



Implementation of Differentiated Instruction in the Indonesian Language Course: Lecturer Strategies in Accommodating Gen Z Learning Styles

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ABSTRACT

This study presents an analysis of the implementation of differentiated learning in Indonesian Language courses at the university level. The main focus of the study is to uncover lecturers' operational strategies in accommodating the diversity of student learning styles. Through a qualitative research design with a descriptive case study approach, this study involved 28 students as subjects. Data were collected through triangulation methods, namely a comprehensive diagnostic assessment, participant observation, in depth interviews with lecturers and students, and analysis of Semester Learning Plan (RPS) documents. The results of the diagnostic assessment empirically mapped the learning style profiles of the 28 students into three main neuro-cognitive preferences: visual dominance (13 students), auditory (8 students), and kinesthetic (7 students). The research findings indicate that the implementation of differentiated learning was executed systematically through three essential instructional dimensions. In the content differentiation dimension, lecturers adjusted the format of teaching materials to be multimodal (interactive digital text, infographics, podcasts, and short videos). In the process differentiation dimension, the orchestration of the Project Based Learning and Flipped Classroom models was applied. In the differentiation dimension, students are given autonomy to produce assignment outputs in the form of academic essays, literary appreciation, or observational videos/vlogs. This strategy has been empirically proven to increase students' academic engagement, intrinsic learning motivation, and comprehensive understanding of language materials, while also deconstructing the historical stigma that Indonesian language courses are monotonous and dogmatic. Further discussion of this study highlights that the effectiveness of the differentiation strategy highly dependent on the pedagogical competence of lecturers as curriculum designers, facilitators, and innovators, even though in practice they are faced with the challenges of high administrative burdens and time constraints.

Keywords: differentiated instruction, Indonesian language, lecturer strategies, gen-Z, learning styles

Implementasi Pembelajaran Terdiferensiasi Mata Kuliah Bahasa Indonesia: Strategi Dosen dalam Mengakomodasi Gaya Belajar Gen-Z

ABSTRACT

Penelitian menyajikan analisis implementasi pembelajaran berdiferensiasi pada Mata Kuliah Bahasa Indonesia di tingkat perguruan tinggi. Fokus utama penelitian adalah membongkar strategi operasional dosen dalam mengakomodasi keragaman gaya belajar mahasiswa. Melalui desain penelitian kualitatif pendekatan studi kasus deskriptif, penelitian ini melibatkan subjek sebanyak 28 mahasiswa. Data dikumpulkan melalui metode triangulasi yaitu asesmen diagnostik komprehensif, observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan dosen dan mahasiswa, serta analisis dokumen Rencana Pembelajaran Semester (RPS). Hasil asesmen diagnostik secara empiris memetakan profil gaya belajar ke-28 mahasiswa ke dalam tiga preferensi neuro-kognitif utama: dominasi visual (13 mahasiswa), auditori (8 mahasiswa), dan kinestetik (7 mahasiswa). Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi pembelajaran berdiferensiasi dieksekusi secara sistematis melalui tiga dimensi instruksional esensial. Pada dimensi diferensiasi konten, dosen melakukan penyesuaian format materi ajar menjadi multimodal (teks digital interaktif, infografis, sinar/podcast, dan video pendek). Pada dimensi diferensiasi proses, diterapkan orkestrasi model *Project-Based Learning* dan *Flipped Classroom*. Pada dimensi diferensiasi, mahasiswa diberikan otonomi untuk menghasilkan luaran tugas berupa esai akademik, apresiasi sastra, atau video/vlog observasi. Strategi ini terbukti secara empiris mampu meningkatkan keterlibatan akademik, motivasi belajar intrinsik, dan pemahaman komprehensif mahasiswa terhadap materi kebahasaan, sekaligus mendekonstruksi stigma historis bahwa mata kuliah Bahasa Indonesia bersifat monoton dan dogmatis.

Kata kunci: pembelajaran terdiferensiasi, bahasa Indonesia, strategi dosen, gaya belajar Gen-Z

Submitted
27/02/2026

Accepted
11/03/2026

Published
13/03/2026

Citation	Barata, M. A. S. (2026). Implementation of Differentiated Instruction in the Indonesian Language Course: Lecturer Strategies in Accommodating Gen Z Learning Styles. <i>Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra, Volume 5, Nomor 2, Maret 2026, 1257-1272</i> . DOI: https://doi.org/10.55909/jpbs.v5i2.1286
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Publisher
Raja Zulkarnain Education Foundation

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in Indonesia is currently traversing the most crucial structural and philosophical transition phase in its contemporary history, driven by the absolute urgency to align academic curricula with the demands of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Society 5.0 (Intan Sari & Swatika Sari, 2025). Within this modern educational constellation, the paradigm of knowledge transmission can no longer rely on conventional didactic approaches that are one-way, hierarchical, and teacher-centered. Instead, academic institutions are required to reconstruct their learning ecosystems into entities that are more dynamic, inclusive, adaptive, and responsive to the unique characteristics and needs of each learner (Setyo, 2025). This paradigm shift finds its institutional momentum through the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia. The MBKM policy essentially grants far broader autonomy to higher education institutions to design, orchestrate, and execute learning schemes that are relevant, flexible, and ontologically centered on student autonomy (student-centered learning) (Setyo, 2025). Within this MBKM architecture, one instructional approach viewed as the most holistic, emancipatory, and aligned with the spirit of learning independence is differentiated instruction (Hetilaniar et al., 2022).

