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# Implementation of Differentiated Learning in Arabic for Children with Special Needs in Elementary Schools

**Muhammad Iqbal Fuadhi[1]; Hisbullah Huda[2];**
[1, 2] UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia

**Abstract:**

This study aims to identify the implementation of differentiated learning in the context of Arabic language subjects for children with special needs at Muhammadiyah 1-2 Taman Primary School and its supporting and inhibiting factors. The subjects studied include inclusion assistant teachers, subject teachers, students with special needs. The method used is descriptive qualitative where data is collected from observation, interviews and documentation, the results show that in its application differentiated learning is carried out with several stages of mapping learning needs, implementing differentiation of content, process and product in learning. several supporting factors such as active collaboration between the principal and parents in providing support, high enthusiasm and interest of students, comfortable and happy learning situations inhibiting factors in the application of differentiated learning in Arabic language subjects for children with special needs include limited ability to read and write Arabic and minimal learning motivation, unstable emotions, difficulty in concentration, limited teacher understanding in conducting initial assessments of the abilities and learning readiness of students with special needs.

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education*; *Differentiated Instruction*; *Arabic as a Foreign Language*; *Primary Education*; *Children with Special Needs;*

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**Correspondence Author:**
Muhammad Iqbal Fuadhi
fuadhiiqbal@gmail.com

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# Implementasi Pembelajaran Diferensiasi pada Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Arab bagi Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus di Sekolah Dasar

**Muhammad Iqbal Fuadhi[1]; Hisbullah Huda[2];**
[1, 2] UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia

**Abstrak:**
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi implementasi pembelajaran diferensiasi dalam konteks mata pelajaran Bahasa Arab untuk anak berkebutuhan khusus di SD Muhammadiyah 1-2 Taman serta faktor pendukung dan penghambatnya. Subjek penelitian meliputi guru pembantu inklusi, guru mata pelajaran, dan siswa berkebutuhan khusus. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif di mana data dikumpulkan dari observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam penerapannya, pembelajaran diferensiasi dilakukan dengan beberapa tahapan pemetaan kebutuhan belajar, implementasi diferensiasi isi, proses, dan produk dalam pembelajaran. Beberapa faktor pendukung seperti kolaborasi aktif antara kepala sekolah dan orang tua dalam memberikan dukungan, antusiasme dan minat siswa yang tinggi, situasi belajar yang nyaman dan menyenangkan. Faktor penghambat dalam penerapan pembelajaran diferensiasi pada mata pelajaran Bahasa Arab untuk anak berkebutuhan khusus meliputi kemampuan membaca dan menulis Bahasa Arab yang terbatas dan motivasi belajar yang minimal, emosi yang tidak stabil, kesulitan berkonsentrasi, pemahaman guru yang terbatas dalam melakukan penilaian awal kemampuan dan kesiapan belajar siswa berkebutuhan khusus.

**Kata Kunci:** *Pendidikan Inklusif; Pembelajaran Diferensiasi; Bahasa Arab sebagai Bahasa Asing; Pendidikan Dasar; Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus;*

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Correspondence e-mail: fuadhiiqbal@gmail.com

## INTRODUCTION

The implementation of differentiated learning is a learning concept that emphasizes diversity and equality in access to learning and activities focused on identifying the diversity of students' learning backgrounds based on their individual potential. The learning process in schools continues to evolve over time in terms of strategy, model, and method in line with the times. Differentiated learning has become a new alternative for developing various potentials and the diverse capacities of students effectively and efficiently through variations in content, process, and products to be applied in the learning context.Differentiated learning accommodates the delivery of learning material proportionally in various ways according to the interests, learning styles, and learning readiness of students, which differ from one another (Wahyuni, 2022). Teachers provide learning according to the learning capacity of their students. This effort is made as a form of respect and understanding of the conditions of students because each student certainly has different conditions and ways of learning. (Fauzia and Hadikusuma Ramadan 2023)

One of the most important needs and assets in human life is education. Education is a tool for producing a superior and competitive generation. In addition, education makes humans educated individuals with noble character and morals, as well as being able to utilize the potential of each individual. Education enables humans to fully carry out their roles both as individuals and as members of society. As the father of Indonesian education, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, stated that the goal of education must be to guide children's instincts so that they can achieve complete happiness and safety both as individuals and as members of society. Therefore, educators or teachers can only guide or develop their growth and development or lives in accordance with their natural instincts as children. In the process of guiding and mentoring, students are given the freedom to explore many things they want to know, but educators have a responsibility as mentors to provide guidance and direction so that children do not lose their way and endanger themselves. In an effort to improve the quality of education and strengthen the quality of educators, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, wants to change the paradigm of educators' thinking that humans have extraordinary uniqueness and can overcome various human problems themselves. Therefore, the government has made a new breakthrough through the independent learning policy. (Friantoro 2022)

