

## **Differentiated Assessment Practices in EFL Classrooms: Evidence from a Senior High School in Indonesia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Assessment plays an essential role in differentiated learning as it provides information about students' readiness, learning progress, and instructional needs. Through assessment, teachers can adjust instruction and learning activities to support diverse learners in the classroom. In English language teaching, assessment is expected to function as an integral part of the learning process rather than merely as a tool for measuring outcomes. This study aims to explore the implementation of differentiated learning assessment in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, focusing specifically on diagnostic and formative assessment practices. A qualitative case study design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of these practices. The study was conducted at SMAN 2 Makassar in October 2025, involving one English teacher selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Findings indicate that the teacher implemented diagnostic assessment at the beginning of the semester to identify students' initial abilities and employed continuous formative assessment to monitor learning progress and provide feedback. Key formative practices included real-time corrective feedback, consultation mechanisms during writing tasks, peer and self-assessment activities, and sequentially organized learning activities that supported progressive skill development. Student perceptions, gathered through questionnaires, were generally positive, with the majority appreciating teacher feedback, valuing sequential learning progression, and finding diagnostic assessment helpful for understanding their strengths and weaknesses. However, implementation of differentiated assessment remained limited in certain areas, particularly in task variation, the use of diverse assessment instruments, and systematic attention to students' interests and learning profiles. The study concludes that while principles of assessment for learning have been applied, further professional development is needed to strengthen differentiated assessment practices in responding to students' diverse learning needs, particularly in expanding beyond readiness-based differentiation to address the full spectrum of student characteristics.

**Keywords:** Differentiated Assessment; Diagnostic Assessment; Formative Assessment; EFL Classroom; Case Study; Student Perceptions

## INTRODUCTION

In the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), assessment is expected to function as an integral component of the learning process that systematically informs instructional decision-making and supports the development of students' language skills. Effective assessment practices are theoretically grounded in the principle of assessment for learning (AfL), which emphasizes the alignment between learning objectives, evidence of learning achievement, and teacher instructional responses (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Heritage, 2021; Popham, 2020). Within this framework, differentiated learning assessment is positioned as a pedagogical approach that allows teachers to tailor assessment tasks, criteria, and feedback based on students' readiness levels, learning profiles, and learning progress (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). This concept provides a theoretical basis that assessment not only measures final learning outcomes but also supports individual learning through accurate information about each student's strengths and needs (Brown, 2010). In practice, differentiated assessment acknowledges that students demonstrate their learning achievements through various means aligned with their diverse abilities, making it particularly relevant in heterogeneous EFL classrooms where language proficiency levels often vary significantly (Rafi, Pourdana, & Ghaemi, 2022).

Recent empirical research has demonstrated the potential of differentiated assessment in EFL contexts. Rafi et al. (2022), in their computer-mediated study with mixed-ability EFL learners, found that differentiated instruction combined with diagnostic assessment significantly improved students' performance, with lower achievers showing the most substantial gains when tasks were tiered to their readiness levels. Their findings underscore the importance of aligning assessment tasks with learner variability a principle central to differentiated assessment. Similarly, Song (2026) developed a differentiated English evaluation system based on multiple intelligences theory, demonstrating that such approaches improve students' skills, encourage autonomous learning, and provide tailored intervention suggestions while reducing teacher workload. These studies suggest that differentiated assessment, when systematically implemented, can address the persistent challenge of accommodating diverse learner needs in language classrooms.

In the Indonesian context, the implementation of differentiated assessment has gained renewed urgency with the adoption of the Kurikulum Merdeka (Merdeka Curriculum). This curriculum reform explicitly mandates differentiated learning as a core pedagogical approach, positioning teachers to accommodate student diversity in readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). A scoping review by Nugroho, Sugiyanto, and Prihadi (2025) examining the impacts of Merdeka Curriculum implementation found that differentiated learning and diagnostic assessment have been proven to increase learning effectiveness in Indonesian senior high schools. However, their review also revealed that authentic

and cognitive assessments still face implementation obstacles, highlighting the gap between policy expectations and classroom practices.

