

The Effectiveness of Differentiated Learning Method on Motivation and Achievement of Foreign Language Learning

La efectividad del método de aprendizaje diferenciado sobre la motivación y el logro del aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to identify the effectiveness of Differentiated Learning approach on motivation and achievement of foreign language learning. Arabic is one of the foreign languages offered in Malaysian public schools to be learnt. This study employed a total of 60 Form Two students from the secondary schools as the respondents. This study adopted a quasi-experimental design by running pre-test and post-test on two respondent groups, which were the treatment group and the control group. The results showed that there was a significant difference on the motivation level between the two groups studied. Similarly, it was also found that there was a significant difference in achievement level between control and treatment group. Therefore, this study shows that Differentiated Learning Approach contributes to boost up the level of motivation and achievement in learning of Arabic Language. The implication of this study is that the Differentiated Learning Method is one of the foreign language learning approaches that Arabic teachers can use to enhance the mastery of this language among students.

Keywords: Teaching method, foreign language teaching, learning Arabic Language, learning motivation.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este estudio fue identificar la efectividad del enfoque de Aprendizaje diferenciado sobre la motivación y el logro del aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. El árabe es uno de los idiomas extranjeros que se ofrecen en las escuelas públicas de Malasia para aprender. Este estudio empleó a un total de 60 estudiantes del Formulario Dos de las escuelas secundarias como encuestados. Este estudio adoptó un diseño cuasi-experimental ejecutando pre-test y post-test en dos grupos de encuestados, que fueron el grupo de tratamiento y el grupo de control. Los resultados mostraron que hubo una diferencia significativa en el nivel de motivación entre los dos grupos estudiados. Del mismo modo, también se descubrió que había una diferencia significativa en el nivel de logro entre el grupo control y el grupo de tratamiento. Por lo tanto, este estudio muestra que el Enfoque de aprendizaje diferenciado contribuye a aumentar el nivel de motivación y logro en el aprendizaje del idioma árabe. La implicación de este estudio es que el Método de aprendizaje diferenciado es uno de los enfoques de aprendizaje de idiomas extranjeros que los maestros de árabe pueden usar para mejorar el dominio de este idioma entre los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Método de enseñanza, enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, aprendizaje del idioma árabe, motivación de aprendizaje

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Recibido: 21/07/2019 Aceptado: 16/09/2019

1. INTRODUCTION

Each student has their own differences that persuade the differences of learning needs to be attended in teaching. Teachers who can fulfill the differences of learning needs will be able to mark up the learning outcome (Ismajli & Imami-Morina, 2018). However, more often than not, teachers catered one-size-fits-all methods in their teaching. Most teachers use one technique for all students with different needs. There are a few of teachers who try to fulfill the differences of learning needs during lessons in the classrooms.

In any classes, including foreign languages' classes, there are differences of learning needs across students, such as motivation and academic performance. Needless to say, these differences require different approaches to teaching and learning. It could be that one method that works best for a student, but on the other hand, that method will not work best for others. On the same ground, one method may promote students' motivation level and academic performance, but for others, the same method could lessen their motivation and academic performance. In other words, 'one size doesn't fit all' in the practice of teaching methods in situations where students' learning needs are different.

If the students continuously received the same method of teaching, students will be discouraged from furthering their learning. Students may not realize that they are demotivated by differences in their unmet needs, but the effect of losing motivation will be reflected in student's exam result because motivation and interest have a significant relationship with achievement. Previous studies have shown that motivation influences learning achievement, including the foreign language learning (Parrish & Lanvers, 2019).

On the other hand, motivation can also act as a mediator in helping students for getting better academic achievement (Asbulah, Lubis, Aladdin, & Sahrim, 2019). If the motivation is not high, then the student is likely to experience anxiety and fear over the subject. Alkhateeb, Reports and Issues (2014) stated that extreme levels of anxiety and intense worry can lead to insecurity in a student.

