CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The following chapter discusses the background of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, scope of the study, and significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Advancement continues to occur across diverse fields and requires all aspects of life to play along, one of which is the field of education. Education in the 21st century is characterized by the development of new literacies, such as digital literacy, information literacy, and media literacy (Mardhiyah et al., 2021). Educational practices are increasingly incorporating technology to cultivate learners' digital literacy and technological fluency. Similar to this progress, the Indonesian education system is also undergoing a dynamic evolution. Law Number 20 of 2003 stipulates that national education is rooted in Indonesian religious and cultural values, and responsive to the demands of changing times, which implies that national education is continuously renewed in order to remain relevant in the present and maintain a dynamic relationship with knowledge (Svalastog et al., 2021).

Advancements in education did not stop from occurring, even when the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world. By mid-April 2020, the pandemic's impact on education was immense, with a minimum of 1.3 billion schools globally, including 646.200 schools in Indonesia, forced to close during the outbreak

(Ali, 2020). As a consequence, an estimated 1.6 billion students, or 94 percent of the world's student population across more than 190 countries have shifted their traditional classrooms into remote learning as an emergency response (Ali, 2020; Muñoz-Najar et al., 2021; UN, 2020). Ali (2020) and Geng et al. (2019) explained that remote learning offers enriched educational opportunities where students can personalize their education through interaction and collaboration with other students. Nevertheless, the implementation of remote learning encounters plenty of challenges along the way. Students are struggling with their limited attention span which hinders them from learning autonomously (Mukhtar et al., 2020) and teachers are incapable of integrating technology into remote learning (Surahman et al., 2020). Unrecognized yet potent, these challenges lead to some prolonged negative impact.

According to the data shared by Sekretariat Nasional Satuan Pendidikan Aman Bencana (2021), one of the long-term negative impacts caused by remote learning is learning loss which is marked by students' diminished learning progress (Ali, 2020). Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MECRT), Nadiem Makarim, stated that the learning loss that occurs in Indonesia is equivalent to 6 months of learning loss for literacy, and 5 months of learning loss for numeracy (Amalia et al., 2023). Hence, on February 11, 2022, the Ministry officially launched the Merdeka Curriculum, or Kurikulum Merdeka as a solution and an attempt to transform Indonesian education by reducing the impact of learning loss. One of the improvements

in the Merdeka Curriculum is the emphasis on student-centered learning through the implementation of differentiated learning according to the stage of learner's achievement to optimize learning (Aprima & Sari, 2022). Differentiated instruction aims to address students' diverse learning needs (Abdillah et al., 2022) and fosters inclusive classrooms (Gheyssens et al., 2020). Consequently, this approach is considered helpful in reducing learning loss in the Indonesian education context.

Differentiated Instruction (DI) is a philosophy of and model for effective teaching and learning (Tomlinson, 2017). DI fosters a student-centered learning environment by allowing teachers to strategically plan the lesson according to students' needs, and provide a variety of techniques to assist students in grasping concepts, acquiring knowledge, and actively utilizing their newfound skills (Bondie et al., 2019). This approach fosters academic success by providing students with learning experiences tailored to their abilities (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020) and gives students the freedom to choose a learning method that suits their learning style, interests, and readiness so that students feel more motivated and have a sense of responsibility for their learning process (Bondie et al., 2019). The initial step of implementing DI is conducting a diagnostic assessment to map out learners based on their readiness level, learning profile, and interest (Pozas et al., 2021). With this learner-mapping data in hand, teachers can start designing a lesson plan or teaching module (Setiawan et al., 2022). The module emphasized differentiated instruction, encouraging teachers to modify the

content, process, and product to cater to the diverse learning needs within the classroom. This ensures all students have the opportunity to achieve success, regardless of their learning capabilities (Said, 2019). Teaching modules that reflect the concept of differentiated learning should include how to implement the differentiation, use a variety of methods in learning activities, and provide a variety of options for assessment according to the uniqueness of the learners.

