



A Systematic Review on Differentiated Instruction in Language Teaching

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Abstract

A student centered approach that highlights multiple intelligence and learning profiles such as differentiated instruction should be the 21st century teachers' best practices. This systematic review of existing literature attempts to fill in the gap on reviews of effective differentiated instruction practices in language teaching. The aims of the analysis were to identify the differentiated instructions practices and the challenges faced in its implementation. Guided by the RepOrting standards for Systematic Evidence Syntheses (ROSES) analysis protocol, this review involved the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases. The search resulted in eighteen (18) articles that were screened by title and abstract. A total of eleven (11) themes were derived from the analysis of these articles. Six (6) themes describe how differentiated instruction was implemented: through group activities, integrating of multiple teaching approaches, adapting activities and materials, distributing autonomy, planning and managing, and supporting the teaching and learning process. Five (5) themes on challenges identified were: context, unsuitable materials, lack of knowledge, socioeconomic factor and exam oriented system. These findings are significant as they describe the possible ways of practicing differentiated instruction and prepare teachers of the challenges they may face.

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Differentiated Instruction in Language Teaching

The 4.0 Industrial Revolution (4 IR) brings about rapid change to technology, industries and society. This includes education. To ensure that the knowledge disseminated to the current generation or the Gen Z as well as the growing Alpha Generation is relevant to them, all teachers including language teachers must also prepare themselves with current instructional skills (Hussin, 2018). This need is even more crucial for language teachers as the role of language is increasingly becoming more challenging as communication becomes wider, farther and diversified due to technology. Students need to possess good communication skills to convey the ideas and technology developed (Elayyan, 2021).

In addition, language and communication skills need to be taught through a student centered approach that highlights multiple intelligence and learning profiles (Elayyan, 2021). A uniformed approach to language teaching is no longer relevant in the 21st

century learning (Sparks, 2015). This is so as each student has his or her own abilities as well as different backgrounds. Hence, language teachers need to adopt pedagogical approaches that suit the students' ability and needs (Beck and Beasley, 2021). This may be achieved through differentiated instruction.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is a pedagogical approach is the process of ensuring that what a student learns, how he or she learns it, and how the student demonstrates what he or she has learnt is a match for that student's readiness level, interests and mode of learning (Tomlinson, 2004). In other words, a student centered approach. Differentiating enables teachers to bring about the individual potentials of the students. This more personalised pedagogy provides the opportunity for each student to learn better (Rasheed and Wahid, 2018).

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Most education system in developed countries have implemented differentiated instruction due to the diversified students in schools. For instance, Singapore's Education Ministry believes that implementing differentiated instruction in its national education system caters for the diversity of the students (Heng and Song, 2020). Similarly, teachers in the United States, Germany dan Netherlands are differentiating their instructions to cater for the different students' backgrounds (Pozas et al., 2020; Smets and Struyven, 2020; Stollman et al., 2021). Belgium's policy makers too put their trust in the implementation of differentiated instruction at primary and secondary school education (Coubergs et al., 2017). The effectiveness of differentiated instruction is proven when the United States, Turkey and Maldives reported that their students' mastery of the History, Mathematics and Science subjects increased (Dack and Triplett, 2020; Prast et al., 2018; Senturk and Sari, 2018). Finland's national curriculum too listed differentiated instruction as its most significant pedagogical approach (Laari et al., 2021). These imply that differentiating is applicable in all subject areas.

Differentiated Instruction in Teaching Language as a Subject or Literacy

Differentiating instruction is also practiced in language or literacy teaching as it allows teachers to convey their contents more effectively and attract students' attention. Through differentiating, teachers provide the opportunity for students to choose learning strategies that suit them (Stollman et al., 2021). Among the strategies employed by language teachers are multi-level and group activities (Pozas et al., 2020). In addition, cooperative learning is also a dominant strategy employed by English language teachers in the United States of America (Smets and Struyven, 2020).

An interesting aspect about differentiated instruction in language or literacy teaching is that it enables teachers to vary their teaching activities in the classroom. For instance, in teaching reading, teachers may allow students to read novels according to individual's levels, or in reading groups or conduct diversified reading activities (Johnsen et al., 2020). This is also possible to be conducted at elementary or primary school level where teachers could assign tasks that are suitable with the primary or elementary students' readiness, interest and learning profile as students are able to interact with

their teachers and peers without any limits (Smets and Struyven, 2020).

Differentiated instruction should be applied in the teaching of Malay language too. It is relevant as Malay language is the national language that must be learned by all school going students. It is a compulsory subject that is assessed in the national examinations at primary and secondary school levels. The language is taught in all types of schools in Malaysia - schools for the indigenous, national schools, vernacular schools and religious schools whose students come from various ethnic background with their own mother tongues (Sulaiman and Wok, 2018). Due to this diversity, differentiated instruction is seen suitable for the schooling system in Malaysia (Sapranı et al., 2018). Hence, Agus (2021) recommend that differentiated instruction be applied in the teaching of Malay language for a more efficient learning.

