

# IMPLEMENTATION OF BINNENDIFFERENZIERUNG IN WRITING FOR GERMAN LEARNERS AS DAF

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#### **ABSTRACT (in English)**

German is widely taught as a foreign language (DaF; Deutsch als Fremdsprache) in Indonesia. However, observations during German language instruction at Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA) have revealed that writing skills pose a significant challenge for many learners. Preliminary observations suggest that diverse language proficiency levels is a primary contributing factor to this challenge. Notably, a substantial portion of German Education students at UNESA did not have prior German language course's exposure in high school. In light of these observations, the present study underscores the urgency of implementing Binnendifferenzierung, a differentiated instruction approach, to address the diverse skill levels among learners. This qualitative descriptive research aims to describe the implementation of Binnendifferenzierung—differentiation learning—in the "Thematisches Schreiben" (Thematic writing) course. The study employed one form of differentiation: Differenzierung nach Aufgaben (task differentiation). Differenzierung nach Aufgaben involved introducing two variations of writing exercises at the A2 level: Aufgabe A. These variations included (a) vocabulary enrichment exercises, (b) guided writing with keywords, (c) serial writing based on cartoon images, and (d) free-theme writing. Differenzierung nach Sozialformen involved differentiating the teaching methods based on learners' preferences and learning styles. The findings of the study demonstrate that the implementation of Binnendifferenzierung in both forms effectively accommodated the heterogeneity of learners and provided opportunities for individualized learning tailored to their interests and abilities. This approach also introduced variations that aligned with the diverse needs of the learners.

**Key Words:** Binnendifferenzierung, Thematisches Schreiben, DaF, Differentiated instruction

Bahasa Jerman diajarkan sebagai bahasa asing di Indonesia (*Deutsch als Fremdsprache DaF*). Pengamatan selama mengajarkan bahasa Jerman ini menunjukkan bahwa keterampilan menulis tidak mudah dilakukan oleh pembelajar Bahasa Jerman di UNESA. Pra pengamatan menunjukkan bahwa heterogenitas kemampuan pembelajar menjadi salah satu indikasi kendala ini. Banyak pembelajar di Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Jerman UNESA





tidak mempelajari bahasa Jerman saat di SMA. Berdasarkan fenomena ini, peneliti melihat urgensi implementasi Binnendifferenzierung untuk mengakomodir heterogenitas kemampuan Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan; (1) Bagaimana implementasi Binnendifferenzierung (differensiasi pembelajaran) dalam mata kuliah Thematisches Schreiben. Penelitian dikategorikan sebagai penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Prosedur penelitian dilakukan dengan penerapan 2 differensiai, yaitu pertama implementasi Binnendifferenzierung berupa Differenzierung nach Aufgaben (differensiasi jenis latihan). Differensiasi ini dilakukan dalam 2 variasi latihan menulis level A2, yaitu Aufgabe A, bentuk latihan (a) latihan pendalaman kosakata, (b) menulis terikat, dengan bantuan kata kunci, (c) menulis berseri, gambar kartun, dan (d) menulis dengan tema (bebas). Implementasi kedua dilakukan dengan bentuk Differenzierung nach Sozialformen (differensiasi bentuk pengajaran). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implemenasi Binnendifferenzierung dalam 2 bentuk yang diterapkan dapat mengakomodir heterogenitas peserta didik dan memberikan peluang pembelajar untuk belajar sesuai dengan ketertarikan dan kemampuan individu peserta didik. Hal ini dapat pula memberikan variasi yang sesuai dengan kebutuhan heterogenitas peserta didik.

**Kata Kunci**: Binnendifferenzierung, Thematisches Schreiben, DaF, Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi

#### INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental productive skill in language acquisition. Through writing, individuals convey their thoughts, ideas, and abstract concepts using the written medium. Effective writing requires a systematic approach to ensure clarity and comprehension for the reader. In this process, writers must possess strong orthographic skills, grammatical proficiency, and a diverse vocabulary to produce high-quality written work.

