differentiated assessment can be implemented in ways that are both pedagogically sound and practically sustainable.

Negotiation Text in Indonesian Language Instruction and Its Pedagogical Implications

Negotiation text occupies a distinctive and pedagogically significant position within the Indonesian language curriculum at the senior secondary level. As a genre, negotiation text involves structured communicative interaction between two

or more parties aimed at reaching a mutually acceptable agreement, and its learning requires students to develop competencies across multiple language dimensions simultaneously, including grammatical accuracy, pragmatic awareness, strategic communication, and critical reasoning (Nursolihah, 2020). The structure of negotiation text, which characteristically progresses through stages of orientation, proposal, counter-proposal, and agreement, demands that students not only comprehend and produce formal written language but also engage analytically with the communicative logic of persuasion and concession. These cognitive and linguistic demands make negotiation text a particularly rich yet challenging domain for language instruction, especially within heterogeneous classrooms where students present widely varying levels of prior competence.

Within the framework of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, the teaching of negotiation text is expected to go beyond rote structural analysis and instead cultivate students' capacity for authentic and contextually appropriate communication (Subandiyah et al., 2025). This expectation aligns closely with the principles of differentiated instruction, which prioritize meaningful engagement, varied modes of expression, and the recognition of students' individual communicative strengths (Melesse & Belay, 2022). The application of DI in this context implies that teachers must design learning activities and assessments that allow students to engage with negotiation text at varying levels of linguistic complexity, through different process pathways, and by producing different forms of learning output. Research in related areas of language instruction supports this approach: By and Veng (2024), for instance, demonstrated that oral communication and speaking skills developed more robustly when learners were provided with varied, contextually grounded interaction tasks rather than uniform instructional formats. Despite this theoretical alignment, empirical documentation of how differentiated assessment is applied specifically within negotiation text instruction at the SMA level remains limited, underscoring the contribution that the present study seeks to make.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design, which is considered appropriate when the primary objective is to examine and portray a phenomenon as it naturally occurs within its real-world context, without manipulation of variables or conditions (Creswell & Poth, 2024; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This design was selected on the grounds that the implementation of differentiated learning assessment constitutes a contextually embedded practice that cannot be adequately captured through numerical measurement alone. The exploratory nature of the research problem further justifies this approach, given that empirical documentation of differentiated assessment within Indonesian senior secondary language instruction remains limited in the existing literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

The research was conducted at SMAN 1 Sumatera Barat, with an Indonesian language teacher responsible for Grade X instruction serving as the primary informant. This selection reflects a purposive sampling strategy, widely employed in qualitative inquiry to identify participants who possess direct and substantive experience relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2024; Patton, 2015). Two instruments were used for data collection: a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire comprised thirty items organized across three indicator domains corresponding to the content, process, and product dimensions of differentiated assessment, incorporating both closed-ended items measured on a four-point Likert scale and open-ended items for elaborative responses. Content validity was established through expert review by two specialists in Indonesian language education, with item revisions made prior to data collection. The semi-structured interview guide consisted of twelve questions designed to probe and triangulate the questionnaire responses regarding the teacher's planning processes, instructional decisions, and implementation constraints (Kvale, 1996).

Data collection proceeded sequentially, commencing with digital questionnaire distribution followed by in-depth interviews. The collected data were analyzed using the framework proposed by Miles et al. (2020), comprising three iterative stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Raw data were systematically coded and filtered to retain information pertinent to the three DI dimensions, organized into descriptive narrative form, and synthesized to construct a comprehensive account of differentiated assessment implementation in relation to students' learning profiles, interests, and readiness levels.

Trustworthiness was ensured through multiple credibility procedures. Instrument triangulation was achieved by cross-referencing questionnaire and interview data to confirm and extend emerging patterns. Member checking was conducted by returning a summary of preliminary findings to the participating teacher for verification (Creswell & Poth, 2024). Peer debriefing with a colleague experienced in qualitative research further refined the analytical categories prior to conclusion drawing. Additionally, this study was conducted in accordance with established research ethics: informed consent was obtained from the participant, confidentiality of all data was maintained, and no personally identifiable information was disclosed in any research output.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that differentiated learning assessment within negotiation text instruction at SMAN 1 Sumatera Barat was implemented across three principal components: content, process, and product. The following sections present the findings pertaining to each component in turn, drawing on data obtained through the structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview conducted with the Indonesian language teacher serving as the primary informant.