However, preliminary findings during the implementation of the AJARMI program at SMAN 2 Makassar reveal a persistent gap between these normative expectations and actual assessment practices. Based on classroom observations, feedback in formative assessment is still provided in a general manner and tends to be delivered collectively to all students without consistent adjustments to individual learning achievements or difficulties. In addition, the provision of formative feedback has not been implemented continuously at every stage of learning, meaning assessment information has not been fully utilized to monitor student learning progress or adjust instructional strategies. Thus, the ongoing assessment practices still tend to be uniform in their application, as feedback and learning follow-up have not been adjusted to the variation in student learning achievements. This condition reflects what Fitriyah et al. (2022) identified in their study of Indonesian EFL teachers: while teachers demonstrate awareness of assessment for learning principles, they encounter significant hurdles in engaging students in sustained reflective processes and adapting feedback to individual needs.

A recent review of the literature shows that empirical studies on differentiated learning in the EFL context continue to grow, but most still focus on instruction and teacher perceptions rather than assessment practices specifically. For example, a study on teachers' perceptions of differentiated instruction in EFL classrooms found various teaching strategies but also identified obstacles to implementation (Sentia & Febriani, 2023). Another study in Indonesia examined the implementation of differentiated learning strategies in EFL classrooms but did not specifically investigate assessment practices (Purnamaningwulan, 2024). A study by Febriani et al. (2024) on differentiated learning implementation in Central Bengkulu senior high schools found that teachers conduct initial diagnostic assessments to determine students' abilities, interests, and learning styles, but they face challenges including inappropriate diagnostic assessment results, time management issues, and limited training opportunities. Furthermore, a conceptual study on differentiated assessment in Indonesian EFL highlighted prospects and challenges but was not empirically grounded (Arsyad & Suadiyatno, 2024). More recently, Permana (2025) explored teachers' assessment practices for students with different speaking abilities under the Merdeka Curriculum, finding that while teachers use both formal and informal methods adjusted to student ability levels, challenges such as limited time, student confidence, and resource constraints persist. This condition indicates a research gap in empirical literature that directly observes and describes the practice of differentiated learning assessment carried out by teachers in Indonesian senior high school EFL classes.

To address this gap, the present study is guided by three main research questions. First, it explores how an EFL teacher at a senior high school in Indonesia implements differentiated assessment in the classroom. Second, it identifies the types of differentiated assessment strategies employed to accommodate students'

diverse readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. Third, it examines how students perceive the differentiated assessment practices implemented by their teacher. By describing these assessment practices, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on how differentiated assessment is understood and applied in the context of senior high school education in Indonesia. The findings are expected to serve as a basis for reflection for key stakeholders, including teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers, in designing and improving assessment practices that are more responsive to student diversity in EFL classrooms. As Nketsia et al. (2024) emphasize, understanding educators' knowledge and practices regarding differentiated instruction is essential for identifying professional development needs and enabling teachers to effectively model differentiated learning experiences. Therefore, this study contributes to the growing body of research on differentiated assessment in Indonesian EFL contexts while offering practical insights for strengthening assessment practices in the era of Kurikulum Merdeka.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Differentiated Learning: Foundations and Contemporary Perspectives**

Student diversity in abilities, interests, and learning styles is an inherent characteristic of contemporary classrooms, necessitating pedagogical approaches that respond systematically to these differences. Differentiated instruction, as conceptualized by Tomlinson (2014), represents a deliberate approach wherein teachers modify content, process, product, and learning environment based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. This framework moves beyond one-size-fits-all instruction (Subban, 2006) toward a responsive model that maintains rigorous learning expectations while providing multiple pathways for achievement.

Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that effective differentiation constitutes pedagogical decision-making grounded in teachers' understanding of students' learning needs. Pozas, Letzel, and Schneider (2021) and Coubergs et al. (2022) argue that differentiated instruction requires teachers to maintain identical learning objectives while strategically adjusting instructional approaches according to student characteristics. In the Indonesian EFL context, Widayanti, Suwastini, and Artini (2024) demonstrate that differentiated learning enables teachers to respond effectively to variations in students' language proficiency without compromising learning targets.

