Indonesian English Teacher's Stories in Designing Differentiated Speaking Activity Instruction: A Narrative Study

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ABSTRACT

This inquiry aimed to explore and make sense of the stories of an English language teacher's experiences using the CEFR framework to design the DI of speaking activity instruction. More specifically, the research was intended to understand the usage of CEFR in designing differentiated learning of speaking activity instruction. To achieve the purpose of the research, a narrative inquiry is employed. One English language teacher at a junior high school in Indonesia participated in this research and shared her experience using CEFR as a tool for designing differentiated learning. The data were collected through the online interview to collect information from the teacher's Zoom application and analyzed qualitatively in steps. The findings showed that in narrative research, limited attention has been paid to how English teachers constructed their differentiated teaching-speaking instruction through a CEFR framework. this narrative inquiry indicated that CEFR accommodated students' needs and fostered students' competencies, effectively designing differentiated teaching and speaking instruction. English teachers had different stories in constructing differentiated instruction (DI) tailored to different learner needs within the CEFR framework.

Keywords: Speaking Activity; CEFR Framework

INTRODUCTION

Effective teaching is correlated to the student's academic achievements and study goals (Grants,2011). In the English language teaching context, the English teacher must consider the student's needs to promote their achievements and goals. Knowing students at different levels and needs is important in promoting their competencies (Nurkamto,2018). The Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) is the alternative framework for English language teachers to design teaching instruction for students' needs (Savski, 2023). The principle of CEFR is a perspective descriptor for language learners to achieve the goal of being able to communicate (Folley, 2022). The Council of Europe (2011) classifies language proficiency in particular areas, such as basic, intermediate, and advanced. On the

other hand, Zheng (2016) gives a more detailed proficiency category: A1 and A2, including basic users; B1 and B2 distinction intermediate users called independent users; and last, C1 and C2 levels are advanced, proficient users. Conducting a needs analysis based on the CEFR allows teachers to individualize instruction and provide for the unique needs of each student. It helps identify the specific areas where students require additional support or challenge (Renandya, 2018). For example, some students may excel in vocabulary but need help with pronunciation, while others may have strong speaking skills but need to work on grammar and fluency (Sulistyaningrum, 2021).

However, in Indonesia context still limitless information on how to construct differentiated teaching speaking instruction in junior high school grades. It is because rarely a best practice or research story about differentiated teaching speaking instruction. One such approach to gaining students speaking competencies is through recognition of the differentiated instruction model (Tomlinson, 2013).
The main issue is that Asian people are not proficient in constructing teaching English instruction which has an impact on students' English competency (Pitsuan, 2014). Comparing the gap in several countries we describe the practical solutions in several countries. So far, to solve the problem of low proficiency Thai institutions have developed their standard of evaluation and assessment of English proficiency (Deygers 2017). Furthermore, many Thai learners need more satisfactory proficiency in English. Consequently, the English language reform policy emphasized in Thailand (Ministry of Education, 2014) the use of CEFR in the design of language curricula, learning goals, testing, assessment, and designing of teaching English instruction (Hiranburana et al., 2018).

In other countries, a survey (Nguyen, 2017) Japan realized that the proficiency of English language learners is low, so the minister of education attempted to implement teaching and learning English modified by CEFR, Choong (2021) revealed more detail in their findings, starting with Japan's education focus on changing the paradigm from curriculum-oriented to proficiency-oriented. Another issue differs from Malaysia countries because English is a second language (Ishak,2018). Moreover, accepting the framework is still difficult to incorporate CEFR into teaching instruction (Uri,2018). Another issue is that CEFR is unpopular in Indonesia; Hamid (2018) argues it is only implemented in Higher Education in Secondary, Senior, and Vocational High Schools. A comparison between Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, and Malaysia. Similarly, in Indonesia, English learners are still low in speaking proficiency (Hamid,2020).

The most successful way to learn English is by mastering oral skills. They are called productive when they convey ideas clearly (Nasir, 2017). Helping students develop their competency in English is the critical aim of Indonesian language teachers; the situation must change by upskilling their proficiency through teaching English effectively (Richards, 2017). The European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) provides a valuable framework for implementing differentiated instruction

in teaching speaking. It has recently become a widely recognized and influential tool in language education (Deygers, 2018).