The General Compulsory Course (*Mata Kuliah Wajib Umum* or MKWU) in Indonesian Language occupies a highly strategic and essential position within the core curriculum structure of higher education across Indonesia. This course is no longer designed merely to transfer syntactic knowledge, morphological knowledge, or spelling rules mechanistically; rather, it has fundamentally transformed into a catalyst for the development of critical thinking skills, logical reasoning, and the multidimensional literacy of 21st-century students (Sari, 2019). Through the mastery of proficient Indonesian language skills, students are expected to be able to articulate ideas systematically,

argumentatively, and ethically, both in the context of academic discourse such as academic writing (Sujendra et al., 2025) and in broader public and professional discourse within society. However, empirical reality in various lecture halls often presents a paradox and a wide gap between ideal curricular expectations and the level of student motivation and engagement. The Indonesian Language course is frequently perceived reductively by the majority of students as a subject that is repetitive, overly theoretical, boring, and lacking pragmatic relevance to the specific disciplines they are pursuing (Subandiyah et al., 2025). This pedagogical challenge demands that lecturers immediately revitalize their teaching strategies, breaking free from the shackles of dogmatic lecture methods, and begin integrating instructional innovations that are authentically capable of sparking the intellectual and affective enthusiasm of students (Sofia Agustina, 2023).

The complexity of this pedagogical challenge becomes exponential when confronted with the demographic profile of current college students, who are exclusively pure representations of Generation Z (Gen-Z). Individuals born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s are true digital natives whose primary enculturation and socialization processes flourished amidst the massive penetration of the internet, social media, and smart mobile devices (Hayati, 2024). Constant and persistent exposure to various digital platforms delivering simultaneous streams of information has shaped a very specific neuro-cognitive structure, perceptual preferences, and psychological characteristics in Gen-Z. They possess a tendency for layered and rapid information processing, a deeply ingrained multitasking capacity, a dominant preference for visual stimuli and multimedia interactivity, and high expectations for instant feedback. Conversely, this intense exposure to the digital environment also carries the logical consequence of significantly shorter attention spans compared to preceding generations. Therefore, the application of monologue lecture methods over long durations becomes ineffective,



obsolete, and highly prone to triggering alienation and academic disengagement among students.

Furthermore, the literature identifies Gen-Z as an entity that is highly expressive in constructing their digital identities, very pragmatic regarding achievement, and possessing a prominent entrepreneurial spirit and content creation creativity. Departing from this socio-cultural premise, the architecture of learning in higher education must be fundamentally re-engineered to accommodate the socio-cultural and cognitive ecosystem of this latest generation (Hayati, 2024). Facing this constellation of multidimensional challenges, the role of a lecturer must undergo a fundamental metamorphosis. Lecturers can no longer maintain the status quo as the sole authority holding the supremacy of knowledge in the classroom; instead, they must radically transform into learning experience designers, dialogical facilitators, and highly adaptive knowledge navigators (Setyo, 2025). It is in this context that the philosophy of differentiated instruction offers a theoretical and practical framework that is highly promising and rational. Referring to the canonical thought of Carol Ann Tomlinson, differentiated instruction is defined as a proactive, systematic, and planned effort by an educator to adjust instructional processes in the classroom to meet the varying profiles, readiness, and learning interests of each individual learner. Differentiation in practice is not extreme individualized learning requiring lecturers to compile dozens of completely different lesson plans for each student—which would be administratively impossible. Rather, differentiation is a series of rational, measurable, and coherent modification strategies across three main dimensions of learning: the content dimension, focusing on variations in what is learned and how access to information is granted; the process dimension, focusing on variations in how that information is processed and made meaningful by students; and the product dimension, focusing on variations in how final understanding is expressed, synthesized, and evaluated (Pristiwati, 2022).

If a bibliometric analysis and comprehensive literature review were conducted across various SINTA (Science and Technology Index) accredited journals documenting educational research in Indonesia, a trend would emerge showing a sharp escalation in discourse regarding the effectiveness of differentiated instruction over the last five to nine years (Wiyono et al., 2024). This increase in scientific publications runs parallel to the widespread adoption of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in various institutions. However, a more analytical and in-depth literature review reveals a concerning asymmetry, bias, or imbalance in research focus. The majority of research regarding the implementation of differentiated instruction remains exclusively concentrated on primary education (Elementary School) and secondary education (Junior High, Senior High, Vocational School) levels (Fadhilah et al., 2025). Theoretical exploration, instructional modeling, and empirical investigation regarding the praxis of differentiated instruction at the higher education level particularly in the specific realm of native or national language learning are recorded as extremely rare, sporadic, and leave a very wide literature gap (Wiyono et al., 2024). Yet, the complexity of applying differentiation in the higher education ecosystem requires a framework of analysis that is far more sophisticated, nuanced, and comprehensive, considering the students' more advanced level of cognitive maturity, greater learning autonomy, and the demands of academic outputs that must be oriented towards professional graduate profiles ready to face the complexities of the real working world (Sari & Sari, 2025).

