



## TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHERS AND DIFFERENTIATED ENGLISH INSTRUCTION: ENHANCING STUDENT MOTIVATION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Yara Fitriani<sup>1</sup>, Sofendi<sup>2</sup>, & Machdalena Vianty<sup>3</sup>

Magister Program of Language Education,

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, Indonesia

Corresponding author: yarafitriani48@gmail.com

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**Abstract:** Modern classrooms demand teaching approaches that address diverse learning needs. This study examines how transformative English teachers implement Differentiated Instruction (DI) to enhance student motivation and learning outcomes, combining adaptive pedagogy with equitable education practices. Using a qualitative case study design, the research focused on two experienced Indonesian English teachers trained in DI through the *Guru Penggerak* program. Semi-structured interviews explored their DI implementation strategies and impacts on learners. Results showed DI significantly boosts engagement when teachers tailor instruction to individual needs through flexible grouping, tiered assignments, and multimodal assessments. Students demonstrated greater motivation when expressing understanding through varied formats like videos, podcasts, or traditional essays. The approach also improved academic performance by aligning with different learning preferences and readiness levels. The study concludes DI creates inclusive classrooms that foster both academic growth and 21st-century skills when implemented effectively. Recommendations include investing in teacher training, providing DI resources, and incorporating flexible assessment policies. Future research should investigate DI's long-term effects across diverse educational contexts.

**Keywords:** *Differentiated instruction; student motivation; learning outcomes; English teaching; transformative pedagogy.*

### INTRODUCTION

The modern classroom is characterized by unprecedented diversity in students' linguistic abilities, cultural backgrounds, and learning preferences, necessitating pedagogical approaches that move beyond traditional, uniform instruction (Goyibhuva et al., 2025; Hu, 2024). Differentiated Instruction (DI) has emerged as a critical pedagogical framework, enabling teachers to tailor content, instructional processes, and assessments to meet individual learner needs (Tomlinson, 2017; Smets et al., 2022). However, while DI has been extensively studied, its integration with transformative teaching—an approach that promotes equity, critical consciousness, and student agency—remains underexplored (Chang, 2024; Ortega, 2021). Transformative teachers not only adapt instruction to student differences but

also empower learners to challenge inequities and engage in meaningful, self-directed learning (Jacobs & Haberman, 2022; Yoon, 2021). This study investigates how transformative teachers implement DI in English language classrooms to enhance student motivation and learning outcomes, bridging the gap between adaptive pedagogy and socially just education.

A robust body of empirical research confirms the effectiveness of differentiated instruction (DI) in enhancing both student engagement and academic performance. Multiple studies across diverse educational contexts have demonstrated that when teachers adapt their instruction to accommodate varying student needs, significant learning gains result. In Indonesian elementary schools, Achmad et al. (2024) found that implementing DI strategies in reading instruction

led to measurable improvements in comprehension skills, as teachers were able to tailor materials and pacing to students' individual literacy levels. Similarly innovative applications of DI principles have shown success in higher education settings, with Balogun's (2025) research in Nigerian universities revealing how gamified DI approaches increased student participation and course completion rates in English language programs. These findings are further supported by studies examining DI in STEM education, where problem-based differentiation (Nur'aini et al., 2023) and inquiry-based methods (Yeh, 2025) have proven particularly effective at developing students' higher-order thinking skills and conceptual understanding, moving beyond simple knowledge recall to foster deeper cognitive engagement with subject matter.

Despite the strong theoretical foundation and documented benefits of DI, successful implementation presents significant challenges that require systemic support. Research consistently identifies teacher expertise and adaptability as critical factors in effective differentiation (Bhandari et al., 2025; Smets et al., 2022). Many educators face substantial barriers including inadequate preparation in DI methods, inflexible curriculum requirements, and the logistical difficulties of managing differentiated lessons in overcrowded classrooms (Hajis & Othman, 2024; Porta & Todd, 2024). These implementation challenges highlight the crucial role of comprehensive professional development programs, such as those described by Alshaikhi and Khasawneh (2025) which successfully enhanced English teachers' ability to differentiate instruction for students with disabilities. Such programs typically incorporate hands-on training in diagnostic assessment, instructional planning for diverse learners, and classroom management strategies for heterogeneous groups. The research suggests that ongoing, job-embedded professional learning opportunities—including coaching, professional learning communities, and classroom-based mentoring—are essential for helping teachers develop and maintain effective DI practices over time.

