

DIFFERENTIATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING COURSEBOOKS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SWITZERLAND

Der Begriff *Differenzieren* wird als Schlagwort von den meisten neueren Englischlehrwerken verwendet. Der vorliegende Artikel konzentriert sich auf die Frage wie Differenzierung in den Materialien angeregt wird. Vier Lehrwerke, die an Primarschulen in der Schweiz vorgeschrieben sind, wurden analysiert, um herauszufinden, wie Differenzierung von den Verlagen/Autoren interpretiert und welche Arten von Differenzierung angeboten werden. Die Analysen offenbaren mehrheitlich schwache Formen von Differenzierung, insbesondere im Vergleich mit Tomlinsons Modell zur Differenzierung. Die angebotenen Materialien sind meist nur nach Leistung und nach Aktivitäten, entweder für sogenannte starke oder schwache Lernende, konzipiert. Dieser Artikel schliesst mit ein paar Anmerkungen und Vorschlägen zur Umsetzung von Differenzierung im Klassenzimmer.

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Introduction

A brief scan of ELT coursebooks used in primary and lower secondary schools in Switzerland supports the claim of differentiation as a buzzword (see an example in Figure 1). In addition, due to the implementation of new curricula (e.g. Lehrplan 21, PER), the topic of differentiation has received even more attention in Switzerland. Although the term differentiation is an important component of course materials nowadays, it is not clear how the term is interpreted by publishers and/or material writers, what kinds of differentiation materials they offer, and how teachers implement differentiated instruction (DI) in their classrooms. This article focuses on how DI is interpreted and what kinds of DI can be found in coursebooks used in primary schools in Switzerland. However, it does not include how teachers implement DI.

For the analysis, I selected four coursebooks set for primary education by cantonal ministries of education (see Figure 2). Three coursebooks set in the Swiss-German-speaking part of Switzerland, *New World*, *Top Deck*, *Young*

World, and one coursebook set in the French-speaking part, *More! 7e*, were analysed. While the latter is based on a global coursebook (*More!*) that was adapted to fulfil the requirements of the Conférence Inter-cantonale de l'Instruction Publique de la Suisse romande et du Tessin (CIIP), the three coursebooks used in the Swiss-German speaking part were designed for the local market. In this article, the term coursebook encompasses both the individual book and the whole package.

There are many definitions of DI and almost as many models of DI. In accordance with Strohn (2015), the analyses and the discussion of the four coursebooks are based on Tomlinson's definition and model of DI (2001). Figure 3 provides a graph that illustrates Tomlinson's framework.

Tomlinson's DI model (see Figure 3) shows that teachers can differentiate the three key components content, process, and product according to students' traits (readiness, interests, and learning profile). Whereas in a one-size-fits-all approach student similarities take cen-

tre stage, the differentiated classroom acknowledges and builds upon student differences. Tomlinson (2017) stated that “a differentiated classroom provides different avenues to acquiring content, to processing or making sense of ideas, and to developing products so that each student can learn effectively” (p. 1). She argued that “[w]e know that students learn better if tasks are a close match for their skills and understanding of a topic (readiness), if tasks ignite curiosity or passion in a student (interest), and if students have the freedom to work in a way that is more efficient or that makes learning more accessible for them (learning profile)” (p. 83). Strohn (2015) translated the term readiness into German with *Differenzierung nach Leistung* (p. 56). The term learning profile is used as an umbrella term that includes four factors: (1) learning style, (2) intelligence preferences, (3) gender, and (4) culture. For a more detailed explanation of this, see Tomlinson (2017: 110-123).

To start implementing DI, Tomlinson (2001) provided a 10-step-guideline which is based on two DI strategies: **anchor activities** (activities students can turn to without further help when they finish an assignment) and **tiered assignments** (tiering is offering students of differing readiness levels activities, but to do so at different levels of difficulty). The 10-step guideline contains: (1) Train your learners to do anchor activities; (2) Start the lesson with an anchor activity and give a different task to one group thus introducing the idea of not everybody doing the same; (3) Try differentiated tasks (tiered assignments) during a small block of time; (4) Grow slowly but grow – moderately challenged; (5) Differentiate one product per term; (6) Find multiple resources for some key parts of the curriculum; (7) Establish class criteria for success with products, add individual criteria to each learner’s list; (8) Give learners more choice; (9) Envision – choreographed differentiation; and (10) Reflect before taking the next step (see Schwab, 2015: 43).

