

The Role Of Teaching Aids In Supporting Differentiated Pedagogy Among Arabic Language Teachers

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Abstract

21st-century education demands that educators cater to the diversity of student potential, particularly following the abolition of the class streaming system in 2019, which created mixed-ability classes. However, the unreadiness of Arabic language teachers, who often remain bound by traditional methods, has been found to hinder the student learning process. Therefore, this study aims to explore the role and integration of Teaching Aids in supporting the implementation of Differentiated Pedagogy among Arabic language teachers. This qualitative study employs a case study design using semi-structured interviews with experienced Arabic language teachers at Jawahir Al-Ulum Religious High School, Johor. The data analysis outlined four main themes: selection strategies for Teaching Aids based on student inclination and cognitive levels; effective characteristics of Teaching Aids encompassing real materials and multimedia; suitability measurement mechanisms through teacher reflection; and implementation challenges involving resource, time, and training constraints. Overall, the study concludes that Teaching Aids function as a critical strategic instrument, not merely a support tool, in bridging student cognitive gaps. The implications suggest that teacher training programs should be empowered with innovations in Teaching Aid development to ensure a more effective and inclusive implementation of Differentiated Pedagogy in Arabic language education.

Keywords: Teaching Aids; Differentiated Pedagogy; Arabic Language Education; Mixed-Ability Classes; Instructional Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The world of education is currently undergoing a rapid evolution parallel to technological advancements, aimed at producing competent and competitive human capital (Mohd Izani & Wan Muna Ruzanna, 2020). This shifting landscape demands that educators master new knowledge and accommodate pedagogies capable of meeting the diverse cognitive needs of students (Zurina et al., 2021). This reality of diversity is inherent in human nature, as individuals possess varying levels of understanding and learning styles whether visual, auditory, or kinesthetic as emphasized by Nurin Wajahah, Wan Mohd Nuzul Hakimi and Hafsa (2024) regarding students' diverse learning profiles. Consequently, embracing diversity within the classroom is critical for establishing active learning and effective two-way communication (Hamir & Mohammad Hilmi, 2019; Mohamed Shalikin & Abdul Ghani, 2025).

However, the issue of teacher unreadiness in addressing student diversity remains a primary challenge, particularly following the Ministry of Education Malaysia's (MOE) abolition of the class streaming system in 2019 (Zurina et al., 2021; Mohd Izani & Wan Muna Ruzanna, 2022; Borham et al., 2024; Ghani & Wan Daud, 2023). This situation has resulted in mixed-ability classes, rendering the "One-Size-Fits-All" approach no longer relevant. Teacher unpreparedness in this regard, as highlighted by Aksorn et al. (2019) and Danial (2020), can disrupt cognitive development, cause student confusion, and ultimately lead to the risk of student dropout.

In the context of Arabic language teaching, this issue is more pronounced as teachers still tend to favor traditional methods, such as translation and teacher-centered approaches that lack interactivity (Abdul Razif et al., 2019; Ghani et al., 2022). This weakness is further compounded by a failure to diversify pedagogical approaches and a lack of engaging Teaching Aids. According to Paul Mupa and Tendeukai Isaac Chinooneka (2015), teachers who rely solely on textbooks without exploring relevant and interactive teaching aids render student's passive and stifle critical and creative thinking.

Recognizing this reality, the integration of pedagogical approaches with the use of Teaching Aids is viewed as an effective solution to bridge the gap in student diversity. Therefore, this study is highly significant in exploring the role of Teaching Aids in supporting the implementation of Differentiated Pedagogy among Arabic language teachers. The application of Differentiated Pedagogy through the modification of content, process, and learning products assisted by appropriate teaching aids is expected to enhance student acceptance of instruction and ensure that language learning objectives are achieved holistically.