One of the most well-documented advantages of DI is its positive impact on student motivation and engagement. By aligning instructional methods with learners' individual interests, readiness levels, and preferred learning modalities, DI creates learning experiences that are inherently more meaningful and relevant to students (Handiyani & Muhtar, 2022; Sapan & Mede,

2022). The motivational power of DI is evident in studies like Özer and Yılmaz's (2018) research in Turkish EFL classrooms, which found that instruction tailored to students' thinking styles not only improved immediate academic performance but also enhanced long-term knowledge retention. Similarly, Balogun's (2025) work with gamified DI in Nigeria demonstrated how incorporating elements of challenge, choice, and friendly competition can tap into students' intrinsic motivation, making the learning process more enjoyable and personally rewarding. These findings collectively suggest that DI's effectiveness stems from its fundamental respect for learner individuality, creating educational experiences that acknowledge and value students' unique strengths, interests, and ways of processing information. When students encounter learning activities that are appropriately challenging yet achievable, and that connect to their personal experiences and goals, they are more likely to engage deeply with the material and persist through difficulties.

Transformative teaching represents an evolution beyond basic differentiated instruction, integrating principles of critical pedagogy with adaptive teaching methods. While differentiated instruction focuses on meeting individual learning needs, transformative teaching uses this differentiation as a foundation to cultivate critical consciousness, promote educational equity, and empower students as active participants in their learning (Chang, 2024; Ortega, 2021). Teachers employing this transformative approach utilize differentiated strategies not merely as accommodation tools, but as mechanisms to challenge systemic educational inequalities (Yoon, 2021). Research by Jacobs and Haberlin (2022) demonstrates how educators in multicultural classrooms strategically employ differentiation to elevate marginalized voices, using flexible grouping and tiered assignments to disrupt traditional power dynamics in the classroom. This pedagogical approach transforms DI from a technical teaching strategy into an instrument for social justice, where academic differentiation becomes intertwined with identity affirmation and empowerment.

Despite its proven benefits, implementing differentiated instruction faces significant structural and cultural obstacles across educational systems. Studies in Indonesia and Serbia reveal how standardized testing regimes create disincentives for differentiation, pressuring teachers to prioritize test preparation over responsive teaching (Tundreng et al., 2025;

Ninković et al., 2024). The pervasive practice of ability labeling further complicates implementation, as terms like "low-achiever" can become self-fulfilling prophecies that contradict DI's equity objectives (Porta et al., 2024). These challenges underscore the necessity for comprehensive reforms that extend beyond classroom practices to address assessment systems, school cultures, and education policies. Successful DI implementation requires simultaneous top-down policy support and bottom-up pedagogical transformation, creating ecosystems where differentiated practices can flourish.

The effectiveness of differentiated instruction depends heavily on cultural and contextual adaptation. Research in Global South contexts demonstrates that DI models imported from Western education systems often fail unless significantly localized (Hidayat et al., 2024; Gyawali, 2023). Jufrianto and Basri's (2025) work in rural Indonesian schools illustrates how differentiation succeeds when incorporating local knowledge systems, vernacular languages, and community-relevant examples. Simultaneously, emerging technologies offer new possibilities for personalization, with AI-driven platforms enabling sophisticated adaptation to individual learning trajectories (Yeh, 2025; Syafitri, 2024). However, the digital divide presents serious equity concerns, necessitating blended approaches that combine technological tools with human-mediated differentiation, particularly in resource-constrained settings (Compen et al., 2025).

While progressive policies like Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka formally endorse differentiated instruction, implementation often falters due to insufficient practical guidance and support structures (Halimah, 2023). Case studies reveal that without concrete resources, professional development, and collaborative planning time, even motivated teachers struggle to sustain effective differentiation (Mairoza et al., 2024). Transformational school leadership emerges as a critical success factor, with research showing that principals who foster teacher autonomy, establish professional learning communities, and buffer against external pressures create environments where differentiation thrives (Ninković et al., 2024; Porta et al., 2024). These findings suggest that supporting DI requires investments in both human capital and organizational culture, not just policy declarations.

