
The differentiated instruction and its implementation for developing countries: Partnership students learning Indonesian language in bridging course program

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***Abstract:** Students are unique human beings. They are not always alike. As they have different backgrounds, interests, cultures, and learning dynamics, they learn differently. The Developing Countries Partnership students in YSU, Indonesia come from different countries with different levels of Indonesian language competences. In order to get the reflection of students' personal best learning style and the degree of individual progress from each learner's achievements, some steps need to be applied in differentiated instructions. While teachers need to facilitate and coach students in learning, this instruction will enable the students to actively participate in learning, producing, and assessing their own learning. The result shows there is only one fully autonomous student; two semi-autonomous students, one introvert who does not like working in group, and one extrovert; and three other dependent students who always need Google translation to help them in doing their tasks.*

***Keywords:** different learner, differentiated instruction*

1. Introduction

Since 2006 Yogyakarta State University (YSU) in Indonesia has accepted students from the Non-Allied Movement (NAM) countries. These students are the recipients of the Developing Countries Partnership (DCP) scholarship. However since 2002 the scholarship has been offered to citizens of other developing countries who want to study in Indonesia. To date, there have been students from 14 countries enrolled in YSU. Those countries are Bangladesh (4 students), Cambodia (4), Columbia, Fiji, Guyana, India, Kenya, Korea, Madagascar, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan (1 student each), Laos (11) and Thailand (13). The DCP scholarship is offered to postgraduates (Master Degree) students to study at YSU for 3 years where students spend one year on studying Indonesian Language and doing

Preparatory Programs and the remaining 2 years on the Masters Programs.

Instructions in most subjects taught at YSU are conducted in the Indonesian language. Therefore it is crucial that International (postgraduate) students have high proficiency levels of Indonesian before they can attend the Masters program. However, after one year of intensive classes in the Indonesian language, their proficiency levels still vary, ranging from beginner to advanced. Students with prior experience in Indonesian language instructions, i.e. the recipients of the Indonesian government's scholarship, Dharmasiswa, generally have higher proficiency levels than those who come as complete beginners. During this research in 2012 academic year, there are only a small number of students enrolled in the program, only 6 DCP students and 2 sit-in students, and due to limited resources

(teachers and classrooms) available at YSU, all these DCP students with varying degrees of commands of the Indonesian language are put in the same class.

Bearing in mind these various levels of language competencies and readiness, there is a need for a special kind of instructions to be conducted in a short period of learning. This paper will discuss Differentiated Instruction applied to deal with the heterogeneity of the students.

This approach takes into account that each student is unique. Each student is different and therefore a good teaching approach should allow students to use multiple options to absorb information and make sense of ideas. Differentiated instruction is a teaching theory based on the premise that instructional approaches should vary and be adapted in relation to individuals and diverse students in classrooms (Tomlinson, 2001). It means that the teacher is expected to create and prepare different methods to respond to students' various needs (Louis Legrand, 1984).

This in fact has been a well-known and frequently talked about educational practice. Yet in reality the implementation of this approach is not as easy as it sounds especially in comparison to the more traditional teaching approaches that assume all students have similar backgrounds and readiness.

As DCP students clearly have different backgrounds, experiences and interests, differentiated instruction approach is needed. Before deciding the kind of curriculum that best suit the students, the teacher need to find out their backgrounds.

2. Method

The first step of the DCP program is knowing the profile of the students. With a small number of students in each academic calendar (usually no more 10) a structured but casual interview can be conducted. The teacher may ask the students about their study program, why they choose Indonesia as

their destination; what their motivations and objectives are; whether they have learnt Indonesian language before and where; whether they are fluent in any other language(s); what difficulties they encountered when learning Indonesian language before; what they like or dislike in term of class activities such as individual or group works, etc.

Today, as the internet is easily accessible, it is also possible to distribute written questionnaires about their familiarity working with the internet. Do they always have an internet connection at home? Do they join social network and which one(s)? How often do they use the internet? How do they communicate with their family? What language do they use in communicating with their friends? Etc.

All those questions are not aimed at classifying the students but rather to better understand students' background and to predict their readiness. Only after establishing the students' profile can the type of instructional approach be determined.

The second step is giving diagnostic evaluation on their linguistic competence and other issues. From the students' perspective, it is beneficial as they will soon be involved in dynamic learning activities. They will also be able to find out about their language competencies to prepare their learning.

Meanwhile from the teacher's point of view, understanding their students' profile allows them to plan the learning progression. This also means that the teacher will have time to prepare the multi-levels and various kinds of learning materials and texts. This kind of evaluation also enables the teacher to anticipate difficulties students may encounter.