Therefore, this explanatory and descriptive research is presented with the strategic aim of bridging this epistemological gap by examining comprehensively, microscopically, and deeply how differentiated instruction strategies are concretely operationalized within the ecology of the Indonesian Language lecture hall. The research focus is placed on a specific population of 28 students, representing an ideal sample of higher education class dynamics. The differentiated

instructional approach studied is expected not only to serve as a tactical solution to solve the chronic problems of low participation and motivation in the classroom but, more than that, aims to project a holistic, inclusive, and equitable language education landscape (Sujendra et al., 2025). A landscape where every Gen-Z student entity, with their unique learning modalities and preferences, receives a perfect equivalence of opportunity to actualize their potential and achieve academic success without being reduced by obsolete standardization of teaching (Sujendra, Puspa Hestiantini, et al., 2025).

Departing from the extensively elaborated background, the urgency of this research focuses on unraveling the complexity of implementing differentiated pedagogy in higher education. The problem formulation is articulated into three intertwined and investigative research questions as follows:

1. How are the neuro-cognitive profiles and specific learning style characteristics of the 28 Generation Z students identified in the Indonesian Language course through a comprehensive diagnostic assessment mechanism at the beginning of the lecture?
2. How are the operational strategies and pedagogical architecture designed by the lecturer in implementing differentiated instruction specifically elaborated through the modification of content dimensions, interactive process differentiation, and product output differentiation to accommodate the diversity of learning styles of the 28 students?
3. What are the empirically produced academic implications, as well as the managerial, infrastructural, and pedagogical challenges faced by the lecturer in orchestrating a sustainable differentiated learning ecosystem at the higher education level?

Linearly and coherently with the established problem formulation, this research is conducted with the following multi-dimensional objectives:

1. To diagnose, precisely map, and analytically describe the learning readiness profiles, intellectual interests, and learning styles of 28 Generation Z students as essential empirical baseline data for designing instructional modifications for the Indonesian Language course.
2. To critically analyze and elaborate on the lecturer's tactical strategies in executing differentiated instruction, covering learning content curation, classroom interaction process engineering, and evaluation product specifications that are accurately aligned with the heterogeneous cognitive and affective needs of students.
3. To evaluate the concrete impact or significance of applying these differentiation strategies on class dynamics and the quality of achieving Graduate Learning Outcomes (CPL), while simultaneously carefully identifying various structural and cultural obstacles that arise to formulate constructive mitigation recommendations for the future development of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) curriculum praxis.

The significance of the research is divided into two parts, namely theoretical and practical benefits. Further explanation is provided below:

Theoretical Benefits

- a. Scientific Development:** Enriching the scientific literature in the field of language education, particularly regarding the evaluation and implementation strategies of differentiated learning at the higher education level.
- b. Complementing Research Literature:** Adding empirical literature references regarding the cognitive characteristics and learning styles of Generation Z students, as well as how pedagogical approaches can be adapted to respond to such diversity in understanding Indonesian Language courses.



Practical Benefits

- a. **For Lecturers:** Serving as an applicable reference for educators, especially within the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), in compiling the Semester Learning Plan (RPS), designing teaching materials, and executing learning methods that are more adaptive, varied, and relevant to the current student profile.
- b. **For Students (Gen-Z):** Helping to create a more inclusive, flexible, and personalized learning ecosystem. This is expected to increase students' active involvement, foster motivation, and optimize the achievement of literacy skills (reading, writing, speaking).
- c. **For Institutions (Higher Education):** Acting as an evaluation basis and providing strategic input for universities or faculties in developing curriculum policies and pedagogical capacity-building training programs for lecturers in the digital education era.

The following are several journal articles that strongly intersect with differentiated learning, Gen-Z learning styles, Indonesian Language subjects, and lecturer strategies:

First, research conducted by (Nurlatifah & Munandar, 2024) entitled "*Penerapan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Berdasarkan Gaya Belajar Peserta Didik*" (The Implementation of Differentiated Learning Based on Student Learning Styles). This journal specifically discusses how the differentiation of process, content, and product is tailored to the profile or learning style of each individual to improve language learning outcomes.

Second, research conducted by Andina (2017) entitled "*Strategi Dosen dalam Pengondisian Perilaku Membaca Mahasiswa di Era Digital*" (Lecturers' Strategies in Conditioning Students' Reading Behavior in the Digital Era) in *Aspirasi: Jurnal Masalah-masalah Sosial*. This article is highly relevant for formulating a theoretical foundation regarding lecturers' strategies in fostering a literacy culture (a crucial component in the Indonesian Language) among a generation that is very familiar with technology.

Third, research conducted by Rosiyani et al. (2024) entitled "*Penerapan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi dalam Kurikulum Merdeka pada Pembelajaran IPAS Sekolah Dasar*" (The Implementation of Differentiated Learning in the Emancipated Curriculum in Elementary School Science and Social Studies Learning). This article provides a strong conceptual foundation on how differentiation steps are specifically executed in linguistic materials.

Fourth, research conducted by Gymnastiar (2024) entitled "*Implementasi Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dalam Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar Siswa di Kelas*" (Implementation of Differentiated Learning in Improving Students' Learning Motivation in the Classroom) in *El Banar: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*. It discusses the direct correlation between teaching differentiation and the level of active participation and student motivation, which perfectly suits the Gen-Z character that favors freedom of expression.

Fifth, research conducted by Shallina et al. (2025) entitled "*Pengaruh Antarmuka Pengguna, Pengalaman Pengguna, dan Fitur Layanan Terhadap Kepuasan Pengguna Aplikasi Shopee pada Gen Z di Kota Samarinda*" (The Effect of User Interface, User Experience, and Service Features on Shopee App User Satisfaction among Gen Z in Samarinda City). Although the context extends to technology/applications, this latest research article focusing on Gen-Z is highly useful for analyzing Chapter 2 (Literature Review) regarding Gen-Z's User Experience, where in the classroom context, this User Experience relates to their learning experience, which demands appealing, concise, and interactive visuals.