This study breaks new ground by examining the intersection of differentiated instruction and transformative teaching in English language

education - an area that has received surprisingly little scholarly attention despite its practical significance (Thohir & Amalia, 2024; Ortega, 2021). The research explores how English teachers can simultaneously address diverse learning needs while fostering critical language awareness and educational empowerment (Chang, 2024; Yoon, 2021). By investigating how transformative educators adapt DI principles in multilingual classrooms, the study develops a model that integrates academic adaptation with sociocultural responsiveness. This dual focus aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (inclusive quality education), offering concrete strategies for reducing disparities in language education outcomes (Gaitas et al., 2024). The findings have significant implications for teacher education programs, suggesting they must develop both the technical skills of differentiation and the philosophical foundations of transformative pedagogy to prepare educators for 21st-century classrooms.

## METHOD

This research employed a qualitative case study design to explore how transformative English teachers implement differentiated instruction (DI) and its impact on student motivation and learning outcomes. As emphasized by Gaitas et al. (2024), qualitative approaches are particularly effective for examining complex educational practices in authentic classroom settings. The case study method was selected because it enables an in-depth investigation of teachers' instructional practices within their natural teaching environments (Hidayat et al., 2024). This approach aligns with Gyawali's (2023) assertion that case studies provide rich, contextual understanding of pedagogical phenomena.

The study utilized purposive sampling to select two exemplary transformative English teachers (*Guru Penggerak*) from public junior high schools in Palembang. Both participants were highly experienced educators with 19-20 years of English teaching experience who had completed the *Guru Penggerak* professional development program (Halimah, 2023). Their schools were designated as *Sekolah Penggerak*, reflecting their commitment to implementing innovative teaching approaches (Wahyuningsih et al., 2022). These teachers were specifically chosen due to their active and intentional use of differentiated learning strategies in daily instruction (Maruf, 2023), characteristics that Bhandari et al. (2025) identify as essential for effective DI implementation.

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection method, as they have been shown to effectively capture teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices (Tundreng et al., 2025). The interview protocol focused on four key areas: (1) teachers' conceptual understanding of differentiated instruction (Achmad et al., 2024), (2) specific strategies for implementing DI in English classes (Diananseri & Yaslina, 2024), (3) perceived impacts on student motivation and learning outcomes (Sapan & Mede, 2022), and (4) challenges encountered during DI implementation (Hajis & Othman, 2024).

To ensure research credibility, the study incorporated member checking, a process where participants verified the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations (Porta & Todd, 2024). This validation strategy helped address potential issues of researcher subjectivity, a critical consideration in qualitative research highlighted by Obrovská et al. (2024). The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework described by Ninković et al. (2024). The analysis process involved five key stages: transcription of interview recordings, repeated readings to identify initial patterns, systematic coding of the entire dataset, development of meaningful themes, and final refinement of these themes.

The research adhered to rigorous ethical standards in educational research (Porta et al., 2024). All participants provided informed consent, were assured anonymity through the use of pseudonyms, retained the right to withdraw at any time, and the study obtained necessary permissions from school administrations. These measures align with current best practices for conducting classroom-based research.

The selection of *Guru Penggerak* participants held particular significance for several reasons. First, these educators had received specialized training in contemporary student-centered approaches (Chang, 2024). Second, their schools were actively engaged in implementing Indonesia's current educational reforms (Mairoza et al., 2024). Third, they demonstrated a strong commitment to innovative teaching methods (Alshaikhi & Khasawneh, 2025). Finally, their extensive teaching experience facilitated deep reflective practice (Jacobs & Haberlin, 2022), making them ideal candidates for this investigation.

This methodological approach yielded rich, contextualized insights into DI implementation while maintaining the rigorous standards of qualitative research. The findings contribute to the

growing body of knowledge about differentiated instruction in EFL contexts (Jufrianto & Basri, 2025) and respond to recent calls for more context-specific investigations of teaching practices (Thohir & Amalia, 2024). The study's strengths include its depth of qualitative exploration (Goyibova et al., 2025), focus on transformative teachers (Ortega, 2021), alignment with current DI research (Hu, 2024), and relevance to the Indonesian educational context (Handiyani & Muhtar, 2022). While the small sample size represents a limitation common to case study research, the depth of understanding gained through this approach provides valuable insights that complement broader quantitative studies in the field.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### *Teacher's understanding of differentiated learning*

The study's findings demonstrate that teachers acquired their understanding of Differentiated Instruction through their participation in the *Guru Penggerak* program, a transformative teacher training initiative implemented by the Indonesian government to promote student-centered learning. Analysis reveals that teachers possess a comprehensive awareness of student diversity, recognizing that each learner has unique characteristics shaped by their individual talents, preferences, and interests. This understanding forms the foundation of their instructional approach, as they consciously adapt their teaching methods to accommodate various learning profiles, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities.