How coursebooks interpret differentiated instruction

Each of the coursebooks was analysed on how the publishers/material writers describe and define differentiation in their introduction of the teacher’s books (TB). The analyses revealed that the four

coursebooks do not share the same definition of terms such as mixed-ability or slower versus faster learners. While the writers of *More! 7e* discuss mixed ability with “[e]very class contains students with a wide range of abilities, linguistic knowledge and learning styles” and then emphasize the gap between complete beginners and students who already know some English, *Top deck* TB explains mixed-ability classes with “some pupils learn very quickly while others need more time to achieve the same objectives” (p.11). Material writers seem to use the terms *mixed-ability*, *stronger* and *weaker* in different ways; unfortunately, the coursebooks rarely offer definitions of how they use the terms *stronger/faster* or *weaker/slower learners* or their definitions are not congruent. In addition, it remains unclear whether learners are considered to be weak in one skill (listening, reading, speaking, or writing) or one sub-skill (grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary) or labelled weak or strong for learning in general. Hallet (2011) pointed out that learners might not be weak or strong in all four language skills nor in the sub-skills vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in exactly the same way.

Figure 1: *Top deck Teacher’s Book*

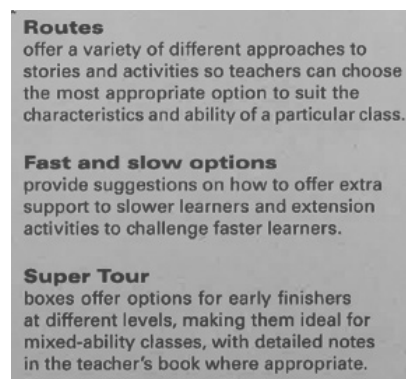


Figure 3: Tomlinson’s DI model (2001)

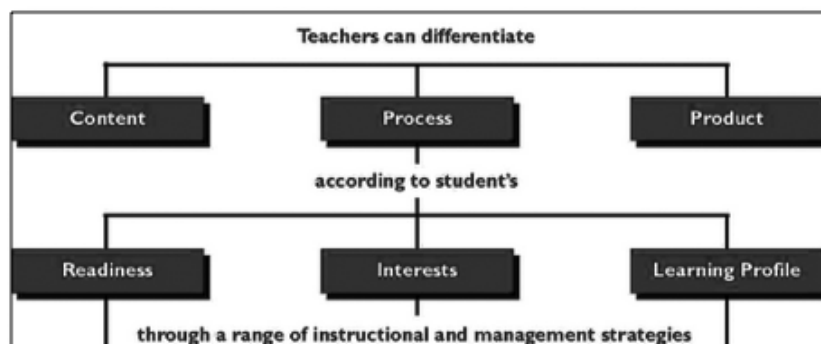


Figure 2: The four coursebooks analysed

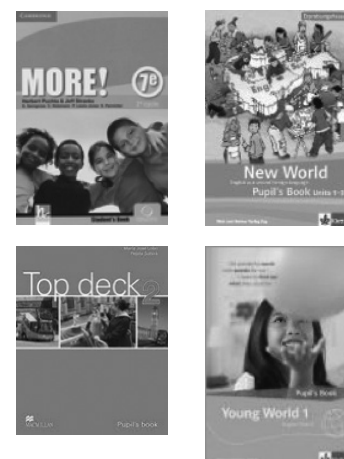


Table 1 provides an overview of how the four TB describe and highlight differentiation.

My analyses revealed that there are not many tiered assignments and not enough open activities that would encourage DI. To sum up, each coursebook analysed includes tips, ideas, suggestions of how to vary approaches and activities, e.g. *More! 7e* includes plenty of TEACHING TIP boxes and also boxes marked EXTRA ACTIVITY, *New World* as well as *Young World* contain a section called "Erweiterung" [extension] or reduced/extended requirements in the TB, *Top deck* offers some variation with the Super Tour boxes, etc. However, apart from two examples in *More*, no further tiered assignments could be found. Instead of supplying teachers with more worksheets that only contain closed activities and no tiers, coursebooks could offer more open activities, more tasks

that would allow for DI of content, process, and product in response to student readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

Implications and suggestions

Coursebooks could offer a wider scope of DI by opening up activities, by tweaking closed activities and thus turning them into semi-open or open activities. Brian Tomlinson (2015, 2018) made suggestions for material writers and teachers how to open up activities and thus "stimulate meaningful mental activity and communication" (2018, p. 34). Hallet (2011) discussed "komplexe Kompetenzaufgaben" and provided an example with *Good Food - Bad Food at School* (p. 163-171). Likewise, Müller-Hartmann and Schocker-von Dittfurth (2011) illustrated how coursebooks can be taskified. Schwab (2015, 2018b) combined task and DI and provided some examples to illustrate DI of content and process in response to learning profiles. Once more task-like and open activities are available, teachers would then have to ensure that these activities are good ones.