Therefore, since 2018, teachers of Malay language have been exposed to differentiated instruction the a module developed by the Teacher Training Institute for Malay Language (Sapranı et al., 2018). Consequently, the District Education Office has taken the responsibility to train Malay language teachers in implementing differentiated instruction 1304 to ensure that all students master the language (Mutallip, 2020). Through this training, it was found that the Malay language teachers are ready and have the knowledge to differentiate their teaching (Agus, 2021; Mohamed and Zulkafali, 2019). As a result, Saali (2019) found that students' have accepted this teaching approach; as well as students who were not interested and had negative attitude towards learning Malay language are now more positive about it.

Elements of Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction was first introduced in the United States of America by Tomlinson (Subban, 2006). This pedagogical approach is underpinned by the Vygotsky's Constructivism Theory (1978), Gardner's Multiple Intelligence (2011) and Tomlinson's Learning Profile (2009). It is believed that by providing a teaching approach that suits the students' readiness, interest and learning profiles; learning takes place more effectively as individual students differ and have different learning preferences (Sizemore, 2015). Teachers therefore need to be committed to modify or adapt their teaching through selection of activities, materials and teaching techniques and strategies that would suit their students' strength, need and interest



(George, 2005).

Differentiating instruction involves modification or adaptation of the teaching content, process or product (Ismajli and Imami-Morina, 2018; Williams-Black et al., 2010). The content needs to suit the students' academic ability (Kreitzer, 2016) as students will learn better when the content suits their readiness, interest and learning profile (Subban, 2006). Meanwhile, modifying or adapting process involves providing multiple activities (Chien, 2013) that would ease students' understanding of the content (Kreitzer, 2016).

Finally, modifying or adapting product involves demonstration of students' understanding of what has been learnt (Ismajli and Imami-Morina, 2018). This involves different ways of presenting students' understanding (Sizemore, 2015).

Despite evidence of the effectiveness of differentiated instruction, Goddard et al. (2019) found that there are still many teachers who lack knowledge on differentiated instruction and therefore do not implement it. In addition, there is still a lack of comprehensive literature reviews on differentiated instruction that could inform language teachers on how to differentiate their instructions and the challenges that they may face

(Pozas et al., 2020; Robinson & Lowe, 2015). In addition, existing systematic literature reviews (SLR) on differentiated instruction thusfar (Lindner and Schwab, 2020; Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019) have not focused on language teaching.

Hence, this systematic literature review aims to fill in the above gaps and to specifically answer the research questions: What are the language teachers' practices of differentiated instruction?; and What are the challenges faced in its implementation? Findings of this review will contribute to deeper understanding of differentiated instructions for teachers in order to implement it. Consequently, students will benefit from the implementation of differentiated instruction.

Methodology

This systematic literature review (SLR) employed the RepOrting Standards for Systematic Evidence Syntheses (ROSES) protocol in identifying and analysing the sources and articles to be reviewed. ROSES is chosen as it is a pro forma and flow diagram designed specifically for systematic reviews and systematic maps in the field of conservation and environmental management (Haddaway et al., 2018). In the context of this study, the environmental management refers to the

learning environment that is affected by the implementation of differentiated instruction. The following sections describe the sequential steps of the review process as guided by the ROSES protocol; namely 1) development of the research questions; 2) systematic strategic search for the documents to be analysed; involving identification, screening and confirmation; 3) quality evaluation of the articles for eligibility; and 4) data extraction and analysis of the selected articles.

Development of Research Questions

Lockwood et al. (2015) elements of PICO; namely Population or Problem (P), Interest (I) and Context (Co) were used to guide the development of the research questions. As the environment studied was a learning environment, the population and issue or problem (P) chosen were teachers; whose practices and challenges were sought as the interest (I) of the SLR and the context (Co) is language teaching; more specifically the implementation of differentiated instruction. Subsequently, two research questions were developed: 1) What are the practices of differentiated instruction implemented by language teachers; and 2) What are the challenges faced by language teachers in implementing differentiated instruction?.

Systematic Strategic Search

This systematic strategic search involved three processes. First, identification of relevant databases to ensure that the articles gathered would provide the answers to the research questions. Second, selection of articles through a systematic screening process. Third, confirmation on the eligibility of the selected articles for further analysis.

Identification Process

Based on the environmental issue that is the learning environment, two databases were identified for their vast inclusion of researches related to social sciences including education. They are the two databases centred in the United States of America and Europe; namely Scopus dan Web of Science (WoS). More specifically, WoS is a very stable and established database that features better and more detailed graphical analysis; while Scopus has a very wide scope of collection stored. Then, identification of keywords for further screening was done. The keywords were determined based on the main elements and background of the study that was on differentiated



instruction, differentiation practices, language, practice, perception, primary education and mixed-ability classroom. The “field code”, “phrase searching”, “truncation” and “Boolean” functions were used for combination of search of these keywords in the Scopus and WoS data. Having identified the articles at this stage, the articles went through the screening step.

