



IMPLEMENTING DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION THROUGH SHORT STORY READING AMONG THIRD GRADE STUDENTS AT SD NEGERI TANJUNGSARI

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ABSTRACT

Enhancing reading literacy at the elementary level remains a critical challenge in foundational education, particularly in early-grade classrooms. This study examines the implementation of differentiated instruction through short story reading to develop the language skills of third-grade students at SD Negeri Tanjungsari. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with data gathered through classroom observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that differentiation strategies across process, content, and product dimensions effectively address students' diverse needs, interests, and readiness levels. The intervention led to noticeable improvements in students' intensive and creative reading abilities, including the strategic use of visual aids and dictionaries to comprehend texts. Key enablers included a calm classroom environment and engaging story content, while challenges were primarily related to text difficulty and external distractions. These findings suggest that differentiated instruction, when applied through short story reading, not only strengthens reading literacy but also fosters intrinsic motivation and peer interaction in language learning activities.

Keywords: differentiated instruction, short story reading, language skills, elementary students, literacy development

INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious and planned process that aims to create a learning and learning atmosphere so that students can actively develop their potential. This is stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes the importance of spiritual development, self-control, intelligence, noble morals, and skills needed by individuals and society. In the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI), the term "education" comes from the root word "didik" which is given the suffix "pe-" and the suffix "-an", forming a meaning as a process, way, or act of guidance. Education not only focuses on knowledge transfer, but also includes the formation of ethics and behaviors, which aim to foster the independence and maturity of students through various learning processes, guidance, and coaching.

According to Atmojo (2024), the success of the learning process is highly determined by the selection of the right learning model. The approach used by teachers can facilitate the development of students' potential in various aspects, such as critical thinking skills, creativity, and problem-solving. Therefore, the learning model implemented in the Independent Curriculum is a strategic element in supporting the achievement of learning objectives. An effective model will help teachers create a

systematic flow of learning activities from start to finish, as well as tailor them to the needs of students. Furthermore, Noprina (2023) stated that language, literature, and thinking skills are the main foundations in literacy. These three abilities are essential in all aspects of learning and social life, as affirmed in the Decree of the Head of the Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency No. 033 of 2022. Literacy is not only a tool for understanding information, but also an important provision for lifelong learning.

In the context of learning in elementary school, observable phenomena are closely related to students' ability to understand literary texts such as short stories. Eliana (2021) noted that students show variations in understanding explicit and implicit meanings, as well as in identifying the main idea, moral message, and intrinsic elements of short stories. In addition, social interactions that occur while reading, such as discussing or expressing opinions, are also important indicators in the process of understanding texts. In differentiated learning, teachers apply strategies that adapt learning to students' needs and abilities, for example through different assignments, the use of visual and audio media, and intensive guidance for students who need more support (Rambe & Mirna, 2022).

At SD Negeri Tanjungsari, the results of interviews with teachers show that the reading ability of grade 3 students is still low. Some students are not fluent in reading, and interest in reading activities is still relatively low, even though the school has provided a reading corner with various collections of stories. The low level of reading initiative shows that innovation in learning approaches is needed to engage students and improve their reading skills. One of the approaches that can be pursued is the application of differentiated learning. This model allows teachers to tailor teaching strategies based on students' readiness, interests, and learning styles. Differentiated learning is expected to provide appropriate challenges for students who are already fluent in reading, as well as provide optimal support for students who are still experiencing difficulties. This approach also supports the creation of an inclusive learning environment that is responsive to the individual needs of students.

