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**MATCH OR MISMATCH? DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES
PREFERRED BY STUDENTS AND APPLIED BY TEACHERS**

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Abstract

Catering to the needs of students through Differentiated Instruction (DI) has been an approach chosen instead of the one-size-fits-all methodology when each student's needs are of concern. Although DI aligned classroom instruction gives students much room to discover learning and new ideas, there are many instances and factors to be considered in ensuring efficiency of the implementation. One of the crucial factors is the students' preferences in learning and teaching strategies. In consideration of this and through mixed method research design, the study aims to discover if the differentiation strategies employed by teachers and preferred by their students match. 288 students and 10 teachers of rural and urban schools in the southern-most state of Malaysia were selected as participants of this study. The outcome of the mixed method approach through questionnaires and interviews will furnish teachers with a thorough and extensive feedback from students which will act as a source for reflection and modification to warrant a more efficacious teaching and learning experience for themselves and their students.

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1. Introduction

Despite being the second language for Malaysians, English has been highly important in the Malaysian education system. However, although Malaysia was ranked third in Asia, after Singapore and The Philippines, in the 2019 EF Proficiency Index (2019), the language competency level of local graduates is perturbing (Lai, 2019).

Differentiation is a way of teaching by catering to the needs of the students instead of employing the one-size-fits-all approach. Since Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) introduced DI, there have been many definitions from various scholars. “DI is a means of teaching to all children to help them reach a common goal, regardless of the path they take to get there” (Robinson et al., 2014) while Heacox (2012) defines differentiation as “changing the pace, level, or kind of instruction you provide in response to individual learners’ needs, styles or interests”. Besides that, King-Shaver (2008) defined DI as a conscious and cautious way of preparing for and conducting lessons that provide students with various opportunities for learning while being focused on clearly defined goals. The common idea that all three definitions possess is that DI responds to students’ needs and helps them achieve a common goal.

Forming a high-calibre teaching workforce is the basis of a top-performing education system; the issues pertaining to the said teaching workforce must be identified and eradicated to an acceptable extent (Don et al., 2015). A question worth pondering is whether it will be sufficient if the focus is only placed on teachers? The whole shift in the education system itself lies on the basis of producing more internationally competent graduates. Taking into consideration the item first highlighted in Cambridge Baseline Study (CBS) and then in the roadmap regarding speaking being the weakest skill and that it could be due to the lack of opportunity to use the target language, it is clear that the direct solution to this is to increase students’ use of the target language in and out of the classroom. The employment of DI through student-centred learning strategies that maximises student participation and minimises teacher-talk would be the most effective method in increasing the frequency and depth of students using English language, that is, by first creating the need converse in English.

Therefore, students’ participation in the classroom is significant in ensuring that this aim is met. It is an evidence-based conclusion that students’ participation level in the classroom hinges on many factors such as class size (Susak, 2016), feedback (Susak, 2016), student characteristics (Congmin, 2016; Susak, 2016), classroom environment (Aziz et al., 2018; Mustapha et al., 2010), cultural differences (Congmin, 2016) with the match or mismatch between students’ learning strategies being one of the major components (Akbarzadeh & Fatemipour, 2014; Toyama & Yamazaki, 2020; Vukić, 2018).

With teachers employing differentiation strategies in their lessons, will it be a match or a mismatch between students' and teachers’ expectations? The current study seeks to find the answer to this issue, which is the preferred differentiation strategy and to see if there is a mismatch between the teachers and students.

- i. What are students’ preferred differentiation strategies in relation to Content, Process, Product and Environment domains during the teaching of speaking skills?
- ii. Do students’ preferred differentiation strategies match the strategies used by teachers in the teaching of speaking skills?

1.1. Knowing students' preference in learning and its significance

Quite often, the focus lies on the appropriate teaching methods and the effective approaches that provide the idea for the right ways of learning. Teachers sometimes get carried away in preparing activities for a lesson that they place their teaching style before the consideration of students' preferences in learning (Samperio, 2017). However, Nunan (1999) strongly suggests that any selection made in relation to classroom teaching should consider students. In addition to this, Jang et al. (2016) argued that teaching in ways that students prefer encourages autonomous learning, classroom participation and conceptual learning. To make wise decisions when it concerns teaching and learning in a language classroom, one must first be aware of the factors that influence the preference for learning.

