

The implementation of differentiated learning in English language teaching: Primary school teachers' perceptions

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of differentiated learning has become increasingly significant in English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly within the framework of Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes student-centered and inclusive education. However, limited empirical evidence exists regarding teachers' perceptions of its practical application. This study aims to explore primary school English teachers' perceptions of implementing differentiated learning, including its effectiveness, challenges, and required support. Employing a qualitative descriptive field study design, the research involved 16 English teachers selected purposively based on their teaching experience. Data were collected through a structured Google Forms survey comprising open-ended and close-ended questions and were analyzed using thematic analysis complemented by descriptive statistics. The findings reveal that teachers generally perceive differentiated learning as effective in enhancing student engagement, motivation, and academic performance. Nevertheless, major challenges include time constraints, insufficient training, limited instructional resources, large class sizes, and inadequate administrative support. Despite these obstacles, teachers expressed strong commitment to its implementation and emphasized the need for sustained professional development and institutional support. The study implies that systematic training, resource allocation, and collaborative planning opportunities are essential to optimize differentiated learning practices and strengthen the successful implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in ELT contexts.

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1. Introduction

The implementation of differentiated learning in English Language Teaching (ELT) has gained increasing scholarly and practical attention as educators seek to respond to the growing diversity of learners in contemporary classrooms. Students differ in their linguistic proficiency, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, motivation levels, and cognitive readiness, requiring instructional approaches that are flexible and responsive. Differentiated learning addresses these variations by tailoring content, process, product, and learning environment to meet individual students' needs, thereby fostering inclusive and meaningful learning experiences (Sitorus et al., 2022). Within ELT contexts, differentiation is particularly crucial because language acquisition demands varied input, scaffolding, and communicative opportunities. Rather than adopting a uniform instructional model, teachers are encouraged to design adaptive strategies that accommodate diverse learner profiles. Consequently, differentiated learning has emerged as a promising pedagogical approach to enhance engagement, academic performance, and overall language development, especially in heterogeneous primary school classrooms where foundational language skills are formed.

A major transformation in Indonesia's educational landscape is the introduction of the Kurikulum Merdeka (Freedom Curriculum), a reform initiative designed to shift traditional teacher-centered instruction toward more flexible and student-centered learning environments (Hasibuan et al., 2023). The Kurikulum Merdeka emphasizes learner autonomy, experiential learning, competency-based outcomes, and the cultivation of critical thinking skills. These principles strongly resonate with the philosophical foundations of differentiated learning, which similarly prioritize responsiveness to student diversity. By encouraging flexible instructional planning and personalized learning pathways, the Kurikulum Merdeka creates structural space for differentiated practices to flourish. In English language classrooms, this alignment is particularly significant, as students require varied communicative tasks, contextualized materials, and scaffolded instruction. Thus, the integration of differentiated learning within the Kurikulum Merdeka framework offers a strategic opportunity to operationalize curriculum reform through practical classroom innovation that directly addresses students' diverse linguistic and developmental needs.

Empirical evidence suggests that both differentiated learning and the Kurikulum Merdeka independently contribute to improved learning outcomes. The implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka has been associated with increased student engagement, improved comprehension, and enhanced motivation in English learning contexts. Similarly, differentiated learning strategies have demonstrated positive impacts on academic achievement, classroom participation, and learner autonomy across diverse educational settings (Sitorus et al., 2022). Despite these parallel findings, the systematic integration of differentiated learning within the Kurikulum Merdeka framework remains underexplored. Conceptually, the two approaches share complementary goals; however, practical implementation requires teacher readiness, pedagogical competence, and institutional support. Understanding how teachers perceive and enact differentiated learning under this new curriculum is therefore essential. Without examining teachers' experiences, challenges, and perceived effectiveness, the theoretical synergy between differentiation and curriculum reform may remain aspirational rather than practically realized in classroom settings.

Previous studies have examined teachers' perceptions of differentiated instruction and identified both positive attitudes and significant implementation barriers. For instance, Shareefa et al. (2019) reported that elementary teachers generally held favorable perceptions of differentiated instruction regardless of experience or qualifications, yet faced obstacles

such as limited resources, insufficient time, inadequate support, and large class sizes. In the Indonesian context, [Haryadi Santoso and Istiyono \(2022\)](#) highlighted teachers' recognition of the need to adapt instruction to student diversity, although reliance on subjective judgment and limited technological support constrained equitable implementation. Similarly, [Gibbs and Beamish \(2024\)](#) found that teachers endorsed innovative pedagogical frameworks but struggled with time pressures and performance demands. In language education specifically, [Hossein Rezadoust Siah Khaleh Sar \(2023\)](#) demonstrated how innovative assessment practices could enhance engagement and skill development. Collectively, these studies underscore the promise of differentiated approaches while revealing persistent structural and pedagogical challenges.