Drawing upon 15 years of experience teaching German writing as a foreign language – *Deutsch als Fremdsprache*, DAF – at Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA), that is not easy. Writing is difficult, because writers must meet many requirements, while at the same time; they must think of the audience, structure the text in a logical way, formulate their sentences well, think of what they want to say. On the other side the researchers have also identified significant challenges encountered by learners in producing German written work that meets the required standards. These challenges arise from a variety of factors and contribute substantially to the overall difficulties experienced by novice German language learners at UNESA.





A primary indicator of the challenges encountered in German writing is the heterogeneity of learners' initial German language proficiency. This heterogeneity is exacerbated by the diversity of learners' prior knowledge (Vorwissen) of German acquired in high school. Approximately 70% of students enrolled in the German Education Study Program at UNESA had no prior exposure to German before entering high school. The remaining students possessed limited German language experience gained through extracurricular activities or elective courses. Notably, a significant proportion of students did not attend language-focused high schools, where German instruction typically receives greater emphasis. These disparities in prior knowledge create substantial imbalances within the classroom learning environment. Consequently, students exhibit varying levels of reading comprehension and overall reading proficiency.

Beyond the heterogeneity of learners' prior knowledge and proficiency, several additional factors contribute to the challenges encountered in writing German as a foreign language (*DaF*) at UNESA. These challenges encompass limited vocabulary, grammatical deficiencies, and significant disparities in writing skills among students. Furthermore, classical teaching methods, large classes, and a one-size-fits-all approach to writing topics and assignments—despite the students' differing levels—further worsen their writing skills. In fact, such heterogeneity in student input calls for a more differentiated and responsive pedagogical approach.

Based on the aforementioned root issues, the researchers recognize the importance of applying suitable strategies and differentiation in the learning process. One effective approach for addressing these challenges is *Binnendifferenzierung* (differentiation strategy in instruction). *Binnendifferenzierung*, also referred to as *innere Differenzierung*, is a teaching strategy that enables the customization of learning processes for individual students. This can involve variations in assignments, themes, teaching methods, and more. It is believed that this strategy has the benefit of catering to learners with diverse characteristics, offering them the chance to develop in line with their unique abilities and conditions.



## Writing in German Learning

Writing is a crucial competence for students' academic and professional success (Traga Philippakos and FitzPatrick, 2018 in Winkes & Schaller, 2022). Writing stands as a fundamental human endeavor, a means of expressing thoughts, emotions, and ideas in a structured and organized manner through the written word. As defined by the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), the Indonesian national dictionary, writing encompasses the creation of written compositions, ranging from articles in magazines or newspapers to stories and other literary forms. Expanding upon this definition, ....das Schreiben zaehlt zu den grossen Leistungen das menschlichen Geistern, in denen sich seine freiheit Ausdruck. Duden (2009), Schreiben is eine Vorgang, der neue eine Person betrifft und schreiben ist weniger spontan, ist meist Unpersoenlich. Moreover, Shehzadi (2018) said that for second and foreign language learners, writing is a demanding activity because this skill helps students to perform better in course work and examinations especially, at the university level. In summary, writing is a complex yet essential skill that not only reflects human intellect and freedom but also plays a vital role in academic achievement, especially for second and foreign language learners.

According to Azies (2018), the writing process can be categorized into three primary activities: (1) Controlled writing, (2) Guided writing, and (3) Free writing. In controlled writing, the process is segmented into stages. Initially, learners engage in tasks with significant instructor support, where the instructor's role is particularly prominent. Controlled writing exercises may include (1) jigsaw sentences, (2) tiered discourse, (3) pure cloze passages, (4) multiple-choice cloze passages, (5) finding and copying, (6) dictation, and (7) sentence arranging. Conversely, guided writing can be facilitated through activities such as (1) picture description, (2) story creation using pictures, (3) formal exercises, (4) summarizing, (5) combining notes, (6) replying to letters and rewriting advertisements, and (7) paired dialogues.