Samperio (2017) listed a few factors, namely "learning and teaching styles, motivation, students' perception of usefulness or importance, classroom environment, personality, or language level" as the factors he affirms influence the preference for language learning. He adds by mentioning that as activities could have positive or negative effects on students, the right activities would increase their motivation and reduce their anxiety in using the target language. Rao (2002) adds to Samperio's list by stating that the consideration of students' needs, potentials and capacities also matter in selecting activities or teaching styles. Usually, a mismatch between the students' preference and teachers' teaching style is due to teachers working according to their own belief on what is right and effective or sometimes teachers choose not to go according to students' preference because their preferences were not considered in the first place (Samperio, 2017).

Much importance is placed on students' preferences instead of teachers because a mismatch between the students' preferences and teachers' teaching styles could bring great disadvantages to the lesson flow and the achievement of the learning outcomes. This is elaborated by Felder and Spurlin (2005) who mentions that the consequences include student feeling boredom which may result in students becoming demotivated and inattentive in class. Inattentive students do not participate and if they do, they do it without comprehension, which defeats the purpose of learning. Chetty (2019), Rabab and Meryem (2018), Övez and Uyangör (2016) argued that this mismatch will result in underperformance.

When there is a match between the students' preference and teachers' teaching style, the lesson could be considered as well-performing and a success, as it has high classroom engagement. Lawson and Lawson (2013) defined classroom engagement as "what happens in the classroom", which usually includes the interaction and actions between students and other students and the teacher. Generally, a well performing class has high student engagement where students actively participate and interact with each other and the teacher. An in-depth thought on Lawson's definition would give the idea that what happens in the classroom involves not only interaction but also students' cognitive and emotional presence in the classroom. This is in line with Sullivan et al. (2018) explanation that students prefer activities that give them the opportunities to interact and create relationships with their friends.

1.2. Studies on learning preferences

Given the significance of knowing and recognizing students' preferences in learning, scholars have conducted studies relating to it. For instance, Toyama and Yamazaki (2020) conducted a study they

mentioned as one of its kind, investigating the match between teaching styles and learning styles and whether it affects students' proficiency and motivation to learn English. The study that utilized Kolb Learning Style Inventory and Kolb Educator Role Profile as instruments confirmed that the match between learning styles and teaching styles influences students' proficiency and motivation to learn English.

The investigation of 251 students and five lecturers for a similar objective in Universiti Malaysia Pahang by Chetty (2019) revealed that the majority of the students preferred visual learning styles. They concluded that the impact of the match or mismatch on students' performance is excellent and that it is significant that both styles match. A study which focused on the issue here is the one conducted by Jannah et al. (2021) who looked into whether there is a mismatch between learning styles and teaching styles and the results showed positive correlations.

Case study on the same topic being discussed, the match or mismatch between teachers' practices and learners' preferences showed that students benefit from a positive relationship between the two determinants. This study was conducted on grammar's explicit and implicit teaching (Rabab & Meryem, 2018). Övez and Uyangör (2016) investigated the effect of the abovementioned match on students' achievement involving a more significant sample; 700 students and 31 students also found similar results. These studies prove that knowing students' preference in learning will positively impact various factors related to learning effectiveness.

However, a similar study conducted by Khalid et al. (2017) proved otherwise. The study centred on 42 schools in the province of Punjab revealed that the teaching and learning styles have no significant effect on students' achievement. The study which employed a survey research design used descriptive statistics that revealed the abovementioned finding.

Focusing on the mismatch, Ge (2019) investigated if the mismatch impacts students' achievements negatively. This study differs from the other studies elaborated here because it concerns with e-learning. The questionnaires and semi-structured interviews found that students preferred learning in groups, but the mismatch between the learning preference and teaching style did not affect their achievement.

From the discussion of the previous studies above, it could be seen that the significance of the match or mismatch between students' and teachers' preferences and its effect on various factors would still benefit from further research. With the concern over speaking skills being the weakest skill, knowing students' preference in learning speaking skills is very significant as it is the means where teachers could provide students with the opportunities to speak in English while teachers monitor, facilitate and guide them. DI, which caters to students' needs, indirectly increases students' participation level in classrooms. Therefore, these factors are interrelated, which justifies the focus of the current study.