Integrating differentiated instruction in the classroom can be tricky. Thus, strategies are needed to successfully tailor content, process, and product to students' readiness, interest, and learning profile (Tomlinson, 2017). Several researchers have discovered strategies for integrating DI in the classroom, including Hockett (2018), Lindner & Schwab (2020), and Peng et al. (2019). According to Peng et al. (2019), traditional DI strategies primarily involve grouping students, homogeneously or heterogeneously. However, the rise of information technology allowed innovations to occur in these strategies. Grouping can now be dynamic, adapting to students' needs in real-time, and interventions can be tailored accordingly. This shift contrasts with past practices where instruction was largely predetermined, with less flexibility to meet student differences. On the other hand, Lindner & Schwab (2020) found that DI can be implemented through collaboration, grouping based on student's abilities and interests, and modifying the curricular elements including modification of the content, process, product, instruction, assessment, learning environment, material, and time frame. Therefore,

drawing on Tomlinson's DI strategies, Hockett (2018) developed a set of handful strategies to implement differentiated in the classroom for grades 6-12. These strategies include modifying the content, process, and product to students' readiness, interest, and learning profiles.

While there have been studies investigating the integration of DI in teaching activities, there is a scarcity of research exploring the strategies used by English teachers in an attempt to integrate DI into the teaching module of Junior High School. Existing literature primarily focuses on the DI in the teaching process, omitting the strategies planned by teachers to integrate DI in their teaching modules. The strategies discovered in earlier studies are too general, there is no explanation of the teacher's specific strategy to differentiate the content, process, or product. Thus, a research gap exists regarding strategies used by English teachers in integrating DI, specifically in their teaching module.

Addressing this research gap is crucial to obtaining a comprehensive overview of strategies used by English teachers to integrate DI into their teaching modules. Identifying these strategies will provide valuable insight for the respective teachers and other teachers to construct an efficacious teaching module that meets the needs of the students and helps them make the most of their potential and talents.

1.2 Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the differentiated instruction strategies employed by teachers in their teaching modules, as evidenced by the teaching modules they have developed. This analysis will examine whether the strategies are explicitly stated or implicitly embedded. Based on this purpose, a research question followed by 2 subquestions were proposed, particularly:

1. How do teachers integrate differentiated instruction in the learning activities section of the English teaching module of Junior High School?

   1.1 What types of DI strategies are identified in the learning activities section of the English teaching module of Junior High School?

   1.2 Which DI strategies do most teachers use in the learning activities section of the English teaching module of Junior High School?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Based on the research questions above, this study aims to obtain an in-depth analysis of the differentiated instruction strategies integrated into the English teaching module. The current research on differentiated strategies integrated into the teaching module remains relatively scarce. By examining

the differentiated instruction strategies in the English teaching module, this research hopes to shed light on which differentiated strategies are mostly used and which strategies must be integrated more. This study intends to generate a profile of DI strategies that are commonly used to facilitate learning activities presented in English teaching modules published by teacher writers in the Indonesian MECRT's *Platform Merdeka Mengajar* (Emancipated Learning Platform), commonly referred to as PMM. The differentiated instruction strategies proposed by Tomlinson as refined in Hockett's (2018) list of DI strategies will be employed as the framework of reference in generating the profile.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the differentiated instruction strategies employed in the English teaching modules published by teacher writers in PMM. A number of modules written for 7 to 9 graders will be selected as the object of this study according to Brown's (2015) format of a lesson plan, specifically in the learning procedure. Tomlinson's DI strategies refined by Hockett's (2018) will be used as the framework of reference in analyzing the types of strategies employed in the modules as well as looking at how frequently the strategy is employed in the module.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is expected to provide insightful knowledge regarding differentiated instruction to several stakeholders in education, including teachers, curriculum developers, policymakers, and educational researchers and publishers. Handy strategies for the implementation of DI are available to guide teachers in differentiating the instruction in their classroom and help teachers understand the best practices for integrating DI into learning activities. The findings also intended to inform curriculum developers that further guidance is needed to support teachers in integrating DI. Furthermore, the study hopes to contribute to policymakers' discussion about the importance of DI and the need for resources and support to successfully implement DI in the classroom. While the concept of DI is well-established, some teachers may lack clarity on how exactly to integrate DI effectively into their teaching module. Therefore, this study would raise teachers' awareness and encourage a more deliberate application of differentiated instruction to meet diverse students' needs.