

DIFFERENTIATED TASKS FOR MIXED-ABILITY CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

Mixed-ability classrooms are commonly found in educational settings where students possess different levels of knowledge, learning speed, motivation, and language proficiency. These differences often create challenges for teachers in delivering effective instruction that can accommodate all learners equally. One strategy that can be implemented to address this issue is differentiated tasks. Differentiated tasks refer to learning activities designed according to students' readiness, interests, and learning styles so that every student can participate actively in the learning process. This paper discusses the implementation of differentiated tasks in mixed-ability classrooms and their impact on student engagement and learning outcomes. The study uses a descriptive qualitative method by reviewing related literature and analyzing classroom practices. The findings show that differentiated tasks help teachers provide fair learning opportunities, improve student participation, and reduce learning gaps among students. In addition, students become more motivated and confident because the tasks are adjusted to their abilities. However, teachers also face challenges such as time management, classroom organization, and the need for creativity in preparing learning materials.

Keywords: differentiated tasks; mixed-ability classrooms; differentiated instruction; student engagement; learning strategies.

ABSTRAK

Kelas dengan kemampuan campuran (mixed-ability classrooms) merupakan kondisi yang umum ditemukan dalam lingkungan pendidikan, di mana siswa memiliki tingkat pengetahuan, kecepatan belajar, motivasi, dan kemampuan bahasa yang berbeda-beda. Perbedaan tersebut sering kali menimbulkan tantangan bagi guru dalam memberikan pembelajaran yang efektif dan mampu mengakomodasi seluruh peserta didik secara merata. Salah satu strategi yang dapat diterapkan untuk mengatasi kondisi tersebut adalah penggunaan tugas terdiferensiasi (differentiated tasks). Tugas terdiferensiasi merupakan kegiatan pembelajaran yang dirancang berdasarkan kesiapan, minat, dan gaya belajar siswa sehingga setiap peserta didik dapat berpartisipasi secara aktif dalam proses pembelajaran. Artikel ini membahas implementasi tugas terdiferensiasi di kelas dengan kemampuan campuran serta dampaknya terhadap keterlibatan siswa dan hasil belajar. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif melalui kajian literatur dan analisis praktik pembelajaran di kelas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tugas terdiferensiasi membantu guru memberikan kesempatan belajar yang lebih adil, meningkatkan partisipasi siswa, serta mengurangi kesenjangan

belajar antar siswa. Selain itu, siswa menjadi lebih termotivasi dan percaya diri karena tugas yang diberikan disesuaikan dengan kemampuan mereka. Namun demikian, guru juga menghadapi berbagai tantangan, seperti pengelolaan waktu, organisasi kelas, dan kebutuhan akan kreativitas dalam menyiapkan materi pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: tugas terdiferensiasi; kelas dengan kemampuan campuran; pembelajaran terdiferensiasi; keterlibatan siswa; strategi pembelajaran.

A. Introduction

In today's educational environment, classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of students' abilities, learning styles, backgrounds, and interests. This condition creates what is known as mixed-ability classrooms, where students in the same class possess different levels of academic competence and learning speed (Brunello & Brunello, 2022). In English language learning, for example, some students may have excellent speaking and writing skills, while others may still struggle with basic vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. Such differences are common in schools and universities, making it necessary for teachers to develop teaching strategies that can accommodate all learners effectively (Amini & Suryana, 2023).

Teaching in mixed-ability classrooms is often challenging for educators. Teachers must ensure

that advanced students remain motivated and challenged while also supporting lower-level students who need more guidance and assistance (Lestari & Hidayat, 2025). If teachers use only one method of instruction and provide identical tasks for all students, some learners may feel bored because the tasks are too easy, while others may feel frustrated because the activities are too difficult (Rizky, Rafieqah Nalar and Mahardika, 2023). As a result, students may lose motivation, become passive in classroom activities, and fail to achieve learning objectives optimally. Therefore, teachers need flexible and inclusive teaching strategies that can address students' different needs and abilities (Nurfajria et al., 2024).