Arabic language education in Malaysia has undergone significant evolution since its introduction through the j-QAF program in 2005 (Nazilah et al., 2017; Ghani et al., 2022). Although Arabic is recognized as an important foreign language under the Education Act 1986, its implementation still faces critical constraints, particularly regarding teaching aids resources and instructional strategies. Mastery of linguistic aspects such as syntax and morphology alone is insufficient; teachers must possess high pedagogical competence to ensure effective instruction (Nazri et al., 2014).

In facing 21st-century education, the role of the teacher is no longer merely a disseminator of information but a facilitator who wisely integrates technology and teaching aids. According to Nor Hadisah (2024), teachers need to leverage technological advancements to create active learning environments. This aligns with the view of Abdul Rasid (2021), who states that learning effectiveness depends on the synergy between the teacher, the student, and the material. Teachers are responsible for modifying teaching materials to suit the diverse knowledge levels of students to capture their interest.

However, the reality on the ground indicates an issue of teacher unreadiness in catering to student diversity. Many Arabic language teachers are found to be still bound by traditional methods, such as the grammar-translation method, which is teacher-centered, causing students to become passive and less interested (Abdul Razif et al., 2019; Asma et al., 2020; Borham et al., 2024). The failure of teachers to apply current approaches and a lack of variation in teaching aids hinder the achievement of learning objectives, specifically in mastering the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Muna, 2016; Mohamed Shalikin & Abdul Ghani, 2025).

To address the issue of diverse student levels, especially following the abolition of the class streaming system in 2019 the "one-size-fits-all" approach is no longer relevant (Zurina et al., 2021). As an alternative, the practice of Differentiated Pedagogy is seen as the best solution. This concept, pioneered by Carol Ann Tomlinson, emphasizes modifying instructional elements such as content, process, product, and environment to celebrate the inherent diversity of students (Tomlinson, 2014). Research by Fairuz et al. (2017) also supports that this approach can enhance student motivation and teaching effectiveness.

Therefore, the successful implementation of Differentiated Pedagogy relies heavily on the support of effective teaching aids, whether electronic or non-electronic (Danial Arif, 2020). The integration of Differentiated Pedagogy and the innovative use of teaching aids align with the aspirations of the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025) to bridge the student achievement gap. Consequently, this study is conducted to examine the role of teaching aids in supporting the implementation of Differentiated Pedagogy among Arabic language teachers, ensuring that the potential of every student across different levels can be optimized.

METHOD

As postulated by Chuan (2006), a research design serves as a systematic blueprint that directs the data collection and analysis processes based on predetermined variables, ensuring the study proceeds in a logical and coherent trajectory. Aligning with this framework, this study adopts a qualitative research paradigm, prioritizing the acquisition of primary data through semi-structured interviews. This methodological approach enables a profound exploration of participants' perspectives, thereby fulfilling the study's research questions and objectives. Unlike quantitative inquiries, qualitative research emphasizes the depth and richness of data derived from a focused sample rather than the magnitude of respondents (Ang Kean Hua, 2016). Furthermore, the data analysis is underpinned by a deductive logical reasoning approach, which synthesizes specific observations into broader generalizations (Neuman, 2006; Resichadt & Cook, 1979). This analytic strategy facilitates the extraction of meaningful insights pertinent to the context of Arabic language education.

The efficacy of the sampling process is pivotal in establishing a study's validity and reliability. Chua (2006) asserts that appropriate sample selection is a prerequisite for ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of research findings. Consequently, the population for this study comprises Arabic language teachers from Jawahir Al-Ulum Islamic Religious High School, Senggarang, Johor, selected for their direct expertise and relevance to the domain of Arabic language education. To elicit rich and diverse insights, the researcher employed purposive sampling, a technique widely utilized in qualitative inquiry. Specifically, the participants were identified among teachers instructing under the Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini (KBD) framework at the institution. This strategic sampling ensures that the data gathered is strictly aligned with the research objectives and questions.

To guarantee that the respondents possess the requisite competency to contribute meaningfully to the study, strict inclusion criteria were delineated. The selection of teachers was contingent upon the following prerequisites:

1. Possession of a minimum of two (2) years of teaching experience in the Arabic Language subjects named Al-Lughoh Al-A'rabiah Al-Mua'sirah.

