



English Teachers' Assessment Practices in Differentiated Instruction

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Abstract

This study aims to describe how English teachers at SMA Negeri 3 Singaraja implement assessment in differentiated instruction. Using descriptive qualitative methods through observations and interviews, this study found that teachers utilize diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to identify students' prior knowledge, monitor learning progress, and measure final achievement. Diagnostic assessments help teachers map students' readiness, interests and learning styles, while formative assessments allow teachers to provide feedback and adjust learning according to students' needs. Summative assessments are used at the end of learning to evaluate overall mastery of the material. This practice shows that assessment is not only a tool for assessing learning outcomes, but also supports student-centred learning and is aligned with Merdeka Curriculum. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating different types of assessments to create flexible learning, accommodate students' diverse abilities, and motivate students to improve their learning outcomes.

Keywords: Diagnostic; Formative; Summative; Assessment; Differentiated Instruction; Emancipated Curriculum; EFL

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1. Introduction

Education in Indonesia continues to change in line with the changing demands of the times. One of the most significant changes is the curriculum. The curriculum is a dynamic tool that evolves based on changing needs, technological advancements, and educational goals (Marthawati & Setyo, 2024; Suarimbawa et al., 2017). In Indonesia, the curriculum change aims to improve the quality of education by switching from the curriculum 2013 (K13) to the Merdeka curriculum, also known as the emancipation curriculum, which should emphasize the development of analytical, evaluative, and creative thinking skills to improve students' higher-order thinking ability (Paramartha, 2017). The emancipation curriculum is designed to provide greater flexibility to education units and educators in managing the learning process. The transition from the curriculum 2013 to the emancipation curriculum reflects a shift towards a simpler and learner-centered approach, with a focus on core material, character development, and mastery of knowledge (Kusumawati et al., 2024). This change is in line with the demands



of modern education by integrating technology and adaptive learning strategies. The emancipation curriculum is based on five key principles: 1) Learning that is tailored to the developmental stage and achievement level of learners, 2) Learning that aims to build the ability of learners to become lifelong learners, 3) Learning process that supports holistic development of learners' competence and character, 4) Relevant learning, designed according to the context, environment, and culture of learners, and involving parents and the community as partners, 5) Future-oriented and sustainable learning (Sundari, 2023).

The emancipation curriculum implements differentiated instruction that allows learners to learn according to their individual needs and learning stages (Lindner et al., 2021). According to Kamarulzaman et al., (2021), differentiated instruction allows all learners to achieve the same learning objectives through various pathways that are tailored to individual needs. This approach helps teachers identify learners' learning abilities and interests. Suwastini et al., (2021) describes differentiated instruction as a strategy that aligns learners' learning experiences with their readiness levels, interests, and preferred learning styles. By recognizing that each learner has a unique learning profile, teachers can create a more inclusive and personalized learning environment. This approach allows learners to interact with learning materials in the way that is most effective for them (Dewi, 2025).

Besides the learning process, the assessment aspect should also be harmonized with the principles of differentiated instruction to ensure that the evaluation reflects the needs and potential of diverse students. According to Berry (2008), assessment is a tool that teachers use to collect information about learners' performance. Through assessment, the interaction between teachers and learners can be improved, and learners can gain an understanding of their knowledge, learning abilities, skills, and areas for improvement. Ratminingsih et al., (2018) also emphasizes that assessment is important because it can mark the end of the learning process. In the classroom, teachers use assessment to monitor learners' progress and gather information that can be used to design effective teaching strategies. Adnyayanti et al., (2013) assert that assessment recognizes all educational achievements and is closely linked to learners' academic progress. Furthermore, assessments can motivate learners by providing constructive feedback to help them develop their abilities.

Based on observations and interview at SMA Negeri 3 Singaraja, it was revealed that there were English teachers who use differentiated instruction. The implementation of differentiated instruction by these teachers also varies, so the assessment they applied also varies as well. The assessments conducted were, for instance, group discussions and presentations as the formative assessment. Besides, diagnostic and summative assessments were also applied by the teachers. Therefore, there is an opportunity to explore how teachers conduct the assessment for assessment in differentiated instruction. Therefore, the researcher tries to look deeper and find out how teachers' conduct assessment related to assessment in differentiated instruction. This study was conducted at the senior high school level, specifically at SMA Negeri 3 Singaraja, due to research access and the fact that no research has been conducted at the school. The current research focuses on English teachers' used assessment for assessment in differentiated instruction.