Screening Criteria

Several eligibility requirements and exclusion criteria were determined to ensure only relevant articles would be selected. Only empirical articles were selected; other publications such as books, book chapters and conference proceedings were excluded. Articles were those written in English and Malay language as the researcher is well versed in both languages. Then to ensure that the review is relevant to current education; taking into account the concept of ‘research field maturity’ after five years (Kraus et al., 2020), only articles published in 2017 to 2021 were selected. Finally, the screening took place after the keyword search. At this point, 107 from 163 abstracts were removed as they did not focus on the differentiated instruction practices and challenges faced in its implementation. There

were also articles that could not be accessed.

Confirmation of Eligibility

Final step of the screening is confirmation of eligibility. Having read the full papers of all the 56 articles screened, 38 were not related to differentiated instruction in language teaching. They also did not meet the requirements and exclusion criterias described in the methodology. Subsequently, at this stage, only 18 articles were gathered for inclusion in the SLR analysis.

Quality Evaluation

Quality evaluation of article is conducted before data extraction and data analysis to ensure that only articles with the methodology and analysis accurately presented are chosen. In this effort, the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) 2018 version was employed. MMAT is a comprehensive evaluation tool as it is capable to measure various types of research including qualitative, experimental, descriptive and mixed methods. Among the aspects or criteria stressed by MMAT are research question, sampling, measurement and data analysis (Hong et al., 2018).



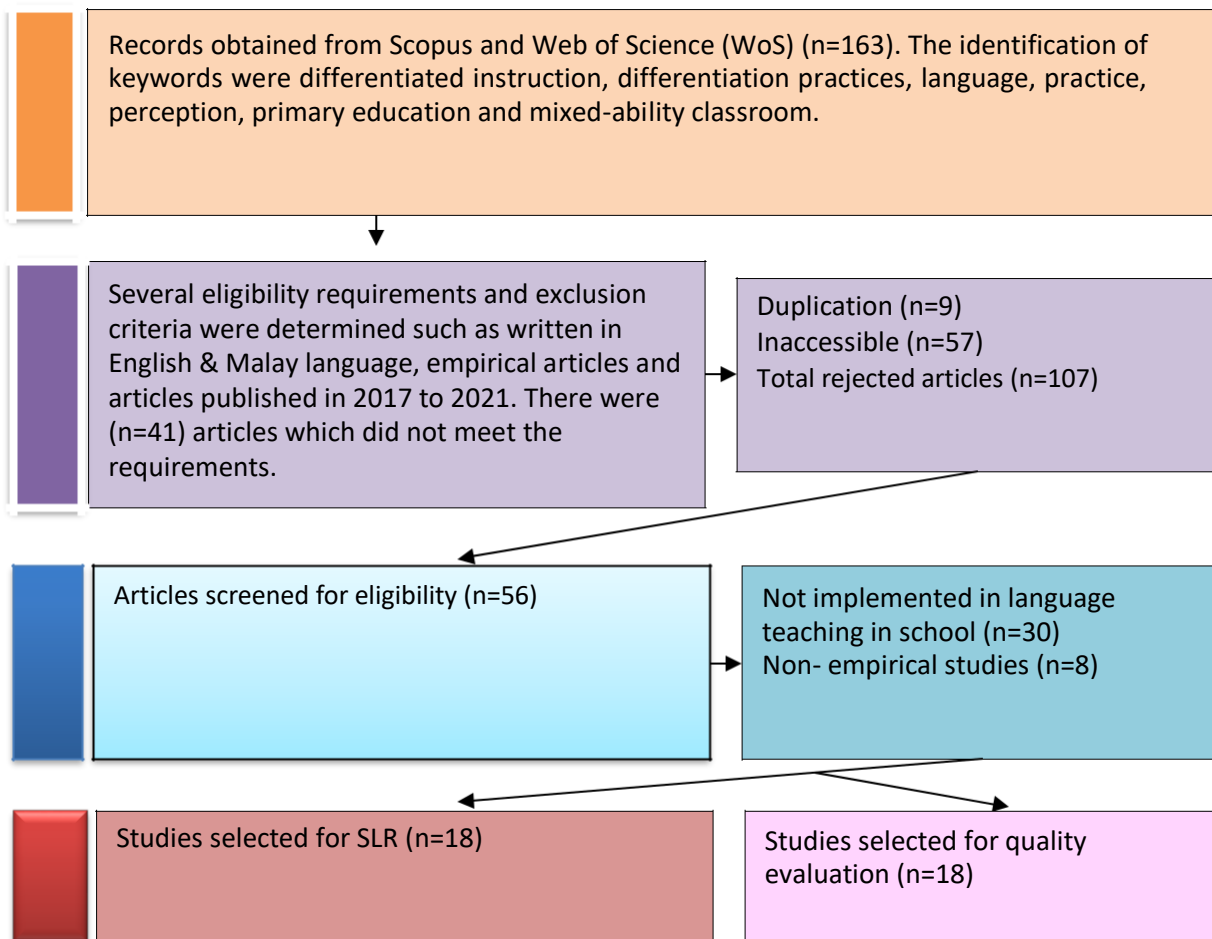


Figure 1: Identification Process Flow Diagram

Data Extraction and Analysis

In-depth analysis is performed at this stage. The process of data extraction and analysis is guided by research questions. The researcher analysed the data through abstract reading to get an initial overview before proceeding with critical reading to the rest of the article. Several themes and sub-themes related to differentiated instruction practices and the constraints of the implementation