The fundamental and key aspect of education lies in the curriculum. The curriculum is an important part of the "spirit" of education that needs to be continuously reviewed to keep pace with the times and science and technology (Suryaman, 2020). In implementing education in an institution, everything is inseparable from the curriculum. Gunawan states that the curriculum occupies a central position in the educational process. In addition, the curriculum is a reference for all educational policies implemented by school management or the government. The Indonesian education system has undergone curriculum transformations. Curriculum changes have taken place several times from post-independence to the present era. When viewed from its historical record, the curricula that have been implemented in Indonesia range from the 1947 curriculum to the 2013 curriculum (Baderiah, 2018). The curriculum continues to transform in line with the times and the increasingly advanced world of education, striving to find an educational

curriculum that is in line with the cultural conditions of the country in order to create a good and optimal performance process. (Elviya and Sukartiningsih 2023)

The Merdeka Curriculum is one of the visionary ideas initiated by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, to welcome the transformation of Indonesian education to produce a future generation that is superior and competitive in the global arena. Merdeka Belajar (Freedom of Learning) is a new educational transformation policy concept from the Ministry of Education and Culture that aims to create exciting learning for everyone, both students and educators. This policy is based on the critical problems experienced by students in Indonesia in the context of prolonged learning degradation during Covid 19. (Elviya and Sukartiningsih 2023)

The government has offered many alternatives and policy breakthroughs in an effort to restore learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, one of which is through the implementation of an independent curriculum that offers teachers a variety of freedoms in implementing learning, including the freedom to select and adjust learning tools according to the needs based on the applicable learning levels in educational institutions, so that students can explore knowledge and learning experiences in accordance with their individual abilities and potential. The main point in the Merdeka Belajar concept refers to freedom in utilizing thinking skills. Teachers, as the main controllers in education, have the authority to interpret the curriculum based on their understanding before delivering it to students. If teachers are able to understand the established curriculum, they will be able to respond to students' needs in the learning process. Thus, the Merdeka Belajar education program design is expected to contribute to the development of teachers' teaching competencies. The educational goal of positioning teachers as educators and students as learners will be realized if the learning process is interesting, enjoyable, and meaningful. Merdeka Belajar encompasses freedom in achieving learning goals, methods, materials, and evaluation, both for teachers and students. (Elviya and Sukartiningsih 2023)

Thinking skills are one of the many potentials within humans that are utilized to carry out various activities, including teaching and learning. One aspect contained in Merdeka Belajar is the freedom for educators and learners to imagine and explore various things around them, These activities stimulate the independent character within each individual, both as educators and students, so that they can explore knowledge from their environment, which has so far been studied by educators and students through materials that can be accessed through various learning resources, including books, articles, modules, and other learning resources. The Merdeka Belajar program is designed to improve student learning outcomes while shaping the nation's future generation to be advanced, creative, critical thinkers, innovative, and collaborative. (Siregar, Sahirah, and Harahap, 2020). In an effort to produce learners who have distinctive characteristics through independent scientific development, it is necessary to implement Merdeka Belajar in the national education system. (Elviya and Sukartiningsih 2023)

Inclusive education is a concept that promotes equality and equity in the implementation of education and teaching by opening access for all students to learn and develop their knowledge without discrimination. According to Qomarudin & Safrudin, (2021) Inclusive education is a representation of the practice of fulfilling the right to education fairly and equitably so that it can be accessed by all groups

without any difference in treatment between one another, including children with special needs (ABK). Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution guarantees the right of every citizen to obtain education without discrimination. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System also emphasizes the importance of fair and equal education. In an inclusive education system, children with special needs are not only given access to learning, but also the opportunity to develop academically, socially, and emotionally in a friendly and supportive environment. This policy is in line with international agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, which target quality education for all without exception. (Suryani 2024)

Inclusive learning is implemented in the same way as general learning by providing equal access for students with special needs in the context of learning, just like other normal children, without any differences between them so that students are able to develop and empower themselves according to their potential. (Prastiwi and Abduh 2023)

In supporting the development of students with special needs, differential learning is a relevant alternative to be applied in classroom learning because it respects and appreciates each learning process, characteristics, and uniqueness in each student. Thus, students and teachers have the authority to learn and modify learning according to the needs, abilities, and learning readiness of each individual in the classroom. One of the optimal learning methods applied in the context of inclusion refers to differential learning. Individual competencies, needs, and interests are three elements that are integrated with each other and even become the strength of this differentiation concept. The key concept of Tomlinson's differentiated learning focuses on three aspects: learning material, learning practices, and learning evaluation. (Purwowidodo & Zaini, 2023) Teachers provide differentiation to deliver more specific learning experiences to students, so that learning needs can be met optimally and more comprehensively. The application of differentiated learning at the elementary level is an important foundation because it is a decisive phase for students to grow and develop their abilities and potential, including for children with special needs. (Suryani 2024)