Recent empirical research has illuminated both the potential and challenges of differentiation. Kabtyimer and Zhao (2024) found that while teachers demonstrate familiarity with differentiation concepts, they exhibit gaps in understanding its core elements. Jufrianto et al. (2025) developed a validated framework for assessing differentiated instruction implementation barriers among Indonesian EFL secondary teachers, revealing significant discrepancies between teachers' theoretical knowledge and classroom practice process differentiation strategies

were implemented by only 33% of participants, highlighting the critical knowing-doing gap. Morais (2024) demonstrated that differentiation significantly enhances engagement and inclusivity when effectively implemented through strategies such as mixed-ability grouping and differentiated tasks.

### **Differentiated Learning Assessment: Theoretical Framework**

Differentiated learning assessment is defined as a continuous, integrated process that supports responsive teaching to student diversity. This assessment serves dual functions: helping teachers understand students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles so instruction can be tailored to individual needs, and providing evidence of learning that informs subsequent pedagogical decisions (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013; Sofiana, 2024). Setiawan et al. (2024) emphasize that beyond measuring outcomes, assessment functions as a reflective tool for monitoring progress and evaluating instructional effectiveness.

Recent Indonesian scholarship has examined differentiated assessment within the Kurikulum Merdeka framework. Nugroho, Sugiyanto, and Prihadi (2025), in their scoping review of Merdeka Curriculum implementation, found that differentiated learning and diagnostic assessment increase learning effectiveness, while authentic and cognitive assessments continue to face implementation obstacles. Kholid, Rahman, and Irawan (2024) investigated how junior high school teachers utilize diagnostic assessment to design differentiated learning modules, identifying five steps: assessing students' needs, setting objectives, designing activities, incorporating different learning styles, and conducting regular formative assessments.

Tomlinson (2014) articulates that assessment in differentiated learning encompasses three interrelated types:

**Diagnostic Assessment** is conducted before instruction to identify students' readiness, strengths, weaknesses, and interests as the foundation for designing differentiated learning (Popham, 2020; Brookhart & McMillan, 2020). Popham (2020) identifies four essential elements: individual-level information, revelation of strengths and weaknesses, coverage of diverse domains, and actionable information for instructional planning. In Indonesian EFL contexts, Kholid et al. (2024) operationalized this framework, demonstrating that diagnostic assessment enables teachers to map students' learning profiles and design differentiated modules responding to individual characteristics.

**Formative Assessment** encompasses ongoing evaluation during learning to monitor progress and adjust instruction based on evidence (Popham, 2020; Bayukkarci & Sahinkarakas, 2021). Heritage (2021) emphasizes that effective formative practice requires teachers to elicit evidence of learning, interpret it in relation to learning goals, and take pedagogical action a cyclical process central to differentiation. Nasr, Baradaran, and Nowrozi (2025), in their large-scale study of Iranian EFL contexts, found that teachers attributed greater value to monitoring and scaffolding practices than students, underscoring the importance of understanding

both teacher and student perspectives a consideration directly relevant to the present study's third research question.

**Summative Assessment** evaluates learning outcomes at the conclusion of instruction (Mogboh & Okoye, 2019). In differentiated contexts, summative assessment is designed flexibly, providing students with task choices and employing rubrics tailored to student characteristics while emphasizing individual progress (McTighe & O'Connor, 2005). Hu, Chen, and Chen (2025) found that diversified assessment methods significantly enhance students' interest, engagement, and sense of achievement, providing empirical support for flexible, varied summative assessment.

### **Assessment for Learning and Differentiated Assessment**

Differentiated assessment aligns closely with the assessment for learning (AfL) paradigm, wherein assessment supports rather than merely measures learning (Black & Wiliam, 2009). Nasr et al. (2025) articulate that AfL practices hinge on monitoring and scaffolding. Monitoring encompasses feedback provision and self-monitoring designed to highlight students' strengths and weaknesses (Lee & Mark, 2014). Scaffolding, rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development, refers to temporary assistance enabling students to perform tasks with support before achieving independent competence (Heritage, 2007). In differentiated classrooms, assessment must not only identify where students are but also provide actionable information about how to move them forward with scaffolds tailored to individual readiness.

### **Teacher Knowledge and Practice: Bridging the Implementation Gap**

A critical theme concerns the gap between teachers' theoretical knowledge and practical implementation. Jufrianto et al. (2025) found significant discrepancies between Indonesian EFL teachers' self-reported perceptions and observed practices while teachers possessed reasonable knowledge of differentiation principles, process differentiation strategies were implemented by only 33% of participants. Fitriyah et al. (2022) found that Indonesian EFL teachers encounter significant hurdles in adapting feedback to individual needs. Nugroho et al. (2025) identified teacher readiness as the critical variable determining successful implementation in Indonesian senior high schools.