have been identified. According to Miles & Huberman (1994) this process is a part of analysis in order to differentiate and combined the data that have been retrieved before making a conclusion. After that, the articles were thematically analysed to perform qualitative analysis. These are the key features of qualitative analysis which based on naturally occurring practices that can ensure the data provided are rich and holistic (Creswell, 2009)

Table 1: Analysis of Articles

Number	Title	Author	Background	Research Design	Perspectives from	Findings	Country	Journal
04S (1)	Reading comprehension gains in a differentiated reading intervention in Spanish based on the Simple View	Silva-Maceda & Camarillo-Salazar (2020)	Primary School Spanish	Quantitative	Differentiated Instruction Effectiveness Among Students	Group & Pair Work Activities, Various Teaching Approach, Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Challenges	Mexico	Child Language Teaching and Therapy



						in Learning Environment		
06S (2)	Has differentiated instruction gone 'awry' in online teaching and learning?	(Idrus et al., 2021)	Secondary School English	Qualitative	Differentiated Instruction Practices & Challenges Among Teachers	Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Challenges in Learning Environment, Unsuitable Material, Lack of Knowledge, Socioeconomic Challenges	Malaysia	Journal of Language Teaching and Research
09S(3)	The use of learning station method according to competency development for elementary students in Vietnam	Pho et al. (2021)	Primary School Vietnamese	Quantitative	Differentiated Instruction Effectiveness Among School Administrator & Teachers	Group & Pair Work Activities, Various Teaching Approach, Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Challenges in Learning Environment, Lack of Knowledge, Socioeconomic Challenges	Vietnam	Cogent Education <u>1308</u>
11S(4)	Using differentiated instruction in multigrade classes: a case of a small school	Shareefa (2021)	Primary & Secondary School English & others	Qualitative	Differentiated Instruction Practices Among School Administrator & Teachers	Group & Pair Work Activities, Various Teaching Approach, Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Teaching & Learning Support, Challenges in Learning	Maldives	Asia Pacific Journal of Education



						Environment, Lack of Knowledge, Challenges in an Exam Oriented Education		
12S(5)	Unpacking the relationship between teachers' perceptions of professional learning communities and differentiated instruction practice	Wan (2020)	Primary School Chinese and others	Quantitative	Differentiated Instruction Practices Among Teachers	Adaptation of Activities & Materials	Hong Kong	ECNU Review of Education
17S (6)	Didactic aspects of teachers' training for differentiated instruction in modern school practice in Ukraine	Nychkalo et al. (2020)	Secondary School English	Mixed Method	Differentiated Instruction Practices Among Teachers	Group & Pair Work Activities, Various Teaching Approach, Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Teaching & Learning Support, Challenges in Learning Environment, Unsuitable Material, Lack of Knowledge, Socioeconomic Challenges	Ukraine	International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research ¹³⁰⁹
18S (7)	Differentiated instruction for basic reading comprehension in Philippine settings	Suson et al. (2020)	Primary School English	Quantitative	Differentiated Instruction Practices Among Students	Group & Pair Work Activities, Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Teaching &	Philippines	Universal Journal of Educational Research



						Learning Support		
22S (8)	The effectiveness of differentiated instruction by streaming: A preliminary study of current practices in the UAE	Magableh & Abdullah (2020b)	Secondary School English	Qualitative	Differentiated Instruction Effectiveness Among Teachers & Students	Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Planning & Management, Challenges in Learning Environment, Unsuitable Material	UAE	International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research
26S (9)	Effectiveness of differentiated instruction on primary school students' English reading comprehension achievement	Ibrahim Magableh & Abdullah (2020)	Primary School English	Quantitative	Differentiated Instruction Effectiveness Among Students	Group & Pair Work Activities, Adaptation of Activities & Materials	Jordan	International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research ¹³¹⁰
32S (10)	The effects of differentiated instruction on Turkish students' 12 achievement, and student and teacher perceptions	Yavuz (2020)	Secondary School English	Mixed Method	Differentiated Instruction Effectiveness Among Teachers & Students	Group & Pair Work Activities, Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Teaching & Learning Support, Challenges in Learning Environment, Lack of Knowledge	Turkey	Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics
35S (11)	On the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in the enhancement of Jordanian	Magableh & Abdullah (2020)	Secondary School English	Quantitative	Differentiated Instruction Effectiveness Among Students	Group & Pair Work Activities, Adaptation of Activities & Materials	Jordan	International Journal of Instruction