This evaluation can be conducted both orally and in writing. The written component may include grammar and writing a passage. In the oral component of the test, the teacher may ask a series of questions to gain a deeper understanding of the students or what is known as "Faisons Connaissance" in French.

A Self-Assessment can also be done for this purpose. For example, students can be asked the following questions or respond to the self-assessment items.

The following criteria can be used as a self-assessment.

- : I do not understand at all
- : I am still confused
- +/- : I am learning how to
- + : I can
- ++ : I am perfectly able to

Another type of self-assessment procedure can be given to these students. The rating scale below is one such instrument that is easy for the students to use.

Based on this self-assessment, the teacher can find out students' levels of comprehension. Then a supplementary task can be prepared.

The third activity in the program is related to Error-Based Learning. Mistakes or even errors are unavoidable and often considered as part of learning. They also show the students' progress (Jean-Pierre Astolfi,

2006). And how does the teacher handle and manage students' errors? Some teaching-learning strategies may be adopted.

Giving different kinds of instruction for different students can be applied. This can be done individually as different students may produce mistakes differently. It must be kept in mind that students learn differently.

The teacher may also give exercises in order to help students to understand their mistakes. As they make different mistakes, different tes are also needed. The teacher should recognize and then correct the mistakes in the sentence. Or ask the student in question to recall the pattern(s) where he/she made mistakes, and/or give 1 or 2 different exercises to address the mistakes he/she made.

The last step is to make the instructional grouping in which students will start their instructional activities. In the traditional approach, a single instruction is delivered to the whole class. But in the differentiated instruction, the teacher has established the students' profile and anticipated the problems

Table 1
Self-assessment Instrument on Linguistic Competence

| Linguistics Competence | 13/02 | 20/02 | 27/02 | 05/03 | 12/03 | 19/03 | Notes |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| I can: | | | | | | | |
| introduce myself (name/ age/ profession/ nationality) | | | | | | | |
| greet people in formal and informal situations | | | | | | | |
| ask and give personal information (my telephone number, date and place of birth, address) | | | | | | | |
| talk about leisure time | | | | | | | |
| talk about preferences (what I like/do not like) | | | | | | | |
| describe my family | | | | | | | |
| characterize people | | | | | | | |
| physically | | | | | | | |
| mentally | | | | | | | |
| tell about my days | | | | | | | |
| ask and tell about time | | | | | | | |
| My personal objectives: | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

they may encounter so small groups with different instructions that are needed. This flexible grouping and regrouping of students is done according to instructional objectives and also in response to students' needs.

Three classifications/groups should be sufficient:

1. a fully autonomous group
2. a semi-autonomous group, which requires the teacher to provide a vocabulary list accompanying each text.
3. a dependent group, which requires the teacher's guide in every task.

3. Findings

First, all of the students are computer literate, and they agree to apply a smart board and practice *E-learning*. Plan, instruction material and home works will be easily accessed from <http://knb2.pbworks.com>. One student is a fully autonomous student, and at the same time he was granted the Dharmasiswa scholarship from the Indonesian government to undertake one year of learning Indonesian language and culture in the previous year. He shows his advanced learning among others. He is also the captain of the class. Three students always refer to Google translation in accomplishing their reading comprehension, one of them even did this until the end of the program fail to access <http://knb2.pbworks.com> as she forgets the password after 4 times changing her *E-mail* address. She always sends the task through her *E-mail* address instead.

Second, there are three students who belong to the dependent types. What the teacher needs to do is facilitate them with extra vocabulary and patterns which are used in the texts, although the teacher's explanation is still needed. The teacher also may ask one or two students who have higher Indonesian language competence to help them. Sometimes this explanation is uttered in English, and sometimes in their mother tongue.

Third, only a few students will

deliberately use Indonesian in class discussion and only one introvert student needs to be asked prior to speaking. Moreover he was always late in submitting his homework, while he actually had no such serious problem with Indonesian.

Fourth, using pictures and or photos followed by free speaking or writing becomes the favorite for all the students. This also happened when they were asked to create an advertisement in running an informal education. In a short time, they finish the task and they are showing their happiness.

4. Conclusion

As a conclusion, as students learn differently, the teacher has to adopt different types of instructions (learning strategies) such as which students prefer to work individually, in pair, and/or in group; giving learning supplementary; special techniques to explain grammar or vocabulary; using translation and always try to compare with/understand through their mother tongue. With a class of seven students, this kind of instruction will maximize students' individual potentials. However, it seems a tedious task if implemented in a big class. This will be a challenge for the teacher.

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