METHOD

To fully and deeply unravel the complexities of implementing differentiated instruction, this study is firmly grounded in the constructivist paradigm, adopting a qualitative research design with a descriptive case study approach (Fatmawati et al., 2023). The selection of the case study approach is not without reason; it is considered to

possess the most appropriate epistemological capability for exploring a social unit, event entity, or educational intervention program within its natural setting in a holistic, intensive, and highly detailed manner (Wiyono et al., 2024). Through this qualitative method, classroom reality is not simplistically reduced to rigid quantitative numbers or variables. Instead, it is understood comprehensively as a highly dynamic entity, wherein the reciprocal interactions between lecturer capacity, student backgrounds, the materiality of teaching materials, and pedagogical strategies are intertwined and mutually influential (Pristiwati, 2025).

This study specifically designates 28 first-semester undergraduate students currently taking the General Compulsory Course (MKWU) in Indonesian Language as the research subjects and primary unit of analysis. The selection of these 28 students was conducted intentionally using a purposive sampling technique. The figure of 28 represents the most ideal and rational class density in both public and private higher education, allowing differentiation interventions by a lecturer to be managed, measured, and observed in a micro, holistic, and focused manner (Intan Sari & Swatika Sari, 2025). First-semester students were chosen with the consideration that they represent a crucial transition period from secondary to higher education, while also carrying the pure *habitus* of Generation Z, which requires a significant adaptation process in learning styles (Hayati, 2024).

Field data collection was carried out comprehensively through multi-method triangulation techniques to ensure the degree of trustworthiness and the depth of information excavated (Intan Sari & Swatika Sari, 2025). (1) Diagnostic Assessment (Non-Cognitive and Cognitive): Distributed in the first week of the semester using a basic psychometric questionnaire based on Google Forms. This assessment aimed purely to map individual learning profiles (visual, auditory, or kinesthetic tendencies), vocational interests, and readiness in mastering basic linguistic concepts (Fadhilah et al., 2025). (2)

Passive Participatory Observation: The researcher was present as a non-intervening observer in 14 face-to-face and synchronous virtual lecture meetings. This aimed to directly observe the dynamics of pedagogical interaction, the effectiveness of differentiated learning media, classroom layout modification (learning environment), time management, and students' affective and emotional responses during the process (Nurizki et al., 2025). (3) In-depth Interviews: Structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted intensively with the lecturer and representative students from each learning style category. These interviews explored the lecturer's social action motives (Maulida, 2025), their philosophical understanding of Tomlinson's theory, and managerial barriers, as well as the students' subjective phenomenological perceptions and experiences regarding their learning (Alfian, 2025). (4) Document Analysis: A critical and deconstructive review of the MBKM-based Semester Learning Plan (RPS) (Haryadi, 2024), innovative Teaching Modules, summative assessment rubrics, and artifacts of the students' learning portfolios (academic papers, video links, magazine prototypes, and podcast recordings) (Fatmawati et al., 2023).

The qualitative data analysis procedure utilized the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which methodologically requires a cyclical and simultaneous evaluation process comprising four essential stages (Alfian, 2025). The initial stage was extensive data collection, accumulating all raw data from field notes, assessment results, and transcripts. The second stage was data reduction strictly selecting, simplifying, and abstracting rough data, discarding irrelevant information, and categorizing findings thematically based on content, process, and product differentiation dimensions. The third stage was data display, organizing reduced information into qualitative matrices, narrative comparative tables, and flowcharts to facilitate the reading of implementation patterns. The final stage was conclusion drawing/verification, performed by confirming meanings against the theoretical



framework of 21st-century education and comparing them with current literature published in SINTA journals (Wiyono et al., 2024). Data validity was tested in layers using techniques of prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation of sources (lecturer vs. students) and methods (observation vs. interviews vs. documents), as well as member checking with informants to avoid researcher interpretation bias (Pristiwati, 2025).

RESULT

Mapping Generation Z Student Learning Profiles (Diagnostic Assessment)

The implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) curriculum and the philosophy of differentiated learning necessitate the execution of diagnostic assessments as a *conditio sine qua non* (an absolute, non-negotiable prerequisite) prior to the design of the Semester Learning Plan (RPS) by the lecturer (Sari & Sari, 2025). The results from the analysis of the psychometric diagnostic assessment instrument, administered to 28 students during the first orientation meeting, successfully mapped their cognitive diversity and primary sensory preferences. Based on the analysis of the compiled questionnaire data, the experimental class demonstrated a sufficiently heterogeneous distribution of learning style profiles. The mapping distribution of the 28 students is comprehensively presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1
 Learning Style Profile

Learning Style Category	Number of Subjects	Population Percentage	Identified Typical Cognitive Characteristics (Gen-Z Context)
Visual	13 Students	46,40%	Requires strong graphical stimuli, mind-mapping, the use of color gradations, and aesthetic typography. Demonstrates resistance and difficulty absorbing purely verbal lectures without the support of slide presentations. Tends to respond very quickly to data presentations through digital infographics, diagrams, and high-resolution video displays.
Auditory	8 Students	28,60%	Highly receptive and responsive to lecturers' oral explanations, guided group discussions, conceptual debates, and podcasts. Possesses a unique tendency to remember the lecturer's intonation, emphasis, and diction. Tends to be more vocal and articulate in delivering oral arguments than in long written texts.
Kinesthetic	7 Students	25,00%	Absolutely requiring periodic physical movement, spatial simulations, role-playing, contextual field observations, and active motor engagement. This group is reported to be most susceptible to acute burnout, physical restlessness, and loss of cognitive focus if forced to sit passively listening to material for more than 30 consecutive minutes.