	students' overall achievement							
42S (12)	The Nature of Cooperative Learning and Differentiated Instruction Practices in English Classes	Ismail & Al Allaq (2019)	Secondary School English	Mixed Method	Differentiated Instruction Effectiveness Among Teachers	Group & Pair Work Activities, Various Teaching Approach, Adaptation of Activities & Materials	UAE	SAGE Open
48S (13)	Examining the implications of differentiated instruction for high school students' self-actualization	Aljaser (2019)	Secondary School English	Quantitative	Differentiated Instruction Effectiveness Among Students	Various Teaching Approach, Planning & Management, Teaching & Learning Support	Saudi Arabia	International Journal of Education and Practice
60S (14)	Teacher structure as a predictor of students' perceived competence and autonomous motivation: The moderating role of differentiated instruction	Guay et al. (2017)	Primary School French	Quantitative	Differentiated Instruction Effectiveness Among Teachers & Students	Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Planning & Management	Canada	British Journal ¹³¹¹ of Educational Psychology
67S (15)	Category-bound rights and obligations of young EFL learners in Denmark: The case of (extreme) differentiation	Aus Der Wieschen (2018)	Primary School English	Mixed Method	Differentiated Instruction Practices & Effectiveness Among Teachers	Various Teaching Approach, Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Providing Autonomy in Learning	Denmark	Hacettepe Egitim Dergisi



43W (16)	Approaches to teaching in the multi-level language classroom	Ashton (2019)	Secondary School Various language	Mixed Method	Differentiated Instruction Practices Among Teachers	Group & Pair Work Activities, Various Teaching Approach, Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Planning & Management, Teaching & Learning Support, Challenges in Learning Environment, Lack of Knowledge, Challenges in an Exam Oriented Education	New Zealand	Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching
54W (17)	The effectiveness of multiple intelligence based differentiated instruction on metacognitive reading comprehension in Arabic language among middle school students in Saudi Arabia	Alsubaie (2020)	Secondary School Arabic	Quantitative	Differentiated Instruction Effectiveness Among Students	Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Planning & Management, Teaching & Learning Support	Saudi Arabia	Revista Amazonia Investiga
56W (18)	Perspectives of teachers on differentiated teaching in multi-cultural South African secondary schools	De Jager (2017)	Secondary School English	Mixed Method	Differentiated Instruction Practices Among Teachers	Group & Pair Work Activities, Various Teaching Approach, Adaptation of Activities & Materials, Teaching & Learning	South Africa	Studies in Educational Evaluation



						Support, Challenges in Learning Environment, Lack of Knowledge Socioeconomic Challenges		
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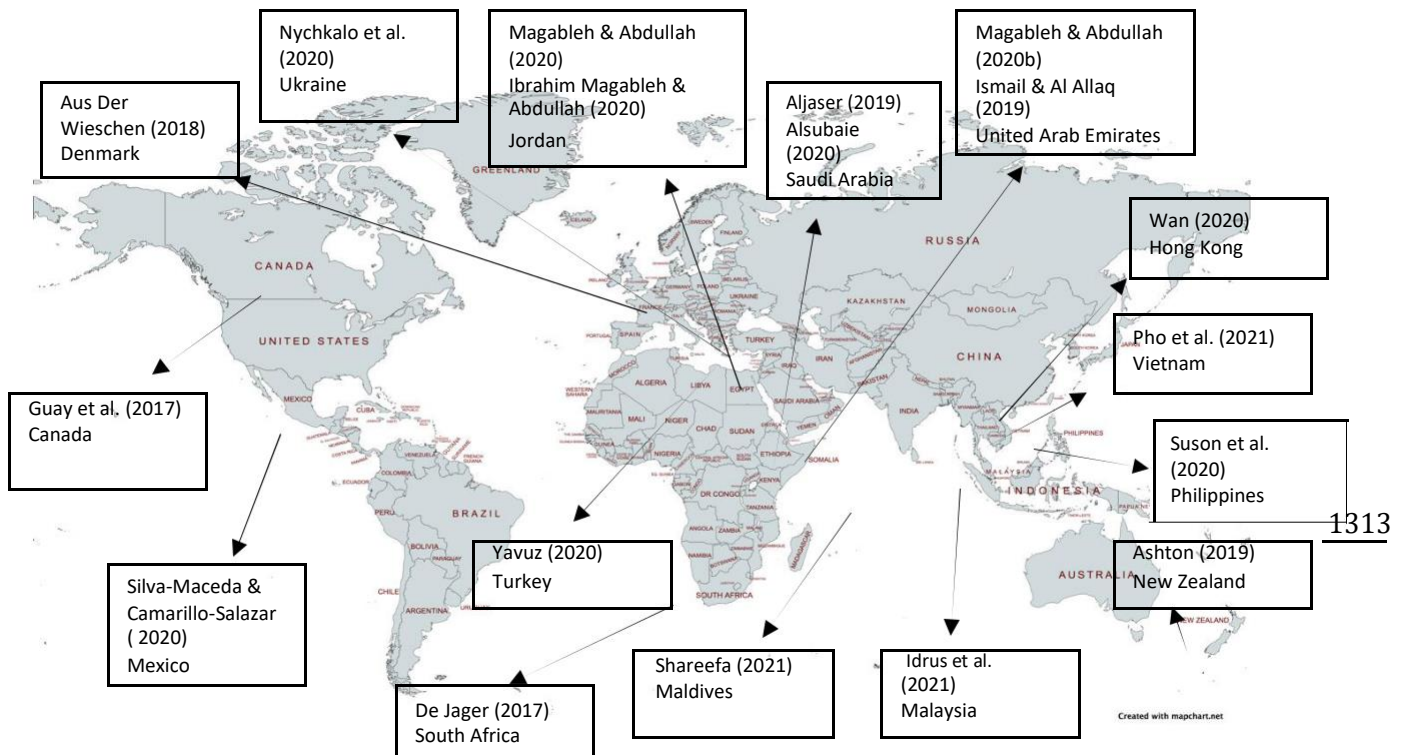