Content Differentiation in Assessment

With respect to the content component, the findings indicate that the teacher successfully varied the instructional materials used to introduce and reinforce negotiation concepts. The resources employed included written texts, video simulations, contextual case studies, and structured discussion activities. This deliberate variation in content presentation reflected the teacher's awareness that students differ in the modalities through which they most effectively access and process new information.

The teacher reported adjusting the level of textual complexity across different groups of students, providing more scaffolded materials for students with lower prior competence while offering more analytically demanding texts and case studies to students demonstrating higher readiness levels. This approach ensured that all students engaged with the same core learning objectives, namely understanding the structure, linguistic features, and communicative functions of negotiation text, while doing so through materials calibrated to their individual readiness.

The use of video simulations proved particularly effective in motivating students whose learning profiles favored visual or auditory modes of engagement, as these materials brought the abstract concept of negotiation into a concrete and relatable context. This variation in content aligned with the principle articulated by Tomlinson (2014), which holds that content differentiation should be responsive to students' interests, ability levels, and learning styles so that every learner is afforded a meaningful entry point into the material. The content variation also facilitated both independent and collaborative learning pathways, accommodating students who preferred self-directed study as well as those who benefited from structured peer interaction.

Process Differentiation in Assessment

The findings pertaining to the process component demonstrate that learning activities were designed to promote active student participation rather than passive reception of teacher-transmitted knowledge. Three principal activity types structured the process dimension of differentiated instruction: negotiation simulation, collaborative group discussion, and multimedia presentation of negotiation outcomes.

In the negotiation simulation activity, students assumed designated roles within realistic scenarios modeled on business or social negotiation contexts, allowing them to engage with the genre's communicative functions through direct experiential practice. Collaborative group discussion enabled students to exchange perspectives, resolve communicative problems collectively, and develop shared negotiation strategies. The presentation activity required students to communicate and justify their reasoning to a wider audience, thereby strengthening their critical reflection and oral communication competencies.

These activities were sequenced and varied in accordance with class conditions, group composition, and available learning media, accommodating both face-to-face and digital learning modes. The teacher indicated that heterogeneous grouping was a deliberate strategy intended to expose lower-readiness students to the communicative models demonstrated by higher-achieving peers. Despite these positive outcomes, classroom management during heterogeneous groupings emerged as a practical constraint, as preparation for varied process activities was time-intensive and demanded a high degree of flexibility. Ensuring equitable participation across groups of varying ability and motivation required careful planning and continuous monitoring throughout each lesson.

Despite these challenges, the teacher affirmed that varied process activities generated notably higher levels of student engagement with negotiation text compared to conventional, teacher-fronted instructional formats. This finding aligns with the observation of Purnawanto (2023), who noted that varied process activities within differentiated learning frameworks consistently produce stronger student involvement and deeper conceptual engagement than undifferentiated approaches.

Product Differentiation in Assessment

In relation to the product component, the findings reveal that students were afforded meaningful choice and flexibility in the forms through which they demonstrated their learning outcomes. The range of products generated by students included performed negotiation simulations, written analytical reports, process diagrams mapping the structural stages of negotiation, and multimedia presentations combining textual, visual, and oral elements.

This diversity of output forms enabled the teacher to conduct holistic assessment extending beyond the measurement of declarative knowledge to encompass students' practical skills, creative capacities, critical reasoning, and communicative confidence. The teacher explicitly reported that allowing students to select their preferred product format increased their sense of ownership over the learning process and reduced the anxiety commonly associated with uniform, high-stakes assessment tasks.

Assessment of each product was conducted with reference to criteria that acknowledged individual readiness levels, ensuring that students at different points on the competence continuum were evaluated against challenges appropriate to their current stage of development rather than against a single uniform standard. This approach reflects the principle advanced by Agung et al. (2024), who affirmed that differentiated assessment must attend to students' learning profiles and individual achievement targets in order to generate evaluative evidence that is both valid and equitable.