Our narrative inquiry study aimed to explore how practical designing differentiated instruction through the CEFR is in teaching speaking. It purposes to better understand what teachers and learners do in teaching and learning. Barkhuzein et al. (2014) defined narrative inquiry as an effective research design used to examine topics such as teachers' experiences of teaching implementation and innovation. In order to with the definition, the study was concerned with how differentiated instruction through CEFR impacts students' learning and speaking experience in the classroom. Even though previous research has reported how CEFR is a descriptor in English language communication, that is still limited information on how CEFR is the differentiated instruction model of teaching speaking effectively. The research questions addressed in the present study as follows are:
Can you tell me about your first-time constructing teaching instruction?
What story does the participant tell about designing differentiated speaking instruction?

LITERATURE REVIEW

CEFR and Differentiated Learning

This literature review aims to explore the integration of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and differentiated instruction in language teaching. The CEFR, introduced by the Council of Europe in 2001, has emerged as a universally recognized language proficiency framework encompassing various aspects of language education, including curriculum design, teaching methodologies, learning processes, and assessment practices (Council of Europe, 2001). As a reference for language learning, the CEFR provides valuable guidance for educators in designing effective teaching methods, implementing appropriate learning approaches, and developing evaluation strategies aligned with learners' specific needs and contexts (Council of Europe, 2020). By following the guidelines and standards set by the CEFR, educators can ensure that their instructional practices cater to their students' diverse linguistic backgrounds, abilities, and goals.

One of the significant advantages of using the CEFR is its ability to facilitate the interpretation and comparison of learning outcomes across different learning environments (Haris et. al 2015). Since the CEFR is based on objective standards that various countries have validated (Yuce,2022), it allows for a more standardized language proficiency assessment (Sahi, 2022). This standardized approach enables educators and stakeholders to understand learners' language abilities and progress better, regardless of the specific educational context. Integrating differentiated instruction within the framework of the CEFR holds promise for addressing the individual needs and differences among language learners (Carrol,2020).

Differentiated instruction emphasizes tailoring teaching methods, materials, and assessments to accommodate students' diverse learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses (Tomlinson, 2017). By combining the principles of differentiated instruction with the CEFR's guidelines, educators can create more inclusive and learner-centered language learning environments that promote engagement, motivation, and improved language proficiency (Forster,2018). However, integrating the CEFR and differentiated instruction may pose challenges and require careful implementation (Faber,2018). Teachers may need professional development and training to effectively implement differentiated instruction strategies within the parameters set by the CEFR (Smets,2022). Additionally, curriculum design and assessment practices must align with the CEFR's proficiency levels and the principles of differentiated instruction to ensure coherence and effectiveness in language teaching (Hashanah,2023).

Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, this review aims to participate light on the relationship between the CEFR and differentiated instruction, highlighting the potential benefits, challenges, and considerations associated with their integration (Suprayogi,2022). By examining empirical studies, case examples, and scholarly discussions, this review provides valuable insights and practical recommendations for educators and researchers interested in enhancing language teaching practices by integrating CEFR and differentiated instruction.

Self-Efficacy and Speaking Skills

Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, which later became known as the social cognitive theory, introduced the concept of individuals' belief in their ability to successfully perform, manage, and control the necessary actions to accomplish tasks (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy has a significant impact on individuals' thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and motivation (Zulkosky, 2009), making it a fundamental and influential factor. When a student possesses high self-efficacy, they are more likely to set ambitious goals, demonstrate a strong commitment towards those goals, approach challenging tasks with confidence, view tasks as motivating challenges that spur them to exert more effort and experience lower levels of anxiety (Mills, 2014). These characteristics contribute to improved performance and greater success.

Research has indicated that self-efficacy plays a significant role in language learning and directly impacts achievement and performance. One study by Mills et al. (2007) focused on intermediate-level French students and found that self-efficacy strongly predicted their final course grades. Students with firmer self-efficacy were observed to employ various effective learning strategies, demonstrate better self-regulation, and sustain their efforts to complete tasks, resulting in better performance (Wang et al., 2013). Moreover, a positive correlation between self-efficacy and speaking skills has been identified (Desmaliza & Septiani, 2017). Students with high self-efficacy in speaking were more engaged in class

participation, exhibited greater study efforts, and showed fewer adverse emotional reactions when facing challenges (Darmawan et al., 2021). Another study conducted by Chen and Hsu (2022) involving 310 participants reported that EFL learners with higher levels of self-efficacy willingly took on learning content that required higher proficiency, leading to enhanced language skill development.