### **Synthesis and Research Gap**

This literature review establishes that differentiated learning assessment is theoretically well-established as a responsive, continuous process encompassing diagnostic, formative, and summative components (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Empirical research in Indonesian contexts confirms both the potential and challenges of implementing differentiated approaches under Kurikulum Merdeka, with teacher readiness emerging as the critical success factor (Nugroho et al., 2025;

Kholid et al., 2024). A persistent gap exists between teachers' theoretical knowledge and classroom implementation (Jufrianto et al., 2025; Fitriyah et al., 2022), and understanding both teacher and student perspectives is essential for capturing the full picture of assessment practices (Nasr et al., 2025). However, limited empirical research directly observes and describes how Indonesian senior high school EFL teachers implement differentiated assessment, including specific strategies employed to accommodate diverse learners and how students perceive these practices. The present study addresses this gap by providing contextualized evidence from a senior high school in Makassar, guided by three research questions examining teacher implementation strategies, types of assessment employed, and student perceptions.

## **METHOD**

### **Design and Sample**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single-case study design to explore the implementation of differentiated learning assessment in an Indonesian senior high school EFL classroom. A qualitative approach enables in-depth and contextualized understanding of educational phenomena that cannot be adequately captured through numerical data (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The case study design is appropriate for examining contemporary practices within their real-life context (Yin, 2018). In this study, the case was bounded by one English teacher, her classroom practices, and the natural setting of SMAN 2 Makassar. The study was conducted at SMAN 2 Makassar, a public senior high school in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, in October 2025. The site was purposively selected based on preliminary information indicating the implementation of differentiated learning practices. Participants were selected using purposive sampling (Patton, 2015). The primary participant was one English teacher who met the following criteria: actively teaching EFL, familiar with differentiated learning concepts, willing to participate, and implementing differentiated assessment. In addition, 30 students from the teacher's class participated by completing questionnaires regarding their perceptions of the assessment practices. Student participation was conducted with parental consent and student assent. Including both teacher and student perspectives enabled data triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Nasr et al., 2025).

### **Instruments and Procedures**

Data were collected using four instruments to capture the multidimensional nature of differentiated assessment practices. First, classroom observations were conducted as non-participant observations across several sessions. Field notes focused on diagnostic assessment, formative assessment strategies, teacher–student interactions, feedback practices, and student responses. Observations were guided by a protocol adapted from Tomlinson's (2014) differentiated assessment framework. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher to

explore her understanding and implementation of differentiated assessment. The interview protocol included questions on assessment strategies, adaptation to student diversity, and perceived effectiveness. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Third, document analysis was used to examine supporting materials such as lesson plans, diagnostic instruments, formative assessment tools, and student work with feedback. These documents provided additional evidence and helped corroborate findings from observations and interviews (Bowen, 2009). Fourth, a student questionnaire was administered to 30 students to gather their perceptions. The questionnaire, adapted from Nasr et al. (2025), included Likert-scale and open-ended items addressing students' awareness of assessment practices, perceived usefulness of feedback, motivation, and suggestions for improvement. Data collection followed a sequential procedure, beginning with classroom observations, followed by interviews, document collection, and questionnaire distribution. Ethical considerations were strictly maintained, including informed consent, confidentiality, and secure data storage.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which involves three concurrent processes: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and coding data from observations, interviews, documents, and questionnaires. Coding combined deductive categories based on Tomlinson's (2014) framework (e.g., diagnostic assessment, formative feedback) and inductive categories emerging from the data (e.g., time constraints, student responses). Second, data display involved organizing the condensed data into matrices and narrative descriptions to facilitate pattern identification. A matrix was used to map assessment practices against types of assessment and dimensions of differentiation, while student perception data were grouped into thematic categories. Third, conclusion drawing and verification involved interpreting patterns and generating findings related to the research questions. To ensure validity, findings were verified through triangulation across data sources, member checking with the teacher, peer debriefing, and examination of disconfirming evidence (Miles et al., 2014). To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, including credibility (triangulation and member checking), transferability (thick description), dependability (audit trail), and confirmability (evidence-based interpretation). These strategies ensured that the findings are reliable, transparent, and grounded in the data.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the findings derived from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and student questionnaires conducted at SMAN 2 Makassar. The findings are organized according to the three research

questions: (1) the teacher's implementation of differentiated assessment, (2) strategies used to accommodate student diversity, and (3) students' perceptions of these practices.