Writing is a skill that requires consistent practice to develop. Kast (2003) outlines various types of exercises that can enhance writing proficiency. These include: (1) *Vorbereitende Übungen* (preparatory exercises), (2) *Aufbauende Übungen* (sentence construction), (3) *Strukturiende Übungen* (structured exercises),



and (4) Freies und kreatives Übungen und kommunikatives Schreiben (free and creative writing exercises and communicative writing). To enhance learners' vocabulary, exercises such as Wortsatzerweiterung, Workette, Schatzlange, Woertsätze, and Ich buchstabiere are recommended.

Based on the curriculum development model of the Bachelor's Program in German Language Education at UNESA, students are expected to master writing competencies from levels A1 to B1. This expectation is reflected in the substantial credit weight of writing courses within the German Language Education Program. The relevant courses include *Schreiben für Anfänger*, *Thematisches Schreiben*, *erweitertes Schreiben*, *Schriftlicher Ausdruck*, and *Deutsch und kreatives Schreiben*. Specifically, the course *Thematisches Schreiben* carries 2 credit units and is offered in the second semester. Students are required to achieve A2 level writing competence in accordance with the European standards (*Gemeinsamen europäischen Referenzrahmen für Sprachen* (GER), as outline below:

#### [ 3. ] Schreiben

C 2	Kann klar, flüssig und stilistisch dem jeweiligen Zweck angemessen schreiben. Er/sie kann anspruchsvolle Briefe und komplexe Berichte oder Artikel verfassen, die einen Sachverhalt gut strukturiert darstellen und so dem Leser helfen, wichtige Punkte zu erkennen und sich diese zu merken. Er/sie kann Fachtexte und literarische Werke schriftlich zusammenfassen und besprechen.
C 1	Kann sich schriftlich klar und gut strukturiert ausdrücken und seine/ihre Ansicht ausführlich darstellen. Er/sie kann in Briefen, Aufsätzen oder Berichten über komplexe Sachverhalte schreiben und die für ihn/sie wesentlichen Aspekte hervorheben. Er/sie kann in seinen/ihren schriftlichen Texten den Stil wählen, der für die jeweiligen Leser angemessen ist.
В 2	Kann über eine Vielzahl von Themen, die ihn/sie interessieren, klare und detaillierte Texte schreiben. Er/sie kann in einem Aufsatz oder Bericht Informationen wiedergeben oder Argumente und Gegenargumente für oder gegen einen bestimmten Standpunkt darlegen. Er/sie kann Briefe schreiben und darin die persönliche Bedeutung von Ereignissen und Erfahrungen deutlich machen.
В 1	Kann über Themen, die ihm/ihr vertraut sind oder ihn/sie persönlich interessieren, einfache zusammenhängende Texte schreiben. Er/sie kann persönliche Briefe schreiben und darin von Erfahrungen und Eindrücken berichten.
A 2	Kann kurze, einfache Notizen und Mitteilungen schreiben. Er/sie kann einen ganz einfachen persönlichen Brief schreiben, z.B. um sich für etwas zu bedanken.
A 1	Kann eine kurze einfache Postkarte schreiben, z.B. Feriengrüße. Er/sie kann auf Formularen, z.B. in Hotels, Namen, Adresse, Nationalität usw. eintragen.

Figure 1. Writing competence in accordance with the GER

# Binnendiffirenzierung and its Implementation in Writing

Teaching fundamentally involves the guidance and delivery of material. According to Arief (1986), the teaching and learning process is the transmission of messages through specific channels or media to the recipients. Stern (1983) argues





that learning is a process that leads students to enhance their competencies and abilities or even to achieve a higher level of education. Learning is thus viewed as a process culminating in a greater degree of skills and abilities, and consequently, a higher level of education. This principle also applies to language learning, which aims to foster activities and implement language teaching. Stern (1983) defines language teaching as the activities intended to facilitate language acquisition. Schwerdtfeger (2021) emphasizes that effective teaching should contribute to and provide further development opportunities for all students, particularly in enhancing reading, writing, communication, media literacy, social competence, and other personal competencies.