The data indicates that teachers' conceptualization of Differentiated Instruction aligns with contemporary educational principles that emphasize learner variability. Their pedagogical beliefs reflect a commitment to creating inclusive learning environments where all students can thrive. Teachers demonstrate this through their intentional modification of content, process, and product based on careful assessment of student needs. This adaptive approach stems directly from their training in the *Guru Penggerak* program, which emphasizes responsive teaching practices within Indonesia's *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) curriculum framework.

A detailed examination of teachers' perspectives, as presented in the accompanying table, shows they view differentiation not as an optional strategy but as an essential component of effective instruction. Their understanding encompasses both the philosophical underpinnings

of differentiated learning and practical classroom applications. Teachers particularly emphasize the importance of recognizing and valuing student differences while maintaining high expectations for all learners. This balanced approach reflects the

transformative nature of their professional development experience, which has equipped them with both the mindset and skills necessary for implementing differentiated instruction effectively.

Table 1. *Teacher's understanding of differentiated learning*

Theme	Sub-theme	Findings
Teacher Understanding	Differentiated concept	learning All teachers understood the concept of meeting students' needs according to their readiness, and profiles.
	Differentiated purpose	learning All teachers understood the broader purpose of differentiated learning

*Understanding of differentiated instruction among teachers*

The research findings demonstrate that teachers developed their expertise in differentiated instruction primarily through their participation in the Guru Penggerak program, a transformative professional development initiative established by the Indonesian government to promote student-centered learning (Halimah, 2023). Analysis reveals that educators possess a comprehensive understanding of student diversity, recognizing that each learner exhibits unique characteristics shaped by individual talents, preferences, and interests (Bhandari et al., 2025). This awareness forms the foundation of their instructional approach, as they consciously adapt their teaching methods to accommodate various learning modalities, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic preferences (Goyibova et al., 2025).

As Participant 1 articulated, "*The main idea is to meet students' needs in ways that suit them,*" while Participant 2 emphasized that "*The core of DI is teaching based on student needs—understanding what each student requires*" (Hidayat et al., 2024). These perspectives align with current research showing that effective differentiation requires teachers to develop a nuanced understanding of students as individuals and tailor instruction accordingly (Achmad et al., 2024). The teachers' approach reflects the principles of Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar curriculum framework, which emphasizes responsive teaching practices that honor student individuality while maintaining high academic expectations (Wahyuningsih et al., 2022).

Both teachers demonstrated a strong belief in the inherent diversity of learners, maintaining that every child possesses unique characteristics and learning dispositions (Maruf, 2023). This conviction echoes the educational philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara, Indonesia's pioneer of

student-centered education, and is supported by contemporary research showing that differentiation leads to improved outcomes when teachers adapt instruction to students' varying needs (Diananseri & Yaslina, 2024; Sapan & Mede, 2022). Their implementation of flexible teaching strategies that consider students' varying learning paces and abilities transforms the traditional teacher-student dynamic into a collaborative partnership (Chang, 2024).

The study's findings corroborate recent research indicating that differentiated instruction significantly enhances student engagement and learning outcomes when properly implemented (Labordo Jr., 2024). Teachers' ability to move beyond standardized instruction by implementing flexible teaching strategies demonstrates the effectiveness of the Guru Penggerak program in developing educators' capacity for responsive teaching (Alshaikhi & Khasawneh, 2025). These results are consistent with broader international findings on the benefits of differentiated instruction across various educational contexts (Hu, 2024; Tundreng et al., 2025).

The study findings reveal a strong philosophical alignment between the teachers' implementation of differentiated instruction and Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational principles.

The goal is aligned with Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational vision—to bring happiness and wellbeing by helping students explore their natural potential. – P1

In fact, based on Ki Hadjar Dewantara's philosophy, true learning freedom means giving children space to explore, grow, and learn without pressure. – P2

Participant 1 emphasized how their teaching goals connect directly to Dewantara's vision, stating that education should cultivate happiness

and wellbeing by nurturing each student's natural potential. This perspective reflects the core belief that learning experiences should be tailored to help students discover and develop their unique abilities. Participant 2 further elaborated on this connection, explaining that true educational freedom - a central tenet of Dewantara's philosophy - requires giving students the space to explore, grow, and learn without undue pressure or artificial constraints.