Product-based assessment also served a formative function throughout the learning sequence. The teacher used intermediate outputs to provide targeted

feedback and to adjust subsequent instructional decisions accordingly. Students who produced process diagrams demonstrated particularly clear evidence of structural understanding of negotiation text, while those who opted for multimedia presentations showed stronger development of communicative fluency and digital literacy, suggesting that varied product formats generated distinct and complementary forms of evidence regarding student learning.

Constraints in Implementation

Notwithstanding the generally positive implementation outcomes reported above, the findings also document a number of practical constraints that affected the consistency and depth of differentiated assessment practice. The most frequently cited challenge concerned the limited instructional time available for designing, facilitating, and evaluating the full range of differentiated activities and products. Preparing varied assessment tasks for students with different readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles required substantially more planning time than the preparation of conventional uniform assessments.

A second constraint involved classroom management during heterogeneous group activities, particularly in ensuring that all students remained productively engaged and that no group was left without adequate teacher guidance. A third challenge related to the difficulty of consistently encouraging students to take initiative in seeking additional information independently, as some students demonstrated a tendency toward passivity rather than proactive engagement with the learning tasks provided. These constraints collectively point to the need for institutional support structures, including reduced administrative load, targeted professional development, and adequate resource provision, if differentiated assessment is to be implemented with the depth and consistency that the principles of *Kurikulum Merdeka* demand.

The findings of this study are broadly consistent with and in several respects extend the existing body of scholarship on differentiated instruction and differentiated assessment. Regarding content differentiation, the teacher's practice of adjusting material complexity and format in response to students' readiness levels aligns closely with the framework documented by Gheysens et al. (2022), who identified content adaptation as the dimension of differentiated instruction most frequently enacted by secondary school teachers. The present study extends this finding by demonstrating that content differentiation within a language-specific instructional context can be operationalized through concrete material variations, including tiered texts, video simulations, and contextual case studies, rather than remaining at the level of general principle. This finding further corroborates the position of Melesse and Belay (2022), who argued that content adaptations yield the greatest instructional benefit when they are deliberately linked to students' cognitive profiles rather than applied without systematic planning, a condition that the practice documented in this study appears to satisfy.

With respect to the process component, the positive association between varied process activities and student engagement documented in this study is consistent with Magableh and Abdullah (2020), who found that process differentiation was most strongly associated with gains in academic achievement and motivational orientation in mixed-ability classroom settings. The present study adds subject-specific evidence to this general finding by illustrating how negotiation simulation, collaborative discussion, and presentation activities function as viable differentiated process pathways within the context of Indonesian senior secondary language instruction. The constraints encountered during process-differentiated activities, particularly those related to heterogeneous group management and unequal student participation, are also reflected in the broader literature. Smets and Struyven (2020) similarly observed that teachers who understood the theoretical foundations of differentiated instruction nonetheless struggled to sustain consistent implementation when faced with the practical demands of managing diverse learner groups within a single instructional setting.

Regarding product differentiation, the finding that varied output formats generated holistic and multidimensional evidence of student competence supports the conclusion reached by Rafi and Pourdana (2023), who demonstrated that student-chosen, tiered assessment tasks in a language learning context produced richer and more valid evidence of learner competence than uniform assessment formats. The present study reinforces this conclusion and further specifies that product differentiation in negotiation text instruction serves a dual evaluative function, operating simultaneously as a summative measure of learning achievement and as a formative mechanism for continuous instructional feedback, a duality that has received limited empirical attention within the Indonesian senior secondary context.

This dual function of product-based assessment is further supported by Agung et al. (2024), whose work affirmed that when assessment tasks are aligned with individual learning profiles and tiered according to readiness, they generate evaluative evidence that is simultaneously more equitable and more informative for subsequent instructional planning. The present findings extend this claim by demonstrating its applicability within a genre-specific language learning task, namely the production and analysis of negotiation text, thereby contributing subject-specific empirical grounding to what has largely remained a general pedagogical argument.

The implementation constraints documented in this study corroborate the findings of Widiastuti et al. (2023), who reported that Indonesian teachers consistently identified time pressure and planning complexity as the primary barriers to sustained differentiated assessment implementation. The present study provides additional granularity by demonstrating that these constraints manifest with differing intensity across the three DI components: time demands bear most heavily on the preparation of content and product variations, while classroom

management challenges are concentrated most acutely within process-differentiated group activities.