In the teaching process, educators determine learning strategies. One such strategy is Binnendifferenzierung (differentiation teaching), which has been developed in Germany since the 1970s. Implementing this instructional strategy allows educators to organize heterogeneous learning activities, accommodating the diverse needs and conditions of learners. These differences may include variations in intelligence, interests, learning motivations, or prior knowledge. Motivation is important, because "without student motivation, there is no pulse; there is no life in the class." Zhang, Jian, Yu, Mengyue & Abbas, Safda (2022). This process encourages learners to become more actively engaged in their education, enabling them to select learning strategies that suit their individual needs. This approach aligns with the views of Schwerdtfeger, Tilman and Sofia. Tilman (2010) defines "Unter innere Differenzierung versteht man die Möglichkeit, den Lernprozess für verschiedene Lernende unterschiedlich zu gestalten". Sofia (2023) meint Lernen an Stationen um eine handlungsorientierte Lernmethode; Lernende übernehmen eine aktive Rolle und versuchen selbst neues Wissen durch Anwendung verschiedener Lernstrategien zu entdecken.

The implementation of *Binnendifferenzierung* needs to accommodate and consider the learning characteristics of students. *Binnendifferenzierung* can be applied both individually and in groups. The choice between these forms requires careful consideration and thoughtful planning, tailored to the class and learners' conditions, as both individual and group formats have their own characteristics,





advantages, and disadvantages. For instance, a benefit of group learning is that it can facilitate collaborative problem-solving among learners more effectively than individual learning. Frey (2010) emphasizes that 'Vorteile der Gruppenarbeit: der Menschen hilft: konkrette Probleme zu lösen."

Essentially, differentiation within *Binnendifferenzierung* primarily involves distinguishing according to language proficiency levels. Ardiyani (1) defines *Binnendifferenzierung* or *Innere Differenzierung* (internal differentiation) as a didactic and methodical concept originating from Germany, where it functions as a learning strategy that considers the unique characteristics and needs of each learner by offering various alternative models or learning forms based on their conditions. There are several variations and differentiations within the learning process, such as (1) *Differenzierung nach Aufgaben* (differentiation by task types), (2) *Differenzierung nach Themenbereichen* (differentiation by thematic areas), (3) *Differenzierung nach Sozialformen* (differentiation by social forms of teaching), (4) *Differenzierung nach Leistungsniveau* (differentiation by learning styles) (Schwerdftfeger, 2001:110). [http://lehrerfortbildung-bw.de/di downloaded on 20/1/2012]

Implementation of differentiated language learning (writing) can be carried out through the following differentiations; Schwerdftfeger (2001)

1. Differenzierung nach Aufgaben (differentiation by type of exercises).

Learning with differentiation by type of exercises can be done through various types of writing exercises. Learning with differentiation by type of exercises can be done by selecting writing materials based on various types of writing exercises. For example, writing vocabulary, writing texts with keyword assistance, writing free paragraphs (unrestricted), and so on.

2. Differenzierung nach Sozialformen (differentiation by teaching forms).

Learning with differentiation by type of exercises can be done through different forms of learning, namely classical forms (Plenum), individual (individual work), group work (group work), and partner work (partner work).

3. *Differenzierung nach Leistungsniveau* (differentiation based on level of understanding).





Learning with differentiation by type of exercises can be done through different difficulty levels (niveau). Different forms of writing exercises will greatly help each learner. Learners with higher writing abilities can be given exercises with higher difficulty levels than learners with lower levels of understanding.

4. Differenzierung nach Lernwegan (differentiation by type of learners).

Learning with differentiation by type of exercises can be done through multimedia differentiation forms used as media in delivering writing learning. Learning sources can include, for example, films, pictures, listening materials (CDs, DVDs), or the use of computers in learning followed by writing activities.