2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method designed to gain a comprehensive understanding of how English teachers used assessment for assessment in differentiated instruction. This approach emphasizes describing and interpreting the phenomena systematically based on the teachers' experiences. The research took place at SMA Negeri 3 Singaraja. This school was chosen as the research setting because it was already implementing the emancipated curriculum and applying differentiated instruction in English classes, and yet had not been studied specifically in relation to teachers' assessment practice. Participants in this research were three English teachers, selected through purposive sampling after a preliminary study conducted at SMA Negeri 3 Singaraja, located in Buleleng Regency. The preliminary study was carried out to ensure that the selected teachers actually met the predetermined criteria, which included (1) senior high school English teachers who have implemented differentiated instruction in English instruction, and (2) teachers who have sufficient time and willingness to provide information and data. This preliminary study involved classroom observations and informal interviews to confirm that the teachers implemented differentiated instruction and were willing to participate. This process supported the selection of eligible participants so that the study findings could accurately describe the implementation of differentiated instruction that is relevant and meaningful.

Data were obtained through observations using an observation sheet and interviews guided by an interview protocol. The observation sheet focused on how assessment was practiced in real classroom situations, including types of assessment and student engagement in differentiated instruction. The interview guide addressed teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding their assessment practices. Data collection took place over four weeks, with classroom observations and interviews scheduled based on the teachers' availability.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data, which involved organizing and compiling data, filtering and categorizing information into key themes, presenting the results in descriptive form supported by visuals if needed, and drawing conclusions by comparing and confirming patterns across data sources. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, data triangulation was applied by combining information gathered from documents and research subjects as the primary data, providing a thorough and balanced view of the phenomenon under investigation.

3. Findings

The results of this subchapter were collected through two instruments, namely Observation Sheets, and Interview Guides. The Observation Sheet was used during the learning activities in the classroom. Meanwhile the interview guide was used in direct conversations with the teachers in the school. Based on observations of three English teachers, it was found that all three had implemented differentiated instruction in the classroom.

Table 1. Table Observation

Object	Observation	Note
T1	The teacher groups the students into two categories, visual and auditory, according to the learning interests identified in each student. Although the material is the same, the text is tailored to the learning styles of each group, namely visual and auditory. The visual group received texts supplemented with videos to aid comprehension through images, while the auditory group received material in the form of audio that had to be listened to.	Observations in the classroom revealed that the teacher used and implemented differentiation in content and process. The teacher divided students based on their abilities and provided texts with different topics. For the assessment carried out by the teacher is formative assessment with students presenting their work and the teacher provides feedback for each group and the teacher does not carry out the 4 differentiations simultaneously in one meeting.
T2	The teacher divides the students into small groups to make the learning process more structured and interactive. Each group is given the task to create learning media that is in accordance with a particular topic. The topics given to each group are different, so that each group can explore specific material in a more focused manner. This method aims to develop students' creativity as well as train their ability to work together and manage information.	In learning the teacher conducts process and content differentiation where in the module there is also such differentiation although it is not explicitly explained. process and content differentiation is carried out by the teacher dividing students into groups and giving different topics to each group to discuss. the assessment carried out by the teacher is a presentation in class, students will present the results of their work.
T3	The teacher explains the material to the students after which the teacher then asks the students to create a simple project in the form of a story text based on their personal experiences, such as vacations, weekend activities, or other important events according to the students' interests. the assessment is done by presentation by considering aspects of students' ability in writing or speaking	In the lesson, the teacher does differentiation in process and product but in the module there is no specific differentiation. The teacher frees students in creating their text according to students' interests and assesses students based on students' writing and speaking during presentations.

Based on the observation, teachers generally used formative assessment in class through presentations. In T1, the assessment was done with group presentations according to visual and auditory learning styles, accompanied by feedback. In T2, teachers assessed group work presentations in the form of learning media to see creativity and cooperation. In T3, the assessment was in the form of a personal story text presentation to assess writing and speaking skills. This assessment supported differentiated instruction as it helped teachers understand students' needs and potential. However, in further interviews, teachers also revealed that they used diagnostic assessments at the beginning to determine students' initial abilities, as well as summative assessments at the end to see overall learning outcomes.



