

The Effect of Differentiated Instruction on Eleventh Grade Students' Narrative Writing Skill at SMA Budi Murni 2

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This study aims to determine the effect of Differentiated Instruction on students' narrative text writing ability. In this study, there are two variables used, namely Differentiated Instruction as the independent variable and students' narrative text writing ability as the dependent variable. This study was conducted at SMA Budi Murni 2 Medan on eleventh grade students in the 2025/2026 Academic Year. The population of this study was eleventh grade students of SMA Budi Murni 2 Medan, while the research sample consisted of two classes selected by purposive sampling technique, namely eleventh grade students 3 as the experimental class and eleventh grade students 2 as the control class. This study used a quasi-experimental method with a pre-test and post-test control group design. Data were collected through writing tests before and after treatment. The results of the study showed that the narrative text writing ability of students taught using Differentiated Instruction experienced a better improvement compared to students taught using conventional methods. The average score of the experimental class increased from 61.94 in the pre-test to 76.39 in the post-test, while the average score of the control class increased from 58.19 to 66.39. The implementation of Differentiated Instruction is one of the solutions to improve students' writing skills because learning is adjusted to students' learning readiness, interests, and learning profiles so that they are more actively involved in the learning process. Therefore, it can be concluded that Differentiated Instruction is effective in improving the narrative text writing skills of eleventh-grade students of SMA Budi Murni 2 Medan.

Keywords: Differentiated Instruction, Narrative Text, Writing Skill, Quasi Experimental Method

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1. Introduction

Writing is one of the essential language skills in English learning. Writing is a thought process that involves planning, composing, and revising to produce a meaningful text [1]. Through writing, students are required to develop ideas, organize them, and use appropriate grammar and vocabulary. Among the various types of texts studied in secondary school, narrative text plays a crucial role in developing students' creativity, critical thinking skills, and communication skills. However, writing is often considered the most difficult language skill because students must simultaneously master various aspects, such as content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and writing mechanics [2].

The success of writing learning is influenced by various factors, one of which is the learning strategies used by teachers. Teachers need to consider students' needs, abilities, and characteristics to optimally achieve learning objectives. Based on initial observations at SMA Budi Murni 2 Medan, it was found that many eleventh-grade students still experience difficulties in writing narrative texts. Students often struggle to develop story ideas, construct a logical plot, use appropriate vocabulary, and apply correct grammar. These conditions result in students' writing being underdeveloped and not meeting the expectations of English writing lessons. This finding aligns with research [3] which states that limited vocabulary, poor grammar mastery, and lack of writing practice are the main factors affecting students' writing abilities.

To address these issues, learning strategies are needed that accommodate the diversity of students' learning needs. One approach that can be implemented is Differentiated Instruction. Differentiated Instruction is a learning approach that adapts content, process, product, and learning environment based on students' learning readiness, interests, and learning profiles [4]. Through student-centered learning, teachers can provide learning experiences more tailored to individual students' needs. Previous research has shown that implementing Differentiated Instruction can increase student engagement in learning and positively impact their learning outcomes [5].

Based on the issues outlined, it is important to examine the application of Differentiated Instruction in teaching narrative writing. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the effect of Differentiated Instruction on the narrative writing skills of eleventh-grade students at SMA Budi Murni 2 Medan. The results are expected to contribute to the development of more effective English learning strategies that meet the diverse learning needs of students.

2. Literature Review and Problem Statement

Writing is a complex productive skill because it requires students to develop ideas, organize them logically, and use appropriate grammar and vocabulary [1]. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), writing is often considered one of the most challenging skills due to students' limited opportunities to practice English in daily communication [3]. Among the various genres taught in secondary education, narrative text plays an important role in developing students' creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills through a structured sequence of events consisting of orientation, complication, and resolution [6]. To support successful writing instruction, an approach that can accommodate students' diverse learning needs is required. One relevant approach is Differentiated Instruction, which adapts content, process, product, and learning environment according to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles [4]. The importance of this approach is also supported that both teachers and students perceived Differentiated Instruction positively because it creates a more inclusive and responsive learning environment [7]. Likewise, [8] reported that the implementation of Differentiated Instruction contributes to improving student engagement and well-being by addressing learners' individual needs. Several studies have demonstrated the positive impact of Differentiated Instruction on students' writing performance. [9] found that this approach improved students' ability to generate ideas, compose narrative texts, and increase learning motivation. Similar findings were reported by [5], who showed that the integration of Differentiated Instruction into narrative writing instruction significantly enhanced students' writing skills. These findings suggest that learning experiences tailored to students' individual needs can improve both the writing process and learning outcomes.