2. Research Methods

The clustered sampling technique was used to establish a concurrent mixed method research design to determine the questionnaire respondents. Clustered sampling is when the population is categorised into clusters and then randomly selected for data collection (Jackson, 2011; Wilson, 2010). Teachers distributed the questionnaires randomly to their predetermined clusters of different classes. For the interviews, convenience sampling was used to determine the participants. Convenience sampling is a

non-probability sampling technique that selects participants who are often readily available (Taherdoost, 2016). This sampling method was used due to teachers' limitations in relation to the availability, willingness and confidence to be interviewed. The sample for a semi-structured interview was selected through convenience sampling. The sample size was decided based on the principle of replication in which several samples are first selected and investigated with the intention and expectation of identifying replications of specific findings. Interviews were conducted till the data reached a saturation point.

Thus, the total number of interview participants is ten, and this is justifiable as there are representatives from each school being investigated in this study. The total population of students in the selected rural and urban schools, obtained from the information provided by the ministry of education, is 9088. Out of this, the population of Form Two students was 1073 at the time of data collection. The number of students was obtained from the clerk in each school's office. According to the table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), 285 samples were needed for this study. Out of 313 questionnaire responses collected, 288 responses were complete and could be used for analysis.

The first instrument is the Differentiation Strategies Preference Questionnaire (DSPQ). The items were adapted from Possibilities for Learning Surveys (Kanevsky, 2015). This survey which has gone through multiple revisions upon pilot studies and face validation is a tool that assesses students on their preferred differentiation strategies. This tool was selected for present study's use because of its accuracy in relation to the purpose of this study. The regenerated Cronbach Alpha's Coefficient value for all items in the questionnaire is 0.872, which is 'good' according to Cronbach (1951). This shows that the questionnaire is reliable and fit for use.

The second instrument is a semi-structured interview that seeks to find responses to questions about the application of DI in the teaching of speaking skills. The interview questions were set according to the question matrix suggested by Ismail (2010) and went through the double validation process.

The SPSS software was used to conduct descriptive statistics for the questionnaire, and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) was used for the interviews. The nature of the reflexive thematic analysis that was implemented commenced the inductive way, in which the codes and themes were developed based on the data. The findings were then compared with the existing literature to look for reasonings, similarities, contrasts, and support beyond the data.

3. Findings

The data for this study was obtained through a 57-item questionnaire from a sample of 288 students and semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers. The strategies preferred by the respondents are looked at from two different perspectives. The first the overall strategies preferred across the four domains: Content, Process, Product, and Environment. The second analysis was done to look at the preferred strategies for each domain.

In order to identify the preferred strategy by the students across all four domains, the frequency and percentage of agreement and disagreement for each item were calculated and tabulated in a descending order due to the Likert scale classifications (4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree).

3.1. Overall Preferred Differentiation Strategies

The overall preferred differentiation strategies are determined by computing the means for each item. Table 1 shows the tabulation of the results for the 10 items with the highest mean and the item with the lowest mean.

Table 1. Descending Mean Distribution According to Items

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Domain</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Q7	Process	3.44
Q57	Environment	3.42
Q45	Product	3.42
Q51	Environment	3.37
Q21	Process	3.36
Q4	Content	3.33
Q15	Process	3.32
Q49	Environment	3.31
Q32	Process	3.28
Q37	Product	3.26
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Q14	Process	2.08

To ease identification and analysis, the items in Table 1 have been arranged in ascending order; from the item that has the lowest mean to the item that has the highest. Inclusively, the means for all 57 items range from 2.08 to 3.44. It is found that Item 7 received the highest mean, 3.44, indicating that students prefer this strategy the most. Item 7 states “I like it when my teacher gives me time to think after giving me a difficult idea to understand or a problem to solve” which is placed in the Process domain. This shows that students prefer to be given some time to figure certain things out on their own by using their own strategies with proper guidance from the teachers. This finding is in line with Kanevsky (2015) who found out that students objected being pressured to present their work or to catch up in the classroom. Giving students time to master or comprehend new information is an important crucial for learning (Deunk et al., 2015).

Based on teachers’ descriptions of their teaching processes during the interviews, it could be inferred that there are a few teachers who cater to the expectation of students in Item 7 and a few do not. For example, RT3 who does not implement Item 7 mentioned:

I'm the kind of person who takes a chair and sit beside them if they are not responding. If it is a groupwork, if they are not responding, I will stand beside them. They will try to talk because they know I will not move if they don't talk”

whereas UT4, who implements Item 7 mentioned that:

Sometimes certain students will take some time to answer and some of them will be very eager to answer but I will ensure the slow one will answer. I want them to know that I'm not rushing them and that they can take some time to answer.