This dimensional specificity offers a more detailed account of implementation barriers than prior studies have typically provided and suggests that professional development initiatives should address each DI component separately rather than treating differentiated assessment as a single, undifferentiated instructional challenge. Furthermore, the observed tendency among some students toward passive engagement rather than independent information-seeking is consistent with findings reported by Smets and Struyven (2020), who noted that the effectiveness of differentiated instruction is contingent not only on teacher practice but also on students' capacity for self-regulated learning, a competency that requires deliberate and progressive cultivation rather than being assumed as a given condition. Taken collectively, the findings of this study affirm that differentiated assessment constitutes a pedagogically valuable and practically feasible approach to language instruction at the senior secondary level. At the same time, they confirm that its sustained and equitable implementation requires systemic support conditions, including institutional time allocation, professional development, and administrative flexibility, that extend beyond the capacity of individual classroom teachers alone.

CONCLUSION

This study described the implementation of differentiated learning assessment within negotiation text instruction for senior secondary students at SMAN 1 Sumatera Barat. The findings demonstrate that differentiated assessment was implemented effectively across the three components of content, process, and product. In the content dimension, the teacher varied material formats and complexity levels to accommodate students' differing readiness, interests, and learning styles. In the process dimension, activities such as negotiation simulation, group discussion, and multimedia presentation prioritized active participation, though challenges related to time management and heterogeneous group coordination were noted. In the product dimension, students were given meaningful choice in demonstrating their learning through diverse output formats, with assessment criteria sensitive to individual competence levels, enabling evaluation that served both summative and formative functions simultaneously.

The implementation documented in this study reflects the broader principles of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which positions student diversity as a pedagogical resource and calls for assessment practices genuinely responsive to learner heterogeneity. Overall, differentiated assessment contributed to a more meaningful and student-centered learning environment for negotiation text instruction, demonstrating its practical value in fostering critical thinking, creative expression, and equitable participation. However, sustained implementation requires adequate planning time,

strong classroom management capacity, and institutional support structures that extend beyond the efforts of individual teachers alone.

This study acknowledges that its findings are contextually situated, having been conducted in a single school with one teacher as the primary informant, and should therefore not be treated as universally generalizable. This constraint reflects the purposive and context-specific character of qualitative descriptive inquiry rather than a methodological oversight, as qualitative research prioritizes depth of understanding over breadth of generalization. From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to scholarly understanding of how Tomlinson content-process-product framework can be operationalized as concrete, subject-specific assessment practice within the Indonesian senior secondary language curriculum, and affirms the analytical utility of integrating this framework with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development as a lens for examining adaptive assessment in heterogeneous classrooms. Future research involving multiple participants across diverse school contexts is encouraged to establish broader transferability and to further develop the theoretical dimensions of differentiated assessment in Indonesian education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers are encouraged to further develop differentiated assessment practice, particularly in the process and product components, through systematic planning that aligns instructional variations with documented evidence of students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. Dedicated preparation time for assessment design and stronger classroom management strategies for heterogeneous groupings should be prioritized to ensure equitable and quality participation across all students. The deliberate integration of diverse learning media across both face-to-face and digital modalities is also recommended to widen students' accessible pathways for engaging with negotiation text material. Students, in turn, are encouraged to engage purposefully with the choices afforded by differentiated assessment, including product selection and active participation in simulation and discussion activities, as these experiences cultivate communicative competence, critical thinking, and creative expression.

Future researchers are encouraged to extend the scope of inquiry beyond a single school site by incorporating larger and more diverse teacher samples to enable broader generalization of findings. The inclusion of classroom observation data and student learning outcome documentation as complementary evidence sources would produce a more methodologically robust account of differentiated assessment implementation. Additionally, examining differentiated assessment across other text genres and subject areas within the Indonesian curriculum would help establish the transferability of this approach across varied instructional contexts. Longitudinal designs tracking both teacher practice development and

student outcomes over time are also recommended to advance theoretical and practical understanding of differentiated assessment in Indonesian secondary education.

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