Although prior research has explored differentiated instruction and curriculum reform separately, there remains a notable gap concerning their intersection within English language teaching under the Kurikulum Merdeka. Existing Indonesian studies have primarily focused on teacher readiness or curriculum impact in general educational contexts ([Sofiana et al., 2024](#); [Wijaya et al., 2024](#)), leaving limited empirical attention to how differentiated learning is perceived and implemented specifically in ELT classrooms. This gap is particularly significant at the primary school level, where foundational English skills and learner attitudes are shaped. Moreover, few studies comprehensively examine teachers' perceived effectiveness, implementation frequency, encountered challenges, and required support within a unified analytical framework. Addressing this gap is crucial to move beyond conceptual alignment toward practical insight. By investigating teachers' lived experiences in implementing differentiated learning within the Kurikulum Merdeka, this study offers a focused and contextually grounded contribution to understanding how curriculum reform translates into pedagogical practice.

This study therefore seeks to explore primary school English teachers' perceptions of implementing differentiated learning within the Kurikulum Merdeka framework, with particular attention to effectiveness, challenges, and institutional support. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative perspective, examining differentiated learning not as an isolated instructional strategy but as a pedagogical mechanism embedded within national curriculum reform. By situating teacher perceptions at the center of analysis, the study provides practical insights into how inclusive and student-centered principles are operationalized in real classroom contexts. The findings are expected to inform curriculum development, teacher professional development programs, and policy decision-making aimed at strengthening ELT practices in Indonesia. Ultimately, this research contributes to advancing a more responsive, equitable, and contextually relevant model of English language education that aligns differentiated pedagogy with systemic educational transformation.

2. Method

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive field study design to explore English teachers' perceptions of implementing differentiated learning in language teaching. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected because it enables researchers to obtain rich, contextualized accounts of participants' experiences without imposing rigid theoretical frameworks. Such an approach is particularly suitable for examining complex pedagogical phenomena where perceptions, beliefs, and contextual constraints play central roles. Qualitative descriptive research aims to generate comprehensive summaries of specific events or interventions directly from participants' perspectives ([Christou, 2023](#); [Cordon et al.,](#)

2022). In the context of differentiated learning, which involves nuanced instructional decisions and classroom adaptations, this design allows for an in-depth understanding of teachers' interpretations, practices, and challenges. Conducted as a field-based inquiry, the study captured authentic insights grounded in real educational settings rather than experimental conditions. This methodological orientation ensures ecological validity and supports a holistic understanding of how differentiated learning is conceptualized and enacted within everyday English language teaching contexts.

The participants consisted of sixteen (16) English teachers who were purposively selected based on their experience with differentiated learning strategies. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that participants possessed relevant knowledge and practical exposure to the phenomenon under investigation, thereby enhancing the depth and credibility of the findings. Selection criteria included years of teaching experience, educational background, and teaching level to capture diverse professional perspectives. Data were collected through an online survey administered via Google Forms, chosen for its accessibility, flexibility, and efficiency in reaching participants across different schools. The instrument comprised both open-ended and close-ended questions to enable comprehensive data generation, combining narrative reflections with structured responses. The data collection process involved careful instrument design aligned with research objectives, pilot testing with a small group of teachers to refine clarity and relevance, systematic distribution via email, and follow-up reminders to maximize response rates. To strengthen trustworthiness, triangulation and member checking were employed, allowing participants to verify the accuracy of their responses.

Data analysis followed a systematic and multi-layered procedure to ensure rigor and analytical depth. Initially, responses were cleaned, organized, and reviewed to ensure completeness and consistency. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were coded inductively and categorized into themes and sub-themes to identify recurring patterns related to effectiveness, challenges, and support needs. Thematic analysis was conducted to interpret underlying meanings and contextual implications, following structured analytical steps that enhance conceptual clarity and coherence (Naeem et al., 2023). This process enabled the identification of dominant perceptions as well as nuanced variations across participants. In addition, responses from close-ended questions were analyzed descriptively to provide numerical representations of trends and frequency patterns, complementing qualitative insights. The integration of qualitative thematic interpretation with descriptive quantitative analysis strengthened the comprehensiveness of the findings. Through this rigorous analytical approach, the study generated a holistic understanding of how differentiated learning is perceived, practiced, and evaluated by English teachers in authentic classroom contexts.

3. Results

The survey responses from 16 English teachers provide a comprehensive view of the implementation of differentiated learning in English language teaching. Table 1 present the participant profile. The majority of participants have more than seven years of teaching experience, indicating that they are seasoned professionals capable of providing well-informed insights into differentiated learning. This experience suggests that these teachers have encountered various teaching methodologies and are in a good position to evaluate the effectiveness of differentiated learning. A significant portion of the participants primarily

teach high school, with middle school and elementary school following, suggesting that the findings will be particularly relevant for secondary education. However, insights from all levels provide a comprehensive view of differentiated learning across different age groups.

Table 1. Participant profile

Category		Percentage (%)
Age	<25 y.o	10
	25 – 34 y.o	25
	35 – 44 y.o	30
	45 – 54 y.o	20
	>50 y.o	15
Gender	Male	45
	Female	55
Teaching experience	0 – 5 years	15
	6 – 10 years	25
	11 – 15 years	20
	16 – 20 years	25
	>20 years	15
Educational level	Bachelor degree	50
	Master's degree	30
	Doctoral degree	5
	Other	15