These teacher perspectives demonstrate how differentiated instruction serves as a contemporary manifestation of Dewantara's humanistic educational approach. Both participants highlighted the importance of creating learning environments that respect individual differences and allow students to progress at their own pace. Their instructional practices embody three key aspects of Dewantara's philosophy: the intrinsic value of each learner, the need for flexible teaching methods, and the importance of natural developmental processes. By adapting their instruction to accommodate diverse learning needs and preferences, the teachers operationalize Dewantara's vision of education that is both personalized and empowering.

The teachers' approach aligns with recent research on culturally responsive pedagogy in the Indonesian context. Their emphasis on student wellbeing alongside academic growth mirrors findings that differentiated instruction can enhance both learning outcomes and emotional development when properly implemented. This dual focus on cognitive and affective domains represents a holistic interpretation of Dewantara's educational philosophy, demonstrating how traditional values can inform modern teaching practices. The participants' success in creating supportive, pressure-free learning environments while maintaining academic rigor illustrates the practical application of these principles in contemporary classrooms.

#### *Purpose of differentiated learning*

The analysis revealed that teachers possess a clear understanding of students' diverse learning needs and recognize the importance of addressing these individual differences through differentiated instruction. This approach requires educators to carefully assess students' abilities and tailor their teaching strategies accordingly before instruction begins. As highlighted by Diananseri and Yaslina (2024), teachers who grasp the fundamental concept of differentiated learning are better equipped to implement it effectively, ensuring that

instruction aligns with students' unique requirements.

Participant 1 articulated a student-centered perspective, stating, "*The purpose of education is to discover and develop each student's unique abilities.*" This view emphasizes personalized growth over standardized achievement, reinforcing the idea that learning should nurture individual potential rather than enforce uniformity. Participant 2 further clarified the practical application of differentiation, explaining, "*We use this information to group students—not to discriminate, but to support those who need more help and guide them more effectively.*" This approach aligns with Goyibova et al. (2025), who argue that strategic grouping in differentiated instruction enhances targeted support without fostering inequality.

The teachers' insights demonstrate a commitment to inclusive and adaptive education. Participant 1's perspective shifts the focus from content delivery to personal development, while Participant 2 highlights how differentiation ensures equitable learning opportunities. This aligns with Hidayat et al. (2024), who found that differentiated instruction fosters inclusivity by accommodating varying learning paces and styles. The teachers' use of assessment data to inform instruction—rather than to label students—reflects the principles of equitable pedagogy discussed by Thohir and Amalia (2024).

By understanding the purpose of differentiation, teachers make deliberate adjustments in both content and instructional processes. Instead of delivering uniform material, they modify lessons to ensure accessibility and relevance for each student. This approach, as supported by Achmad et al. (2024), helps maintain an optimal balance between challenge and support, preventing frustration while promoting academic growth. The findings suggest that when teachers apply differentiated strategies thoughtfully, they create a learning environment where all students can thrive at their own pace, reinforcing the principles of student-centered education advocated by Ki Hajar Dewantara (Wahyuningsih et al., 2022).

In summary, the teachers' implementation of differentiated learning reflects a deep commitment to recognizing and nurturing individual potential. Their practices align with contemporary research (Bhandari et al., 2025; Labordo Jr., 2024), demonstrating that differentiation, when applied with intentionality, enhances both inclusivity and academic success. By adapting content and

instructional methods to meet students' needs, they ensure that learning remains engaging, manageable, and conducive to long-term growth.

For those who are struggling, I give simpler questions, while the more advanced students get more challenging ones. I might differentiate the number of questions—giving five to lower-level students and ten to higher-level ones. – P1

I also vary class activities. I group students by ability: fast, average, and slow learners. Sometimes I mix them so they can learn from each other and collaborate more. – P2

The differentiated instruction strategies described by these teachers demonstrate strong alignment with current educational research. P1's approach of modifying question difficulty and assignment quantity based on student readiness levels reflects well-established best practices in differentiation. This tiered methodology supports Brunello and Brunello's (2022) findings that adjusting cognitive demands according to individual ability leads to improved learning outcomes. Similarly, P2's flexible grouping strategies - alternating between ability-based and mixed groups - mirrors Compen et al.'s (2025) research showing this dual approach maximizes both academic progress and peer learning benefits.

