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The Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Its Implementation: A Study Case of Developing Countries Partnership (DCP) Students Learning Indonesian Language in a Bridging Course Program

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Abstract—Students are unique human beings and because they have different backgrounds of knowledge, language, interest, culture, learning dynamic, therefore, they learn differently. One particular learning environment for a student would not necessarily be suitable for another. The DCP students in YSU, Indonesia came from different countries with different levels of Indonesian language competence. In order to get the reflection of students' personal best and the degree of individual progress and achievement, some steps needs to be applied in the form of DI. While teachers need to facilitate and guide students in learning, this instruction will enable the students to actively participate in learning, producing and assessing their own learning.

Keywords: *different learner, differentiated instruction*

I. INTRODUCTION

Since 2006 YSU in Yogyakarta, Indonesia has started teaching students from the Non-Allied Movement (NAM) countries. These students are the recipients of the DCP scholarship. Since 2002 the

scholarship has been extended to citizens of other developing countries who want to study in Indonesia. To date there have been students from more than 42 countries of which 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 students). The DCP scholarship is offered to postgraduate (Master Degree) students to study at YSU for three years, where students spend one year studying the Indonesian Language and Preparatory Programs and the remaining two years for Masters Program.

The language instruction in most subjects is Indonesian. 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 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, or Thailand students who come from Southern provinces of their country where the Malay language is also used, generally have higher proficiency levels than those who start

as beginners. A student's personality also influences his/ her progress in learning the Indonesian language. i.e., students who are extroverts, easy going, and have more Indonesian language contact with local students show different Indonesian language performance than those who have opposite personalities. As there are only a small number of students enrolled in the program and due to limited resources (teachers & classrooms) available at YSU, all these DCP students with varying degrees of command 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 specific kind of instruction to be conducted in a short period of learning. This paper will discuss the idea of implementing DI to deal with the heterogeneity of the students in the classroom.

I. DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

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. DI 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 [6].

It means the teacher is expected to create and prepare different methods to respond to students' various needs, so that students of different abilities, interests or learning needs experience equally appropriate ways to absorb, use, develop and present concepts as a part of their daily learning process [4].

This idea is a well-known one and is frequently discussed in relation to 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.

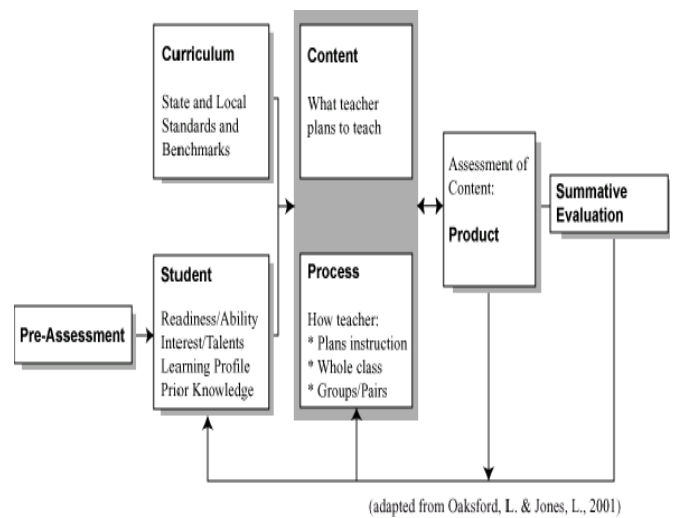


Figure 1. Learning Cycle and Decision Factors Used in Planning and Implementing DI[5]

Additionally, from figure 1 above Tomlinson [6] identifies that there are three elements which can be developed differently. They are content, process, and product.

III. DIFFERENTIATING THE CONTENT/ TOPIC

Content means some knowledge, skills, and attitudes which the teacher wishes the students to learn. In differentiating the content the teacher may give some pre-test so that he/ she can identify the students' needs, diagnoses the difference in readiness, interests and learning style by using a variety of performance indicators.

As DCP students have different backgrounds, experiences and interests, DI is the suitable approach to be implemented. Before deciding the kind of curriculum that best suit the students, the teacher need to find out their backgrounds.

To gain students' profile a number of steps can be taken.

A. Questionnaires

With a small number of students in each academic year (usually no more 10) a structured but informal interview can be conducted. The teacher

may ask the students about their study program. Why they chose Indonesia as their destination; what their motivations and objectives are; whether they have learnt Indonesian before and where; whether they are fluent in any other language(s); what difficulties they encountered when learning the Indonesian language before; what they like or dislike in terms of class activities such as individual or group work, written or oral tasks, etc.