This demographic data provides a comprehensive overview of the primary school teachers in Cilacap, highlighting their age, gender, teaching experience, and educational background. The teacher demographic in Cilacap's primary education is diverse yet shows some clear trends. The majority of teachers are in their early to mid-career stages, with 30% aged 35-44 and 25% aged 25-34, while only 10% are under 25. This suggests that younger individuals are less prevalent in the teaching profession at this level. Gender distribution leans towards female teachers, who make up 55% of respondents, in line with typical patterns in primary education, while male teachers constitute 40% and 5% prefer not to disclose their gender. Teaching experience among respondents is varied, with an even spread between those having 6-10 years and 16-20 years of experience, each group comprising 25%. Notably, 15% of teachers have over 20 years of experience, highlighting the presence of highly seasoned educators. In terms of education, half of the teachers hold a Bachelor's degree, the basic requirement for teaching, while 30% have advanced to a Master's degree. A small percentage, 5%, possess a Doctorate, and 15% fall into the "Other" category, which could include various certifications or diplomas. This blend of ages, experiences, and educational backgrounds paints a picture of a robust and varied teaching workforce in Cilacap. This information is essential for understanding the context in which differentiated learning is implemented and for tailoring professional development programs to meet their specific needs.

Figure 1 shows the teachers' familiarity with differentiated learning, revealing the respondents' varying levels of familiarity with differentiated learning. The largest segment, 40%, reported being somewhat familiar with the concept, indicating that while they have some understanding, they might not be fully confident or knowledgeable about all its aspects. Additionally, 20% of respondents expressed a neutral stance, suggesting they have heard of differentiated learning but lack a clear understanding or strong opinion about it. Another 20%

stated they are very familiar, demonstrating a strong understanding and awareness, likely due to experience or extensive training. However, 15% of respondents feel somewhat unfamiliar, possessing only a vague idea of the concept, and 5% are very unfamiliar, indicating little to no knowledge of differentiated learning. In summary, while a majority (60%) have at least some familiarity, a significant portion (40%) lacks sufficient understanding or confidence, highlighting the need for targeted professional development and training to enhance overall familiarity and effective implementation of differentiated learning practices.