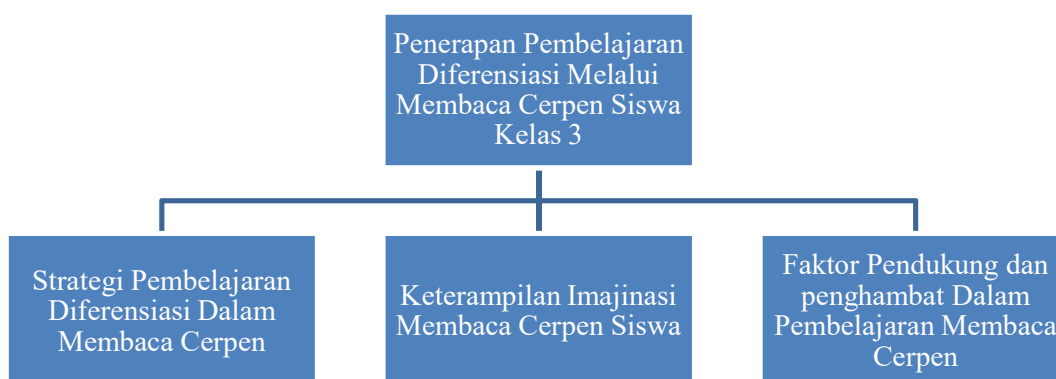
Various differentiated learning approaches that have been implemented such as demonstrations, speed reading, and problem-based learning have been shown to be effective in improving students' reading skills (Yusnan et al., 2022; Nugraha & Dewi, 2022; Wardani & Janattaka, 2022). However, there have not been many studies that specifically integrate the differentiation approach with short story reading activities in 3rd grade elementary school students. This gap highlights the need for in-depth research on the effectiveness of such approaches in improving overall language skills, including critical reading, speaking, and writing.

METHOD

The research approach used in the study "The Application of Differentiated Learning Through Reading Short Stories for Grade 3 Students of SD Negeri Tanjungsari" is a qualitative research with a phenomenological method. This research was carried out at SD Negeri Tanjungsari and aims to deeply understand the subjective experiences of grade 3 students in differentiated learning activities through reading short stories. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meaning of the learning experiences experienced by students directly, especially in the context of reading and understanding short stories.

Data collection was carried out through field observations, interviews with teachers and students, and documentation of learning activities. The main focus of this research is not only on the final results of students' understanding of short stories, but also observes how the process of imagination, interpretation, and students' responses to the content of the story is made. The study also looked at how differentiated learning contributes to accommodating students' diverse learning needs, as well as the extent to which students' personal experiences affect the way they understand and appreciate the content of the stories they read.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



Picture 1. Findings

Based on the images of the findings displayed, this study reveals that the application of differentiated learning through reading the cerepen of grade 3 students is influenced by three aspects, namely differentiation learning strategies, reading skills, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors in learning to read short stories.

1. Differentiated Learning Strategies in Reading Short Stories

Table 1 Findings of Differentiated Learning Strategies in Short Story Reading

Differentiation Learning Strategies		
Process Differentiation	Content Differentiation	Product Differentiation
a. Hear stories b. Imagination	a. Adventure b. Companionship	a. Role-playing b. Portrait of a figure

The results of the study show that teachers have implemented differentiation learning strategies through three main approaches: process differentiation, content, and product. In the aspect of process differentiation, teachers involve students in activities of listening to stories and imagining the content of stories. The enthusiastic response of the students to this activity showed that they enjoyed the imaginative and auditory learning process. This supports the creation of student-centered learning that is tailored to their learning style. On content differentiation, students tend to be more interested in adventure and friendship-themed stories. These themes are considered relevant to their experiences and the world of their lives, thus facilitating emotional connection and strengthening the understanding of the content of the story. Meanwhile, in product differentiation, students choose to express their understanding through role-playing activities and drawing characters in stories. This strategy allows students to demonstrate their understanding in a creative form and according to individual preferences. This is in line with Tomlinson's

(2001) view that differentiation is a proactive approach in designing learning based on students' needs, readiness, interests, and learning styles. By applying these three types of differentiation, teachers have shown real efforts in accommodating the diversity of students to create a more meaningful and effective learning experience.

2. Imagination Skills of Reading Students' Short Stories

Table 2 Findings of Students' Short Story Reading Imagination Skills

Imagination when reading stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The spirit of saving b. Please help c. Guess the story d. Many good lessons e. Reading in front of you aloud f. Query dictionary g. View images h. Good i. Help j. Read the story k. Hear stories
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Students' reading skills are reviewed through their involvement during the short story reading activity. This activity has been proven to encourage the development of students' imaginative abilities. They show high emotional and cognitive engagement, characterized by the ability to understand moral messages in stories, such as the importance of saving, the spirit to help each other, and an empathetic attitude towards others. Students are also active in responding to the content of the reading through guessing the storyline, reading aloud in front of the class, asking questions about vocabulary that they have not understood, and using illustrated pictures to support their understanding. Visualization activities through pictures make an important contribution to the development of students' imagination and creativity.