However, previous studies have not produced completely consistent findings. [10] argued that although Differentiated Instruction has the potential to increase student engagement and learning outcomes, its implementation still faces challenges related to teacher readiness, limited instructional time, and difficulties in addressing diverse student needs. In addition, most previous studies have focused on conceptual discussions, development research, or the general implementation of Differentiated Instruction, rather than quantitatively measuring its direct effect on students' narrative writing achievement. Consequently, empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction in improving narrative writing skills at the senior high school level remains limited. This condition indicates a research gap concerning the application of Differentiated Instruction in EFL writing classrooms, particularly in narrative writing. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by examining whether the implementation of Differentiated Instruction has a significant effect on the narrative writing skills of eleventh-grade students at SMA Budi Murni 2 Medan.

3. Method

This research employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental research method. A quantitative approach is a research method used to test theories through variable measurement and numerical data analysis using statistical procedures [11]. In line with this, [12] states that quantitative research enables researchers to collect numerical data and analyze it systematically in order to produce valid and reliable conclusions. Therefore, this approach was considered appropriate for investigating the effect of Differentiated Instruction on students' narrative writing skills. The research design used was a pre-test and post-test control group design, which allows researchers to compare students' performance before and after treatment between the experimental and control groups [13]. In this study, Differentiated Instruction served as the independent variable, while students' narrative writing skills served as the dependent variable. The research was conducted during the 2025/2026 Academic Year at SMA Budi Murni 2 Medan.

The population in this study were eleventh-grade students of Budi Murni 2 High School, Medan. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which is a technique for determining samples based on specific considerations tailored to the research objectives so that the selected sample represents the characteristics required in the study [14]. The research sample consisted of two classes: eleventh-grade 3 students as the experimental class and eleventh-grade 2 students as the control class. The experimental class received treatment using Differentiated Instruction, while the control class was taught using conventional learning methods.

Data collection was conducted through a test method. The research instrument used was a narrative text writing test administered in the form of a pre-test and a post-test. The pre-test was administered before the treatment to determine students' initial abilities, while the post-test was administered after the treatment to determine students' writing skills improvement. Students' writing results were assessed based on five aspects of writing adapted from Brown: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics [15].

The data obtained were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS version 25. Data analysis began with descriptive statistics to determine the average, maximum, and minimum scores. Normality and homogeneity tests were then performed as prerequisites for statistical analysis. After the data met the necessary assumptions, hypothesis testing was conducted using an Independent Samples t-test to determine whether there was a significant difference between students' narrative text writing skills in the experimental and control classes after the treatment. Additionally, a paired-sample t-test was used to determine the improvement in students' narrative writing skills before and after treatment in each group. The results of this analysis were used as a basis for drawing conclusions regarding the effect of Differentiated Instruction on students' narrative writing skills.

4. Results and Discussion

Result

The effect of Differentiated Instruction on students' narrative writing skills was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research data were obtained from pre-test and post-test results given to the experimental and control groups. The analysis included descriptive statistics, normality tests, homogeneity tests, independent samples t-tests, and paired samples t-tests.

Aspect	Description
Key Findings	Visualization of results (graphs/tables) shows key patterns such as increases, decreases, differences between groups, or relationships between variables.

Aspect	Description
Comparison with Previous Research	The results show consistency/inconsistency with studies A, B, or other relevant literature, accompanied by methodological reasons or data characteristics.
Phenomena and Explanations	The phenomenon found is consistent/inconsistent with expectations. The contributing factors are explained, such as data assumptions, sample characteristics, or the influence of certain variables.
Preliminary Conclusions	Preliminary conclusions regarding the direction of findings, implications, and potential for further analysis.

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics

	Post_Test_Experimenta	Pre_Test_Experimenta	Post_Test_Contro	Pre_Test_Contro
N Valid	36	36	36	36
Missin g	0	0	0	0
Mean	76.39	61.94	66.39	58.19
Std. Deviation	9.681	11.419	14.571	11.598
Variance	93.730	130.397	212.302	134.504
Range	35	50	55	50
Minimum	60	40	40	40
Maximum	95	90	95	90

Based on Table 4.1, it can be seen that both the experimental and control groups experienced an improvement in narrative writing scores from the pre-test to the post-test. The mean score of the experimental group increased from 61.94 to 76.39, while the control group increased from 58.19 to 66.39. These results indicate that students who were taught using Differentiated Instruction achieved greater improvement in narrative writing skills than those who were taught using the conventional method.