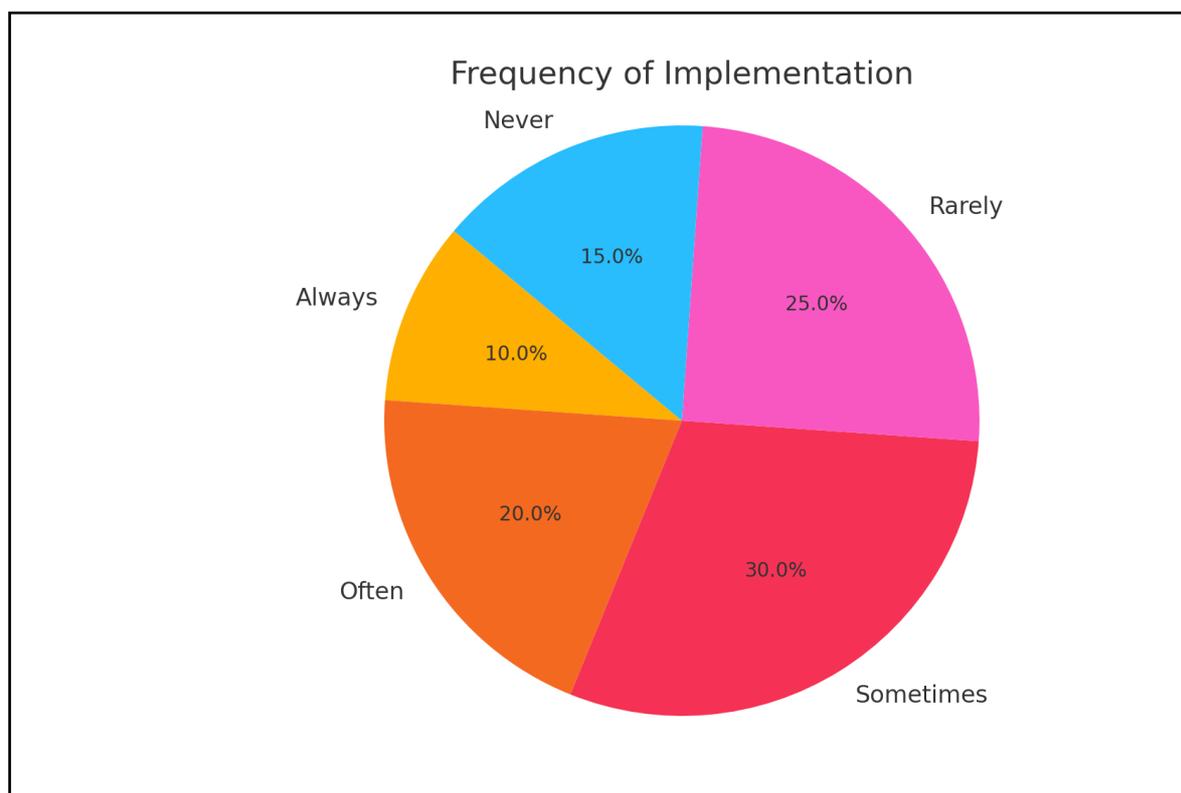


Figure 1. Teacher familiarity with differentiated learning

The data demonstrated in [Figure 2](#) indicated the frequency of differentiated learning implementation by the teachers. Here, it illustrates how often respondents implement differentiated learning strategies in their teaching practices. The largest portion, 30%, indicated that they sometimes use differentiated learning, suggesting that while they recognize its importance, it is not a consistent part of their teaching routine. This is followed by 25% who rarely implement it, indicating significant room for improvement in the frequency of using differentiated strategies. Additionally, 20% of respondents reported that they often use differentiated learning, showing a more regular application of these strategies in their classrooms. However, only 10% always implement differentiated learning, highlighting a small group of educators who consistently apply these methods. Finally, 15% of respondents never use differentiated learning, suggesting a complete lack of engagement with this approach among a notable segment of the population. Overall, the chart indicates that while there is some level of engagement with differentiated learning, the frequency of implementation varies widely. A majority of respondents fall into the sometimes and rarely categories, pointing to a need for increased support, training, and resources to encourage more consistent and effective use of differentiated learning strategies in educational settings.

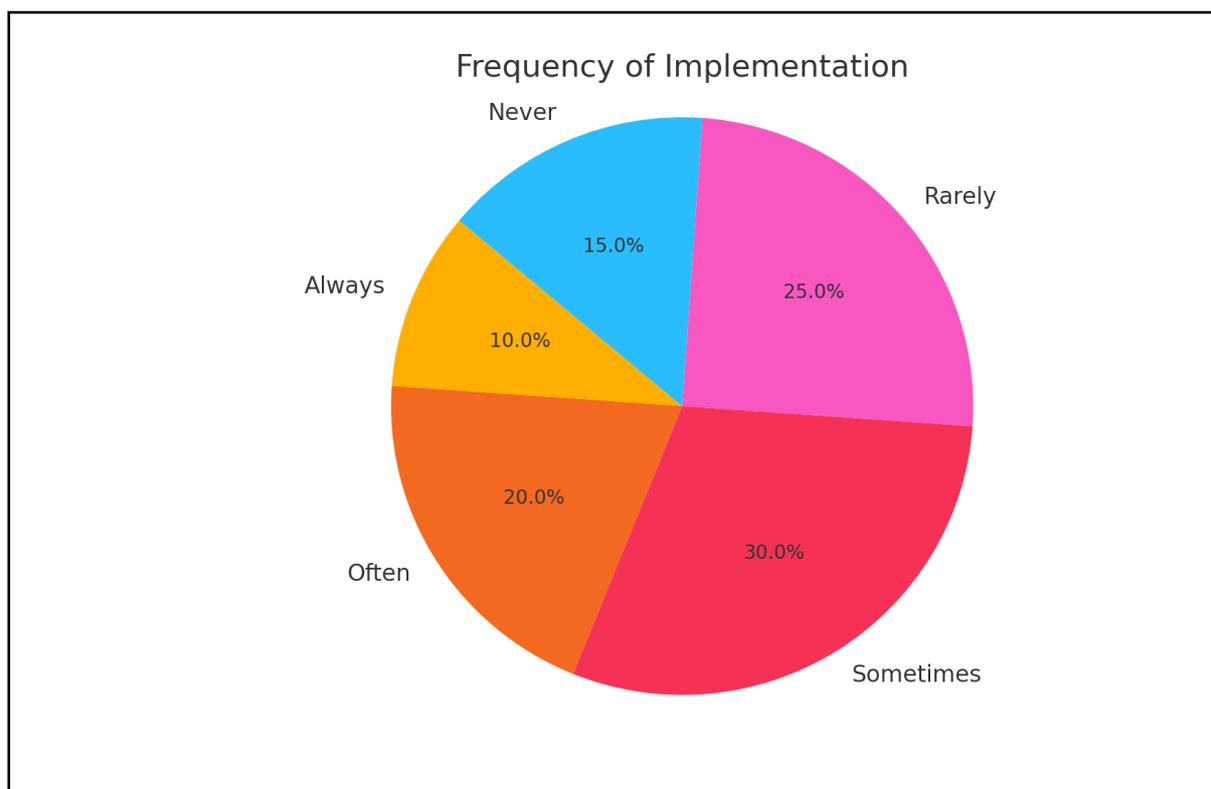


Figure 2. Frequency of differentiated learning implementation

Figure 3 presented the Main Challenges in differentiated learning implementation by highlighting the primary obstacles educators face when implementing differentiated learning. The largest segment, 20.7%, identified a lack of time as the most significant challenge. This suggests that educators feel they do not have sufficient time to plan and execute differentiated strategies effectively. Following closely, 19.0% of respondents pointed to insufficient training as a major barrier, indicating a need for more professional development and education on how to implement differentiated learning effectively. Limited resources were identified by 17.2% of respondents, highlighting the need for more or better materials to support diverse learning needs. Large class sizes were cited by 15.5% of respondents, suggesting that managing a large number of students can make it difficult to tailor instruction to individual needs. Diverse student needs, mentioned by 13.8%, also pose a challenge, reflecting the complexity of addressing varying learning styles and abilities within a single classroom. Lack of administrative support was identified by 10.3% of respondents, indicating that some educators feel they do not receive adequate backing from their school leadership. Finally, 3.4% of respondents mentioned other challenges, which could include a range of less common or specific issues not captured by the main categories. Thus, the chart underscores that time constraints, insufficient training, and limited resources are the top challenges for educators. Addressing these issues through better time management, enhanced professional development, and increased resource allocation could significantly improve the implementation of differentiated learning.