The empirical data in Table 1 clearly demonstrates a predominance of visual learning styles among students. This finding is statistically and psychologically strongly correlated with the essential characteristics of the Gen-Z “digital natives” phenomenon. Historically, this generation has been massively exposed to screens from an early age and is in constant interaction with social media platforms that prioritize interactive visual interfaces, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. It is this diagnostic baseline data that is subsequently utilized scientifically by the lecturer as an epistemological foundation to deconstruct rigid, conventional Semester Lesson Plans (*RPS*) and reconstruct a highly measurable and targeted differentiated learning architecture (Haryadi, 2024).

Implementation of Content Differentiation (Materiality of Teaching Materials)

Content differentiation conceptually refers to the tactical modification of how students are granted access to consume essential materials or knowledge, with the guarantee that such modifications do not in any way reduce the core competencies outlined in the course curriculum. In the context of field research within this sample group of 28 students, the Indonesian Language lecturer proactively moved away from a singular reliance on thick, monolithic printed textbooks or obsolete PowerPoint slides densely packed with text. Instead, the lecturer implemented a multi-modal content curation strategy, centrally managed through the integration of a Learning Management System (LMS) based on Moodle or dynamic Google Classroom platforms.

The content differentiation strategy to facilitate the three learning style groups is detailed as follows: (1) For the 13 Visual Learners: The lecturer supplied digital reading materials in the form of interactive E-books and PDF academic journals enriched with highlighting. Specifically, the lecturer uploaded conceptual infographics

regarding standard grammar guidelines (*PUEBI*) and linked materials to various animated educational videos on YouTube that illustrate popular syntactic or morphological errors in a highly visual and entertaining manner (Fatmawati et al., 2023). (2) For the 8 Auditory Learners: Instructional content was modified and provided in the form of asynchronous voice recordings (short audiobooks) containing material summaries expressively read by the lecturer. A curation of podcast links discussing literature and contemporary linguistic phenomena was also provided. Furthermore, the lecturer facilitated recorded live sessions on a cloud platform, allowing this group of students to replay and re-listen to crucial conceptual explanations, such as reasoning techniques in scientific writing. (3) For the 7 Kinesthetic Learners: Historically the group most left behind in theory-based language classes, the lecturer creatively designed interactive web hyperlinks allowing for spatial navigation, digital quiz assignments requiring motor activities like dragging-and-dropping grammar concepts using gamification platforms like Wordwall, and observation worksheets requiring physical movement to document language usage in public spaces (such as spelling errors on banners, billboards, and pamphlets) in the commercial environment surrounding the campus.

Implementation of Process Differentiation (Engineering Interactive Learning Activities)

Process differentiation relates directly to the instructional manipulation of how students engage in “sense-making” activities (understanding and constructing meaning) from the cognitive material being learned. Field observations conducted over months convincingly showed that the lecturer facilitated this complex cognitive assimilation process by boldly abandoning the traditional centralistic lecture model. The lecturer shifted to a 21st-century pedagogical model utilizing a blend



of Blended Learning and problem-solving-based Project-Based Learning (PjBL).

A specific case study on the meeting discussing “Public Speaking Proficiency” competencies (including Master of Ceremony/MC practice) demonstrated an exceptionally brilliant execution of process differentiation. The lecturer applied a highly flexible grouping technique among the 28 students. Students showing high learning readiness based on formative results were granted autonomy to immediately draft protocol scripts and practice improvisation independently (an absolute student-centered approach). Meanwhile, students who were still grasping basic concepts were gathered in small groups to receive scaffolding instructional guidance that was far more systematic, structured, and supportive from the lecturer. In the operationalization of discussion activities, the process was differentiated as follows: (1) Visual Learners: Focused on critical dissection activities of professional national-scale MC videos; they were assigned to observe, note, and analyze the presenter’s mastery of body language (kinesics), posture, micro-expressions, and eye contact. (2) Auditory Learners: The material immersion process emphasized the analytical dissection of intonation waves, vocal projection, articulation clarity, and juncture techniques. This process was facilitated through head-to-head dialogue simulations in front of the class or through structured debate sessions with time conditioning. (3) Kinesthetic Learners: The sense-making process emphasized spatial and stage training (*olah ruang*). Students were physically directed to stand tall, move to master the classroom proscenium, practice correct microphone handling, respond to distractions, and holistically simulate protocol events through intense role-play methods.

Furthermore, to validate formative understanding mid-way through syntax materials, the lecturer exploited the Quizizz application and

academic gamification approaches. This interactive knowledge processing method aligns perfectly with the inherent nature of Gen-Z regarding immediate challenges, peer competition, and the expectation of gratification through instant recognition/scoring.

Implementation of Product Differentiation (Performance Autonomy and Evaluation Rubrics)

Product differentiation represents the culmination phase or the final manifestation stage in instructional design, where students proudly demonstrate concrete evidence of their learning and synthesis of understanding. This is achieved through output formats that they are permitted to select autonomously according to their interests and best potential strengths, with the absolute condition that the product must comprehensively demonstrate the achievement of the curriculum’s essential standards.