The description given by RT3 illustrates that students are being constantly pushed indirectly to respond or take part in the lesson, which could create anxiety in the students and affect the quality of the product. On the other hand, the description given by UT4 shows that she assures the students that they can take their time to respond and that she will wait patiently for their answers. This gives the students the idea that the teacher is giving them the space to think and respond once they are done.

Although this finding shows what students expect their teachers to do, it does not mean that it is always the most effective strategy in ensuring effective teaching and learning. Considering the revelation made by the rural and urban schoolteachers concerning the low proficiency of their students, frequently leaving students to solve problems may leave certain students, especially the low proficiency students, feeling lost or unable to complete the task on their own. Decristan et al. (2015) and Kaur (2017) also mentioned that scaffolding instructional discourse improves conceptual comprehension for low-proficiency students, which means that they need guidance from their teachers to ensure accurate comprehension.

Besides that, the question of whether teachers should give students time to figure out difficult ideas on their own or to guide them in comprehending difficult ideas raises complication for teachers as there is limited time allocated for instruction. Apart from that, teachers have other factors such as curriculum and assessments to consider during instruction. The teachers from rural and urban schools have highlighted the time constraint issue when it comes to catering to students' needs through DI, stating that:

Ok, but in terms of implementation, we do not have enough time to do. In terms of time. We only have 40 minutes, but we have to cater to two big groups. So, I have time constraint problems because I have to prepare and also administer it. But even if the courses are arranged, teachers have time constraint because we have to finish our syllabus.” (UT3)

This expression indirectly signifies that giving students time to think over complicated ideas may not be suitable for in-class activities. In addition, Kanevsky (2015) also mentioned that students dislike waiting for their peers to complete a task, which was also expressed by teachers during the interview. Their statements include:

The good ones will finish fast; they have to wait for their friends. They will make boring faces. And sometimes I become too focused on the weaker students and the good ones will be frustrated (RT4).

Well, the good ones become impatient while waiting for the weaker ones. I would like them to help others but sometimes, they don't want to help. Some of them are pretty selfish in this (UT4).

These situations will create a negative learning environment in the classroom, where fast learners may feel frustrated and bored. So, teachers could cater to this student-preferred DI strategy by giving them take-home tasks that require students to think and reflect upon the idea and then guide discussions in the following lessons. Therefore, since the teachers are the ones who face the students and have first-hand knowledge about their behaviour and expectations, it could be left to the discretion of the teachers in deciding the times where prompting and urging are needed and the times where students should be given time to think and reflect on their own.

3.2. Most Preferred Differentiation Strategy According to Content, Process, Product and Environment

The questionnaire items have been classified according to four differentiation domains, namely Content, Process, Product and Environment. Table 2 shows the classification of questionnaire items to differentiation domains.

Table 2. Classification of Questionnaire Items

NO.	DOMAIN	ITEM NUMBER
1	Content	1-6
2	Process	7-34
3	Product	35-48
4	Environment	49-57

To find out the most preferred strategy according to domains, descriptive statistical analysis was carried out by computing the means and standard deviations of the items according to each category.

3.2.1. Content

Item 1 till Item 6 in the questionnaire describes situations related to the differentiation strategies in the Content domain in speaking lessons. Table 3 shows the results of the computation of three items with the highest means.

Table 3. Mean Distribution of Differentiation Strategies: Content

Item No.	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	288	3.03	.778
2	288	2.97	.893
3	288	3.17	.879

According to Table 3, it could be seen that Item 4, which has the highest mean, has received the highest agreement from the respondents. Item 4, with a mean score of 3.33, states that students like to learn about their chosen topics. Allowing students to choose the topics, according to Ginja and Chen (2020), is one of the ways to create a positive environment in the classroom. This is because students choosing the topics or how they would want to learn a particular topic gives them the perception that teachers give importance to their opinions, which indirectly boosts motivation and encouragement (Bonyadi & Zeinalpur, 2014) in the classroom.