## Teacher's Implementation of Differentiated Assessment

### Diagnostic Assessment Implementation

The findings show that the teacher implemented diagnostic assessment at the beginning of the semester to identify students' initial abilities, particularly in cognitive domains. This was evident from interview data where the teacher stated:

*"Biasanya di awal pertemuan... kasih tes supaya bisa dilihat kemampuan anak-anak itu."*

*(Usually at the beginning of the meeting... I give a test to see the students' abilities.)*

(Interview, October 1, 2025)

This statement indicates that diagnostic assessment was used as an entry point to understand students' readiness before instruction began. Document analysis further supports this, as the teaching module explicitly mentions that the diagnostic test focuses on reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing:

*"...untuk mengetahui kemampuan awal siswa pada aspek reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, dan writing."*

*(...to determine students' initial abilities in reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing.)*

(Document: Teaching Module)

However, the findings also reveal that diagnostic assessment was limited to academic aspects and did not include non-cognitive dimensions such as learning styles or interests. This limitation is confirmed by the teacher's statement:

*"Kalau untuk gaya belajar, saya jarang menggali lebih jauh..."*

*(For learning styles, I rarely explore them further...)*

(Interview, October 1, 2025)

This suggests that while diagnostic assessment was systematically implemented, it primarily focused on cognitive readiness rather than a holistic understanding of student diversity.

### Identification of Students' Strengths and Weaknesses

The teacher identified students' strengths and weaknesses based on diagnostic test results. Interview data indicate that the teacher analyzed student performance to determine their level of understanding:

*"Kalau nilainya rendah di bagian tertentu, berarti itu area yang masih lemah."*

*(If the score is low in a certain part, it means that is the weak area.)*

(Interview, October 1, 2025)

Document analysis further supports this finding, as variations in student performance were clearly visible in the diagnostic test results. For example, some students showed stronger performance in vocabulary but weaker performance in writing. These results enabled the teacher to categorize students based on their abilities and plan subsequent instruction accordingly. This indicates that diagnostic assessment was used effectively to identify learning gaps and inform instructional decisions.

### Use of Diagnostic Results for Instructional Decisions

The findings demonstrate that diagnostic assessment results were translated into concrete classroom actions. The teacher explicitly stated:

*“Hasil asesmen tersebut... bisa digunakan untuk pengelompokan siswa.”*  
(The assessment results can be used for grouping students.)

(Interview, October 9, 2025)

This was confirmed through observation data, where students were grouped based on ability levels and assigned different tasks:

*“Kategori rendah diberikan tugas fill in the blank, sementara kategori tinggi membuat kalimat.”*

(Lower-level students were given fill-in-the-blank tasks, while higher-level students created sentences.)

(Observation, October 9, 2025)

This finding indicates that diagnostic assessment played a functional role in supporting differentiated instruction, particularly in grouping and task adjustment based on student readiness.

### Formative Assessment Practices

Formative assessment was implemented continuously throughout the learning process to monitor student progress and support improvement. The teacher relied on daily performance and ongoing assessment:

*“Saya pakai nilai harian sebagai acuan...”*  
(I use daily scores as a reference...)

(Interview, October 9, 2025)

One of the most prominent elements of formative assessment was feedback. Observation data show that the teacher provided immediate corrective feedback during classroom activities:

*“Guru memberikan koreksi langsung...”*  
(The teacher provides immediate correction...)

(Observation, October 2, 2025)

In addition, the teacher implemented a consultation mechanism in writing activities:

*“Setelah paragraph 1 ... siswa konsultasi, revisi, lalu lanjut.”*  
(After paragraph 1 ... students consult, revise, then continue.)

(Observation, October 23, 2025)

The teacher also used collective feedback strategies to maintain a positive classroom atmosphere:

*“Saya presentasikan common mistakes... untuk hindari menegur langsung.”*

*(I present common mistakes to avoid directly criticizing students.)*

(Interview, October 9, 2025)

These findings indicate that formative assessment was actively integrated into the learning process, emphasizing feedback, revision, and continuous improvement.