Arabic is a language closely related to Islam because the Qur'an, which is a guide for life and a holy book for Muslims, is written in Arabic. In addition, Arabic is used by the community as a means of exploring and understanding Islamic sciences as well as practicing religion. Arabic in the context of education is included in foreign language subjects taught in educational institutions from elementary, middle, and high school levels to universities and Islamic boarding schools, so that many students learn and even study Arabic books. (Rosyidi and Ni'mah 2011)

People's views on learning Arabic as a foreign language vary, with different interpretations between one another because Arabic is a complex subject, making it a challenge for learners of the language. It can be concluded that learning Arabic is an interactive activity between teachers and students in order to learn Arabic with the aim of understanding Arabic and implementing it orally to interact with the language. Arabic, in terms of foreign language learning, certainly has two objectives that must be achieved by students, namely general and specific objectives, both of which have their own tendencies. From the general objective side, Arabic can be optimized by students as an instrument to explore the two main references of Islamic law, the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Furthermore, Arabic can be used as a means

of understanding Arabic-language references related to Islam-based religion and culture. Arabic enables learners to become proficient in expressing themselves through speech or writing. Learners of Arabic can use Arabic as a supporting tool in mastering other skills. Finally, the general objective of learning Arabic is to guide Arabic language experts to become skilled and professional (Thohir 2021).

After reviewing Arabic language learning based on its general objectives, there are also specific objectives for learning Arabic, which have several orientations. First, the academic objective of Arabic language learning is to become a tool or instrument for mastering or achieving a degree of expertise in a particular field of study as well as supporting work in a specific field. In terms of practical implementation, the objective is to achieve proficiency in interacting in a foreign language (Arabic) through spoken, written, receptive, and productive means (Efendy, 2019). One of tools to measure of a child's self-development can be seen in their language capacity. Intelligence, psychomotor, emotional, mental or psychological aspects, and of course the environment are various factors that influence a child's language skills (Rahmat, 2015). To make it easier for children to acquire language, they need to get used to listening to topics of conversation that arise in the community. Without this, the process of children acquiring language will be hampered. Inclusive children, when viewed physically, are equivalent to normal children in general and understand, even comprehend, the conversations of those around them. However, their ability to express their intentions and ideas through language or speech is limited. Even if they are able to express themselves, their speech is not very clear (Antono and Rosid 2021).

One of the main challenges in implementing differentiated learning is the lack of training for teachers, so their understanding of effective strategies and techniques is still limited. Research in Indonesia shows that elementary school teachers often face difficulties in implementing differentiated learning to the fullest extent. Several contributing factors include time constraints, a lack of support facilities tailored to the needs of students with disabilities, and a low level of awareness among various stakeholders, such as school principals, parents, and the community, regarding the importance of a differentiated approach in supporting student learning. Another study reveals that differentiated learning can increase the participation of students with special needs in the learning process, because this method allows students to learn according to their own styles and speeds (Suryani 2024).

Empirical research results reveal that differentiated learning has a positive impact on the involvement and development of students, including children with special needs. This approach increases students' self-confidence because learning is designed according to individual needs. Adjustments to the curriculum, teaching methods, and evaluation can create an inclusive learning environment. Thus, this study will discuss how to implement differentiated learning in Arabic language lessons for children with special needs in elementary school.

## METHOD

The research method is an effort undertaken by researchers to collect research data. This is in line with Sugiyono's opinion, which states that the research method is a scientific-based method for obtaining data for specific purposes. Thematic analysis framework: initial assessment; differentiation of content/process/product;

learning environment; supporting/inhibiting factors). The steps are: transcription → initial coding → theme development → source/method triangulation → member checking. Validity and reliability strategies such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba). Data were analyzed using open/thematic coding. In this study, the researcher used qualitative research with a descriptive approach because it required data collection and previous studies, which were then described. Qualitative research can be used to explore various events and phenomena related to social issues (Sodik and Siyoto 2015). This research was conducted from May 20 to June 12, 2025 (2 weeks) with a single case study at SD Muhammadiyah 1-2 Taman Sidoarjo, which was the main source in this research. The subjects in this study were 1 Arabic language educator, 5 inclusive students, and 4 assistants at the school. In this study, the data used were primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the field and from sources related to this study.