One effective strategy that can be implemented in mixed-ability classrooms is differentiated tasks. Differentiated tasks refer to learning activities that are designed according

to students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. Through differentiated tasks, students are given assignments that match their abilities, allowing them to participate actively and learn more effectively. This approach is part of differentiated instruction, which emphasizes flexibility in teaching methods, learning materials, classroom activities, and assessment. Instead of forcing all students to complete the same activities in the same way, differentiated instruction allows teachers to adapt learning experiences to suit individual learners (Bhandari et al., 2025).

The use of differentiated tasks provides many benefits for students and teachers. Students become more motivated because the tasks are neither too difficult nor too easy. Lower-level students gain confidence because they can complete assignments successfully, while higher-level students continue to develop their abilities through more challenging tasks (Fauziah & Siregar, 2024). Differentiated tasks also encourage active participation, collaboration, creativity, and independent learning. Furthermore, this strategy helps create inclusive

classroom environments where all students feel respected and supported regardless of their academic level (Ziernwald et al., 2022).

In addition, differentiated tasks can improve classroom interaction and learning outcomes. Students who work on activities suitable to their ability levels tend to engage more actively in discussions and group work. Teachers can also identify students' strengths and weaknesses more easily through varied learning activities. In language learning contexts, differentiated tasks may include different reading materials, writing assignments, speaking activities, or vocabulary exercises designed according to students' proficiency levels (Nugroho & Saputra, 2025).

However, implementing differentiated tasks is not always easy. Teachers often face challenges such as limited preparation time, classroom management difficulties, and the need to create various learning materials for different groups of students (Hasanah & Rahmawati, 2023). Teachers must also monitor students carefully to ensure that all learners receive appropriate support

and opportunities for improvement. Despite these challenges, differentiated tasks remain an important strategy for managing mixed-ability classrooms effectively (Pratiwi & Utomo, 2026).

Therefore, this paper discusses the implementation of differentiated tasks in mixed-ability classrooms, including their benefits, challenges, and impact on students' learning experiences. The discussion is expected to provide useful insights for teachers in creating more inclusive, engaging, and effective classroom environments for learners with diverse abilities.

B. Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the implementation of differentiated tasks in mixed-ability classrooms. The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researchers to describe and interpret educational phenomena in detail based on existing theories and classroom practices. The data for this study were collected through a literature review from various academic sources such as books, journals, articles, and previous

research related to differentiated instruction, differentiated tasks, and mixed-ability classrooms. The researchers selected relevant references that discussed teaching strategies, classroom management, student engagement, and learning outcomes in diverse classroom settings.

The collected data were analyzed systematically by identifying important information related to the benefits, challenges, and effectiveness of differentiated tasks in teaching and learning activities. The researchers compared findings from different sources to obtain a broader understanding of how differentiated tasks are applied in classrooms with students of varying abilities. After the analysis process, the information was organized and described in narrative form to provide clear explanations regarding the role of differentiated tasks in supporting inclusive and effective learning environments.

C. Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study show that differentiated tasks have significant positive effects on teaching and learning activities in mixed-ability classrooms. Based on the analysis of

related literature and previous studies, differentiated tasks help teachers accommodate students with different levels of ability, learning styles, and academic needs. Students become more involved in classroom activities because the assignments are adjusted to their readiness and competence levels. As a result, both higher-achieving and lower-achieving students can participate more actively in the learning process.

One important result is the improvement of students' motivation and confidence. Students who usually struggle in traditional classrooms feel more comfortable when they are given tasks that match their abilities. They are more willing to answer questions, complete assignments, and participate in discussions because the tasks are achievable for them. At the same time, advanced students remain challenged through more complex and creative activities. This balance helps reduce boredom among high-level students and anxiety among low-level students.

Another result is the increase in classroom interaction and collaboration. Differentiated tasks often involve pair work and group

activities where students work together according to their strengths and responsibilities. Higher-level students may help explain materials to classmates, while lower-level students contribute through simpler tasks. This interaction creates supportive learning environments and improves students' communication and teamwork skills.