Diagnostic Assessment for Assessment in Differentiated Instruction at SMA Negeri 3 Singaraja

Teachers applied diagnostic assessment, also known as assessment for learning, in the learning process. In interviews with T1, T2, and T3, diagnostic assessments were conducted at the beginning of the learning process. This assessment aimed to explore students' prior knowledge and understanding of the material to be presented. One of the methods used was asking thought-provoking or guiding questions related to the learning topic. Additionally, T1 revealed using diagnostic tests to determine students' learning styles.

(I usually ask some questions at the beginning to find out the students' understanding before the material is given) [T2]

(I use diagnostic tests to find out students' learning styles so that I can adjust to students' learning needs) [T1]

Specifically, in the diagnostic assessment for T3, the evaluation was divided into two aspects: cognitive and non-cognitive. The cognitive assessment focused on measuring students' initial understanding of key concepts related to the subject matter. Meanwhile, non-cognitive assessments addressed areas such as interest, motivation, attitude, and readiness to learn.

(In my learning module there is indeed the use of diagnostic assessments, namely cognitive and non-cognitive) [T3]

It can be concluded that teachers used diagnostic assessments at the beginning of learning to identify students' prior knowledge, interest in learning, and readiness to follow learning materials. In addition, this diagnostic assessment was also used by teachers to find out the learning style of each student, so that this information could be the basis for designing learning that is more in line with the characteristics and needs of students in the classroom.

Formative Assessment for Assessment in Differentiated Instruction at SMA Negeri 3 Singaraja

In the classroom teachers applied formative assessment or what it was classified as assessment for learning as part of evaluating students' learning. This assessment focused on the process, which allowed the teacher to monitor student progress. In observation T1, there were various forms of formative assessments designed by the teacher to monitor and improve the student learning process for example teachers use formative assessment to group discussions and presentations.

In observation T1 used in-class discussion and presentation assessment, the teacher asked each group that had been divided to present the results of their work in front of the class. Each group chose one representative to present their work clearly and could be heard well. While one group presented its work, other groups were asked to pay attention and listen carefully. Occasionally the teacher asked questions to other groups about what was being discussed by the presenting group. While the presentation was taking place, the teacher asked



some questions to the presenting students and corrected the pronunciation or spelling of the students that occurred during the presentation. Feedback was given every time a group presented, there the teacher corrected the results of the students who were less precise and. This feedback aimed to help students improve their abilities both in language aspects and cooperation in groups and could correct students' shortcomings.

(Students in this class were divided into two types of groups: auditory groups and visual groups. Each group gets a different text with a different topic. After discussing and working on tasks based on the text, each group was asked to present the results of their work. Presentations were made by group representatives) [T1]

In the interview, T1 explained that students were divided into two groups, namely auditory and visual. Students in the auditory group were given an audio, while students in the visual group were given a video. The material given was the same but with different text topics in each group.

In the observation of class T2, learning activities were focused on discussion and group work. The teacher first divided the students into several groups heterogeneously, taking into account the students' abilities, so that each group consisted of a combination of high, medium, and low ability students. High ability students in each group aimed to help direct and support other group members during the discussion and assignment process. Each group was given a different grammar topic, and they were asked to create interesting and appropriate learning media, such as posters, web pages, or making. Each group presented their work in front of the class. The assessment used in this activity was a group assessment that gave an overall picture of the group's involvement in the learning process as well as the way students conveyed ideas.

(Assessment of student work is done through presentations. Each group will present their work in front of the class. The assessment is group-based, so one grade is given for all group members based on the work they create and the way they present it. This way, besides being assessed on the final result, students are also assessed on how they work together and convey ideas) [T2]

Based on the teacher's observation, the teacher also emphasized assessment based on students' activeness and involvement in the learning process. The teacher did not only pay attention to the students' final results but also monitored students' active participation. This assessment included direct observation of students' behavior. The teacher actively encouraged students to express their abilities, such as writing, listening, speaking, and reading.

Individual assessment was also carried out by presentation, where each student presented the results of their work in turn. The assessment carried out by the teacher was based on the ability of each student to deliver their work. So the teacher considered the ability of students; if there were students who were lacking in speaking skills, then the student's aspect in writing was taken into consideration for assessment. The other way around, if the student's



ability in writing was lacking but in speaking skills the student showed optimally, then it became the basis for assessment.