Secondary data is additional data obtained through written documents such as reports, books, or scientific journals. The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation is a form of activity to obtain data by directly observing the research object (Sodik and Siyoto 2015) . Meanwhile, interviews are activities to collect data by conducting question and answer sessions with the research object. The research object was Arabic language teachers in grade 5 at SD Muhammadiyah 1 – 2 Taman Sidoarjo. The number of educators sampled was 1 Arabic language teacher, 5 students with special needs of the Borderline Personality Disorder type, and 4 inclusive student assistants, while documentation was a method of obtaining supporting data through written documents such as reports, journals, and other documents in the form of photos and so on.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Implementation of Differentiated Learning

Differentiated learning is an alternative effort by educators to fulfill the expectations and needs of students in the learning process. Students have broad freedom to express what they have been taught and understood. Through differentiated learning, students can learn according to their readiness, interests, and learning styles. Creativity is also developed through the differentiated learning process, enabling students to become innovative individuals and making learning success easier to achieve (Yury et al. 2024).

According to Thomlinson, differentiated learning focuses on three things, namely content differentiation, process differentiation, and product differentiation based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Musasa 2024). Content differentiation refers to adjustments to what students learn, whether in the form of material, concepts, facts, or skills that must be mastered. According to Tomlinson, content differentiation does not mean changing competency standards, but adjusting the level of complexity, depth, and access to material based on students' learning readiness. Students with low readiness can be given material with simpler language, concrete examples, or visual aids, while students with high readiness can be given enrichment material, further reading, or more complex conceptual challenges.

In Tomlinson's theory of learning differentiation, content differentiation is the foundation for ensuring that all students can achieve the core academic curriculum with adjustments for variations in individual readiness, interests, and learning profiles. In his theory, Tomlinson emphasizes that content differentiation is not limited to simplifying or complicating the curriculum, but rather modifying the curriculum in terms of presentation and depth of material to suit student development (Tomlinson 1999). For example, for students with low readiness, content can be presented through scaffolding such as simple analogies or physical manipulatives, which help build understanding gradually. Conversely, for gifted students, content differentiation involves enrichment such as independent research projects or cross-disciplinary concept integration, which encourages deep exploration and creativity. This analysis is based on the principle that content differentiation increases intrinsic motivation and long-term learning outcomes, as students feel the material is relevant and achievable, without the stigma of failure or boredom. Tomlinson also highlights the risks if content differentiation is not implemented properly, such as greater gaps between students, so teachers need to use formative assessments to monitor and adjust content dynamically.

Process differentiation relates to how students learn and process content in learning activities. Tomlinson explains that the learning process should provide opportunities for students to build understanding through activities that suit their cognitive needs and learning styles. Process differentiation can be achieved through flexible grouping, tiered tasks, varied learning strategies, and different types of scaffolding. For example, some students may learn through small group discussions, while others may learn through independent study or project-based activities. The essence of process differentiation is to provide space for students to process information actively and meaningfully, without being forced to follow a uniform learning pattern. In terms of its application, process differentiation is a dynamic element that emphasizes the adaptation of teaching methods to enable students to construct knowledge independently in accordance with their respective learning styles, such as visual, auditory, or kinetic. Tomlinson distinguishes process differentiation from content differentiation by highlighting that process focuses on "how" students interact with the material, not "what" is being learned. For example, for students with high scaffolding needs, the process may involve step-by-step guidance, while independent students may be given free exploration tasks. This analysis shows that process differentiation increases student engagement and knowledge retention, as it utilizes constructivist learning theory, in which students actively construct meaning. However, Tomlinson warns of the risks of overdifferentiation, such as class fragmentation or time management difficulties, so teachers need to use flexible grouping and formative assessment to monitor the effectiveness of the process. Overall, process differentiation promotes inclusion and academic success by minimizing learning barriers and maximizing intrinsic motivation.

Product differentiation refers to how students demonstrate their learning outcomes and understanding of the material they have studied. Learning products do not have to be in the form of written tests, but can be essays, presentations, posters, projects, videos, or other creative forms. Tomlinson emphasizes that product differentiation aims to provide opportunities for students to express their understanding according to their interests, strengths, and learning styles, as long as

they still refer to clear learning objectives and assessment criteria . Assessment is not only used to give a final grade, but also to provide feedback on achievements and needs for further learning (Tomlinson 2005). Teachers can provide several product options with varying levels of complexity or give students the space to design their own products.

In Tomlinson's theory of differentiated learning, product differentiation is the final component that allows students to demonstrate their understanding through diverse outputs, emphasizing authenticity and personal relevance. Tomlinson distinguishes product differentiation from content and process by focusing on "how" students demonstrate their learning, not just what they have learned or how they have learned it. For example, students with artistic interests may create posters or videos, while analytical students may choose essays or research projects, with complexity adjusted based on readiness (such as simple tasks for beginners or multidimensional tasks for advanced students). This analysis is based on intrinsic motivation theory, where product choice increases engagement and ownership, and Gardner's multiple intelligences theory, which accommodates students' strengths, such as in linguistic areas. Tomlinson highlights that product differentiation promotes equity in assessment, as criteria remain clear (e.g., accuracy, creativity, and depth), but risks include subjectivity in grading or difficulty in comparing different products, so teachers need to use consistent rubrics and formative assessments. Overall, product differentiation encourages students to become lifelong learners by building confidence through meaningful expression.