METHOD

Design and Samples

Narrative inquiry is a research method to explore the meaning teachers and learners make about their experiences (Barkhuizen, 2011, 2016; Barkhuizen & Consoli, 2021). The narrative design assisted the researcher in establishing a rapport with participants to learn and exchange the meanings of the stories in the research process, which added a validity check to the overall analysis of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Adopting this design enables participants to reflect deeply on their experiences through stories about their experiences designing instruction using CEFR as differentiated instruction in the classroom. The participant for this study were chosen considering specific criteria like access to the participants and data collection, including validity and ethical concerns (Maxwell, 2005). The researchers chose one English teacher who had experience incorporating CEFR in the design of speaking instruction. There are reasons we recruited one participant, because rarely practical by English teachers rarely use CEFR in their teaching practice, and the close relationship between the researchers and the participant helped to easily build rapport during the interview. Researchers rewarded the participant for her participation in this study.

The detailed information of this participant is described in Table 1.

Tables and Figures are presented center, as shown below and cited in the manuscript.

Table 1. the demographics information of participant

Demographics Information of Participant	
Names	Fx
Gender	Female
Age	36
Educational Qualification	Master in English Language Education
Teaching Experience	14 years
School	State Junior High School Village

Instrument and Procedure

A pseudonym was given to the participant. The participant was female and had 14 years of teaching experience. Participant taught English at public Junior high schools in Indonesia. A semi-structured interview was conducted to collect stories and experiences from the participants. We used this instrument as a conversation to generate more insights into English teachers. Before conducting the interviews, we first contacted the participant via Zoom application. It was undertaken due to the spread of coronavirus disease in Indonesia, as we could not interview the participants directly on the site or in face-to-face meetings. We used Indonesian, which is the participant's first language. It aimed to make the interviewer and the participants closer, and the participant felt relaxed when the interview took place. The duration of the interviews ranged between 30 minutes and 60 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in Indonesia and then translated into English. Then, the participants involved in the interview received a copy of their initial interview transcriptions. It was used in member checking to confirm and clarify or even provide an additional comment to convey the interviewees' intended meanings correctly and accurately. In the interview data, we identified the themes from participant interviews and protocol writing related to their real stories.

Data Analysis

After the data had been collected, we began the narrative analysis by carefully transcribing the interview recordings myself and reading the transcription repeatedly. In the process of retelling the stories, we narrated every event, story, and experience that the participant told us by connecting the place and time in a meaningful way. Lastly, We used a cross-case analysis technique (Creswell, 1998) to manage the complexities of the stories into manageable themes and sub-themes, to find the similarities and differences among the stories, and to relate the findings to the existing literature of the related studies. To obtain the stories in relation to the experiences of teacher, an in-depth narrative interview was used. In other words, I allowed the participants to speak either in Indonesian or English when they told their stories. Among the participants, one of them used English to share the stories, and therefore grammatical errors appeared in the interview extracts. My interview with each participant lasted for about 20-30 minutes, and I tried to minimise my reaction during the interview to avoid my influence on the stories. In order not to miss the participants' stories, the interviews were by agreement verbally recorded via a digital voice recorder. To ensure the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and verification of the narrative interview data and to minimize interpretation in the final report, we included the participants in this process by returning both the transcriptions of the stories and the analysis with the aim of getting their feedback and comments. This process is part of relational responsibility in the narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to negotiate boundaries, anonymity, and ethical issues with their participant.

RESULT

The Lecturer's Story
The participant described the teaching procedures:

> *First, I greet my students and briefly explain to them the purpose of the lesson: to enhance their self-efficacy in speaking through the differentiated model. I also asked them about their anxiety when speaking in front class and told them the importance of self-efficacy in developing communication skills and building their confidence. (Interview Via Zoom, 23 April 2023). Second, I introduce the differentiated Model as a creative and interactive approach to improving their speaking skills.*

> *Third, I instructed them to do a warm-up activity: Word Association (15 minutes) the activities were to distribute index cards or slips of paper with random words or phrases to each student, Instruct students to stand up and find a partner, Set a one-minute timer and ask students to take turns speaking about the word on their card or slip of paper, using it as a starting point for a conversation, encourage students to build on each other's ideas and maintain the conversation flow, after one minute, have the students switch partners and repeat the activity with a new word last repeat this process several times, allowing students to engage in multiple conversations. (Interview Via Zoom, 23 April 2023).*