2. Holding at least a Diploma qualification in Arabic Language or related Islamic disciplines such as Usuluddin, Syariah, or Dirasat Islamiyyah.
3. Demonstrated commitment and willingness to engage fully throughout the interview process. This rigorous selection process ensures the acquisition of high-quality, contextually grounded data from individuals deeply immersed in the practice of teaching Arabic, thereby enhancing the validity and insightfulness of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the qualitative data analysis obtained from in-depth interviews with Arabic language teachers. The primary objective was to explore the role and integration of teaching aids in supporting the implementation of Differentiated Pedagogy. Through thematic analysis, the data has been classified into four emerging themes: (i) Strategies for selecting teaching aids, (ii) Characteristics of effective teaching aids, (iii) Mechanisms for measuring teaching aid suitability, and (iv) Implementation challenges faced by teachers. Each theme elucidates how teaching aids function as a critical instrument in bridging the gap in student proficiency levels.

Strategies for Selecting Teaching Aids Supporting Differentiated Pedagogy

The selection of teaching aids in the context of differentiated pedagogy demands careful consideration and is not merely supplementary to the teaching session. The findings indicate that teachers employ systematic selection strategies based on student inclination, cognitive levels, environmental factors, problem-solving needs, and multiple intelligences.

1. Selection Based on Student Interest and Inclination

Teachers prioritize the selection of materials aligned with student interests to enhance focus and enjoyment during the Learning and Facilitation session, as well as to ensure variety in every topic. Respondents 2 and 9 emphasized:

“My selection leans more towards the students' own inclinations. Okay, for example, and another thing, the teaching aid must not be the same; it should vary and differ according to the topic's needs and student interests” (R2). *“Multi-use and easiest for students to understand”* (R9)

2. Adaptation According to Cognitive Level and Readiness

Beyond interest, the selection of teaching aids is critically based on the students' ability levels to avoid failing to meet teaching objectives. Teachers need to diagnose the level of student understanding before determining the type of material, as stated by Respondents 7 and 5: *“First, I will look at the extent of the students' ability or their level of understanding.”* (R7). *“Yes, I follow the level and so forth.”* (R5)

3. Environmental and Facility Considerations

The physical suitability of the class and the availability of technology also determine the selection of teaching aids. Teachers assess the logistics of the classroom to ensure the smooth usage of the materials. According to respondent 6 explained: *“If we want to choose the material, we indeed have to look at the topic first... based on the topic's suitability, and I like teaching aids that suit the learning atmosphere and the topic”* (R6). *“First, I look at the class condition; if I want to use technology, for example, is it easy to set up the projector in that class or not, can we access technology easily.”* (R6).

4. Problem-Solving Orientation

Teaching aids are also selected as an intervention strategy to resolve specific learning problems faced by students. Respondent 1 elaborated on this diagnostic approach: *“When we want to choose teaching aids, we look at the problem first. It means we look at what the problem is. For example, while teaching, we find that pupils face a problem there. So, we look at the problem. And that problem will help us choose what kind of material suits our pupils”* (R1)

5. Integration of Multiple Intelligences

Finally, the selection of materials is adapted according to students' learning styles (auditory, kinesthetic, visual) to support individual differences. Respondent 4 stated: *“Prepare the teaching aids according to the student's intelligence characteristics; there are auditory teaching aids, kinesthetic, and electronic, and some lean more towards the student's thinking power, for example, what is that name, flashcards”* (R4).

Characteristics of Teaching Aids Supporting Differentiated Pedagogy

This theme outlines the physical and technical specifications of teaching aids found to be most effective in differentiated Arabic language teaching, encompassing real materials, multimedia elements, and practicality.