Today, as the internet is easily accessible, it is also possible to distribute written questionnaires about their familiarity working online. Do they have internet access at home? Do they join social networks and what kind of social network do they join? 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 these 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 the type of instructional approach can be determined.

B. Diagnostic Evaluation

Why do we need diagnostic evaluation? From the students' perspective, it is beneficial as they will soon be involved in classroom activities. They will also be able to find out about their language competencies prior to their learning.

While from the teacher's point of view, understanding their students profile allows them to plan the learning progression. This also means 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 some understanding of the students or what is known as "Faisons Connaissance" in French.

C. Self-Assessment

The following criteria can be used as a self-assessment [3].

--: I do not understand at all

- : I am still confused

+/- : I am learning how to

+ : I can

++ : I am perfectly able to

TABLE I. SELF-ASSESSMENT

Competence	13/ 02	20/ 02	27/ 02	05/ 03	12/ 03	19/ 03	Notes
Linguistics Competences							
I can							
introduce myself (name/ age/ profession/ nationality)							
greet people in formal and informal situations							
give personal information (my telephone number, date and place of birth, address)							
talk about leisure time							
talk about preference (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							

Based on this self-assessment, the teacher can find out students levels of competence or proficiency. Then a supplementary task can be prepared [2].

By doing these three steps to get to know the background of the students, teachers will classify the students, who requires direct instruction and who do not, which students may skip some instruction steps and proceed to apply the concepts to the task of solving a problem. There is another way to differentiate content, that is, by simply permitting the proper or apt students to accelerate their rate of progress. These students can continue their study independently on some other projects.

IV. DIFFERENTIATING PROCESS/ ACTIVITIES

What does it mean by differentiating the process or activities? This means the teacher should vary learning activities or strategies to provide appropriate methods for the students to explore the concept which has been identified in the above paragraph.

It is important to give students some alternative paths to manipulate the ideas embedded within the concept. By varying the activity, the teacher will possibly be very effective in facilitating differing levels of cognitive processing for the students with different ability.

Below are the examples on how to differentiate the process or activity:

A. Error-Based Learning

Mistakes or even errors are unavoidable and often considered as part of learning. They also show the students' progress [1]. 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 should be done individually, as different students may produce mistakes differently. Keep in mind that students learn differently.

The teacher may also give exercises in order to help students understand their mistakes. As they make different mistakes, different texts 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 teacher may also ask the student who made mistakes to do auto-correction, if the student herself or himself can do this step, then, the teacher does not necessarily have to help students do corrections. Another way to respond to mistakes made by the students is by asking the other students to correct the other students' mistakes. After all, when the students cannot do the correction, then it will be the teacher who will have to finally correct them.

B. Instructional Grouping

In the traditional approach, a single instruction is delivered to the whole class. But in DI, the teacher has established the students' profile and anticipated the problems they may encounter so small groups with different instructions are needed. This flexible grouping and regrouping of students is done according to instructional objectives and also in response to students' needs.

3 classifications/groups should be sufficient:

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

In the case of DCP students learning Indonesian language at YSU, the activity of regrouping is not necessary because of the limited number of students. Therefore, the term group activity can be changed to individual activity or at least to working in pairs.

TABLE II. LIST OF DCP STUDENTS YEAR OF 2007-2012

No.	Year	Countries	Number of Students
1.	2007	Kamboja Thailand Laos Bangladesh	9
2.	2008	Guyana Thailand Laos Columbia	7
3.	2009	Kamboja Korea Laos Thailand	5
4.	2010	Thailand	3
5.	2011	Madagaskar Thailand Bangladesh India Laos Srilangka PNG	10*)
6.	2012	Uzbekistan Laos Bangladesh Fiji Thailand	6
TOTAL			40

*) 3 of them were undergraduate students due to some agreements

V. DIFFERENTIATING THE PRODUCT

In differentiating the product, the teacher may creatively vary the complexity of the product so as to enable the students to demonstrate their mastery of the concepts. The teacher launches a choice of

ideas that motivate students to produce various products. The students from above grade level may be asked to produce work that requires more complex and sophisticated or more advanced thinking. On the other hand, the students from below the required level may have reduced performance expectations.

The example of the different product produced by the DCP students of YSU is obviously seen in how they integrate technology into classroom activities. Some students are familiar with computers or laptops, while others still need some guidance.

VI. CONCLUSION

Finally, as the students learn differently, the teacher has to adopt different types of instruction (read learning strategy) such as, which students prefer to work individually, in pairs, and/ or in groups; 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 less than 10 students, this kind of instruction will maximize students individual potential, therefore, the DI is a highly promising approach to be implemented for various students at the same level. However, it is important to note that this will be a challenge for the teacher to adopt DI in big size of classes.

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