

## The Influence of Differentiated Learning Style Strategies on Reading Skills

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### ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to address problems in the instruction of reading skills (mahārah qirā’ah) that ultimately contribute to low student interest and motivation. The general objective of this study is to accommodate differences in students' ability to absorb learning material, thereby helping students increase their learning motivation. More specifically, the research focuses on the specification of differentiated teaching strategies tailored to students' learning styles, integrated with appropriate teaching methods and media. This approach not only clarifies the focus on reading skills but also assists teachers in selecting suitable instructional media, making the method more applicable in the context of Arabic language learning. This research addresses the gap in the aspect of concrete strategy based on learning styles and the utilization of appropriate media, while simultaneously providing a quantitative measurement of the method's effectiveness. This study also offers a new perspective on mahārah qirā’ah instruction within the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum). The methodology employed in this study is a qualitative method with a quasi-experimental design. The results of the pre-test and post-test show a significant increase in the experimental class that used the differentiated teaching strategy. The average pre-test score in the experimental class was 54.90, which increased to 86.35 on the post-test. The control class also showed an increase, from 45.45 to 59.42. However, all students in the experimental class experienced an increase in scores, while some scores in the control class remained unchanged or decreased.

**Keywords:** *Differentiated Learning-style, Reading skill, Arabic learning.*

### INTRODUCTION

Arabic reading skill is often underestimated by students. However, reading skill is not limited merely to fluent reading without regard for meaning. Reading ability can be defined as the capacity to recognize and comprehend the content of a text, with accurate pronunciation serving as the initial foundation. Thus, the ultimate goal of reading is to understand the intended meaning contained within the text. With good reading ability, one can grasp the significance embedded in a written text. One indicator capable of measuring success in Arabic language instruction, particularly reading skill, is innovation in every lesson by utilizing the development of instructional media that supports the enhancement of learning quality while making students enjoy learning Arabic (Wahyu Rindayani, 2024). Reading is a linguistic skill no less important than other language skills; specifically, loud reading must receive serious attention in the learning process because it is foundational for achieving all proficiencies in reading skills. Loud reading trains students to pronounce words clearly so that they can associate graphic symbols with their phonetic pronunciations (Uyuni, 2021).

Nevertheless, the Arabic reading skill learning process is not free from various

problems. These issues include linguistic problems concerning reading that is still continuous and resembles Quranic recitation, a lack of comprehension of the content in the Arabic text (Rohmah & Zainullah, 2024). misunderstanding the function of letters that carry meaning, easily forgetting memorized vocabulary, and the inability to translate Arabic sentences (Syaiful Alam, Moch. Hasyim Fanirin, 2023). Furthermore, non-linguistic problems include a lack of creative instructional media, monotonous teaching methods, differing student experiences and backgrounds, and an unsupportive learning environment (Syaiful Alam, Moch. Hasyim Fanirin, 2023). These problems collectively contribute to the low interest and motivation of students in learning *mahārah qirā’ah* (reading skill) (Burhan Lukman Syah, 2024).

Therefore, the differentiated teaching strategy provides flexibility for educators to adjust teaching methods, materials, and approaches according to each student's learning style. Learning style is defined as the manner in which students absorb, organize, and process information. There are three types of learning styles: auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. The benefit gained by students who recognize their respective learning styles is the ease of understanding the material presented by the teacher, consequently leading to improved learning outcomes (Jannah & Cahyadi, 2024). Through this adjustment, every student receives an opportunity to learn in the way most suitable for them, making it easier to grasp the material being taught (Bulu, 2023). To identify students' learning styles, one technological development that facilitates this is the "akupintar.id" application.

Previous research at MAN 2 Sragen examined differentiated instruction in Arabic generally using the Classroom Action Research method. The results indicated that differentiated instruction was effective in accommodating student differences, but lacked a specific focus on particular language skills, media use, and learning styles (Zulkarnain et al., 2023). Research at MTsN 13 Jombang applied differentiated instruction to teaching vocabulary (*mufradāt*) using a qualitative case study method. Findings stated that this method was effective in improving vocabulary mastery, but was limited to *mufradāt* without detailed media strategies (Uyyun & Hanifah, 2024). Research at MTs NW Mercapada addressed the diversity of student abilities and interests in teaching *mufradāt* with a qualitative approach and focused on student project outcomes after *mufradāt* instruction (Abdurrahman et al., 2023). Research at MA Assahwah Al-Islamiyyah focused on strengthening the Pancasila profile through qualitative descriptive differentiated Arabic learning. It stated that differentiation strengthened social values and critical thinking but did not investigate specific language skills (Ahmad Dzakisiraj, Suparmanto, Tia Fatma, Dian Rismayani, 2024). Research using the Action Research (Al-Tajribiyah Al-Kammiyah) method employed an experimental quantitative approach focusing on the effectiveness of differentiated learning in writing skill (*mahārah kitābah*) (Syukriya, 2024).

Thus, the novelty in this current research lies in the specification of the differentiated teaching strategy tailored to students' learning styles, integrated with specific teaching methods and media. This not only clarifies the focus on reading skills but

also helps teachers select appropriate instructional media, making it more applicable in the context of Arabic language learning at the madrasah level. This research fills the gap regarding the concrete strategy based on learning styles and the utilization of appropriate media, while simultaneously providing a quantitative measurement of the method's effectiveness.

## **METHOD**

### **Subject of Research**

This investigation was conducted using a quantitative research method specifically employing a quasi-experimental design. This approach was selected to examine the causal relationship between the intervention (treatment) and the outcome, while acknowledging that participants could not be randomly assigned to groups—a typical limitation in educational settings. The research was conducted on the population of 7th-grade students at MTsN 2 Cilegon City. The study sample consisted of two pre-existing, intact classes: Class VII.A, which served as the experimental group, and Class VII.B, designated as the control group. Each group comprised 31 students, resulting in a total sample size of 62 participants.

