

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in shaping the quality of human resources in every nation. As the world continues to change rapidly, education systems must adapt to meet new demands and challenges. This chapter covers the study's background, problem formulation, objectives and significance, scope and limitations, and key terms.

A. Background of the Study

Curriculum development in Indonesia continues to change along with the country's social, cultural, and economic conditions. Since gaining independence, Indonesia has made various efforts to improve the quality of education and prepare students to face global challenges. The curriculum used in schools plays an important role in achieving national education goals.

Curriculum development in Indonesia is constantly changing in response to the country's social, cultural, and economic situations. Since attaining independence, Indonesia has made a variety of measures to improve educational quality and prepare students for global problems. The curriculum utilized in schools is critical to meeting national educational objectives.

In 2006, the Indonesian government introduced the School-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan or KTSP). This curriculum gave schools the freedom to design learning materials based on the needs and characteristics of their students. KTSP focused on competencies; it means students were expected to gain not only knowledge but also the skills and attitudes needed in daily life (Depdiknas, 2006). However, KTSP faced challenges such as difficulty in assessment, lack of teacher training, and limited resources.

To address these issues, the 2013 Curriculum (K-13) was introduced. This curriculum promoted a thematic and integrated learning approach and emphasized character education. It aimed to produce students who are both academically capable and have good character (Kemendikbud, 2013). Even so,

many teachers had difficulty understanding the new curriculum, and suitable teaching materials were not always available.

In 2022, the Merdeka Curriculum was introduced to further improve the quality of learning. This curriculum gives more flexibility to teachers and focuses on the unique needs of each student. One of its key principles is differentiated instruction, which means adjusting the content, process, and learning outcomes based on students' abilities, interests, and learning styles (Kemendikbud, 2022).

Differentiated instruction is crucial, especially in diverse classrooms. Since learners come from various backgrounds and possess different abilities, it is essential for teachers to design materials that are accessible and comprehensible to all. This approach is especially relevant in English language classrooms, where students often demonstrate varying levels of language proficiency.

Tomlinson (2001) emphasizes that differentiated instruction is not merely a teaching strategy but a mindset focused on helping all students learn effectively. She explains that effective teachers plan their instruction by considering differences in what students learn (content), how they learn (process), how they demonstrate understanding (product), and the classroom environment. These four components can be adjusted based on students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. By implementing this approach, teachers can create inclusive and responsive learning experiences that support the individual needs of all learners.

In Indonesian high schools, textbooks continue to serve as the primary instructional resource in English language classrooms. Therefore, the content and design of these textbooks should ideally reflect the principles of differentiated instruction. However, not all textbooks consider learner diversity in a meaningful way. It raises an important question about the extent to which the textbooks currently used by students provide differentiated content that addresses various levels of student readiness and learning styles.

The Ministry of Education provides standardized textbooks, such as *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress* for Grade X. These textbooks are designed to

align with the national curriculum, known as Kurikulum Merdeka. This book has a significant impact on how students learn and what they achieve. As a result, analyzing its content through the lens of differentiated instruction becomes extremely relevant.

Textbook remain one of the most common teaching tools used in the classroom. Therefore, whether or not textbooks support differentiated content can have a direct impact on the equity and effectiveness of learning. Here are some previous studies that analyzed English textbooks but did not analyze the differentiation content in the books. For example, a study by Setyawati (2021) analyzed the readability level of English texts in a high school textbook and found that most texts were not appropriate for the students' grade level. Another study by Azizah (2024) investigated how the "Pathway to English" textbook integrated Pancasila Student Profile values, showing that the book supported character development but did not evaluate differentiation.

Meanwhile, the research by Pradnyandari et al. (2024) explored the extent to which the textbook "My Next Word" supported differentiated learning styles using VARK and concluded that the materials only partially addressed learner diversity and lacked clarity for teachers. There is other research that does not contain textbook analysis. The research by Dalila et al. (2022) examined the effect of differentiated learning within the PBL model. It provides empirical evidence that incorporating differentiated learning into the PBL model can effectively improve students' cognitive performance in scientific education.