Understanding the diversity of students' potential is something that teachers need to pay attention to when implementing differentiated learning. Differentiated learning does not mean treating students differently, such as distinguishing between students who are considered smart and less smart. Thus, the diversity of students' potential and backgrounds will be accommodated in the classroom learning process, so that students have full access to differentiated learning (Yury et al. 2024).

Differentiated learning is a new alternative to accommodate the diversity and needs of students in the learning process, which is aligned with individual abilities and readiness. Assessing the learning needs of each student is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that learning runs smoothly and can be understood by all students according to their abilities. The application of differentiated learning aims to strengthen the social bond between teachers and students so that a good and harmonious relationship can be established, which will support the success of the learning process and create an inclusive learning environment for all (Friantoro 2022). Teachers must have a broad range of knowledge and understanding of the overall learning needs of students. Among these are:

### *Needs Analysis*

Teachers administer preliminary tests in the form of writing, tracing Hijaiyah letters, and reciting Hijaiyah letters aloud to children with special needs to assess their initial abilities. The analysis of students' needs is carried out in stages and covers skills, readiness, interests, and diverse learning styles among students (Komalasari 2023). Teachers have the opportunity to design an applied learning process in line with the needs and readiness of the students. This is in line with Marlina's opinion, which explains that differentiated learning is a learning concept

that aligns interests, learning preferences, and student readiness to achieve maximum learning outcomes (Herwina 2021).

***Content Differentiation***

The application of content differentiation is the focus of the researcher, who seeks to explore information on the classification of learning materials for children with special needs. Differentiation in the context of content is carried out by teachers by classifying based on the capacity, readiness, and learning styles of students. The application of content differentiation is implemented by providing the same theme but with the scope of material modified based on the readiness and learning abilities of the students (Azmy and Mahya Fanny 2023). Based on the interview results, Arabic language teachers at SD Muhammadiyah 1-2 Taman have implemented content differentiation in the context of Arabic language learning for children with special needs.

In the Arabic language learning process, teachers optimize the use of various media and methods at school. Teachers utilize pictures, PowerPoint presentations, educational videos, books, or worksheets in delivering lessons, including to students with special needs. In the context of collective learning, teachers facilitate learning through the formation of discussion groups and group presentations according to the abilities and preferences of the students. The application of varied teaching methods is carried out by teachers based on the abilities and learning styles of students by utilizing digital learning media devices and exploring the school's surroundings as new alternatives in Arabic language learning.

This is in line with Endan Edi Friantoro's research, which explains that content differentiation is the first phase in the context of the education and teaching process of Arabic vocabulary taught to students in relation to the themes presented in class. This principle considers the readiness and accommodates the learning interests of students in learning (Friantoro 2022).

Differentiated learning is able to spark students' comfort and confidence in exploring Arabic language learning with a diverse approach to material and a focus on the diversity of learning styles that exist in each individual in the classroom, including students with special needs who are more dominated by visual tendencies in understanding learning (Majid and Ratnawati 2024). The teacher explains the material about الحديقة, Students with special needs are asked to name Arabic vocabulary related to the theme the الحديقة with the help of pictures according to their abilities and understanding, then express it orally.

**LKPD Theme: الحديقة (The Garden)**

**General Objective:**
Students will learn simple vocabulary and phrases related to gardens according to their respective abilities.

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**Tier 1 – Visual (Basic Vocabulary Introduction)**
**Target learners:** those with mild cognitive impairments, language difficulties, or complete beginners.

**Focus:** introduction to concrete nouns through visuals.
**LKPD Content:**
Colourful and clear images:

- 🌳 شجرة (tree)
- 🌸 زهرة (flower)
- 🪑 مقعد (chair)
- 🌿 عشب (grass)

**Task:**

- Match the pictures with the Arabic words.
- Colour the pictures according to the teacher's instructions.
- Trace the letters of the words.

**Support:**

- Large, high-contrast visuals.
- Word cards (flashcards).

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**Tier 2 – Auditory (Listening & Mentioning)**
**Target for children with special needs:** able to follow simple verbal instructions.
**Focus:** sound awareness and pronunciation.
**Worksheet content:**
Teacher audio/recording saying:

- /sha-ja-rah/ → شجرة
- /zah-rah/ → زهرة

**Task:**

- Listen and then point to the corresponding picture.
- Imitate the pronunciation of syllables.
- Saying words with the help of the teacher.

**Support:**

- Audio repetition.
- Visual cues (mouth/hand movements).

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**Tier 3 – Productive (Simple Phrases)**
**Target for children with special needs:** able to form simple meanings.
**Focus:** use of nominal phrases + demonstrative pronouns.
**Worksheet content:**
Example:

- هذه شجرة
- This is a tree

**Task:**

- Complete the sentence with the picture.
- Say the phrase while pointing to the object.
- (Optional) Copy short phrases.