Figure 2: Countries where the Selected Studies were Conducted

Findings

Based on the SLR done on 18 articles, 11 themes were derived from the perspectives of teachers, students and school administrators on the implementation of differentiated instruction in language teaching. Six (6) of the themes were to answer Research Question 1 on the practices of differentiated instruction in language. They were: group and pair work activity, integration of various teaching approaches, modification on activities and material, granting autonomy, management and planning, and learning support. Five (5) themes were to answer the second research question which is the constraints to implement differentiated instruction. They are environmental constraints, unsuitable materials, lack of knowledge, socio-economy constraints, and examination oriented assesment.

All the articles were based on studies conducted in 15 countries that have implemented differentiated instruction; as shown in Figure 2. They are Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Denmark, Philippines, Hong Kong, Jordan, Canada, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, New Zealand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates dan Vietnam. Nine (9) of these studies employed a quantitative research approach, three (3) qualitative and six (6) mixed-method; as indicated in Table 1. The data collection methods employed were interviews, questionnaire, document analysis, pre and post tests and observations. 10 of these reasearches were conducted in secondary school, seven (7) in primary school and one (1) in a combined primary and secondary school.



Group and Pair Work Activities

As indicated in Table 1, eleven (11) studies described practicing group and pair work activities in language lessons using differentiated instruction to promote interaction and collaboration among the students. Groups or pairs were formed based on the students' background (common interest, learning profiles and readiness while doing the activities and materials). Besides that, there are a few teachers who execute flexible group activities to promote collaboration among them.

Integration of Various Teaching Approach

As shown in Table 1, nine (9) studies are found to have integrated various teaching approaches in practicing differentiated instructions. Teachers' choice of teaching approaches are based on their beliefs that philosophy of what works best for the students in helping them to understand the lesson. Among the approaches employed were cooperative learning, teacher oriented, teaching philosophy, socio cultural approach and information communication technology (ICT). These approaches are integrated so that the planned differentiated instruction can be implemented with various methods and strategies to boost teaching and learning process.

Adaptation of Activities and Materials

17 studies were found to modify the teaching materials and activities during the language lessons in practicing differentiated instruction. This was to ensure that the materials and activities are suitable and relevant to students' learning. Among the practices found in these studies was that the teaching activities were organized developmentally according to the students' abilities. The teachers also planned the lesson based on students' interest, learning profile and readiness such as using music, mind maps, pictures, discussions, role play, story telling, presentations, brainstorming, projects and learning stations. Other than that, the teachers also motivated the students to relate the reading materials with the enrichment activities to escalate understanding of the lesson. In addition, the assessment process in language learning were also based on students' interest, learning profiles and readiness. The assessments were done in order for teachers to plan further actions.

Providing Autonomy in Learning

Although only one (1) study highlighted the notion

of student autonomy in implementing differentiated instruction, it is a significant theme as autonomy is important to make the students feel that they are in control of their own learning. It allowed students to play their roles of agents of learning that gave them the power of ownership. This triggered the students a sense of belonging and feeling appreciated throughout the learning process. The opportunities given for the students to participate actively in the teaching and learning process were found to have motivated the students. Thus learning becomes a more meaningful process.

Planning and Management

Focus on lesson planning and management in practicing differentiated instruction was evident in five (5) studies. It is vital to plan and manage teaching and learning as they enhance the process. These were done by setting up classroom rules and regulation so that the students understand their roles whereby teachers were able to facilitate the class and the organise the process well. Some teachers also involved their students in structuring the classroom rules and regulations to make them feel more responsible towards their learning process and

environment. Besides that, the teachers ¹³¹⁴ drafted the lesson plans carefully and specifically to meet the students' levels and needs. Another practice that enhanced planning and managing learning was by streaming the students according to their academic level; ie differentiating instructions according to the students' cognitive ability. Lastly, teachers were found to have adapted the philosophies of planning and management in the teaching and learning process so that the learning environment could be managed effectively.