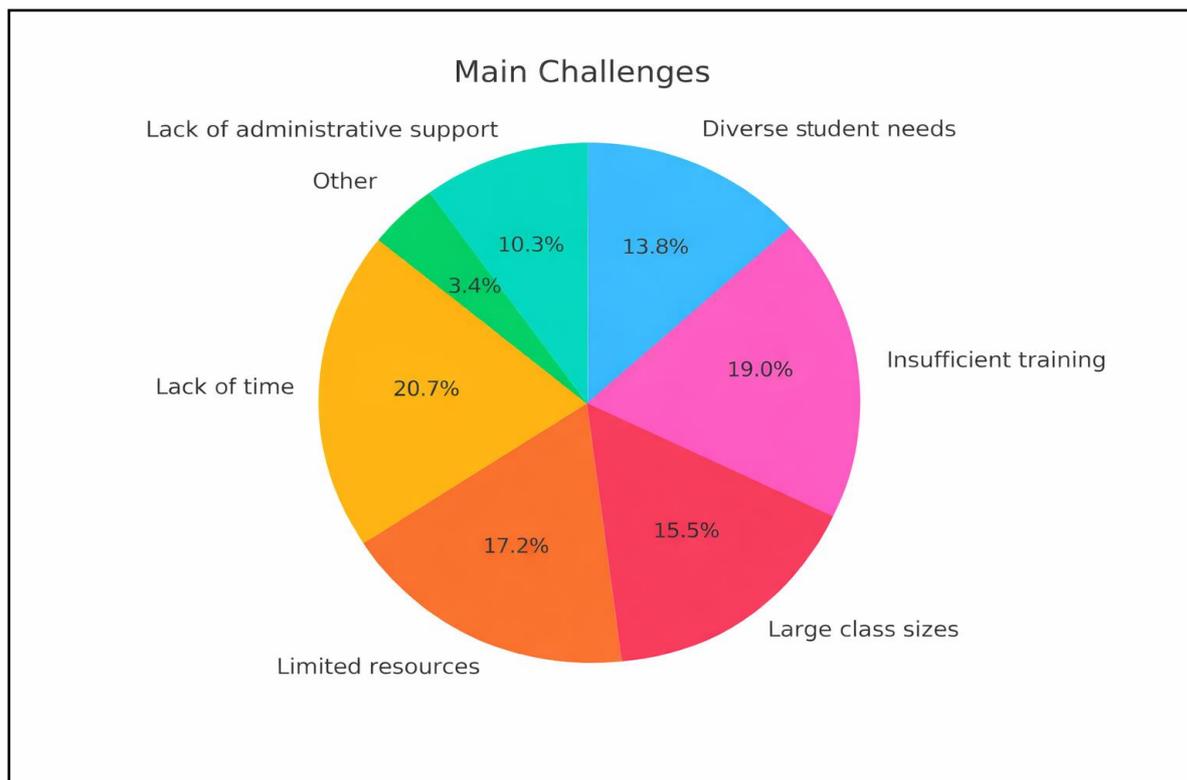


Figure 3. Challenges of differentiated learning implementation

As provided in [Figure 4](#), an overview of how respondents perceive the effectiveness of differentiated learning showed that the largest segment, 35%, indicates that respondents find differentiated learning effective, suggesting that a significant portion of educators believe in its benefits. A quarter of the respondents (25%) have a neutral stance, indicating neither a positive nor negative perception of its effectiveness. This neutrality might reflect uncertainty or variability in experiences with differentiated learning. Another 15% of respondents consider differentiated learning very effective, highlighting a group of educators who see strong positive outcomes from its implementation. Similarly, 15% find it ineffective, suggesting that there are challenges or limitations that prevent its successful application in their contexts. Finally, 10% of respondents view differentiated learning as very ineffective, indicating substantial dissatisfaction or difficulty with its implementation. In short, the chart shows a generally positive perception of differentiated learning, with 50% of respondents finding it effective or very effective. However, the presence of neutral, ineffective, and very ineffective responses (50%) indicates that there are areas for improvement and that not all educators are experiencing the desired benefits from differentiated learning practices. This suggests a need for further support, resources, and training to enhance its effectiveness across diverse educational settings.

Furthermore, [Figure 5](#) shows the data about the support or Resources Needed by the teacher, and illustrates the various types of support and resources that respondents identified as necessary for the effective implementation of differentiated learning. The highest percentage, 70%, indicates a need for professional development workshops. This highlights the importance of ongoing training and education for teachers to enhance their skills and understanding of differentiated learning techniques. Access to differentiated learning

materials is the second most needed support, with 60% of respondents identifying it as crucial. This underscores the necessity for appropriate resources that can aid in the effective implementation of differentiated instruction. More planning time is needed by 55% of respondents, suggesting that teachers require additional time to adequately plan and tailor their lessons to meet diverse student needs. Collaboration with colleagues is important for 50% of respondents, indicating a desire for increased opportunities to work with peers, share best practices, and support each other. Smaller class sizes are needed by 45% of respondents, pointing to the challenges of managing a large number of students while trying to provide individualized instruction. Administrative support is seen as necessary by 40% of respondents, reflecting the importance of backing from school leadership to successfully implement differentiated learning. Lastly, 10% of respondents mentioned other types of support, which could include a range of less common or specific needs not captured by the main categories. Overall, the chart reveals a strong demand for professional development, access to materials, and adequate planning time, with significant emphasis also placed on collaboration, manageable class sizes, and administrative support. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of support required for effective differentiated learning implementation and the need for comprehensive strategies to address these needs.