**Support:**

- Sentence models.
- Verbal scaffolding from the teacher.

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**Assessment Rubric by Tier**

**Tier 1 – Visual**

| Score | Indicators |
|---|---|
| 3 | Correctly matching all image-word pairs |
| 2 | Partially correct (2–3 words) |
| 1 | Still requires full assistance |

**Tier 2 – Auditory**

| Score | Indicator |
|---|---|
| 3 | Pointing and Mentioning words clearly |
| 2 | Points correctly, pronunciation is not yet clear |
| 1 | Does not respond without assistance |

**Tier 3 – Productive**

| Score | Indicator |
|---|---|
| 3 | Saying complete and correct phrases |
| 2 | Partial phrase / needs example |
| 1 | Unable to form phrases |

***Process Differentiation***

In teaching Arabic to children with special needs, at the beginning of the lesson, the teacher identifies and ensures the readiness of the students, including those with special needs, to ensure the smooth running of the lesson as a whole. The teacher does not emphasise the need to understand the entire lesson if students, including those with special needs, experience difficulties in learning Arabic. The teacher will look for new alternatives through questioning and discussion with friends with a better understanding. He emphasised that all students are required to study the same material, only at different levels of difficulty.

The application of learning strategies by teachers in the classroom for Arabic language learning is a point of differentiation in the process. The teaching methods applied during learning are appropriate to the circumstances and readiness of the students. At the beginning of Arabic language learning, the teacher asks stimulus questions followed by ice breaking to lighten the atmosphere and make learning more enjoyable. These activities are part of the differentiation process applied in the classroom (Nahak, K., E. 2023). This is in line with Friantoro's research, which explains that process differentiation is the next step after content differentiation.

Process differentiation is the activity of selecting learning strategies, approaches, methods and steps in the context of dividing students into groups. Examples of the application of process differentiation are as follows: a. preparing a container that suits the interests to develop the abilities and potential of students.

b. Giving appreciation and positive encouragement to students with special needs in the context of learning. c. Developing task-based problem-solving skills in accordance with the agreed time (Friantoro 2022).

1) **Mapping the Learning Profile of Students with Special Needs (Concise & Practical)**
   ***Before the Activity***
   **Interests:** favourite objects (images, sounds, movement, colours).
   **Dominant learning style:** visual / auditory / motor.

   ***Readiness:***
   Pre-phonetic (recognising sounds),
   Early phonetic (imitating sounds),
   Early productive (simple phrases).
   This mapping determines the prioritised stations and level of scaffolding.

2) **Profile-Based Ice Breaking (5–7 minutes)**
   **Objective:** emotional regulation, focus, and vocabulary activation.
   Visual (interest in pictures/colours)
   **Activity:** "Quick Picture Guessing" (teacher holds up a card with زهرة / شجرة).
   **Readiness adaptation:** pointing only (beginners) → naming (advanced).
   Auditory (interest in sounds/songs)
   **Activity:** clap the rhythm of syllables (sha–ja–rah).
   **Scaffolding articulation:** the teacher demonstrates mouth positions (without technical terms).
   Motor skills (interest in movement)
   **Activity:** meaning gesture movement (imitate the growth of a tree).
   **Duration:** 30–45 seconds per instruction for limited attention.

3) **Learning Stations (Core Process, 15–20 minutes total)**
   Students rotate or choose 1–2 stations according to their profile.
   ***Station A – Visual***
   **Content:** picture–word cards, Arabic letter puzzles.
   **Process:** match → sort → name (optional).
   **Scaffolding:** colour of initial letters, reading direction arrows.

   ***Station B – Auditory***
   **Content:** short audio clips (≤10 seconds) per word.
   **Process:** listen → select image → imitate.
   Scaffolding for articulation: focus on one difficult sound per session (e.g. ش).

   ***Station C – Motor skills***
   **Content:** floor cards / concrete objects.

**Process:** pick up–point–say short phrase.

**Scaffolding:** ready-made sentence models (…هذه).

**Attention Note:** each station lasts a maximum of 5–7 minutes, with a visual timer.

**4) Choice Boards (Giving Autonomy According to Interest)**

Students choose 1 mandatory task + 1 option:

🎨 Draw and label 1 object.

🔊 Record a voice saying 1 word.

🚶‍♂️ Demonstrate + say a phrase.

Choices increase motivation without adding cognitive load.

**5) Structured & Safe Discussion (3–5 minutes)**

**Format:** think–point–say

**Think:** look at the object (pause for 5 seconds).

**Point:** point to the picture/object.

**Say:** say a word/phrase (or the teacher models it).

**Readiness adaptation:** nonverbal responses are appreciated.

**6) Scaffolding Arabic Phonetics (Makhraj) that is Friendly to Children with Special Needs**

One sound per session, without complex terms.