1. Real Materials (Maujud) and Visual Stimulation

The use of real materials that can be touched (hands-on) is a key feature emphasized to assist students' conceptual understanding. Three respondents (R1, R4, R9) highlighted this aspect: *“...when we speak about Arabic language mastery, it is usually towards materials that are real [maujud]”* (R1). *“Yes, real materials. It means we give them the material... Maybe we can use, like mine, that small whiteboard”* (R4). *“So, teaching aids are like real materials”* (R9). These materials are reinforced with the use of color to stimulate cognition, as stated by Respondent 2: *“Regarding the characteristics of teaching aids, I prefer using colored papers classified as real materials because being colorful can stimulate students' thinking, and they easily remember if we use colored materials because we classify something using color.”* (R2)

2. Electronic and Multimedia Integration

Electronic-based teaching aids are chosen for their ability to attract the interest of the digital generation and to facilitate teachers in modifying content rapidly. Respondents 1 and 5 explained: *“...audio materials, yes, audio-video materials, because Arabic involves content, so the selection of audio and video is based on learning content... the suitable teaching aids are materials in the form of audio and video as well”* (R1). *“Ok, I use a lot of teaching focused on electronic materials to teach, for example, computers... a lot of computers now because we can modify them quickly according to student levels and so on”* (R5). Furthermore, electronic elements are integrated into class activities for interactive learning: *“Yes, electronic flashcards for flip card activities so students enjoy interactive learning, electronic, or we can just prepare cards that students can choose.”* (R4)

3. ICT Applications and Gamification

The use of ICT platforms and gamification (such as Quizizz and Kahoot) allows for self-paced learning and enjoyable assessment. Respondents 3 and 7 shared: *“I will use teaching aids containing ICT elements, okay ICT, for example, presentation via*

slide shows is one, the second is from the verbal aspect in class” (R3). “Games like Quizizz, Kahoot, Canva, and Genially and all that, and this gamification must follow the level... Technology is easy; if it's not there, teachers must put in some effort. For example, making manila cards; if there is technology, it's easy, just project it.” (R7)

4. Multifunctionality and Practicality

Practicality, durability, and multifunctional capabilities are highly emphasized to save teachers' time and energy. Respondents 6 and 8 stated: *“Okay, and the characteristics are usually we make something that can attract students... and practical, can be dismantled and reassembled, so it lasts a long time” (R6). “I will make multifunctional teaching aids because teachers' time is limited, and we have additional task burdens, not just teaching” (R8).*

Mechanisms for Measuring Teaching Aid Suitability

The effectiveness of teaching aids in supporting differentiated pedagogy is evaluated through two main approaches: student feedback and teacher reflection.

1. Student Feedback

Direct student response in the classroom serves as the primary indicator of whether the material succeeds or fails. Respondents 1, 2, and 9 explained: *“Teaching aids suit student needs in the subject; this we base on response from pupils response, and we do an evaluation like reinforcement tests after finishing the topic” (R1). “Yes, I observe the response from the pupils towards the material” (R2). “We make teaching aids based on topic needs with the hope of facilitating student understanding, and to see if it works, we look at how the student response is in class” (R9). “From the response result of that Q&A, we can see whether the student got the topic we taught using the teaching aid effectively” (R9).*

2. Teacher Pedagogical Reflection

Teachers also conduct post-teaching reflection to assess the achievement of objectives and determine the need for material improvement for future use. Respondents 2 and 7 stated: *“Yes, we look at the response then reflect, we do it. If usually with exercise books, it's with marks, right? If with quizzes, we see the assessment marks... or give them prizes” (R2). “After that, reflection for the teacher too, was the objective achieved? Okay, so after the assessment session, I can know whether this teaching aid can be used in the future for the same student level or not” (R7).*

Challenges in Implementing Teaching Aids Supporting Differentiated Pedagogy

The study identified various constraints faced by teachers, covering aspects of student acceptance, limited resources, time management, cost, and professional training.