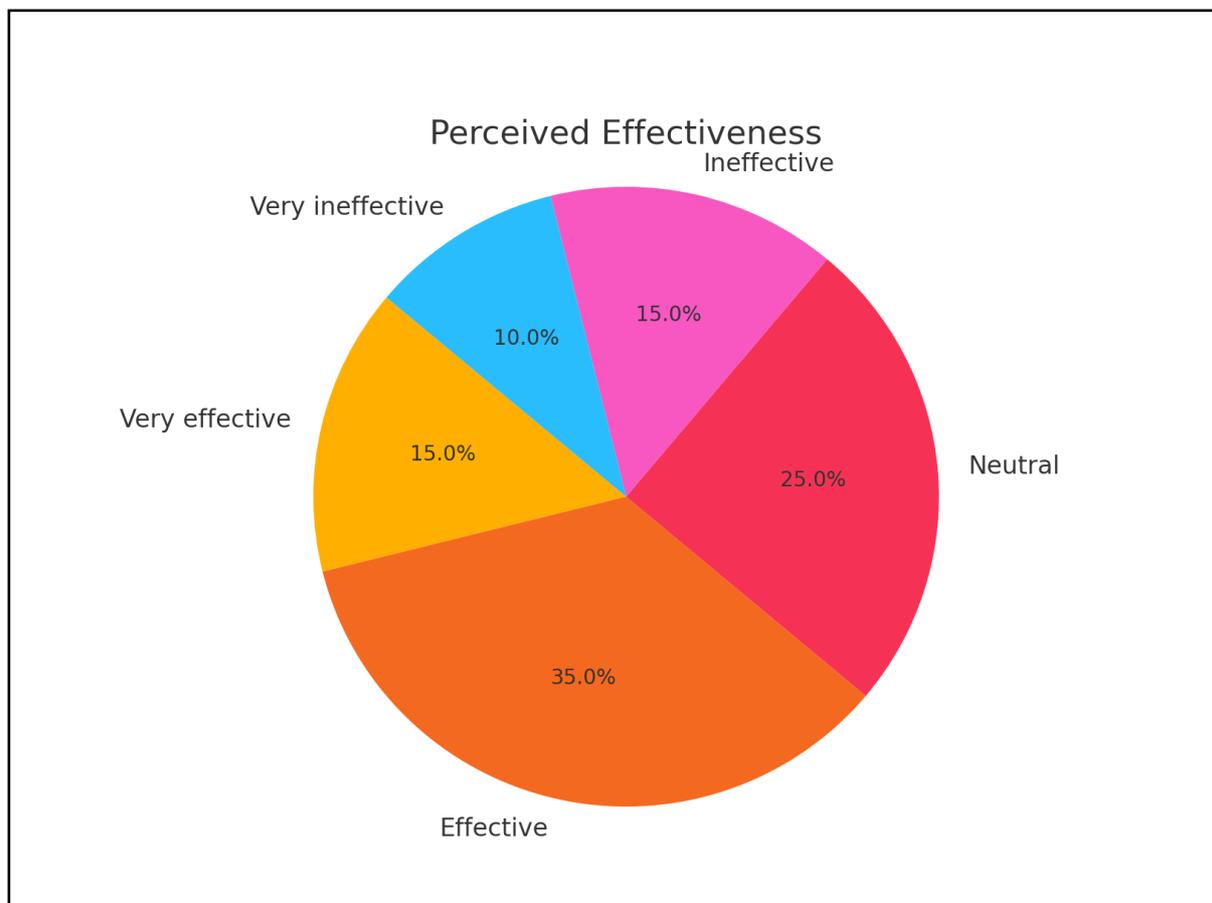


Figure 4. Teachers' perception on the effectiveness in differentiated learning implementation

With 56.25% holding a Master's degree and 37.5% a Bachelor's degree, the participants are well-educated, implying a strong foundational knowledge in educational theories and practices, which supports the validity of their responses and perceptions. Most participants are familiar with differentiated learning, with 50% being very familiar, indicating that the

teachers are knowledgeable about the concept and can provide informed feedback on its implementation and effectiveness. The majority implement differentiated learning often or always, showing a strong adoption rate among the teachers. This frequent use suggests that differentiated learning is integrated into their regular teaching practices and is not just an occasional strategy. Most participants find differentiated learning to be effective or very effective in improving student outcomes, aligning with existing literature on the benefits of differentiated instruction and supporting its continued use in classrooms. Differentiated instruction is the most commonly used strategy, followed by tiered assignments and flexible grouping, indicating that teachers are utilizing multiple approaches to meet the diverse needs of their students. However, responses are mixed regarding the sufficiency of support and resources, highlighting a potential area for improvement and suggesting that better support systems and resources are needed to fully implement differentiated learning effectively.