The findings also indicate that differentiated tasks help teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses more effectively. Through varied assignments, teachers can observe students' progress and learning difficulties more clearly. Consequently, teachers are able to provide more suitable guidance and feedback for each learner. In addition, differentiated instruction contributes to more inclusive classrooms because every student receives equal opportunities to learn and succeed regardless of their academic ability.

However, several challenges were also identified in the implementation of differentiated tasks. Many teachers experience difficulties in preparing different materials and activities for students with varying ability levels. Designing

multiple tasks requires creativity, effort, and additional preparation time. Classroom management can also become more complicated because students are working on different activities simultaneously. Some teachers find it difficult to maintain classroom discipline and monitor all students effectively during differentiated learning activities.

Overall, the results demonstrate that differentiated tasks are beneficial in improving participation, confidence, motivation, and collaboration in mixed-ability classrooms. Although teachers face several obstacles, the strategy remains effective in creating more inclusive and student-centered learning environments.

The findings of this study support the idea that differentiated tasks are an effective strategy for managing mixed-ability classrooms. In traditional teaching methods, students are often given identical tasks and learning materials regardless of their abilities. This situation may disadvantage both advanced and struggling learners because the activities do not always meet their individual needs. Differentiated tasks address this problem by allowing teachers to

adapt learning activities according to students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles (Koimah et al., 2024).

One of the major advantages of differentiated tasks is that they encourage student-centered learning. Students are not forced to learn at the same speed or complete the same assignments in identical ways. Instead, they are given opportunities to learn according to their abilities and learning preferences. This flexibility helps students feel more comfortable and motivated in the classroom. Students who experience success in completing tasks are more likely to develop self-confidence and positive attitudes toward learning (Sari & Wardani, 2024).

Differentiated tasks also play an important role in promoting inclusive education. Mixed-ability classrooms often include students with different academic backgrounds and language proficiencies. By adjusting tasks based on students' needs, teachers can provide fair learning opportunities for all learners. Lower-level students receive additional support and simpler activities, while higher-level students are challenged with more advanced assignments. This

balanced approach helps reduce learning gaps among students and creates positive classroom atmospheres (Wulandari & Nugraha, 2025).

Furthermore, collaborative learning becomes more effective through differentiated instruction. Group activities allow students to learn from one another and develop social interaction skills. Advanced students can strengthen their understanding by helping classmates, while lower-level students benefit from peer support. Such cooperation encourages mutual respect and teamwork among learners (Supriyanto & Setiawan, 2025).

Despite its advantages, implementing differentiated tasks requires strong preparation and classroom management skills from teachers. Teachers need to understand students' abilities, interests, and learning styles before designing suitable activities. They must also prepare varied materials and assessments, which can increase workload and consume more time. Therefore, teachers need creativity, flexibility, and continuous evaluation to ensure that differentiated learning activities run

effectively (Wulandari & Nugraha, 2025).

Differentiated tasks provide many benefits for mixed-ability classrooms, especially in improving student engagement, confidence, participation, and learning outcomes. Although challenges remain, differentiated instruction can help teachers create more inclusive and effective learning environments when applied properly (Firdaus & Bakhtiar, 2022).

D. Conclusions

Differentiated tasks are an effective teaching strategy for mixed-ability classrooms because they help accommodate students with different abilities, learning styles, and academic needs. The implementation of differentiated tasks can improve students' motivation, confidence, participation, and collaboration during the learning process. By providing assignments that match students' readiness levels, teachers are able to create more inclusive and student-centered learning environments where all learners have equal opportunities to succeed. Although teachers may face challenges such as additional preparation time,

classroom management difficulties, and the need for varied learning materials, differentiated instruction remains beneficial in supporting effective teaching and learning activities. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to apply flexible teaching strategies and continuous assessment to maximize learning outcomes in mixed-ability classrooms.

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