In the summative evaluation stage and the final examination for the Indonesian Language course specifically for the assignment projects “Production of Literary Appreciation Texts/Short Stories and Popular Essays” and “Analysis of Language Errors in Public Spaces” the lecturer practiced granting product autonomy (freedom of expression) at the highest level. Table 2 systematically summarizes the variety of differentiated product assignments submitted and presented by the sample of 28 students at the end of the semester, accompanied by their pedagogical correlation analysis.

Table 2
Variety of Assignment Product Differentiation with Pedagogical Correlation Analysis

Majority Subject Learning Styles	Student Final Product Format Options	Analysis of Pedagogical Rationality / Correlation with Gen-Z Characteristics
Visual & Spatial	Producing infographics for polite language campaigns using Canva, high-resolution digital posters for literacy campaigns, creating interactive e-magazine layouts, and linguistic comic strips.	This strategy has proven highly effective in exploiting students' innate digital proficiency in using cutting-edge visual design software. The resulting product is visually aesthetically pleasing and eye-catching, yet the substance of the Indonesian language analysis material remains academically rigorous.
Auditory & Verbal	Producing a 15-minute literary/short story appreciation podcast session, composing an audio-essay, recording a national monologue/oration with argumentative diction, or conducting a purely audio-based narrative storytelling presentation.	This external approach has proven effective in encouraging auditory students to maximally explore their rhetorical abilities, depth of diction, and dialectics without having to feel constrained by the pressure of long-duration conventional writing which often triggers writer's block and affective frustration.
Kinesthetic & Interpersonal	Producing journalistic Vlog (Video Blog) works based on field investigations related to spelling errors in public spaces, designing and staging short action dramas based on linguistic scripts, and conducting live performance demonstrations of MCs in small-scale auditoriums.	Liberating kinesthetic students from the shackles of static activities behind a desk. This format successfully combines expressive physical movement, technical camera/editing skills, direct field observation, and conflict resolution skills through dynamic team-based projects.

A crucial point to underscore from this classroom observation is the aspect of academic fairness quality assurance. Although the physical output formats of the assignments from the 28 students were highly varied and visually disparate, the lecturer demonstrably employed a single analytic evaluation rubric framework that was fair, substantively uniform, and calibrated. This rubric rigorously assessed the depth of logic in linguistic content analysis, absolute adherence to the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI), as well as the originality and criticality of ideas, rather than falling into the trap of merely evaluating the glitz or cosmetic aesthetics of the digital media formats used

DISCUSSION

This analytic discussion section aims strategically to critically synthesize the factual empirical findings obtained in the field from the 28 students, then link them with the discourse of the epistemological framework of learning and educational psychology in the 21st century.

Harmonization of Gen-Z Cognitive Psychology and the Language Education Ecosystem

Referring back to the foundations of the diagnostic assessment results, which explicitly identified an extreme level of heterogeneity in the learning style preferences of the population of 28 students, it is abundantly clear that the homogenization of learning methodologies or what Anglo-Saxon literature



often terms the “one-size-fits-all” approach which has hegemonically dominated higher education in Indonesia for decades, has now lost its validity and pedagogical relevance. These field research findings affirm that the profiles of the 28 students represent the collective psychological reality of Generation Z on a national scale, a group sociologists have dubbed the “cyber-centric” generation or the “phygital” community (a merger of the physical and digital worlds). Their near-addictive attachment to smart device screens, as well as their neurological habits of consuming hyper-fragmented information (generally of micro-duration, such as Reels videos, Twitter threads, or TikTok content), are proven to trigger strong cognitive resistance and rejection if Indonesian Language lecturers stubbornly maintain a material transmission model using rigid, purely textual approaches or the tradition of 100-minute doctrinal lectures.

The strategy of implementing content differentiation that progressively integrates multimodal literacy combining visual graphics, auditory stimuli, and interactive platforms is theoretically proven within cognitive architecture to effectively lower “extraneous cognitive load,” which contributes nothing to learning. When a student with a dominant visual profile gains access to PUEBI (General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling) infographics instead of being asked to dissect a dense, thousand-word narrative text without illustrations, or when an auditory-profiled student can listen to a Spotify podcast on linguistic history while active, the first and most dangerous affective barrier (namely academic boredom and early alienation from the material) is successfully dismantled by the lecturer’s instructional design. These psychological interventions and strategies are absolutely confirmed by findings from extensive studies published in SINTA journals, which highlight that the engagement of interactive multimedia platform architectures (such as YouTube Shorts, Moodle LMS, Wordwall gamification, and Quizizz assimilation) is capable of acting as a defibrillator that revitalizes attention,

ignites organic participation, and strengthens learner information retention in the lecture hall. Within the paradigms of sociolinguistics and educational psychology, what this lecturer is doing is essentially the highest manifestation of the principle of “communicative accommodation,” where linguistic instruments are adjusted to the mental schemas and dominant sociocultural structures of the participants.