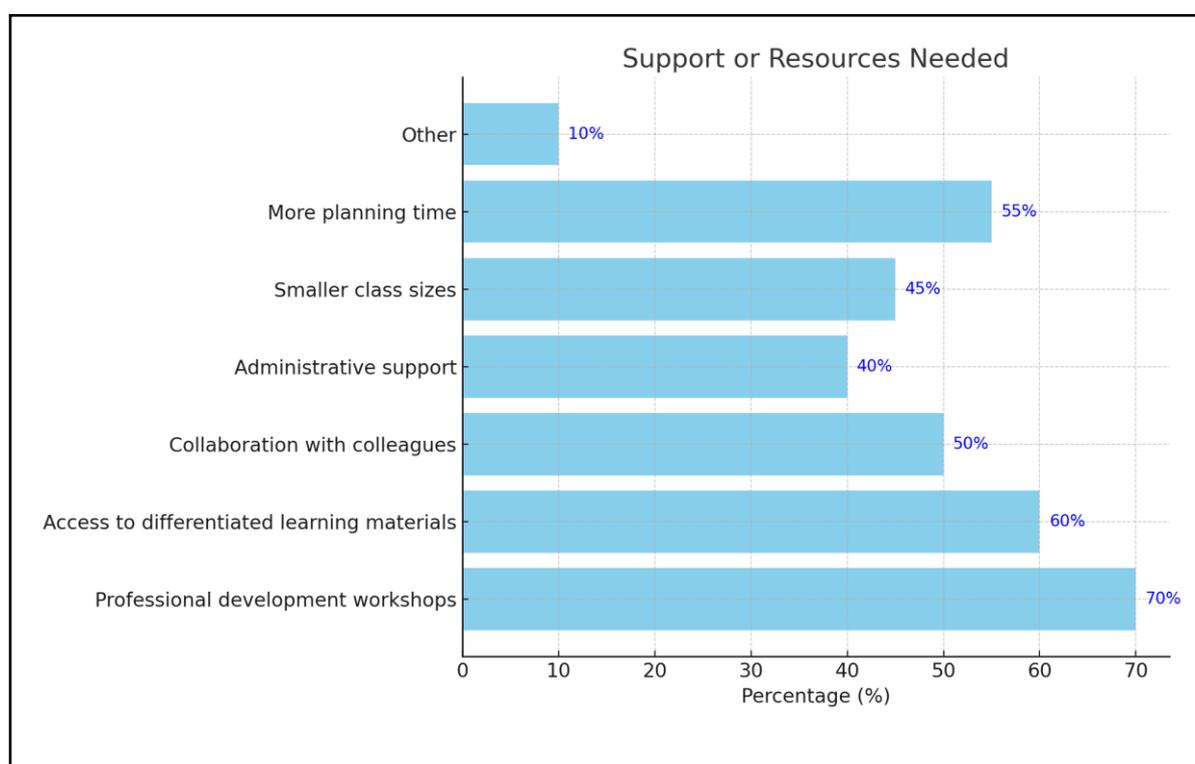


Figure 5. Teachers' need in differentiated learning implementation

Teachers generally find implementing differentiated learning challenging but rewarding. The initial effort required is offset by the benefits seen in student engagement and performance, underscoring the value of investing in differentiated strategies despite the upfront challenges. Common challenges include time for preparation (Suryati & Ratih, 2023), classroom management (Sahayu et al., 2025), and limited resources (Ayuningtyas et al., 2023), indicating that while differentiated learning is beneficial, practical barriers need addressing to facilitate smoother implementation. Successful examples often involve allowing students choice and relevance in their learning activities, highlighting the importance of student autonomy and interest in driving engagement and success in differentiated learning environments. Positive student responses to differentiated activities, including increased engagement and performance, affirm the effectiveness of this approach, suggesting that

differentiated learning can address diverse student needs more effectively than traditional methods.

Thus, a recommendation for professional development plays a crucial role in equipping teachers with the necessary skills for differentiated learning. The positive influence of training on teaching practices indicates that ongoing professional development is essential for effective implementation. Teachers identify catering to individual needs, enhancing engagement, fostering a love for learning, and improving academic outcomes as key benefits, confirming its positive impact on students. The need for more teaching materials, access to technology, and administrative support suggests that while teachers are willing to implement differentiated learning, external support is crucial for its success. This calls for investment in resources and support structures. Teachers use a combination of formative assessments, student feedback, and observations to evaluate effectiveness, ensuring a thorough assessment of how well-differentiated learning strategies are working in their classrooms. Overall, teachers view differentiated learning as transformative, fostering an inclusive environment where every student feels valued, underscoring its importance in promoting equity and inclusivity in education. The analysis reveals a positive perception of differentiated learning among teachers, recognizing its benefits and highlighting areas for improvement in support and resources to maximize its effectiveness.

4. Discussion

The analysis of survey responses from sixteen experienced English teachers provides meaningful insights into the implementation of differentiated learning within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. Overall, teachers demonstrated a strong awareness of differentiation principles and expressed largely positive perceptions regarding its effectiveness in enhancing student engagement and academic performance. These findings reinforce the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on student-centered learning, flexibility, and personalized educational pathways. Teachers reported that differentiated learning fosters greater motivation, encourages active participation, and cultivates a sense of ownership over learning. Practical examples, such as project-based assignments that allow students to select topics aligned with their interests, illustrate how autonomy and relevance contribute to improved learning experiences. This reflects the curriculum's broader vision of nurturing independent and self-directed learners. The alignment between differentiated instruction and the Merdeka Curriculum suggests that differentiation functions not merely as a teaching technique but as a pedagogical mechanism that operationalizes curriculum reform in English language classrooms.