Last, the study by Oktoma et al. (2025) examined the implementation of differentiated learning within the Merdeka Curriculum's framework. It concluded that they still need an improvement for optimizing differentiated instruction under the Merdeka Curriculum. From the five studies, some have touched on differentiated instruction. However, none of them have analyzed the differentiated content in textbooks. While many textbooks are used in schools, we do not know whether they reflect differentiated content or not.

There is a gap in understanding whether English textbooks used in Indonesian high schools have incorporated the principles of differentiated content. It raises a critical question, especially since teachers are expected to

implement differentiation but may rely on textbooks that do not support it. To address this gap, this study investigates one of the government-approved textbooks used in the Merdeka Curriculum: *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress* for Grade X. The textbook is widely used across schools and plays a key role in shaping instructional content. The research aims to analyze whether and to what extent the tasks in this textbook reflect differentiated content as defined by Carol Ann Tomlinson's framework.

B. Research Question

According to the background above, the researcher formulated problem of this study as following question:

“To what extent does the textbook *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress* Grade X reflect the principles of differentiated content as proposed by Carol Ann Tomlinson?”

C. Objectives of the Study

Based on the research question, this study aims:

“To reveal the presence and extent of differentiated content in the Grade X English textbook *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress* based on Carol Ann Tomlinson's theoretical framework.”

D. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute to the field of English language teaching by offering insight into how differentiated content is implemented in high school English textbooks. It is expected to provide several benefits for the following parties:

1. For English teachers

The findings can help increase awareness of how the textbook *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress* supports differentiated content. By identifying which tasks align with students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles, teachers can make informed decisions about how to adapt or supplement materials to better meet the needs of diverse learners. This study also supports more intentional lesson planning that aligns with the principles of differentiated instruction.

2. For textbook writers and publishers

This research may serve as constructive input for designing and developing materials that are more inclusive and learner-centered. By understanding the importance of different levels of difficulty, students' learning profiles, and opportunities for student choice, future textbooks can be better aligned with the principles of differentiated instruction as well as with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum.

3. For future researchers

This study provides a foundation for further investigations into differentiated instruction in educational materials. It may encourage similar research in other grade levels or subjects, or more in-depth analysis of other dimensions of differentiation such as process and product. This research may also inspire comparative studies between different textbooks or between government-issued and commercially published materials.

E. Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on analyzing differentiated content in the English textbook entitled *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress* for Grade X published by the Ministry of Education. The analysis will specifically examine how the textbook reflects the principles of differentiated content as proposed by Tomlinson (2001). The analysis is limited to the tasks found in the first semester of the textbook and does not cover content from the second semester.

The scope of differentiation in this study is also limited to the content dimension, which includes how the textbook addresses students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Other aspects of differentiated instruction, such as process (how students learn) and product (how students demonstrate learning), are not the focus of this research.

Furthermore, this study only involves textual analysis of the textbook and does not examine how the material is implemented in classroom practice. Therefore, the findings reflect the potential for differentiation as embedded in the material, not the actual teaching strategies used by teachers.

F. Definition of Key Terms

To provide conceptual clarity and avoid ambiguity in this study, several key terms are defined as follows:

1. Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is a pedagogical approach that aims to tailor teaching methods and materials to accommodate students' diverse learning needs. According to Tomlinson (2001), differentiated instruction involves proactive planning to adjust content, process, product, and learning environment based on three key student characteristics: readiness, interest, and learning profile. In this study, differentiated instruction serves as the theoretical foundation for analyzing how the textbook adapts content for diverse learners.

2. Differentiated Content

Differentiated content refers specifically to the variation in what students are expected to learn. It involves modifying instructional materials so that they are accessible and challenging for students with different levels of knowledge and skill. Tomlinson (2001) emphasizes that content differentiation should be based on students' readiness levels, interests, and learning preferences. In this research, differentiated content is the central focus of analysis within the selected textbook.

3. Content Analysis

Content analysis is a qualitative research method used in this study to systematically analyze the contents of the textbook. It involves identifying patterns, themes, and categories related to differentiated content.

4. *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress*

This refers to the English textbook published by the Ministry of Education and used by tenth-grade students in Indonesian senior high schools. This study only focuses on the first semester of the book.