Besides that, students choosing their topics in speaking also has been proven to result in students having greater background knowledge and interest in carrying out the speaking activities (Wolf, 2013). Motivation, encouragement, background knowledge and interest are important elements in the success of any speaking task, as it helps students feel confident and comfortable in expressing themselves in the target language. However, a few of the teachers who responded in the interviews mentioned that they chose the students' topics. For example,

I'm very particular about selecting the topic. I will make sure that they have some background knowledge. Only then, I will be able to engage the students easily (UT5).

The reasons given by the teachers include “too many topics to cover” (UT2); “challenging topics” (RT2); “students lack background knowledge on topics” (RT3, RT4, UT3); and “large class-size” (RT1). Although teachers choose the topics for the students, the activities and methods of presentations are frequently varied to cater to students’ needs and interests. For example,

“like the other day, I taught them Wonders of Nature and then we switched to Wonders of Malaysia. I separated them in groups and asked them to present about Langkawi and Tioman” (RT5).

Bonyadi and Zeinalpur (2014) who found that a reliable number of students prefer topics chosen by their teachers mentioned that the students find it “more relieving, encouraging and enhancing.”

3.2.2. Process

Item 7 till Item 34 in the questionnaire describes situations related to the differentiation of Process in speaking lessons. Table 4 shows the results of the computation of three items with the highest means.

Table 4. Mean Distribution of Differentiation Strategies: Process

Item No.	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q7	288	3.44	.772
Q8	288	3.05	.842
Q9	288	2.86	.886

It could be seen from Table 4, that Item 7 has received the highest agreement from the respondents. The item states that students like it when teachers give them time to think about a new idea or a problem to solve. This finding is in line with Kanevsky (2015), who found out that students objected to being pressured to present their work or to catch up in the classroom. Giving students time to master or comprehend new information is an essential crucial for learning (Deunk et al., 2015). However, as time constraint has been established as one of the challenges faced by teachers in implementing DI in speaking lessons, giving a large group of students time to discover new ideas without guidance could cause teachers other complications such as the inability to complete the lesson on time and the inability to fulfill the learning outcomes and curriculum.

Moreover, as the teacher-participants of this study mentioned that the students are mostly low proficiency, teachers’ guidance is crucial in the process of learning and discovery. Decristan et al. (2015) and Kaur (2017) also mentioned that scaffolding instructional discourse improves conceptual comprehension for low-proficiency students, which means that they need guidance from their teachers to ensure accurate comprehension.

Therefore, since the teachers are the ones who face the students and have first-hand knowledge about their behaviour and expectations, it could be left to the discretion of the teachers in deciding the times where prompting and urging are needed and the times where students should be given time to think and reflect on their own. If given sparingly, guidance and prompts do not interfere with or distort students’ flow of thought or critical thinking abilities.

3.2.3. Product

Item 35 till Item 48 in the questionnaire describes situations related to the differentiation of Product in speaking lessons. Table 5 shows the results of the computation of three items with the highest means.

Table 5. Mean Distribution of Differentiation Strategies: Product

Item No.	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q35	288	3.05	.888
Q36	288	2.84	.881
Q37	288	3.26	.801

It could be seen from Table 5 that Item 45 has received the highest agreement from the respondents. Item 45, which received a mean score of 3.42, states that students like to receive feedback from their teachers on how their work could be improved even if they receive good marks. This finding agrees with Muhsin (2016), where students indicated that their spoken errors should be corrected and that teachers' feedback is what they focus on. It could not be denied that valuable feedback leads to substantial gains during the learning process and teacher feedback could be thought of as the most preferred feedback as students view them as a resource and provider of new information (Tasdemir & Arslan, 2018).

Vattøy and Smith (2019) mentioned that students who perceive teachers' feedback as valuable have good consciousness about their own learning goals and expectations. This is explainable as receiving feedback on a well-completed task would help students be aware of the room for improvement and students who are conscious about their learning goals are looking for room for improvement. In line with this outcome, giving feedback is also one of the strategies employed by rural and urban school teachers in teaching speaking skills. For example, RT3 mentioned:

it is troublesome actually but if we take the initiative to do it, at least they will learn. It is an achievement for us. Especially for the weaker ones

when asked about giving specific feedback. However, many teachers mentioned the challenges that they faced when the need arises for feedback; the chief being time limitation during instruction. When RT3's use of the word 'troublesome' was discussed further, she added that

Because it takes time. Sometimes, we tend to ignore a few groups because we have spent time coaching the others.