These classroom practices reveal two significant, research-supported insights about effective differentiation. First, the teachers display a sophisticated understanding of DI principles by addressing diverse learning needs across multiple dimensions, including cognitive ability, learning pace, and social-emotional factors. This comprehensive approach aligns with Halil et al.'s (2024) concept of multidimensional differentiation, which has proven particularly effective in diverse classrooms. Second, the teachers maintain a consistent focus on individual growth rather than comparative achievement, implementing scaffolding techniques that build from each student's current knowledge level. This student-centered philosophy corresponds with Jufrianto and Basri's (2025) findings about successful DI implementation in Indonesian educational contexts.

The teachers' methods exemplify what Smets et al. (2022) term "responsive differentiation" - an adaptive approach that evolves with learners' changing needs. By combining ability-appropriate challenges with purposeful peer learning opportunities, they create inclusive yet rigorous classroom environments. This balanced

implementation, as described in Ninković et al.'s (2024) research, demonstrates both technical mastery of DI strategies and philosophical commitment to equitable education. The approaches effectively maintain high academic standards while ensuring all students receive appropriate support, validating Sapan and Mede's (2022) findings about DI's positive impacts on student motivation and autonomy.

These evidence-based practices highlight how differentiated instruction, when implemented with pedagogical sophistication, can successfully address diverse learning needs while maintaining rigorous academic expectations. The teachers' strategies - including tiered assignments, flexible grouping, and continuous adaptation - reflect current research demonstrating DI's effectiveness in creating inclusive, student-centered learning environments that foster both academic achievement and personal growth.

#### *Implementation of differentiated instruction strategies*

The classroom practices described by participants demonstrate research-supported applications of differentiated instruction principles. As substantiated by Brunello and Brunello's (2022) findings on content adaptation, the tiered questioning system - where teachers adjust both cognitive complexity and assignment quantity based on student readiness levels - has been shown to significantly improve learning outcomes. This approach aligns with Achmad et al.'s (2024) systematic review confirming that differentiated reading instruction enhances comprehension when tailored to individual abilities.

The flexible grouping strategies employed reflect contemporary research by Compen et al. (2025), whose study of vocational education demonstrated that alternating between homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings optimizes both skill development and peer learning. This dual approach effectively operationalizes Bhandari et al.'s (2025) findings about successful DI implementation in mixed-ability language classrooms. The teachers' comprehensive differentiation across cognitive, affective, and social domains exemplifies what Halil et al. (2024) identify as multidimensional differentiation, particularly effective in diverse educational settings.

These practices embody the "responsive differentiation" framework identified by Smets et al. (2022), where continuous adaptation to learner needs maintains academic rigor while supporting

diverse students. The developmental focus on individual growth rather than comparative achievement aligns with Jufrianto and Basri's (2025) research on effective differentiation in Indonesian contexts and Sapan and Mede's (2022) findings about DI's positive impacts on learner autonomy. As Ninković et al. (2024) established through their study of Serbian schools, such balanced implementation requires both technical proficiency and philosophical commitment to inclusive education principles.

*Student's learning motivation*

Extensive educational research substantiates the significant impact of differentiated learning strategies on enhancing student engagement and motivation. Studies by Sapan and Mede (2022) and Handiyani & Muhtar (2022) demonstrate that when educators implement varied instructional approaches tailored to students' readiness levels and interests, classrooms become more dynamic learning environments that boost both participation and content mastery. This pedagogical shift from traditional uniform instruction to customized learning experiences aligns with Brunello and Brunello's (2022) findings on content differentiation, showing how adapting cognitive demands to individual learners leads to better knowledge retention and more positive learning attitudes.

The effectiveness of these differentiated techniques stems from their ability to address the full spectrum of student abilities and learning preferences. As evidenced in Achmad et al.'s

(2024) systematic review, differentiated reading instruction significantly improved comprehension outcomes by accommodating varying literacy levels. Similarly, Balogun's (2025) research on gamified differentiation in Nigerian English courses revealed how interactive, competitive elements increased student motivation and course completion rates. These studies collectively confirm that when teachers move beyond rigid, one-size-fits-all instruction to implement flexible grouping, tiered assignments, and multimodal learning options - strategies emphasized by Compen et al. (2025) - they create classrooms where all students feel appropriately challenged and supported.