The focus of content in Arabic as a Foreign Language in Malaysia focuses on 4 skills of listening, communicating, reading and writing. However, recent studies show that mastery and achievement of the Arabic language among students in all four skills is still at an unsatisfactory level. Baharudin, Ismail, Asmawi, Baharuddin (2014) and Mohd Nor (2018) finds that the level of Arabic writing of students in secondary schools is still low. Such finding was not only found in schools, but also at tertiary level. Jusoh (2018) who carried out a study in tertiary level found that the Arabic writing skill is at the unsatisfactory level. Whereas Masaeed (2018) shows that the level of Arabic speaking among university students is still low. As a result, when these 4 language skills are out of reach and mastered, students will lose their motivation.

A study by Bollinger (2017) found that foreign language teaching method contributes to the acquisition of foreign language among students. A suitable method must be adapted by teachers in order to promote students' motivation to learn thus increasing their achievement in the subject (Hashim, Yunus, & Hashim, 2019).

Kaufmann and Buckner (2019) argue that student achievement can be detrimental if teachers are engaged in the teaching and learning process without regard to student motivation to learn. Teachers need to be more aware of the level of students' motivation. Xuan, Razali, and Samad (2018) found that lack of motivation contributes to the decline in students' writing skills in foreign languages. Similarly, a study by Van Harsel, Hoogerheide, Verkoeijen, and Van Gog (2019) pointed out that there is a significant relationship between high students' motivation with their mastery on a subject.

Tomlinson (2017) is one of the specialists in education who has introduced The Differentiated Learning Approach to address the student's motivation differences. Bondie and Zusho (2018) stated that The Differentiated Learning Approach can facilitate students to improve their motivation and achievements. Beside, this approach is also able to help low-achieving students to master learning objectives on par with the higher students in learning abilities.

Students' background differences require that the Differentiated Learning Method be implemented in the teaching and learning process. Tomlinson (2014) stated that The Differentiated Learning Approach is a modification of teaching techniques to meet the students' differences in needs and abilities. The Differentiated Learning Approach can be done with teachers modifying the five components of teaching and learning, which are The Contents, The Teaching Technique, The Learning Outcome, The Learning Environment, and The Assessment Methods. The modification of the teaching contents in The Differentiated Learning Approach means that the teachers need to prepare several difference learning materials and difference activities to fulfill students' differences needs. However, all the modifications of the contents should be in line with the learning objectives that stated in the textbook used in the school.

The modifications of The Teaching Technique in The Differentiated Learning approach means that teachers diversify teaching techniques in delivering their lessons. At first, they need to identify students learning styles and student's needs. Activities such as playing crossword puzzle and flash card, drawing, acting, discussing, problems solving, group investigation, being in flexible group etc. can be done as part of the teaching techniques. These activities are meant to encourage students to receive and generate new knowledge with ease. Modification of The Learning Outcome in the Differentiated Learning Approach refers to how the students show their understanding on what they have learned in the classroom. For example, if the lesson is about comprehension, then the students will be asked to present on what they have understood from the comprehension by using their own way and preferences. Some students may present it by singing, while others may use posters as a tool to present.

Arabic Language teachers can choose to modify one or more than one components to practice the Differentiated Learning Approach. They could modify The Teaching Content, or The Teaching Technique or The Learning Outcome or The Learning Environment, or The Assessment. What more important is the adjustment should be planned in a timely manner

to enhance their motivation and thus encourage self-learning among students. Walpole, McKenna, and Philippakos (2011) stated that planning before learning process is very crucial to help students understand and achieve the learning objectives.

Moreover, Differentiated Learning Approach does not only allow teachers to modify their teaching strategies accordingly, but also allows students to modify their learning (Singh, Singh, Tek, & Kasim, 2018). The outcome of these are students with courage and unashamed to learn and are able to share information with teachers and their classmates in the classroom setting. In other words, the teacher will be able to create an active learning session and students will be able to learn more effectively with high motivation and enthusiasm.

On the other hand, teachers who are unaware to diversity will not be able to see potentials that can be expanded. Therefore, they will not act to work on to fulfill the diverse students' needs and will use one same technique for all students. According to Bondie and Zusho (2018), teachers who continue to practice conventional method indirectly causes students to see Arabic Language subject as a mundane subject. It could be argued that those teachers prioritize finishing the syllabus in the stipulated time more than anything. Nevertheless, such act adversely affects students' motivation. There, this study was conducted to identify the effectiveness of Differentiated Learning Approach in contributing to students' motivation and learning achievements in Arabic Language as a foreign language subject.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used a quasi-experimental design on 2 groups, which are treatment and control group. A total of 30 students in treatment group and another 30 students in control group participated in the study. A t-test was conducted in the pre-test phase showed that there were not any significant differences between the two groups, indicating that the samples were homogenous. The treatment group was administered with Differentiated Learning Method while the control group underwent conventional method.