### **Instrument**

This design allows for a comparison of outcomes between the group receiving the treatment and the group not receiving it, thereby inferring the effect of the intervention. The study employed a triangulation of data collection techniques to gather comprehensive information about the learning process and its outcomes. The primary instrument for quantitative data collection was the test, which was designed to measure the dependent variable (likely a skill or knowledge area related to the subject of the experiment).

Typically, in a quasi-experimental design, this would involve a pretest to establish baseline equivalence and a posttest to measure the effect of the intervention. In addition to the formal test, the following instruments were used for qualitative and process-based data gathering: (1) Observation Sheets: These were utilized to systematically record and document the teaching-learning process within both the experimental and control groups. This instrument helps in assessing the fidelity of the treatment application and noting any contextual variables that might influence the results. (2) Interview Guides: Structured or semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth, firsthand accounts from relevant stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students) concerning the learning experience, the method used, and their perceptions of the process.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data collection proceeded through the administration of the various instruments. The tests (pretest and posttest) provided the core quantitative data on student performance. Observations were conducted throughout the intervention period, and interviews were performed to gather supporting qualitative evidence. The collected quantitative data were then analyzed using the comparative test technique.

This typically refers to an inferential statistical procedure used to determine if the

difference observed between the mean scores of the two groups (experimental and control) is statistically significant, rather than being due to random chance. Given the design, the most appropriate specific statistical test would be the independent samples t-test (or a non-parametric equivalent if assumptions were violated). This statistical analysis is used to test the research hypothesis regarding the effectiveness of the treatment administered to the experimental group compared to the control group.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data recapitulation results, the post-test scores revealed that the average learning outcome score for 7th-grade students in Class VII.A, who used the differentiated teaching strategy, was 86.35, while the average score for Class VII.B, which received no treatment, was 59.35.

The post-test calculation for Class VII.A yielded a significance value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) (data not normally distributed). For Class VII.B, the significance value of 0.003 ( $> 0.05$ ) also led to the rejection of  $H_0$  (data normally distributed). Since the data from both groups did not meet the normality requirement for parametric testing, the Mann Whitney U Test was employed as a non-parametric solution.

The results of the Mann Whitney U Test indicated a significance value (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , which signifies a significant difference between the two groups. Furthermore, a U value of 0 demonstrates that the experimental group consistently obtained higher scores than the control group, indicating an exceptionally strong difference.

### Implementation of the Differentiated Strategy

In implementing the differentiated learning strategy, the teacher first determined the students' learning styles. Based on the learning style test administered via the *akupintar.id* application, the results showed that 10 students had an auditory learning style, 15 students had a visual learning style, and 6 students had a kinesthetic learning style.

The differentiated teaching strategy for *mahārah qirā'ah* (reading skill) was executed with the following steps:

1. Introduction: The teacher offered greetings, led the students in prayer, checked attendance, conveyed the learning objectives and benefits, and presented guiding questions to engage students based on their prior knowledge.
2. Core Activity (Differentiated Content and Process): The teacher divided students into three groups based on their learning styles. The teacher then distributed learning materials and instructional media tailored to each group: (a) Auditory learners were provided with media, specifically audio containing the text material; (b) Visual learners were provided with colored text material and colored vocabulary lists; (c) Kinesthetic learners were provided with cut-out vocabulary and text sentences, separated from their meanings; and (d) The teacher read and explained the material, followed by students repeating the reading. To initiate student-centered learning, the

teacher asked specific groups to read vocabulary, short sentences, and the meaning of a sentence.

3. Differentiated Process: (a) Visual learners observed the vocabulary and sentences presented on paper; (b) Auditory learners listened to the audio, then took turns listening to their peers read the vocabulary and text sentences; and (c) Kinesthetic learners matched the cut-out vocabulary and sentence pieces with their meanings while reciting the complete text sentence.
4. Teacher's Role: The teacher's position was to provide direction to students needing assistance during the individual learning process based on their respective learning styles, occasionally posing open-ended questions as a form of formative assessment to each group, and observing individual student interaction within the learning groups.

## CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this quasi-experimental study was to determine the effect of implementing a Differentiated Teaching Strategy, tailored to students' learning styles (auditory, visual, kinesthetic), on enhancing the Arabic reading skills (mahārah qirā'ah) of 7th-grade students at MTsN 2 Cilegon City. The study found that the Differentiated Teaching Strategy was highly effective in improving students' reading skills. The strategy involved identifying student learning styles using the *akupintar.id* application and subsequently differentiating the instructional content and process (media and activities) for each group. The pre-test and post-test results showed a significant increase in the experimental class that used the differentiated teaching strategy. The average pre-test score in the experimental class was 54.90, which increased to 86.35 on the post-test. The control class also saw an increase, from 45.45 to 59.42. Crucially, all students in the experimental class experienced a score increase, whereas in the control class, some student scores remained unchanged or decreased. The findings affirm that integrating Differentiated Instruction based on specific learning styles is a powerful and viable strategy for overcoming linguistic and non-linguistic challenges that hinder reading skill acquisition in Arabic. This approach effectively addresses the low motivation and varied backgrounds often observed in madrasah settings. The primary limitation lies in the quasi-experimental design, which, while pragmatic, does not allow for full random assignment, potentially affecting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study did not detail the long-term retention of the reading skills acquired or explore potential confounding variables (e.g., specific teacher competence, duration of exposure to the differentiated media). The initial normality test failure in one class necessitated the use of a non-parametric test (Mann Whitney U Test), which, while valid, limits the power of the analysis compared to a standard t-test.

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