### **Student Involvement and Learning Progression**

Students were actively involved in the assessment process through peer assessment, self-assessment, and reflection. Observation data show that students evaluated their peers during presentations:

*“Setiap kelompok menjadi tim penilai dan memberi komentar.”*

*(Each group becomes an assessment team and gives comments.)*

(Observation, October 23, 2025)

Self-assessment was also implemented through reflection tasks:

*“How do you feel... What are your difficulties?”*

(Observation, October 23, 2025)

Furthermore, learning activities were structured progressively. Observation and interview data confirm that lessons followed a sequence from reading to writing to presentation:

*“Mereka baca dulu, lalu buat teks, baru presentasi.”*

*(They read first, then write, then present.)*

(Interview, October 9, 2025)

This indicates that formative assessment supported not only evaluation but also structured learning progression.

### **Strategies for Accommodating Student Diversity**

#### **Differentiation by Readiness**

The findings show that differentiation was primarily implemented based on student readiness. The teacher grouped students into different ability levels and assigned tiered tasks accordingly. Observation data reveal:

*“Kategori rendah... fill in the blank; kategori tinggi... membuat kalimat.”*

*(Lower group... fill in the blank; higher group... create sentences.)*

(Observation, October 9, 2025)

In addition, the teacher adjusted the level of support provided to students. Lower-level students received more guidance, while higher-level students worked more independently. This indicates that readiness-based differentiation was systematically applied.

### **Differentiation by Interest**

Differentiation based on students' interests was not implemented in a structured manner. The teacher did not formally assess student interests but attempted to maintain engagement by varying activities. Students were given some flexibility in choosing topics within a general theme, such as social media. This suggests that differentiation by interest occurred implicitly rather than through systematic planning.

### **Differentiation by Learning Profile**

The findings indicate that differentiation based on learning profiles was not systematically applied. The teacher acknowledged:

*“Saya jarang menggali gaya belajar...”*  
*(I rarely explore learning styles...)*  
(Interview, October 1, 2025)

However, classroom activities such as reading, discussion, writing, and presentation indirectly accommodated different learning preferences. Despite this, the absence of structured identification of learning profiles indicates that differentiation was not fully implemented across all dimensions.

### **Students' Perceptions of Differentiated Assessment**

#### **Perception of Diagnostic Assessment**

Most students (80%) perceived diagnostic assessment as helpful in identifying their strengths and weaknesses. One student stated:

*“Tes di awal membantu saya tahu bagian mana yang harus saya perbaiki.”*  
*(The initial test helped me know what I need to improve.)*

However, 20% of students reported confusion about its purpose:

*“Saya agak bingung kenapa harus tes di awal...”*  
*(I was confused why we had to take a test at the beginning...)*

This indicates that while diagnostic assessment is beneficial, clearer explanation is needed. These findings suggest that while diagnostic assessment is generally effective and positively received, its implementation would be more optimal if accompanied by clear communication of its purpose. Providing explicit explanations about how the results will be used to support learning can help reduce student anxiety and confusion, and at the same time enhance students' engagement and understanding of the assessment process.

### **Perception of Formative Feedback**

Students showed highly positive perceptions of feedback, with 90% agreeing that it helped improve their work. For example:

*“Feedback sangat membantu... saya bisa memperbaiki langsung.”*  
(Feedback is very helpful... I can immediately fix my mistakes.)

This response indicates that students value feedback as a direct and practical guide for correcting their errors. Immediate feedback allows them to recognize mistakes while the learning activity is still ongoing, which helps prevent repeated errors and strengthens their understanding of language use.

Students also appreciated the consultation process:

*“Kita bisa konsultasi tiap paragraf... lebih percaya diri.”*  
(We can consult each paragraph... more confident.)

This demonstrates that feedback plays a crucial role in supporting student learning. This suggests that the step-by-step feedback mechanism not only improves the quality of students' work but also increases their confidence in completing tasks. By receiving feedback gradually, students feel more supported and less overwhelmed, as they are able to revise their work continuously rather than waiting until the final stage.