The transformative power of differentiation is particularly evident in its dual impact on both cognitive and affective learning dimensions. Research by Özer and Yılmaz (2018) in Turkish EFL classrooms and Nur'aini et al. (2023) in science education demonstrates that differentiated approaches not only improve academic performance but also foster long-term knowledge retention and more positive attitudes toward learning. This occurs because, as Smets et al. (2022) found, responsive differentiation meets students at their individual developmental levels while gradually scaffolding them toward more complex thinking. The resulting classroom environment - where diverse learners experience regular success while being stretched to grow - aligns perfectly with the motivational principles outlined in Sapan and Mede's (2022) study of learner autonomy and engagement.

Table 2. *Students' motivation*

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Finding
Students' Respond	Positive Motivation booster	Students respond positively to differentiated instruction, showing increased engagement, motivation, and enthusiasm for learning.

*Positive motivation*

Student motivation plays a vital role in the success of any instructional approach, including differentiated learning. When students feel that lessons are relevant to their interests and learning styles, their enthusiasm and willingness to participate tend to increase.

I've seen a significant boost in their engagement and learning activity. – P1

The students were very enthusiastic, the students were really motivated and excited to learn this way. – P2

Based on the result, P1 and P2 highlighted a strong and genuine enthusiasm from students when differentiated instruction is applied in the classroom. P1 observed a noticeable increase in how actively students participated and engaged with their learning, while P2 shared how the classroom atmosphere shifted into something more lively and motivating. The students weren't just following instructions but they were truly involved, eager, and emotionally invested in the learning process. This kind of reaction suggests that when teaching is tailored to meet diverse needs, interests, and learning styles, students feel more seen and supported. It energizes them and

makes learning feel more relevant and enjoyable. Their positive response is not just a sign of good teaching practice; it reflects how meaningful and inclusive learning experiences can unlock greater curiosity and effort from learners.

In conclusion, differentiated learning which incorporating diverse activities in the classroom can significantly boost students' motivation to learn by catering to their different interests and learning styles. This is in line with research conducted by Smets et al. (2022) demonstrates that differentiated learning effectively addresses students' needs. Further support for differentiated learning is evident in the research findings of Handiyani & Muhtar (2022) and Meinur et al. (2023), indicating that it has the capacity to enhance student enthusiasm.

### *Students' learning outcomes*

Based on the result, differentiated learning enables students to study according to their individual needs and learning styles, which boosts their participation and motivation. This approach makes students more active in the learning process and enhances their understanding of the material. The outcomes of their learning show increased creativity and conceptual understanding, with diverse and in-depth work that aligns with their interests and abilities. Differentiated learning allows students to imagine and create according to their interests and talents. Although the learning objectives are the same, students can explore their understanding using various media that suit their preferences, without any coercion.

Table 3. *Students' learning outcomes*

Main Theme	Sub-Theme	Finding
Students' Outcomes	Learning Varied Learning Outcome	Differentiated learning leads to a wide range of student learning outcomes, reflecting their diverse learning preferences, strengths, and creative expressions.

### *Varied learning outcome*

One of the key strengths of differentiated instruction lies in its ability to produce varied and meaningful learning outcomes. By allowing students to demonstrate their understanding in different formats, teachers give them the opportunity to use their strengths and creativity.

I once asked students to make a recount text about their personal experience. They were free to choose the format—some wrote essays, some recorded audio, others made comics or added photos with captions. I used Google Drive for submissions. Some even uploaded their videos on TikTok and shared the links with me. – P1

I once taught a lesson on advertisements. Kinesthetic students created broadcast videos, visual students made printed posters, and auditory learners recorded voice ads. – P2

Differentiated instruction allows students to demonstrate their understanding in varied ways, as shown in P1's recount text assignment where students could choose between writing essays, recording audio, creating comics, or even making TikTok videos. This approach aligns with Universal Design for Learning principles by providing multiple means of action and expression. Research by Sapan and Mede (2022) supports this strategy, finding that student choice

in output formats significantly increases engagement and motivation. The use of digital platforms like Google Drive and TikTok also reflects 21st-century learning needs, where multimodal literacy extends beyond traditional writing (Yeh, 2025). By allowing such flexibility, P1 created an inclusive environment where students could leverage their strengths while still meeting the same learning objectives.

P2's advertisement lesson took a learning styles approach, assigning different tasks based on students' preferred modalities: kinesthetic learners created videos, visual learners designed posters, and auditory learners produced voice ads. While learning style theory has been debated, studies like Özer and Yılmaz (2018) demonstrate that matching tasks to student preferences can improve retention and performance. This method exemplifies differentiation by process, where students engage with content in ways that suit them best (Tomlinson, 2017). The real-world application of creating actual advertisements added authenticity to the task, making learning more meaningful (Brunello & Brunello, 2022). Such an approach not only accommodates diverse learners but also prepares them for professional scenarios where different media formats are required.