1. Student Acceptance and Readiness

Weak foundational language proficiency and student boredom pose major hurdles to the effectiveness of teaching aids. Respondents 3, 7, and 9 shared these experiences: *“Secondly, while teaching. Sometimes we just started a new teaching aid, and we are not sure of the students' acceptance... After teaching, only then we know that the use of said teaching aid caused students to be bored. It is boring, the repetition from the aspect of teaching and learning, repetition of the topic. So, we only realize the impact afterwards” (R3). “Like students not focusing on class; even when we explain many times, they don't understand. Even though they can just refer to the dictionary... they still want to ask the teacher even though they can use the dictionary as a teaching*

aid” (R7). *“So far, there are also students facing difficulty due to a lack of basics in Arabic knowledge. For them to accept teaching using teaching aids is a bit hard”* (R9).

2. Limited Teaching Aid Resources

Arabic language teachers face difficulties in obtaining ready-made materials, forcing them to build materials themselves, which requires high creativity. This issue was voiced by four respondents: *“The main challenge is limited materials because we are material-centered, so materials need to be abundant... This abundant material requires a lot of effort to prepare”* (R1). *“The challenge is the aid materials are sort of very limited. Or we don't have many ideas to make them because we [don't] have much time”* (R6). *“If other subjects, we see on Facebook many people share. But for Arabic, this is lacking, so it is us who have to be creative to make these things”* (R8). *“Teaching aids, the challenge is not getting many materials for this upper secondary level”* (R9).

3. Classroom and Time Management

The use of teaching aids was found to be challenging in terms of class control and the division of time between material preparation and teaching implementation. Respondents 2 and 5 stated: *“One, control, student control in class. In our heads when in such a situation. First, must control. Maybe by shouting or cheering, take care of class control; secondly is preparation time for teaching aids and time during implementation in class, if it's too fun sometimes we fear it exceeds the time”* (R2). *“If from my own perspective, it is the preparation time; must do it much earlier... Indeed, we want to produce something, it must take some time to think, explore”* (R2). *“If following strictly to real teaching, it's a bit hard. Yes, the challenge is time; I will use both electronic and real materials... electronic is fast. To set up and spread-out things takes time”* (R5).

4. Financial Constraints

Financial factors also act as a barrier when teachers must spend their own money to produce quality materials. Respondent 3 mentioned: *“The challenge has two aspects, before and after. Okay, if before, sometimes the usage is more towards cost; sometimes there is a little cost expenditure to make one teaching aid”* (R3).

5. Lack of Professional Training

The absence of specific courses on Differentiated Pedagogy for Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini (KBD) teachers forces them to rely on self-initiative through Professional Learning Communities (PLC) with colleagues. Respondent 4 explained this situation: *“Malay and English subject teachers are provided with differentiated pedagogy courses. But here... we KBD teachers have no differentiated courses, but we must be creative ourselves on how to apply differentiated learning forms. It means what, PLC. PLC from colleagues of other subjects to apply in our class”* (R4).

The selection of teaching aids that supports student diversity is a critical strategy in the implementation of material-centered differentiated pedagogy. This discussion focuses on four main aspects: selection methods, material characteristics, effectiveness evaluation methods, and implementation challenges, to ensure that teaching objectives are met and new insights are generated for students. In terms of selection methods, the primary focus is on adapting materials to subject requirements, intelligence tendencies, and student capability levels. Study respondents emphasized that the critical initial step is to identify student problems and proficiency levels before creating material

innovations. This approach aligns with the view of Idris (2001), who asserted that teachers must consider students' intelligence levels; for instance, proficient readers are given varied reading materials, while students with weak reading skills are assisted through demonstrations, flowcharts, or video screenings. This is further supported by Noorazman et al. (2018) and Nurul Haniza et al. (2017), who found that examining the suitability of student levels is a prerequisite in designing teaching aids to align with student progress.