### **Perception of Peer and Self-Assessment**

Peer assessment received mixed responses. While 60% of students found it useful, some felt uncomfortable:

*“Kadang agak malu kalau dikomentari teman.”*  
(Sometimes I feel embarrassed when commented on by friends.)

This response indicates that peer assessment may trigger affective factors such as anxiety, embarrassment, or lack of confidence, particularly when students are not yet accustomed to evaluating one another. It also suggests that students may question the credibility or seriousness of peer feedback, which can influence their level of acceptance. In contrast, self-assessment was positively perceived by 83% of students:

*“Refleksi bikin saya tahu apa yang harus dipelajari.”*  
(Reflection helps me know what to study.)

This finding shows that self-assessment supports students in identifying their own difficulties and learning needs, thereby encouraging greater responsibility for their learning process.

### **Perception of Learning Progression and Overall Experience**

Students appreciated the structured learning progression, with 87% agreeing that step-by-step learning improved their understanding:

*“Dari baca, lalu nulis, lalu presentasi... jadi paham.”*  
(From reading, writing, to presenting... I understand better.)

This response indicates that a sequenced learning process enables students to build their knowledge gradually, moving from comprehension to production. Such progression helps reduce confusion and allows students to develop confidence before engaging in more complex tasks such as presentation.

In addition, the majority of students (87%) reported overall positive learning experiences in the classroom. One student stated:

*“Guru tidak marah... jadi nyaman belajar.”*  
(The teacher does not get angry... so learning feels comfortable.)

This suggests that the teacher’s supportive attitude and feedback approach contribute to a positive emotional climate, which is essential for effective learning. A comfortable environment encourages students to participate actively without fear of making mistakes.

This study examined the implementation of differentiated assessment in an Indonesian senior high school EFL classroom, focusing on diagnostic and formative assessment practices as well as students’ perceptions. The findings indicate that while the teacher demonstrated meaningful integration of several key principles of differentiated assessment, the implementation remains partial, particularly in addressing the full range of student diversity. In terms of diagnostic assessment, the teacher was able to identify students’ initial abilities, determine strengths and weaknesses, and use the results to inform instructional decisions such as grouping and task differentiation. This aligns with Popham’s (2020) framework and supports findings by Kholid et al. (2024), who argue that diagnostic assessment enables teachers to map student readiness and design responsive instruction. However, the diagnostic process was limited to cognitive aspects such as reading, vocabulary, grammar, and writing, while non-cognitive dimensions like learning styles and interests were not systematically explored. This suggests that differentiation was largely based on readiness rather than a comprehensive understanding of student diversity. As Tomlinson and Moon (2013) emphasize, effective differentiation should address readiness, interest, and learning profiles. The absence of these dimensions reflects what Jufrianto et al. (2025) identify as a gap between teachers’ theoretical understanding and classroom practice. Similarly, Muthmainnah et al. (2025) highlight that Indonesian teachers often implement differentiated assessment inconsistently due to limited conceptual understanding and practical constraints.

In contrast, formative assessment practices were implemented more comprehensively and consistently. The teacher demonstrated the ability to identify learning gaps, provide continuous feedback, involve students actively, and structure learning progression effectively, which aligns with Heritage’s (2007) framework.

Feedback emerged as a particularly strong element, as the teacher consistently provided immediate, specific, and constructive responses during classroom activities. This finding supports Baddane (2025), who argues that effective formative feedback enhances student engagement, promotes self-regulated learning, and improves learning outcomes. The use of real-time correction accompanied by explanations helped students understand not only what was incorrect but also why, thereby strengthening their conceptual understanding. Additionally, the consultation process during writing tasks reflects scaffolded learning, where students receive step-by-step guidance. This aligns with Heritage (2021) and Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, as well as Nasr et al. (2025), who emphasize the importance of scaffolding in supporting gradual learning development.

Another important finding is the teacher's use of collective feedback, which allowed students to learn from common mistakes without being singled out. This approach contributed to a supportive learning environment and reduced anxiety, aligning with Brookhart and McMillan (2020) and Baddane (2025), who stress the importance of balancing feedback with students' emotional well-being. Student involvement in assessment was also evident through peer assessment, self-assessment, and collaborative correction activities. These practices reflect the concept of "assessment as learning" (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013), where students actively engage in evaluating their own and others' learning. However, students' responses to peer assessment were mixed, with some expressing discomfort or preference for teacher feedback. This finding is consistent with Backlund (2025), who notes that students may perceive peer assessment as either helpful or unreliable depending on its implementation. Therefore, peer assessment requires careful guidance and clear criteria to ensure its effectiveness.