Table 4.2. Normality Test Results

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Post_Test_Experimental	.140	36	.070	.951	36	.111
Pre_Test_Experimental	.145	36	.053	.963	36	.274
Post_Test_Control	.134	36	.102	.944	36	.065
Pre_Test_Control	.133	36	.111	.947	36	.083

The research data met the assumption of normality across all tested groups, as shown in Table 4.2. These results indicate that the data distribution is normal, making it suitable for parametric statistical analysis. Therefore, hypothesis testing can be conducted at the next stage.

Table 4.3. Homogeneity Test Results

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Value Based on Mean	.050	1	70	.824
Based on Median	.007	1	70	.934
Based on Median and with adjusted df	.007	1	69.922	.934
Based on trimmed mean	.043	1	70	.836

The research data shows homogeneous variance between the experimental and control groups, as seen in Table 4.3. This finding indicates that both groups have relatively equivalent data characteristics. Therefore, the analysis can proceed to the hypothesis testing stage.

Table 4.4. Results of the Independent Sample T-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Value	Equal variance assumed	5.153	.026	3.430	70	.001	10.000	2.916	4.185	15.815
	Equal variances not assumed			3.430	60.863	.001	10.000	2.916	4.170	15.830

Based on Table 4.4, the results of the Independent Samples t-test showed a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.001, which was lower than 0.05. This result indicates that there was a significant difference between the narrative writing skills of students in the experimental group and those in the control group after the treatment was administered. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted. It can be concluded that Differentiated Instruction had a significant effect on students' narrative writing skills.

Table 4.5. Results of the Paired Sample T-Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Post_Test_Experimental - Pre_Test_Experimental	15.278	7.459	1.243	12.754	17.802	12.290	35	.000
Pair 2	Post_Test_Control - Pre_Test_Control	8.472	13.029	2.171	4.064	12.880	3.902	35	.000

Based on Table 4.5, the results of the Paired Samples t-test showed that the significance value for both the experimental group and the control group was 0.000, which was lower than 0.05. This result indicates that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in both groups. However, the experimental group showed a greater improvement with a mean difference of 15.278, compared to 8.472 in the control group. These findings suggest that Differentiated Instruction was more effective in improving students' narrative writing skills than the conventional teaching method.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that Differentiated Instruction had a significant effect on students' narrative writing skills. The descriptive statistics showed that the mean score of the experimental group increased from 61.94 in the pre-test to 76.39 in the post-test, while the control group improved from 58.19 to 66.39. The greater increase in the experimental group indicates that students benefited more from instruction that accommodated their learning needs, readiness levels, and learning preferences.

The results of the Independent Samples t-test further confirmed the effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction. The significance value of 0.001 was lower than the significance level of 0.05, indicating a significant difference between the experimental and control groups after the treatment. This finding is consistent with previous studies which reported that Differentiated Instruction enhances students' writing performance by providing learning experiences that are tailored to individual differences. Through differentiated activities, students are given opportunities to engage more actively in the learning process and develop their writing skills according to their abilities.

Furthermore, the Paired Samples t-test demonstrated significant improvement in both groups; however, the experimental group achieved a higher mean gain score (15.278) than the control group (8.472). This suggests that although conventional instruction can improve students' writing skills, Differentiated Instruction contributes more substantially to students' progress. The improvement may be attributed to the flexibility of the instructional approach, which allows teachers to adjust content, learning processes, and learning products based on students' needs.

These findings support the view that effective writing instruction should consider learners' diverse characteristics. By implementing Differentiated Instruction, teachers can create a more inclusive learning environment that encourages students to express their ideas, develop creativity, and improve the quality of their narrative writing. Therefore, Differentiated Instruction can be considered an effective strategy for enhancing students' narrative writing skills at the eleventh-grade level.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion regarding the effect of Differentiated Instruction on students' narrative writing skills, it can be concluded that Differentiated Instruction was effective in improving the narrative writing skills of eleventh-grade students at SMA Budi Murni 2 Medan. The descriptive analysis showed that the mean score of the experimental group increased from 61.94 in the pre-test to 76.39 in the post-test, while the control group increased from 58.19 to 66.39. The results of the normality and homogeneity tests indicated that the data met the assumptions required for parametric statistical analysis. Furthermore, the Independent Samples t-test revealed a significance value of 0.001 (< 0.05), indicating a significant difference between the experimental and control groups. In addition, the Paired Samples t-test showed a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05) for both groups, with the experimental group achieving a higher mean difference (15.278) than the control group (8.472). These findings demonstrate that Differentiated Instruction provides a more effective learning approach than the conventional method in enhancing students' narrative writing skills by accommodating their learning readiness, interests, and learning profiles. However, this study was limited to one school and focused only on narrative writing skills; therefore, future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, examine other language skills, and explore the long-term effects of Differentiated Instruction in different educational contexts.

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