> *I designed the collaborative Storytelling (20 minutes). First, divided their class into small groups of 3-4 persons, provided each group with a prompt or a starting sentence for a story, and instructed each group to take turns adding a sentence or a paragraph to the story, building upon what has already been shared. It Encourages students to be imaginative, creative, and supportive of each other's contributions. Circulate among the groups, providing guidance and feedback as needed. Last, after a designated time, ask each group to share their completed story with the class by presenting their product individually. I gave them an optional way to present their product based on their interest. (Interview Via Zoom, 23 April 2023).*

> *I led a class discussion about the activity, focusing on the process of collaboration, creativity, and the challenges students faced. Then, I asked them to provide constructive feedback to their peers, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. I distributed peer feedback forms or worksheets for students to provide written feedback to their group members. Last, emphasized the importance of supportive feedback and a growth mindset. (Interview Via Zoom, 23 April 2023)*

> *I keep attention to enhancing my students' confidence and motivation to communicate effectively. When they do this in groups, I also join them to give responses when they are challenged to find ideas. I always give them regular feedback and reflection opportunities to help my students understand their strengths and areas for improvement. (Interview Via Zoom, 23 April 2023).*

Participant believed regular feedback is crucial for students' growth and development. Participant provides ongoing feedback that focuses on their strengths and improvement areas. When students exhibit practical communication skills, participant also acknowledges and reinforces their efforts, building their confidence. Simultaneously, the participant provides constructive feedback to guide their progress and offers specific improvement strategies.

> *I create opportunities for them to showcase their progress, such as presentations or speaking events. Recognizing their efforts, appreciated their hard work and inspired them to continue improving. Celebrating their accomplishments boosts their confidence, motivates them to strive for further success, and reinforces the value of effective communication. (Interview Via Zoom, 23 April 2023).*

In addition, participant told us:

> *To give feedback and provide reflection opportunities for students to assess their performance. Through self-reflection activities, such as journaling or group reflections, students can identify their strengths, areas for improvement, and strategies that have proven effective.*

Participant told:

> *My experience in implementing differentiated instruction through the CEFR profoundly impacts students' learning and speaking experiences in the classroom. By accommodating individual needs, fostering language proficiency, promoting self-expression, and providing targeted feedback, differentiated instruction empowers students to become confident and effective communicators. Through this approach, students not only acquire and master the target language but also develop essential skills for effective communication in various contexts (Interview Via Zoom, 23 April 2023).*

A participant said that using (CEFR) has profoundly impacted her students' learning and speaking experiences in the classroom. By embracing this approach, the participant has witnessed the transformation of students into confident and effective communication. Through the accommodation of individual needs, the fostering of language proficiency, the promotion of self-expression, and the provision of targeted feedback, differentiated instruction has empowered students to acquire and master the target language while developing essential skills for effective communication in various contexts.

I need help determining my students' proficiency levels, which requires comprehensive and reliable assessments, which may be time-consuming and resource-intensive. *I need to employ valid assessment methods, such as speaking tasks and rubrics, to evaluate students' abilities effectively. (Interview Via Zoom, 23 April 2023).*

The participant said that the solution, I provide clear guidelines and training to some expert English lecturers University on conducting reliable assessments aligned with the CEFR levels. Collaborate with language experts or help me with standardized proficiency tests to ensure consistency and accuracy in assessing students' language skills.

I think developing my students' self-efficacy, and their belief in their speaking abilities is a crucial aspect of the English language. Because More opportunities to practice speaking can help my students' confidence. If they have not practiced enough in real-life speaking situations, such as conversations or presentations, they may feel unprepared and need more confidence when speaking. (Interview Via Zoom, 23 April 2023).

The participant thought promoting active participation could enhance her students' language acquisition, motivation, fluency, confidence, real-world communication skills, collaborative learning, and critical thinking abilities. Creating a supportive and interactive learning environment that encourages student engagement in speaking activities will improve their language proficiency and future success. Participant told:

My experience in implementing the differentiated Speaking model instruction profoundly impacts students' learning and speaking experiences in the classroom. By accommodating individual needs, fostering language proficiency, promoting self-expression, and providing targeted feedback, differentiated instruction empowers students to become confident and effective communicators. Through this approach, students not only acquire and master the target language but also develop essential skills for effective communication in various contexts (Interview Via Zoom, 23 April 2023).

The participant said that using the model has profoundly impacted her students' learning and speaking experiences in the classroom. By embracing this approach, the participant has witnessed the transformation of students into confident and effective communication. Through the accommodation of individual needs, the fostering of language proficiency, the promotion of self-expression, and the provision of targeted feedback, differentiated instruction has empowered students to acquire and master the target language while developing essential skills for effective communication in various contexts.