Visual mouth movements (small mirror/image).

Minimal contrast ( ش vs س when ready).

Positive reinforcement for effort, not perfect accuracy.

**7) Brief conclusion (2 minutes)**

Quick review (3-item flashcards).

Choose favourite sticker/symbol (emotional regulation).

Clear transition to the next activity.

***Product Differentiation***

The main point of this differentiation refers to the results of learners' understanding, which is encouraged to produce practical and useful works. The concept of creating this project work is based on the interests and competencies of the students due to the diversity of abilities and readiness among individuals (Nuraini and Ramadan 2024) . Based on the interview results, the products created by students in Arabic language learning are in line with the interests and talents inherent in each student.

Educators provide broad access for creativity to produce work that is liked and in line with the abilities of the students. For example, students with special needs

who have good artistic abilities produce work in the form of drawings or paintings and their activities are directed towards drawing, colouring or painting. The varied and unique forms of the products are still in line with the material presented in class. This is a form of creativity and a medium for channelling the talents and interests of students in learning, while still being in line with the material presented by the teacher during class.

**Product Revision (Student Output)**

Do not simply ask students to "Draw X." Change the instruction to a language-based product that is visualised. Choose one of the following options according to the students' level:

- **Option A: Labelled Poster (Visual Dictionary)**
  - *Task:* Students draw objects (e.g., school supplies/fruits) and **must** write the names of the objects in Arabic (with harakat) and Indonesian.
  - *Competencies: Kitabah* (Writing) & *Mufradat* (Vocabulary).
- **Option B: Mini Comic (Counting Nouns)**
  - *Task:* Students draw a simple scene (e.g., a student pointing at the blackboard) and add speech bubbles containing simple sentences.
  - *Example Text:* هَذَا فَصْلٌ(This is the classroom) or السَّبُّوْرَةُ نَظِيْفَةٌ(The blackboard is clean).
  - *Competencies: Tarkib* (Basic Grammar) & *Kitabah*.
- **Option C: Picture Presentation (Audio Recording)**
  - *Task:* Students draw a picture, then record their voice (audio/video) while pointing to the picture and reciting it.
  - *Competencies: Kalam* (Speaking) & *Qira'ah* (Reading aloud).

**Assessment Instrument (Rubric)**

To ensure a clear connection with Arabic, the weighting for language assessment should be greater than that for art (aesthetics).

**Example of Product Assessment Rubric (Poster/Labelled Image)**

| Assessment Aspects | High Score Criteria (4 - Excellent) | Criteria for Moderate Score (3 - Good) | Low Score Criteria (2 - Fair) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Language Accuracy (40%)** | Arabic letter writing, letter connections, and harakat are **100% accurate** according to the rules. | There are 1-2 minor errors in harakat or letter connections. | Numerous errors in letter/vowel writing, making it difficult to read. |
| **Meaning Accuracy (30%)** | The image is **highly relevant** to the Arabic vocabulary | The image is relevant, but there is some ambiguity. | The image does not match the Arabic text |

| Assessment Aspects | High Score Criteria (4 - Excellent) | Criteria for Moderate Score (3 - Good) | Low Score Criteria (2 - Fair) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | written (meaning validity). | | (misinterpretation). |
| **Fluency/Pronunciation (20%)** *(If there is a presentation)* | Pronouncing the vocabulary with fluent articulation and appropriate intonation. | Pronounces clearly enough but articulation is less than perfect. | Pronunciation is stuttered and many articulations are incorrect. |
| **Creativity & Neatness (10%)** | Attractive layout, clear text, and harmonious colour combination. | Neat and legible, but standard design. | Lacks neatness, text is difficult to read due to overlapping colours. |

**Important Note:** Note that the "Creativity/Art" aspect is only weighted at 10%. This emphasises to students (and observers) that **the primary focus is Arabic language**, not a drawing competition.

**Example Task Instructions (For Teaching Modules)**
***Project Task:*** *"Classroom Wall Dictionary"*

*Select 3 objects found in the classroom.*

- *Draw the three objects on one A4 sheet of paper.*
- *Below each drawing, write a simple sentence using the pattern ( هَذَا/ هَذِهِ + Isim). Example: هَذَا قَلَمٌ (This is a pen).*
- *Ensure that the vowel marks are complete and correct.*
- *Present your drawing to your classmates by reading it aloud.*

With this revision, "Drawing" is merely a visualisation tool, while the core competencies (writing vocabulary, constructing simple sentences, and pronunciation) become the main focus of learning.