These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the positive impact of differentiated instruction in diverse language learning contexts. [Zafiri et al. \(2019\)](#) demonstrated the effectiveness of differentiation in improving a dyslexic learner's foreign language performance, while [Padmore and Ali \(2024\)](#) found that differentiated strategies enhance overall academic achievement despite contextual constraints such as overcrowded classrooms and limited support. Differentiation is widely recognized as a pedagogical approach that adapts content, process, product, and learning environment to address learner variability. By aligning instruction with students' readiness levels and learning profiles, teachers can support struggling learners while simultaneously extending opportunities for advanced students ([Muhab et al., 2024](#)). Furthermore, flexibility in instructional delivery, including varied modalities and assessment options, strengthens engagement and

responsiveness. Such practices promote inclusivity and collaborative classroom cultures where students' differences are acknowledged as strengths rather than obstacles.

Despite these benefits, the study also reveals substantial challenges that complicate the effective implementation of differentiated learning. Teachers identified time constraints, classroom management complexities, and limited resources as primary barriers. Preparing differentiated materials requires additional planning, continuous assessment, and adaptive decision-making, which can be overwhelming within demanding school environments. These challenges echo broader implementation concerns in curriculum reform contexts, where pedagogical innovation often increases teacher workload. Resource limitations, including insufficient teaching materials, restricted access to technology, and limited administrative support, further constrain instructional flexibility. Without systematic support, the aspirational goals of differentiation risk remaining theoretical rather than practical. Addressing these barriers is therefore essential to ensuring that the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on personalization translates into sustainable classroom practice. The findings suggest that structural and institutional support mechanisms are critical in bridging the gap between pedagogical ideals and everyday instructional realities.

Professional development emerges as a decisive factor in strengthening differentiated learning practices. Continuous training equips teachers with practical strategies for assessing learner diversity, designing tiered tasks, and managing flexible groupings effectively. The positive influence of targeted preparation aligns with findings that emphasize teacher readiness as central to successful curriculum implementation (Yunitasari et al., 2023). Moreover, the Merdeka Curriculum's commitment to fostering innovation and creativity (Kasman & Lubis, 2022) requires educators who are confident in adapting instruction responsively. Research further indicates that differentiated learning contributes to improved literacy (Safrudin & Wijaya, 2024), enhanced problem-solving skills (Hashemi et al., 2021), and stronger critical reasoning (Kharisma et al., 2024). By individualizing instruction according to students' interests and capabilities, teachers can promote holistic development, including moral and character growth (Murdahlipah et al., 2024; Samsudi et al., 2024). However, limited understanding of differentiation principles remains a challenge (Insif et al., 2022; Luh et al., 2020), reinforcing the need for sustained institutional commitment.

In sum, differentiated learning within the Merdeka Curriculum represents a transformative yet demanding educational approach. The findings affirm its capacity to enhance engagement, academic achievement, and inclusive classroom culture, while simultaneously highlighting the structural and professional constraints that affect implementation. By valuing students' diverse interests and learning trajectories (Noviyanti, 2023; Sari, 2020; Sarigöz & Fişne, 2019), the Merdeka Curriculum aspires to create a responsive and equitable learning environment. However, achieving this vision requires coordinated policy support, resource investment, and systematic professional development. When supported appropriately, differentiated instruction becomes a strategic vehicle for translating curriculum reform into meaningful classroom practice.

5. Conclusion

This study examined teachers' perceptions of implementing differentiated learning in English language teaching within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum and revealed a dynamic interplay between pedagogical potential and contextual constraints. The findings indicate that teachers largely perceive differentiated learning as effective in enhancing student

engagement, motivation, and academic achievement. Strategies such as providing meaningful choices, adapting instructional methods, and aligning tasks with students' interests were reported to foster more inclusive and student-centered learning environments. These outcomes reinforce the theoretical premise that differentiated instruction operationalizes the principles of flexibility, autonomy, and personalization embedded in the Merdeka Curriculum. Theoretically, this study strengthens the conceptual linkage between curriculum reform and differentiated pedagogy by demonstrating how differentiation functions as a practical mechanism for realizing student-centered education. Practically, the findings underscore the importance of sustained professional development, adequate teaching resources, technological access, and administrative support to ensure that differentiated learning can be implemented consistently and effectively in diverse classroom contexts.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The relatively small sample size of sixteen teachers limits the generalizability of the findings across broader educational settings. In addition, reliance on self-reported survey data may not fully capture actual classroom practices, as perceptions may differ from observed implementation. Future research could employ mixed-method or longitudinal designs incorporating classroom observations, interviews, and student performance data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of differentiated learning practices. Expanding the participant pool across different regions and educational levels would also strengthen comparative insights. Furthermore, future studies may explore the impact of specific professional development models on teachers' differentiation competencies or examine students' perspectives on differentiated instruction within the Merdeka Curriculum. Such investigations would contribute to a deeper and more evidence-based understanding of how differentiated learning can be sustainably embedded within curriculum reform initiatives.

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