The study also found that differentiation strategies were primarily focused on readiness. The teacher effectively used ability grouping and tiered tasks to accommodate different proficiency levels, which aligns with Tomlinson (2014), who identifies readiness-based differentiation as a common starting point for teachers. However, differentiation based on interest and learning profile was not systematically implemented. Although the teacher varied activities to maintain engagement, this approach was intuitive rather than structured. This finding supports Jufrianto et al. (2025), who report that process differentiation strategies are less commonly applied in practice. This limitation should be understood within the context of practical challenges, as Muthmainnah et al. (2025) highlight that heavy workloads and time constraints often hinder full implementation. Therefore, the teacher's success in applying readiness-based differentiation should be seen as a significant achievement, even though further development is needed to address other dimensions of student diversity.

Students' perceptions of differentiated assessment were generally positive, although some important nuances emerged. Most students found diagnostic assessment helpful in identifying their strengths and weaknesses, supporting Tomlinson and

Moon's (2013) view that pre-assessment fosters self-awareness. However, a small proportion of students expressed confusion about the purpose of diagnostic assessment, indicating the need for clearer communication. This aligns with Backlund's (2025) finding that students may perceive assessment as unclear when its purpose is not explicitly explained. Feedback was highly valued by students, with many reporting that it helped them improve their work and increased their confidence. This finding reinforces Baddane's (2025) argument that formative feedback plays a crucial role in enhancing motivation and learning. The consultation process was particularly appreciated, as it allowed students to improve their work progressively rather than facing final evaluation without guidance.

Peer assessment, however, produced mixed perceptions, reflecting both its potential benefits and challenges. While some students found it useful, others preferred teacher feedback due to concerns about reliability. This suggests that peer assessment requires structured implementation and explicit training, as highlighted by Nasr et al. (2025) and Backlund (2025). Students also responded positively to the structured learning progression, noting that step-by-step instruction improved their understanding and confidence. This finding supports Doubet (2024), who argues that scaffolded learning enhances engagement and accessibility for diverse learners. Overall, students reported a comfortable and supportive learning environment, indicating that differentiated assessment contributes not only to cognitive development but also to positive emotional experiences.

These findings suggest several implications for practice. Teachers need support in expanding diagnostic assessment to include interests and learning profiles, while maintaining effective formative practices such as feedback and student involvement. Clear communication about the purpose of assessment is also essential to reduce confusion and anxiety (Heritage, 2021). For policymakers, the findings highlight the importance of sustained professional development, as teacher readiness remains a key factor in successful implementation (Nugroho et al., 2025). This study is limited to a single case and therefore offers analytical rather than statistical generalization (Yin, 2018). Future research should involve multiple cases, examine long-term implementation, and explore the relationship between differentiated assessment and learning outcomes, while also addressing practical challenges such as teacher workload (Jufrianto et al., 2025; Muthmainnah et al., 2025).

## CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence of differentiated assessment implementation in an Indonesian senior high school EFL classroom, addressing gaps identified by Arsyad and Permana. The findings show that meaningful differentiated assessment is feasible within the constraints of Indonesian secondary education, particularly in diagnostic and formative practices. The teacher's systematic use of diagnostic assessment, consistent feedback, student involvement,

and structured learning sequences reflect principles advanced by Carol Ann Tomlinson (2014), W. James Popham (2020), and Margaret Heritage (2021).

However, full alignment with theoretical frameworks especially in assessing student interests and learning profiles remains challenging. This partial implementation reflects the complex realities of classroom practice rather than failure, echoing Jufrianto et al.'s (2025) observation of a persistent knowing–doing gap. Student perception data further indicate strong appreciation for feedback and diagnostic support, alongside mixed views on peer assessment, highlighting both the promise and complexity of student-centered approaches. As Indonesia advances the Kurikulum Merdeka, this study offers grounded insight into practical implementation. Ultimately, as emphasized by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Susan Moon (2013), assessment should not merely measure learning but actively support every learner's development.

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