***Learning environment***

The final series of the differential learning stage. Various things that are close to students and can influence individual mindsets and behaviour in learning can be referred to as the learning environment. Physical and social aspects are two inseparable aspects of the learning environment, so that both influence each other in the learning process of students. (Arumsari and Susanti 2024) . Based on the interview results, Arabic language learning is carried out in a varied, creative, and enjoyable manner with ice-breaking activities to lighten the mood and restore focus

if students lose focus and become bored. Outdoor-based learning is also applied by teachers in Arabic language learning by taking students around the school grounds or learning in the school gazebo. Learning is not only centred in the classroom but can also be done by exploring and observing the environment outside the classroom, which will foster comfort and happiness in the learning process. In addition, she always tries to maintain variety in the seating arrangement in the classroom so that students remain engaged and do not get bored.

## Supporting Factors for Differentiated Learning

In the context of applying differentiated learning in Arabic language lessons for students with special needs at SD Muhammadiyah 1-2 Taman, there are factors that underlie its implementation in the classroom, one of which is supporting and inhibiting factors that have implications for the practical readiness of the strategy. The key to differentiated learning in practice is the alignment between the diversity of learning needs and the capacity and tendencies of the students.

In its journey as an effort to improve the quality of learning and education, differentiated learning in Arabic language subjects for students with special needs is not without challenges and problems that must be resolved. The understanding and ability to solve problems by analysing, reviewing, and comprehensively addressing various supporting factors and challenges play an important role in achieving maximum results, so that positive effects will be felt by all elements, including students, and differentiated learning will run smoothly and produce optimal results.

In striving for the successful implementation of differentiated learning in Arabic language subjects for students with special needs at SD Muhammadiyah 1-2 Taman, several fundamental supporting factors must be considered, including 1. Active collaboration between the principal and parents in providing guidance and motivation as a form of support so that differentiated learning can take place properly. 2. The majority of students have high enthusiasm and interest in learning, a comfortable and enjoyable learning environment, guaranteed safety for students during learning, and adequate infrastructure support (Hasanah and Surakarta 2024) .

The observations also showed that the majority of students learned Arabic with high motivation and enthusiasm for learning. Teachers created a conducive and creative learning environment that attracted the attention of students, including those with special needs. Teachers played videos during lessons and conducted ice-breaking activities. 3. The school has representative and complete electronic learning support devices such as computers, LCDs, projectors, and speakers in every classroom.

## Factors Hindering Differentiated Learning

In the learning process, one thing that cannot be avoided in its implementation is obstacles or challenges. Several things that become obstacles in the application of

differentiated learning in Arabic language subjects for students with special needs at SD Muhammadiyah 1-2 Taman include several critical aspects, among which are from the students' side, namely their ability to read and write Arabic, and a small number of students have minimal motivation to learn, unstable emotions, difficulty concentrating, which are obstacles to the successful implementation of differentiated learning in Arabic language lessons for students with special needs at SD Muhammadiyah 1-2 Taman.

**a) From the students' perspective**

A small number of students have low motivation to learn due to limited ability to understand the material, which hinders the achievement of maximum learning outcomes, as well as the lack of learning activity among students with special needs (Santika and Ngurah Trisna Jayantika 2023) . In addition, another major obstacle is the implementation of differentiated Arabic language learning.

**b) From the teacher's perspective, these include**

1) Teachers' limited understanding in conducting initial assessments of the abilities and learning readiness of students with special needs, so that the application of learning methods is not optimal. Another obstacle to the implementation of this learning is the insufficient duration of time (Supriana et al. 2024) .
2) Developing differentiated learning plans requires more time as they must be reviewed and then aligned with the readiness and learning needs of students with special needs.
3) The lack of cooperation and support from parents is another obstacle faced by educators. Additional time is an important aspect in developing learning plans so that the methods, strategies, and approaches used in differentiated learning can run according to plan and students can follow the learning comfortably and effectively according to their individual readiness in class.
4) Limited ability to operate representative media is another obstacle, so that the application of differentiated learning in Arabic language subjects for students with special needs is still not optimal and the quality of learning needs to be improved further (Seffi and Perseveranda 2025) .

**c) From the parents' perspective**

The lack of support from parents and motivation in learning for students with special needs in learning at home means that differentiated learning in Arabic language subjects is less than optimal and learning outcomes are not maximised (Wulandari et al. 2018) .

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be seen that differentiated learning in Arabic language subjects for children with special needs has a positive

effect, due to several supporting factors such as active collaboration between the school principal and parents in providing support, high enthusiasm and interest among students, a comfortable and happy learning situation, guaranteed safety for students in learning, and adequate infrastructure support. In addition, there are factors that hinder the application of differentiated learning in Arabic language subjects for children with special needs, including limited Arabic reading and writing skills and a small number of students with low motivation to learn, unstable emotions, difficulties in concentration, limitations in teachers' understanding in conducting initial assessments of the abilities and readiness of students with special needs, limitations in the ability to operate representative media, and minimal support from parents in providing learning assistance at home.

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