Teaching and Learning Support

The theme teaching and learning support was evident in eight (8) studies. Teaching and learning support is a form of physical and mental assistance given by the teachers to the students before and after the learning process. Students' participation and involvement in the learning process requires support from teachers, peers and parents to enhance their learning and ultimately the students' achievement. Support given also motivates students. One of the practices observed in the differentiated instruction was the monitoring done by the teachers, parents and peers. It was done during the reading sessions. Interestingly, teaching and learning support was also practiced among the



teachers; an aspect that should be ventured further; particularly in relation to the concept of lesson study.

Learning Environment Constraints

Nine (9) studies highlighted several constraints in implementing differentiated instruction which are related to the learning environment or contextual factors. First, the teachers' workload and lack of time. The teachers reported on the need for more time to prepare the lesson as well as to implement the activities to be done accordingly. This includes preparing activities to cater for the different students need.

Second, the environment constraints was also caused by the lack of interaction and communication during the language lessons. This occurred when the students with different language abilities were put together during work group. This lack was also heightened by the teachers' focus on finishing the syllabus due to time constraints. In addition, the classroom layout and big classroom size contributed to the constraints of conducting group and collaborative work. Thus resulting in the teachers conducting a more teacher centred approach.

Third, policy changes that require different types of transformations at different levels; including of teachers, schools and the curriculum do not allow teachers full autonomy and flexibility in their teaching; including in implementing differentiated instruction. Expectations due to policy changes has caused work pressure and difficulties for teachers to be more flexible in their teaching process.

The fourth constraints was caused by the lack of learning support which lead to the students' deteriorating motivation and finally complicated the implementation of differentiated instruction. From the analysis, parents were found not supportive of teachers' implementation of differentiated instruction as some parents disagreed to modification made based on students' ability. In addition, lack of facilities and financial support were also found contributing to the challenges in implementing differentiated instruction in language teaching.

Finally, teachers were also found not motivated to practice differentiated instruction because they focus more on high performance students. This focus also was found to be demotivating the less or low performance students. In addition, students also disagreed to be segregated according to classes or groups of the same level because they felt embarrassed when given different assignments

according to their individual readiness or capability. Meanwhile, when doing group work students were not focussing on the learning as they were more interested in playing with each other.

Unsuitable Material

Three (3) studies highlighted that unsuitable materials as a contributor to the challenges in practicing differentiated instruction. Appropriate teaching materials are important to ensure the materials are relevant according to students' backgrounds. Based on the analysis, this constraint occur when the content provided by text book is unsuitable for the varied students' background levels. Hence, this causes difficulties for teachers as they need to find a variety of materials to ensure that differentiated instruction could be practiced efficiently.

Lack of Knowledge and Experience

Seven (7) studies explained that the constraint are caused by the lack of knowledge and experience among the teachers in practicing differentiated instruction. Knowledge and experience are important factors in

feasibility of a teaching process 1315 because empirical and theoretical knowledge have an impact on teachers' competence. Based on the analysis of the articles, specific training and sharing regarding differentiated instruction are limited which result in the lack of knowledge and information on how to practice the approach. Lack of knowledge and experience has affected teachers' physical and mental readiness and ultimately their ability to practice differentiated instruction.

Socioeconomic Challenges

The socioeconomic challenges are constraints caused by poverty and lack of financial allocation provided by the educational system. These constraints were found to have hindered differentiated instruction implementations because due to the lack of facilities and teaching materials as a result of financial constraints. For the same reason, training and courses for teachers' competency development are hindered too. In addition, the problem of poverty has also inhibited the focus and interest of students to take part in the learning process.

Challenges in an Exam Oriented Education

Two (2) studies reported that teacher could not



practice differentiated instruction due to the need to prepare students for the national examinations. Exam-oriented assessments is said to be unfair because it assesses students only on their performance in the examination. It does not take into account the learning process where other forms of assessment where presentation skills or communication skills can be assessed. In addition, teachers too do not support examination as the only measure of performance because of the different intelligences among students. Similarly, the varied students levels and ability makes assessment time consuming and difficult.

Discussion

This systematic literature analysis aimed to inform teachers on how to practice differentiated instruction effectively in language teaching by analysing literature on studies conducted on the use of differentiated instruction in language teaching. The screening of articles ended up with 18 studies conducted around the world. Analysis of the articles was based on the two research questions outlined,

1) What are the practices of differentiated instruction implemented by language teachers; and
2) What are the challenges faced by language teachers in implementing differentiated instruction? There are 11 related themes.

To answer the first research question, the findings indicated various forms of differentiated instruction practiced by teachers in language teaching. The main practice is to ensure and modify the teaching materials and activities based on students' readiness, interest and learning profile. For example, teachers have formed pair or groups of students during teaching and learning activities. This practice has been emphasized by teachers in order to help students to understand well the teaching itself (Chien, 2013; Williams-Black et al., 2010). These modifications should be done by teachers on content, process and products which are the teaching components as stated in Differentiation Instruction Models (Ismajli and Imami-Morina, 2018).