Furthermore, the selection of teaching aids must also be based on student interests and profiles to ensure enjoyable learning. According to Najwa, Azman, and Mohd Hilmi (2017), the main purpose of teaching aids is to strengthen teacher instruction, making it more interesting and effective. This indicator serves as an important guideline in material-centered strategies that consider readiness, prior knowledge, and student culture, as suggested by Rasheed and Wahid (2018) and Tomlinson (2017). Beyond student factors, environmental factors such as classroom facilities specifically the availability of audio-visual aids and electrical sockets, also influence material selection, especially those based on technology. Although the use of technology is justified to meet the interests of the modern generation as stated by Rabaah et al. (2021), a balance between electronic and non-electronic materials remains important in Arabic Language teaching and facilitation. Mohamed Nor Azhari et al. (2014) also added that teaching methods must be adapted with teaching aids based on the topic, an approach practiced by the Arabic teacher (LAM) in this study to support differentiated instruction.

Turning to the characteristics of teaching aids that support differentiated pedagogy, priority is given to the use of concrete materials that stimulate student senses. Edgar Dale (1969) explained that students acquire more meaningful experiences when utilizing multiple senses of sight, touch, hearing, taste, and smell during the learning process. Support for concrete materials is reinforced by Abdul Razif et al. (2019), who stated that such materials not only attract attention but also clarify teacher delivery. However, in line with current developments, teaching aids that integrate technology and electronic elements are also emphasized due to their ability to facilitate rapid content modification. Noorazman et al. (2018) suggested that teachers be provided with adequate training in using advanced technological equipment to produce interactive teaching and learning sessions that meet the aspirations of the Ministry of Education Malaysia.

Next, the principles of multifunctionality and practicality are important characteristics in the construction of effective teaching aids. The constructed materials should be versatile, where a single model can be used across different teaching phases, such as set induction and reinforcement. Nurul Haniza et al. (2017) highlighted this principle of diversity through the example of using replicas, which not only explain abstract concepts but also function as reinforcement tools. Additionally, practicality in terms of size and ease of assembly was emphasized by the Arabic teacher (LAM) to ensure smooth classroom management. Noorazman et al. (2018) agreed that practical and innovative teaching aids facilitate teachers in conveying ideas effectively and increasing student understanding without being burdened by technical or logistical issues in the classroom.

To measure the effectiveness of the selection and use of these teaching aids, teachers can evaluate through student responses and Classroom-Based Assessment. Julianah et al. (2023) stated that interactive teaching aids act as stimuli that make students more active and prompter in providing feedback. This view is supported by Pratiwi et al. (2022), who found that clear content delivery through appropriate teaching aids can

broaden students' cognitive horizons. Besides observing responses, various Classroom-Based Assessment instruments such as quizzes, worksheets, and observations allow teachers to detect material weaknesses and make immediate improvements, as outlined by Hariatul Hafidzah et al. (2021). The post-teaching reflection process also becomes a mandatory routine for teachers to re-evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the material-centered strategies implemented.

However, the implementation of this approach is not without limitations, particularly involving cost, time, and teacher knowledge. Faez et al. (2013) found in their study that although teaching aids can increase student interest, constraints in preparation time and a lack of teacher creativity often limit their usage. Furthermore, classroom control issues pose a challenge when activities based on teaching aid involve student movement in large groups, which potentially disrupt focus if not managed well. Therefore, a balance between selecting engaging materials, efficient classroom management, and teacher readiness is critical in ensuring the success of differentiated pedagogy based on teaching aids.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teaching aids serve not only as supportive resources but also as essential strategic instruments in the effective implementation of Differentiated Pedagogy for Arabic language instruction. The results highlight that the efficacy of this method is significantly dependent on educators' expertise in implementing needs-based selection strategies, incorporating responsive material attributes particularly authentic materials and technology and performing ongoing assessment via self-reflection. Despite encountering significant hurdles, including resource restrictions and time constraints, the study demonstrates that adept manipulation of teaching aids can close cognitive gaps and improve engagement among students with diverse competence levels. Thus, this study indicates that prioritising the enhancement of teaching aids in teacher training programs is essential for achieving a more inclusive and effective Arabic language education.

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