Revitalization of the Lecturer’s Role: Epistemological Transformation from Textual Authority to Curriculum Architect

One of the most central and revolutionary philosophical discourses emerging from the execution of differentiation on these 28 student subjects is the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of the ontological function of the lecturer. The implementation of process differentiation mechanics in the classroom such as the application of flexible grouping, peer-assessment exchanges, and the enactment of escalated guidance (scaffolding) empirically demonstrates an epic shift in the history of language education in the Archipelago. The Indonesian Language lecturer is no longer trapped merely as a “gatekeeper” of spelling who must always hold a red pen, a passive dictionary speaker, or a grammar dictator. The lecturer must, and has, transformed into a “curriculum design architect” and a “cognitive mentoring facilitator” who is agile in “reading the room.”

In the context of applying radical Project-Based Learning (PjBL) instruments to material traditionally considered dry such as anecdotal text analysis, contemporary short story review, or writing introductions for scientific methodology reports the lecturer adopts the facet of a mentor tasked with sparking learner autonomy. Gen-Z students are known to possess DNA strands of creativity and a massive spirit of self-actualization freedom. When the lecturer brilliantly offers collaborative projects (Team-Based Projects) for the 28 students to design popular language E-Magazine prototypes or compile a series of

investigative Vlogs on street linguistic errors, the students immediately develop an absolute sense of intellectual ownership over their own learning process and rhythm. This psychosocial dynamic resonates strongly and aligns perfectly with the pillars of Lev Vygotsky's constructivism theory regarding the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) spectrum. Within this differentiation paradigm, teaching interventions (scaffolding) are distributed tactically by the lecturer only at crucial points where students truly demonstrate conceptual stagnation, rather than being spoon-fed from the start to the entire class. The final result is phenomenal and academically verified; as confirmed by dozens of meta-analysis studies and empirical research in the national SINTA accredited journal database, this facilitative approach gives birth to an exponential escalation in conceptual understanding levels and sharply increases student self-efficacy (Intan Sari & Swatika Sari, 2025). The aggregate implication is the boosting of their standard academic achievement to a point of holistic optimization, where curriculum targets are maximally absorbed while students' psychological sanity (freedom from academic burnout) remains preserved.

Execution of Product Differentiation and Dismantling the Myth of General Compulsory Courses (MKWU)

In the perspective of Indonesian national educational historiography, the Indonesian Language MKWU (General Compulsory Course) must often shoulder the burden of stigma as a peripheral subject cluster. It is viewed as a course laden with tedious indoctrination, mere administrative formality, and considered less prestigious when compared to the exact science courses or hard skills of the study program. This dark stigma is the residual legacy of pre-MBKM (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka) era teaching methodologies that were laden with centralistic, doctrinaire features, and centered absolutely on mechanical obedience to syntactic tools and spelling guidelines. The methodological

intervention of product differentiation which was visibly practiced, observed, and found to contribute positively in the research observation of these 28 student subjects by allowing them to present theses and analytic outputs through high-resolution YouTube videos, interactive Canva presentation designs, analytical discourse episodes on Spotify podcast channels, or publishing creative literary prose on personal blog platforms is a radical pedagogical instrument that successfully dismantles and demolishes said stigma.

The strategy of achieving competence through differentiated learning outcomes mentioned above instantly contextualizes teaching materials with the real problems of the industrial world of work and intersects intimately with the set of essential 21st-century soft skills highly coveted by the contemporary labor market (skills including advanced digital literacy agility, visual communication maneuvers, and content generating/creating creativity). For the Gen-Z psychological entity, the compulsion to produce a fifteen-page printed paper is torture; however, the command to produce substantial argumentative digital content is not merely a formal assignment completion activity. They interpret these activities philosophically as a stage for actualizing the proof of their social capital existence in the virtual universe. Therefore, when analytic competence in essay writing was tested within this class differentiation ecosystem not by collecting monotonous typed quarto papers, but transformed into interactive popular essay publications on WordPress or Medium platforms the figures for intrinsic motivation and the seriousness of student literature research jumped logically and exponentially. This phenomenon of learning motivation metamorphosis resonates closely and aligns perfectly with the conclusions of findings from various quantitative studies and meta-analyses of SINTA indexed journal articles (from SINTA rank 2 to rank 5) from various universities in the archipelago. This national literature assertively, consistently, and convincingly draws the conclusion that the provision of a product



differentiation architecture, supported by appreciation for individual interest-based autonomy, is capable of revolutionizing the landscape of learning experiences from merely being in a phase of false obedience due to forced grades (academic compliance) evolving towards a phase of pure “authentic meaningful engagement” that is strongly internalized within the hearts of the learners.

Dynamics of Institutional Challenges, Administrative Burdens, and Macro Policy Reflection

Although the orchestration of differentiated learning theoretically and pragmatically in the classroom proved successful in harvesting academic achievement qualities beyond positive expectations, a comprehensive critical analysis of this qualitative research especially distilled through deep interview transcripts with the lecturer responsible for these 28 students must not romantically ignore or fail to unveil the dark veil regarding the variety of daily operational challenges that cannot be underestimated and require extra stamina. The central axis of the crisis constraints always leads to managerial burdens that drain energy and the multiplication of demands for overtime allocation. As a factual example, the process of designing diagnostic assessment tools with high degrees of reliability and validity, then tabulating and accurately analyzing the output of dozens of parametric statistical data points, only to then in a very short time frame prepare three or more simultaneous differentiation material scenarios for just one Semester Lesson Plan (RPS) document, clearly consumes immense dedication. This work demands an investment of labor, intellectual focus, and operational time that lies outside the calculation of the regular teaching workload overload recognized thus far, triggering psychological fatigue on the part of the *Tridarma* implementers (lecturers).