A good activity is something learners will make or do

> ... using an essential skill(s) and essential information

> ... in order to understand, extend, or apply an essential idea or principle or answer an essential question.

A good differentiated activity is something learners will make or do

> ... in a range of modes, at varied degrees of sophistication and in varying time spans

> ... with varied amounts of teacher or peer support (scaffolding)

> ... using an essential skill(s) and essential information

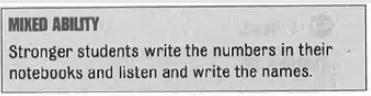
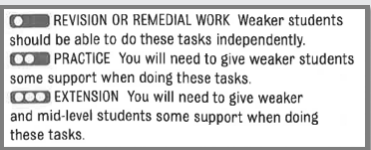
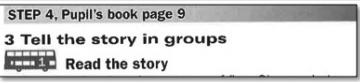
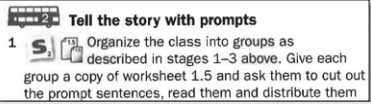
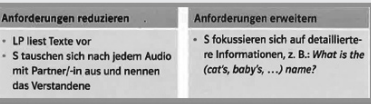
> ... in order to understand, extend, or apply an essential idea or principle or answer an essential question.

(Tomlinson 2017: 134; emphasis Schwab)

The narrow perspective of DI that many coursebooks seem to reveal, leads me to propose more emphasis in teacher education programmes on teacher diagnostic competence and how to cater for diversity. It is up to teachers to know their learners well, to know about learners' interests and to know more about their learning profiles, their strengths and their needs. DI requires teachers to observe and understand the differences and similarities among students (see diagnostic competence e.g. in Doff, 2016; Hallet,

The full analysis is available on
Babylonia's website:
www.babylonia.ch > issue 1-2019
> article Schwab

Table 1. Overview Topic Differentiation in 4 Teacher's Books (TB)

TB	Summary	Teaching notes with example(s)
More 7e	1. Mixed ability = weaker + stronger 2. Plus exercises in 3 categories: (Revision/remedial work; Practice; Extension) 3. Teacher Zone = website	 <p>More! 7e Teacher's Book (p. 45)</p> 
New World 1	„Für den Lernprozess kann aus unterstützenden (support) und weiterführenden (boost) Aktivitäten ausgewählt werden“ (p. 4). [You can choose either support or boost activities to support the learning process].	With little reference to differentiation such as "Leistungsstarke S versuchen es ohne Hilfsmittel" (TB p. 25). Plus reference to: „Worksheet 1 (support): Eine weitere Übungsmöglichkeit zum Zuordnen von Ländernamen, Nationalitäten und Sprachen“ (p. 35). [Further practice opportunities for matching countries, nationalities and languages]
Top deck	1. 3 different routes through activities (see icon double decker) 2. "Suggestions geared to meet the needs of faster or slower learners" (p. 11) 3. Super Tour Boxes (Reference to Activity book)	  <p>"Slower learners can check the pupil's book if they need to" (p. 20).</p>
Young World 1	*Five possibilities for differentiation (p. 9): 1. Open tasks; 2. Simple instructions; 3. Reduced/extended requirements; 4. Tasks: support or boost (copy-sheets); 5. Assessment: Tests at 3 levels *(translation Schwab)	 <p>Reduced vs extended requirements (p. 41) Reduced: T reads text; S exchange after each audio and discuss Extended: S focus on detailed information, e.g. What's the cat's name?</p>

2011) and then use that information for lesson planning. With that knowledge, skills, and attitude teachers would be more aware of how to cognitively- and affectively-motivate learners, as well as how to taskify a closed activity and how to use activities provided in coursebooks more creatively (see e.g. Hallet, 2011; Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-von Ditfurth, 2011; Schwab-Berger, 2015, 2018b; Tomlinson, 2015, 2018). Teachers (and material writers) need to become aware and understand that simply providing faster or slower learners with closed activities without any tiers cannot be seen as encouraging DI. Finally, I hope that teachers and teacher educators reading this article will be encouraged to study Tomlinson's model of DI, her 10-step guidelines, and begin to differentiate content, process, and product in response to a variety of students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles.

Coursebooks

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Arnet-Clark, I. & Frank Schmid, S. (2018). *Young World 1*. Baar: Klett und Balmer Verlag.

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D-EDK, Deutschschweizer

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Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2017). *How to differentiate instruction in academically diverse classrooms* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

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