Our study described the English teacher of a Junior High School who shared experience with CEFR as the tool of descriptors to design differentiated teaching speaking instruction. The participant indicated that to prepare speaking instruction participant has the responsibility to keep attention to the students' learning profile and readiness. It is in line with what Echevarria (2010) revealed the English teacher must consider the students' profile and needs as the best in implementing teaching strategies. The participant in this study described Differentiated instruction, guided by the CEFR, recognizes the uniqueness of each student, and caters to their individual needs. By conducting assessments and using the CEFR's proficiency levels as a guide, the teacher has identified the students' specific strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. Consistent with (Gregory, 2007; Heacox, 2002) teachers can provide basic or advanced proficiency students' current levels by CEFR so they can explore ideas of the topics in different contexts. Adopting CEFR for optimal student speaking development is to varied teaching strategies and activities in accordance with the individual needs of students (Suprayogi et al., 2017). Our study identified three components of

differentiated teaching and speaking instruction related to the participant shared. The participant described CEFR as the differentiated instruction that can be done in the teaching process through two principles learning profile and readiness. (Tomlinson and Moon, 2013), The differentiated model's implementation of teaching speaking should pay attention to the dimensions called content, process, and product (Tomlinson, 2010), (Forgarty & Fete,2011).

On the other hand, Whipple (2012) stated that three dimensions could be used in differentiated instruction: differences in lessons, content, and process. Participants recognized that using this approach can increase the quality of students' speaking proficiency The findings of our study relate closely to other studies. First, our findings, supported by Rumkoda (2023), reported that there was a significant improvement in students' speaking skills through differentiated instruction. It could be seen from the average score on the test and their enthusiasm during the teaching-learning process. Unfortunately, the previous study only used differentiated instruction and did not use CEFR as an approach to diagnostic tests. The participant described how students' performance in the learning process even though they have slow performance, can deliver ideas in short, simple phrases and texts. Nurkamto (2018) supported this study, the students have communication proficiency if they can deliver ideas and understanding. Finally, our research supports Westwood (2018) noted, that governments in Western countries have applied a policy of inclusion, which means that teachers are due to meet the needs of all students in diverse classrooms. Our participant said the teaching guidance from the Minister of Education emphasized all Indonesian English teachers implement the principle of the Merdeka Curriculum, which is to do the diagnostic assessment is important attention in preparing the teaching process.

The findings of our study also make an important contribution to teaching speaking in the classroom. First, our participant indicated the important contribution of using the CEFR is the establishment of clear language proficiency levels. The CEFR provides a standardized framework that enables educators to assess students' speaking abilities accurately. This clarity allows for a more targeted approach to instruction, as teachers can align their teaching strategies with the specific proficiency level of each student. It can guide the design of learning and assessments in countries' courses and examinations, but ultimately, they should be based on what learners need to do in the target language within their context (Foley, 2019). Second, teacher can design speaking activities that engage and challenge students at their respective proficiency levels by recognizing and accommodating diverse learning profiles. Through differentiation, students receive customized support, resources, and strategies catering to their strengths, weaknesses, and learning preferences. This approach enhances students' language development and boosts their confidence and motivation to communicate effectively. Moreover, using the CEFR reference levels as an alignment tool was a reasonable solution as regards teaching speaking obstacles (Oshi,2020).

CONCLUSION

The findings of our study suggest that Indonesian English teachers become familiar with CEFR. This is consistent with that developing language policy awareness among practitioners is a key goal for teacher education. Instead, our participants describe how the combination of CEFR and differentiated learning has the potential to revolutionize the way we teach speaking and nurture competent and effective communicators. Although our study contributed to a better understanding of CEFR as an approach in differentiated teaching instruction and its impact on students' speaking experiences, there were a few limitations. First, although our participants represented a collection of information data, we only recruited from implementing the teaching speaking courses. This recruitment strategy may have limited our access to Indonesian English teachers from majors who use CEFR as part of the teaching planning. Second, although our sample size was in line with recommendations for conducting Narrative Inquiry research obtaining larger sample sizes may allow future researchers to uncover even more detailed descriptions of teaching experiences with CEFR. DI through the CEFR framework needs to be introduced to the Indonesian English teacher. It must be emphasized that differentiated instruction through the CEFR framework, provides opportunities for transition from traditional teaching instruction to an active learning process principled 21 teaching and learning style.

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