In addition to the issues of individual lecturer ergonomics, systemic and ecological barriers in higher education directly related to the lecturer-

student distribution ratio which is often too “fat” in general courses (exceeding 40 people on many campuses, though fortunately, this class was controlled at the ideal number of 28 subjects), the instability of campus wireless network (internet) bandwidth infrastructure when hundreds of students access video servers simultaneously, and the absence of official premium media processing software licenses from the institution become a series of physical, technical, and financial obstacles that weaken the spirit of execution (barriers to entry). It is not uncommon to encounter the phenomenon of lecturers trapped in an acute dilemma between the administrative compliance demands of the university’s internal quality assurance body laden with rigid, bureaucratic, and paper-based standardization formats (rigid standardized assessment mechanism) and the philosophical demands of the Ministry’s MBKM Curriculum, which actually mandates assignment flexibility and measurement diversity (differentiated flexible assessment). The operational conflict of interest between differentiation flexibility versus internal ISO quality standardization in higher education is a residual problem urgently needing alignment through open dialogue.

If our analysis is linked to the mapping and bibliometric tracing regarding the distribution trends of research studies in the Indonesian language education universe within the SINTA reputable database, an asymmetrical phenomenon and a quite ironic literature discrepancy will be detected. Although the echo of discourse and rhetorical instructions regarding this differentiated learning revolution is sounded so massively in national seminars, the volume of research funding portions and applied research publications at the higher education level (higher education language teaching journals) is paradoxically counted as minimal like an oasis in the desert if it must be compared head-to-head with the exponential overflow of similar research in the primary and secondary education areas. The representation of the majority of institutions seems to have a

misconception, focusing this valuable pedagogical innovation purely as a derivative obligation program from the formal “Guru Penggerak” (Mobilizer Teacher) policy or Teacher Professional Education at the elementary and vocational secondary levels, while ironically, the higher education sector entity often misses and is absent from the advocacy field of this reform movement. Empirical findings from this case study and research observation assertively prove the explicit urgency and simultaneously confirm the need for a literature invasion expansion and the opening of much wider research grant loci from the ministry to be published in leading national SINTA accredited journals (Sinta 1, Sinta 2, Sinta 3, Sinta 4) regarding the systematic formulation of how to measure the percentage of Key Performance Indicator achievement in higher education by validating and empowering differentiated formative and summative evaluation instrument mechanisms.

The analytic conclusion signals that the guarantee of existence and operational success of this shift in the MBKM pedagogical approach in higher education is practically impossible to claim and cannot be burdened entirely merely as a sporadic individual initiative of the lecturers (pure bottom-up micro initiative). Necessarily, there must be constructed advocacy and comprehensive structural policy intervention support from top policymakers (top-down affirmative policy from the Rectorate, Deanery, or Faculty leadership levels). The implementation of leadership managerial support can be concretely realized through the provision of modernized corporate Learning Management System facilities with high cloud computation capacity capable of orchestrating differentiation without delay, the arrangement of planned financing allocations for workshops and periodic advanced digital literacy adaptation training (sustainable capacity building program), the initiation of compensatory mitigation for the reduction and simplification of instructors’ administrative work hours, and the most important agenda being the radical reconstruction and

harmonization of the faculty institutional form assessment rubric system so that it no longer alienates and is now friendly to adopting and facilitating the recognition of authentic portfolio performance measurement (peer-assessment mechanisms and authentic project performance evaluation). If there is no synchronization, commitment consolidation, and comprehensive and integrated synergistic orchestration from the various central elements of the trinity of educational progress pillars (the entity of designing lecturers, the active participation of dedicated students, and the facilitation support of university institutions collaborating with the central government bureaucracy), it can be strongly predicted that the elitist vision, emancipatory spirit, and noble ideological goals of the MBKM system intended to fully liberate the talents, interests, and latent potential of the next generation of students will ultimately run a high risk of withering before blooming and merely becoming historical footprints of “artificial jargon” in curricular documents, without leaving a footprint of solid, substantive, sustainable, or empirical pedagogical reality transformation at the grassroots level of Indonesian higher education.

CONCLUSION

Based on a comprehensive participatory investigation involving 28 students in the General Compulsory Course (MKWU) of Bahasa Indonesia, the implementation of a planned differentiation strategy has proven successful. This strategy, initiated by precise diagnostic assessments of learning styles and executed through adaptive instructional modifications in content, process, and product autonomy, created a positive shift in the academic ecosystem. The resulting environment upheld equality, promoted social inclusivity, guaranteed intellectual freedom, ensured equitable participation, and dynamically engaged students’ emotions.

The study found that the diverse learning styles of Gen-Z students whether visual, auditory, or kinesthetic were effectively facilitated and



optimized. This was achieved through the intelligent use of digital platforms, the integration of interdisciplinary Project-Based Learning, and full autonomy in final project formats (including podcasts, interactive posters, investigative vlogs, and e-magazines). The transformative implications of this adaptive teaching strategy were empirically significant, effectively dismantling the archaic academic dogma and the tradition of rote memorization that often characterizes higher education. Furthermore, this approach removed the stigma of the Bahasa Indonesia course as merely a rigid study of spelling rules. Instead, it paralleled a drastic increase in retention, conceptual understanding of linguistics, critical thinking, and intrinsic motivation, while fostering intellectual collaboration and dedication among the students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our deepest gratitude to the Rector of Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember for permitting this study, and to our fellow lecturers for their assistance throughout the research process.

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