In order to attract students' interests, teachers also integrate various effective teaching approaches such as using technological, cooperative and integrating socio-cultural approaches to ensure all students are actively involved throughout the teaching and learning process. For that reason, differentiated instruction approach is very suitable to be applied in teaching in order to ensure the syllabus can match the students' needs and ability (Ismajli and Imami-

Morina, 2018). At the same time, planning and management in teaching are also emphasized by teachers so that the teaching and learning process can be organized appropriately. It also aims to smooth the process thus ensuring the discipline and motivation of students are in good condition. This practice is in line with the recommendation of users of differentiated instruction that this approach will be able to reduce the problems in the classroom if it is implemented efficiently (Subban, 2006).

Teachers also emphasize on student autonomy eventhough all the planning have been prepared earlier. Students involvement in planning rules and providing opportunities and roles in each activity to ensure that there is a sense of responsibility and belonging among students. These practices are important so that students feel responsible in their learning (Pozas et al., 2020) . Finally, learning support is an important practice that has been taken by teachers because it can provide physical and mental assistance to students. Teachers and parents have always monitored the progress of students' learning as well as provided assistance during teaching activities. This clearly proves that this practice can achieved as the ultimate goal of differentiated instruction goal is to

support students 1316 (Sizemore, 2015).

The support is also important for teachers. The support among teachers can also increase their motivation to teach. The support is needed so that teachers can receive guidance on meeting the needs of students in the classroom. This kind of support is a best practice as it encourages collaboration among teachers in selecting materials, content and resources for students' needs (Kreitzer, 2016). Overall, the findings shown through this SLR indicate that teachers successfully use differentiated instruction approaches to ensure that each student gets the best learning experience based on various individual factors such as readiness, interest and learning profile.

Effective instructions that suit every student is not easy to be achieved and need various considerations such as approaches, materials, activities and environment. Nevertheless, various constraints are unavoidable and need to be faced by teachers while implementing differentiated instruction which could finally answer the second research question of this study. The findings indicate that environment factors are a major constraint in the implementation of differentiated instruction. Environmental constraints such as lack of time and workload are the main constraints that cause the



planning and implementation of this approach is difficult (Ismajli and Imami-Morina, 2018). This is because teachers need longer time to prepare lesson plans as well as for the teaching process (Sizemore, 2015). Furthermore, additional factors such as inconsistent curriculum and examination oriented system also pose as challenges to the teachers to implement interesting teaching resulting them to be unmotivated to make changes. As a result, students are also demotivated and at the same time increase disciplinary problems. This is also explained by Rasheed and Wahid (2018) that frequent curriculum change causes teaching resources cannot be reused and differentiated instruction hardly to be implemented. In fact, continuous assessment are also hardly to be done. Another constraint is teacher's knowledge and experience in implementing differentiated instruction. This constraint is such a great concern because the teacher is the facilitator in the class. Due to the limited knowledge and experience will cause failure to implement differentiated instruction effectively. Thus, it adds other challenge such as disciplinary problems and low student motivation. It also implies that there is a need to provide specialized training to teachers so that maximum knowledge of differentiated instruction can be delivered in its maximum capacity (Johnsen et al., 2020).

In addition, less suitable material that have been used caused difficulties for teachers to practice differentiated instruction. This is because the teaching materials are major tools to deliver teaching and learning content.

Finally, socioeconomic factors also hinder the implementation of differentiated instruction because teachers face the problems to obtain teaching equipment, materials and professional training to teach efficiently. This has resulted in unskilled teacher and failure to provide appropriate instructions. To make it worse, the low-income background of students and the lack of provision for teaching also reduce the focus of students in the classroom since they are not ready to learn. As a result, the teaching process will be limited and lessen the creativity of teachers to improvise their teaching (Laari et al., 2021).

Limitation of Study

Limited qualitative study found from the database resulting the limited data eventhough specific discussion was conducted. Therefore, future studies are highly recommended to conduct a SLR based on

a fully qualitative study in order to obtain more comprehensive findings.

This study also considers every perspective of practices and the constraints in the implementation of differentiated instruction in language teaching. The effectiveness of differentiated instruction itself was not analysed and discussed by the researchers in this SLR. Therefore, a further study is proposed to analyse the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in language teaching in order to reveal the feasibility of this approach.

This SLR focuses on the implementation of differentiated instruction in language teaching around the world. However, the SLR related to Malay language context could not be conducted extensively due to the lack of studies. Therefore, future studies are strongly encouraged to review studies on differentiated instruction in the context of Malay language in order to help Malay language teachers in implementing this approach.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review emphasised the essentials of differentiated instruction in the context of language teaching. Based on the findings, various parties

were involved in the implementation of 1317 education in schools such as teachers, school administrators as well as curriculum makers. Last

but not least, teachers should consider the importance of this approach in order to fulfill the students' needs so that the teaching process can be implemented pragmatically.

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