(For example, for the final assessment in the skills aspect, if students are able to present their work, I can assess their speaking ability. But sometimes there are also students who are actually smart, it's just that when assessed for speaking, they are not optimal. In such cases, I can use the score from the writing aspect as a consideration. However, for the next assessment, I will still encourage and require the student to be able to present in front of the class) [T3]

It can be concluded that formative assessment was used in learning to monitor students' learning process on an ongoing basis. Thus, formative assessment served not only to evaluate learning outcomes, but also to support the improvement and development of student learning processes more effectively.

Summative Assessment on Assessment in Differentiated Instruction at SMA Negeri 3 Singaraja

Teachers applied summative assessment, or what was called assessment of learning, which was an assessment carried out at the end of learning to see student achievement. This assessment took the form of the final assessment of each chapter and the final assessment of the semester, which was used to determine the final grade and measure student mastery related to the material that had been taught.

(Summative assessment in the form of end-of-semester assessments and end-of-chapter tests) [T1]

(The final score is still from the written test, although now we use computers, but it is still multiple choice, ABC.) [T3]

The findings of this study show that English teachers at SMA Negeri 3 Singaraja implement various forms of assessment in differentiated instruction. Teachers use diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment. In assessment in differentiated instruction, teachers use diagnostic assessments to understand students' initial abilities and learning needs. This information helps teachers tailor learning materials, processes, and products. This is in line with Nguyen & Phan (2020) and Huang and Jiang (2021) who state that diagnostic assessments are important for tailoring learning to students' readiness. Research by Mutmainah and Widhiatama (2024) also showed that teachers in the Merdeka Curriculum utilize diagnostic assessments to determine appropriate learning strategies.

In classroom practice, teachers placed more emphasis on formative assessment practice. This is in line with Sugiri & Priatmoko, (2020) who stated that in the emancipated curriculum, assessment emphasizes formative assessment compared to summative assessment. Formative assessment was used as an ongoing process to monitor student learning progress during the learning process. The results of the formative assessment were not only used as a basis for making improvements, adjusting strategies, and improving materials so that learning in the



classroom became more effective and in line with students' learning needs. The teachers' use of formative assessment also supports the idea proposed by Black and Wiliam (2009) and Arrafii and Sumarni (2018) who argue that formative assessment is essential for providing feedback and guiding students toward improvement. The feedback continuously helped the students to be actively participated in the classroom. In addition, the feedback allowed the students to adjust and deepen their understanding. Similarly, Hamid and Romly (2021) highlight that feedback as one of the formative assessment types, is not merely about measuring students' understanding but also as the significant tool for supporting the students to achieve learning goals. As stated by Dharma & Adiwijaya, (2019), the emphasis on student activeness in class discussions, presentations, and the willingness to ask questions reflects how formative assessment goes beyond scores, aiming to encourage student engagement and self-reflection.

Summative assessment was also used in differentiated instruction, but it was generally only applied at the end of the learning process, such as through daily tests or end-of-semester exams. This is in line with the opinion of Tajeddin et al., (2018) who stated that summative assessment is used to see the final achievements of students after the learning process has taken place. The findings of Mutmainah & Widhiatama (2024) and Nghia (2018) also indicated that teachers still use summative assessment as a supplement to determine students' overall learning outcomes. However, teachers' use of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment for assessment in differentiated instruction shows an alignment with the principles of the emancipated curriculum, which encourages flexible evaluation to meet students' diverse needs (Putra et al., 2023).

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that English teachers at SMA Negeri 3 Singaraja consistently apply diagnostic, formative and summative assessments to identify students' prior knowledge, monitor their learning progress and evaluate final achievement. The use of diagnostic assessment helps teachers recognize students' readiness and learning needs at the beginning of learning. Formative assessment is emphasized to monitor students' progress and provide feedback during the learning process, so that teachers can adjust strategies and materials to suit students' diverse needs and characteristics. Summative assessment is conducted at the end of the learning cycle to measure overall mastery and academic achievement. Assessment is not only a tool to measure learning outcomes, but also a strategy to support student-centred learning that is aligned with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, effective and consistent use of diagnostic, formative and summative assessments can help teachers design learning experiences that are more meaningful, inclusive and responsive to student differences.

Based on the results of the study, the authors provide suggestions: for teachers, especially English teachers are encouraged to continue developing their skills and knowledge related to assessment in differentiated instruction. Teachers should optimize the use of diagnostic, formative and summative assessments to identify students' strengths, weaknesses



and learning needs more accurately. For future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of this study by involving more teachers and schools to obtain richer data and to further explore the best practices in implementing assessment in differentiated instruction.

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