Both examples highlight key benefits of differentiated instruction. First, they demonstrate

student-centered learning, where pupils take ownership of their educational journey. Second, they showcase how technology can facilitate diverse expressions of knowledge. Third, they maintain academic rigor while allowing flexibility in how standards are met. However, these methods do present challenges, particularly in assessment. Teachers must develop clear rubrics that focus on content mastery rather than format conformity (Wahyuningsih et al., 2022). Some students may also need guidance in selecting appropriate formats, suggesting the need for scaffolding (Smets et al., 2022). Incorporating peer feedback and metacognitive reflections could further enhance these activities by helping students appreciate different approaches and understand their own learning processes (Herwina, 2021).

Ultimately, these teaching examples illustrate how differentiated instruction creates equitable learning opportunities. By honoring individual differences in how students process and demonstrate knowledge, teachers can foster greater engagement while maintaining high expectations. The research-backed strategies employed by P1 and P2 - from offering product choices to aligning tasks with learning preferences - show how differentiation leads to more meaningful and effective learning experiences. As Goyibova et al. (2025) emphasize, such approaches are particularly valuable in today's diverse classrooms, ensuring all students have pathways to success that play to their unique strengths and interests.

For feedback, I usually talk to the student personally. I frequently start by praising their work first, and then I give them suggestions afterward. – P1

A similar point was also expressed by P2, but they added that for students who show lower performance, additional learning support (enrichment) is needed for them.

If a student is having a hard time keeping up or hasn't reached the learning goals yet, they're given extra support through enrichment activities. Instead of pushing them too hard, the focus is on helping them catch up with the learning. – P2

Post-implementation evaluation plays a crucial role in differentiated instruction, as emphasized by recent studies. According to Laboro (2024), systematic assessment of differentiated learning outcomes allows educators to measure

effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. This reflective process, described by Ninković et al. (2024) as essential for professional growth, has been shown to increase student engagement and enthusiasm when implemented consistently.

Research findings from differentiated classrooms reveal two key patterns: first, students exhibit significantly more positive responses and heightened motivation when given choice in their learning (Ramilo & Ting, 2025); second, while academic outcomes vary based on individual preferences, overall results remain positive across different learning modalities (Jufrianto & Basri, 2025). These observations align with broader trends in contemporary education research.

Recent empirical studies continue to validate the benefits of differentiated approaches. Compen et al. (2025) found that students in differentiated classrooms demonstrate both academic gains and improved emotional engagement, showing greater enthusiasm for learning tasks. Similarly, Obrovská et al. (2024) confirmed that instruction tailored to individual needs leads to better learning outcomes, particularly when incorporating student interests and readiness levels. Additional support comes from Matiyenga and Ajani (2024), whose work demonstrates that motivation increases substantially when teaching methods accommodate diverse learning profiles.

This growing body of 2023-2025 research consistently indicates that personalized, differentiated instruction fosters more effective learning experiences by increasing relevance and personal connection for students. As Diananseri and Yaslina (2024) note, the flexibility inherent in differentiated approaches allows learners to engage with content in ways that align with their individual strengths and preferences, leading to more meaningful educational outcomes.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study demonstrates that differentiated instruction, when implemented by transformative English teachers, effectively enhances student motivation and learning outcomes. By adapting content, instructional processes, and assessment methods to accommodate diverse learning needs, teachers create more engaging and inclusive classrooms. The findings show that when students are given choices in how they learn and demonstrate understanding, they become more invested in their education and achieve better academic results.

The research highlights the importance of teacher training and support in successfully

implementing differentiated instruction. While challenges such as time constraints and classroom management exist, they can be addressed through collaborative planning, professional development, and the strategic use of technology. Teachers who embrace this approach foster not only academic growth but also essential 21st-century skills like creativity, critical thinking, and self-directed learning.

Ultimately, this study underscores the value of differentiated instruction as a student-centered approach that recognizes and nurtures individual potential. By tailoring instruction to meet diverse needs, educators can create equitable learning environments where all students thrive. The findings provide valuable insights for teachers and policymakers seeking to enhance educational practices and ensure meaningful learning experiences for every student.

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**Yara Fitriani, Sofendi, & Machdalena Vianty**

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