Students' spontaneous expressions such as "good", "read the story", and "hear the story" are indicators that they are emotionally involved and happy with the activity of reading short stories. This finding corroborates the statement of Tarigan (2008) that reading skills not only include the mechanical aspect of recognizing words, but also include the ability to understand meaning, appreciate content, and provide critical responses to reading. Thus, it can be concluded that the reading skills of grade 3 students develop progressively through approaches that suit their characteristics and interests.

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Reading Short Stories

Table 3 Findings of Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Reading Short Stories

Supporter	Retardant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students find it exciting when reading interesting short stories b. Reading short stories is <i>easy</i> or easy c. A supportive learning atmosphere makes you more focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students consider that reading short stories is a <i>difficult activity</i> b. The <i>noisy classroom atmosphere</i> during reading activities is also an obstacle c. Confusion is also expressed by many students.



<p>d. Quiet <i>or quiet classroom conditions</i> during the reading process are also considered supportive</p>	<p>d. Long reading can cause a feeling of boredom and fatigue e. Students assess that the stories they read feel <i>boring</i>.</p>
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Based on the results of interviews and observations of grade 3 students at SD Negeri Tanjungsari, various factors were found that supported and hindered the activity of reading short stories in differentiated learning. The supporting factors felt by students include the activity of reading short stories is considered *exciting, easy, focused*, and takes place in a *quiet or calm atmosphere*. This shows that the content of the story, the appropriate level of text difficulty, and a conducive learning environment really help increase students' interest and concentration in reading.

However, there are also several obstacles experienced by students, such as feeling that reading short stories is *difficult*, noisy classroom atmosphere, feeling *confused* about the content of the story, texts that are too *long*, and stories that are considered *boring*. These obstacles show the need for adjustment of reading materials, good classroom management, and appropriate mentoring strategies so that reading activities can take place optimally. By understanding these supporting and inhibiting factors, teachers can design differentiated learning that is more effective and enjoyable for all students.

This situation shows that the selection of reading materials and the management of the learning atmosphere are important elements that need to be considered by teachers. This opinion is in line with the statement of Slamet (2003), who emphasized that a comfortable learning environment and materials relevant to the student's world greatly affect motivation and comprehension in reading. Therefore, in order for the short story reading activity to run optimally, teachers need to adjust the reading material to the level of student development and create a conducive and fun learning atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research on the implementation of differentiated learning through short story reading activities in grade 3 students at SD Negeri Tanjungsari, it can be concluded that the differentiation approach has proven to be effective in supporting the improvement of students' literacy and language skills holistically. The application of differentiation in process, content, and product aspects allows teachers to accommodate differences in students' abilities, interests, and learning styles, so that the learning process becomes more inclusive, adaptive, and meaningful. This strategy encourages active student involvement in learning, especially in reading activities that demand deep understanding and creative expression. Students demonstrate the ability to understand the moral message in the story, interpret the content of the reading, and express the results of their understanding both orally and through visual media or roles.

Furthermore, the development of students' reading skills is seen to take place gradually. Students begin to be able to implement self-reading strategies such as using supporting images and dictionaries to interpret the meaning of the text, as well as showing a preference for stories that are relevant to their personal experiences. However, the learning process is also influenced by a number of factors, both supportive and inhibiting, such as the level of noise in the classroom, the complexity of reading, and the emotional state of students during learning activities. Thus, differentiation learning does not only focus on achieving learning outcomes, but also pays attention to the learning process that

respects the different characteristics of each individual. This research emphasizes the importance of the role of teachers as learning facilitators who are able to design strategies that are flexible, responsive, and in accordance with the needs of students. In addition, the differentiation approach also has the potential to strengthen social interaction between students, build confidence, and foster higher motivation to learn. Therefore, differentiated learning through short stories can be one of the effective strategies in realizing education that is oriented towards the development of students' potential as a whole.

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