In addition, it could be inferred from the exchanges that most teachers do not spend much time on teachers give extended and individual feedback on students' achievement or progress, compared to the presentation and management of instruction. This inference was derived after it was found that there were no instances on the teacher mentioning, indicating, or even indirectly describing instances of extended feedback being given. Instead, teachers resort to providing brief feedback like praises such as "good job, good, excellent, OK, interesting"; and rankings such as "the best group, the most interesting, the first group."

These utterances are all considered feedback, as Neals (2015) mentioned that the types of feedback are "oral feedback and written feedback; evaluative and descriptive feedback; informal and formal

feedback; and peer and self-feedback”. In line with this, Lightbown and Spada (2004) mentioned implicit and explicit corrective feedback which include “Recast, Repetition, Clarification Request, Explicit correction, Elicitation, and Paralinguistic signal”.

Although it is evident that teachers give feedback to students on their performance in the classroom, it might not be what is specifically expected of them. Giving brief feedback, like how the teacher-participants in this study do, does not effectively educate students on their weaknesses and room for improvement, as the comments given by teachers may be regarded as generalised feedback that does not focus on individual strengths or weaknesses.

3.2.4. Environment

Item 49 till Item 57 in the questionnaire describes situations related to the differentiation of environment in speaking lessons. Table 6 shows the results of the computation of three items with the highest means.

Table 6. Mean Distribution of Differentiation Strategies: Environment

Item No.	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Q49	288	3.31	.932
Q50	288	2.77	.907
Q51	288	3.37	.902

According to Table 6, it is evident that Item 57 has received the highest agreement from the respondents. Item 57, which received a mean score of 3.42, states, “I like it when my teacher tries to understand what I'm trying to say or what I'm feeling.” In other words, students prefer it if teachers make extra effort to understand their feelings and intentions. Teachers giving attention and space to students give them the idea that their teacher cares for them. At the same time, these actions help nurture and encourage the students to do better. This causal relationship has also been mentioned by Bambaeceroo and Shokrpour (2017), stating that the more teachers use such verbal or non-verbal behaviours, the more efficacious the learning and academic progress were.

Besides that, it is important to note that this expectation from the students is in line with the approach that the teacher-participants in this study utilise in the teaching of speaking skills. Through interviews, many teachers expressed that they take the extra effort to ensure their students understand what is being taught and feel that their opinion and contribution are being considered. For example, UT3 lets students choose their group members for classroom discussions so that they do not feel pressured to perform, but at the same time, conditions are set to ensure that students speak and carry out the tasks accordingly. Similarly, RT3 also allows students to choose their group members with the condition that they must communicate actively. Therefore, this shows that both rural and urban schoolteachers of this study have given importance to students' feelings and intention.

4. Conclusions

The data collected through questionnaires were analysed using descriptive analysis to find out students' preferred differentiation strategies in the teaching of speaking skills. Based on their most preferred strategy, it could be concluded that students are process-driven and give importance to the manner and methods through which they learn. Besides that, they also prioritise their interest in choosing topics and themes of the lesson; they give importance to the feedback they receive from their teachers and recognise and value the effort teachers take in trying to cater to their needs. This shows that students prefer to be given some time to figure certain things out by using their strategies with proper guidance from the teachers. This finding is in line with Kanevsky (2015), who found out that students objected to being pressured to present their work or to catch up in the classroom. Undeniably, "teaching in students' preferred ways" gives preferred outcomes to teachers such as the increased in students' learning autonomy, engagement, and conceptual learning (Jang et al., 2016). Cross-examining students' preferences and teachers' teaching techniques revealed that most of the expectations of the students had been fulfilled by the teachers to a good extent. These expectations could not be realised completely as there are many other factors that teachers need to consider in ensuring that lessons and assessments are carried out systematically.

As for recommendations, since DI was implemented in the year 2018 in both primary and secondary schools, the implementation of DI in primary schools could be considered in future studies. As the age group differs, the approach towards DI and the preferred strategies could differ. In addition, teachers might also face different challenges in implementing DI in primary schools. Besides that, this study centred on the use of DI in the teaching of speaking skills. It would also be advantageous if further studies consider the other three core language learning skills, namely listening, reading and writing. Each skill is unique in that the approach and use of differentiation strategies might differ.

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