For treatment group, a diagnostic test was conducted to identify the difference in students' motivation level. Building on that, modifications on Content, Teaching Technique, and Learning Outcome were made for learning sessions in the classrooms. Students' motivation level was divided into 3 levels which are high, medium, and low. Content modification was based on the Arabic Language textbook used in the school.

Meanwhile, Teaching Technique modification was conducted by adding learning activities with respect to the different motivation levels. Activities added included crossword puzzle game, flash card, acting, and group investigation. Participants in low motivation level was given more activities as compared to those in medium and high motivation level groups.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the t-test result for the motivation level between treatment and control group. The t-test result shows that there is a significant difference between treatment and control group. The mean for treatment group is shown to be higher ($M=83.03$) as compared to control group ($M=76.53$), indicating contribution of Differentiated Learning on students' motivation.

Table 1. T-test result for motivation level between control and treatment groups

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	Std. deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Control	30	75.42	13.73	-2.37	30	0.01*
Treatment	30	83.03	12.57			
Total	60					

* $p < 0.05$

The increase of motivation is related to students' awareness of metacognition, in which it contributes to the increase of students' achievements (Entwistle & McCune, 2013). Metacognitive awareness is student's reaction to use learning strategies. It will enable students to control, plan, and evaluate their own learning. Therefore, students with metacognition ability will self-evaluate their learning. If the learning objectives are not met, they will make amends to their learning techniques until the objectives are achieved. A motivated student has metacognitive awareness in their learning. The higher motivation a student has, the higher their metacognitive awareness is.

Table 2 shows the t-test result for achievements in Arabic Language subject as a foreign language between the control and treatment groups. The result shows that there is a significant difference between the treatment and control group. The mean for treatment group is higher ($M=81.50$) than the control group ($M=51.80$). This shows that Differentiated Learning does contribute to the improvements in students' achievement for Arabic as a foreign language subject.

Table 2. T-test result for the difference between control and treatment group for students' achievements.

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	Std. deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Control	30	51.80	11.59	-10.60	19	.000
Treatment	30	81.50	9.21			
Total	60					

* $p < 0.05$

Both results indicate that Differentiated Learning Method contributes to the achievements in Arabic as a foreign language subject. As teachers showing something new in Content and Teaching Technique to students, students will feel that they are given attention by the teachers. This will make them feel that they are being appreciated by the teacher and they will unknowingly respond well to the Content and Teaching Techniques provided by the teacher. This will also indirectly make the students to modify their learning technique.

Therefore, Differentiated Learning Approach does not only enable teachers to modify their lessons, but also enable students to modify their learning (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2018). As a result, students without any hesitation will voluntarily share information with other students and teachers in the classroom.

Information sharing is highly encouraged in foreign language classes because it will lessen language errors. A weak student is those who make a lot of language mistakes. The mistakes can be observed through 2 skills that are productive in nature, which are speaking and writing skills. Through knowledge sharing between the students, the mistakes can be lessening and this will make the use of foreign language more accurate (Yamat, 2013).

Differentiated Learning Approach can also increase two-ways communication between teachers and students in a foreign language classroom setting. It will be easier for them to get rid of their shame to communicate with teachers because they feel valued and appreciated. They will not be afraid to ask questions to the teachers, and this will increase communication skills among them. Communicating is one of the main practices in learning foreign language where more practices mean better foreign language mastery for the students.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings showed that Differentiated Learning Approach have a significant contribution to the enhancement of students' motivation and achievement levels in learning Arabic as a foreign language. In a broader context, this finding can also be used to increase motivation and achievements for other foreign languages. Therefore, foreign language teachers are advisedly to adapt Differentiated Learning Approach to their teaching and learning techniques.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research was supported by the grant from the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (GG2018-011).

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