

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The increasing awareness of the importance of learning that is designed according to the individual needs of learners makes differentiated instruction begin to be widely applied. Differentiated instruction is a learning strategy tailored to the interests, abilities, and learning styles (Hidayah et al., 2023). The context of differentiated instruction aligns with the principles of the Merdeka curriculum currently implemented in Indonesia. According to Wahyudin et al. (2024), the Merdeka curriculum has three main principles: focusing on essential content, supporting character and competency development, and being flexible. Through these flexible principles, the opportunity to implement differentiated instruction in various educational units is getting bigger. However, several studies found that implementing differentiated instruction in the Merdeka curriculum still faces several challenges, such as limited time and resources.

In English language teaching, differentiated instruction models have started to be used, such as research conducted by Herwanto and Musyarrofah (2024) that identifies the strategies and challenges in implementing differentiated instruction by English teachers. Through descriptive qualitative methods, with data collection using semi-structured interviews and learning document analysis, this study showed that teachers could apply differentiated instruction and adapt various learning strategies to meet students' needs. Another research by Rosadi et al. (2024) used a descriptive qualitative method, and data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using content analysis. The research found that teachers understand the basic concepts of differentiated instruction well. However, the implementation of differentiated instruction faces challenges, including limited time and resources in preparing and delivering materials, as well as large class sizes.

Previous research showed that differentiated instruction was an important approach, but it had not been fully implemented effectively. Various challenges, such as limited time and resources, hinder the effectiveness of implementing differentiated instruction. This research differed from previous research because it used a case study approach to gain in-depth knowledge related to the implementation of differentiated instruction. Data collection was conducted through observation and interviews to gain comprehensive insights into the practice of differentiated instruction. Therefore, this research aimed to examine how differentiated instruction was implemented in the Merdeka curriculum, particularly in English language classes at senior high schools, as well as the challenges and solutions.

B. Formulation of the Problems

The formulation of the problem in this study is “How is differentiated instruction implemented in English class in senior high schools?”

C. Operational Definitions

There are the operational definitions in this study:

- 1. Differentiated instruction** : Differentiated instruction in this study is a teaching strategy designed by the teacher based on students' needs, interests, and learning styles by differentiating content, process, product, and environment.
- 2. Merdeka Curriculum** : Merdeka curriculum is defined as a curriculum that accommodates the diversity of student characteristics and gives teachers the freedom to choose the most effective learning strategies in the classroom to create student-oriented learning.

3. English Language : Teaching (ELT) : The ELT context in this study refers to the teaching of language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) in senior high school with various teaching techniques that are in accordance with differentiated instruction.

D. Aims of the Study

This study aimed to provide in-depth insight into the implementation of differentiated instruction in the Merdeka curriculum in English classes in senior high school.

E. Significances of the Study

The significance of the study includes contributions in several aspects, namely:

1. Theoretical use

This research enriched the theory of differentiated instruction, especially in English language education in senior high schools that used the Merdeka curriculum. It could also be a reference for further researchers on differentiated instruction in the Merdeka curriculum.

2. Practical use

The results of this study contained the stages of implementing differentiated instruction, which could be a practical guide for English teachers to implement differentiated instruction within the Merdeka curriculum framework.

3. Empirical use

This research was beneficial for researchers and prospective teachers, helping them gain a deeper understanding of differentiated instruction practices and contributing to honing their academic writing skills.