#### Method

This research is a qualitative descriptive study and it aims to describe the implementation of *Binnendifferenzierung* strategies. The data source for this study consists of 26 students enrolled in the *Thematishes Schreiben* course. The research procedure involves applying differentiation in two forms: *Differenzierung nach Aufgaben* (differentiation by task type) and *Differenzierung nach Sozialformen* (differentiation by teaching method). In the application of Differenzierung nach Aufgaben (differentiation by task type), exercises are conducted in three different forms.

The writing material *Differenzierung nach Aufgaben* (differentiation by task) includes (a) exercises for exploring and deepening vocabulary, (b) constrained writing (providing supporting words or key words), (c) cartoon-based writing, and (d) theme-based writing (freestyle).

Meanwhile, *Differenzierung nach Sozialformen* (differentiation by teaching method) involves learning through *Partnerarbeit* (partner work).

The writing material is taught in different forms: (a) individual, (b) paired/partner, and (c) group or *Gruppenarbeit*.

#### **DISCUSSION**



The research implementation is carried out for the *Thematisches Schreiben* course for the 2023 cohort, comprising 26 students. These students have completed the *Schreiben fuer Anfaenger* course. Currently, their language proficiency level is A2. The application of exercise differentiation is conducted in two stages. The stages are:

# (1) Differenzierung nach Aufgaben (differentiation by task type).

Learning with differentiation by task type can be carried out through various exercise differentiation activities. In this differentiation by task type, learners are provided with writing materials in different exercise types. In this implementation, there are 3 *Aufgaben* (prepared exercises).

## (a) Aufgabe A- Exercise A

The students are given vocabulary deepening exercises with the theme *Freizeit/Tătigkeiten*. The instructor explains the task related to understanding the content and the difficulty level of each exercise, as well as the technical aspects of the work. The *Aufgabe* A is as follows:

**Binnendifferenzierung - Aufgabe A.** Freizeit oder Tätigkeiten Wortsatz identifizieren. Schreiben Sie Wörter, danach schreiben Sie fünf Sätze zum Thema Freizeit / Tätigkeiten

In this task differentiation, the exercise involves identifying vocabulary related to the theme *Freizeit/Tätigkeiten*, then writing down the vocabulary and constructing 5 simple sentences. The difficulty level of this exercise is categorized as the simplest. During the implementation process, 6 students chose this *Aufgabe*: Yasmin, Queen, Aura Lintang, Daffa, Putri, and Ravenska.

## (b) Aufgabe B- Exercise B

In the implementation of  $Aufgabe\ B$ , students engage in vocabulary exploration with the help of keywords, focusing on the theme dayly activities ( $T\ddot{a}tigkeiten$ ). Students are provided with keywords related to possible activities. Using these



keywords, learners identify vocabulary and create short texts. Seven students chose this approach: Irma, Masyita, Rini, Yohana, Afrida, Ivena, and Wilma.

## Binnendifferenzierung - Aufgabe B

Was machen Sie dieses Jahr? Schreiben Sie einen kurzen Text.

(Rad fahren/ Wandern/Job finden/Sport treiben/Ausbildung machen

# (c) Aufgabe C- Exercise C

The students are given vocabulary deepening exercises with the theme Freizeit/ Tἄtigkeiten. The sequence of activities involves identifying illustrated cartoons. They then write a short text based on the sequence of the cartoon story. Seven students chose this approach: Irma, Masyita, Rini, Yohana, Afrida, Ivena, and Wilma.

## Binnendifferenzierung - Aufgabe C

Was macht Greta? Schreiben Sie einen kurzen Text.









There are 7 students who chose this approach, and they are Irma, Masyita, Rini, Yohana, Afrida, Ivena, and Wilma.

## (d) In Aufgabe D- Exercise A

In this task differentiation, students write freely about their *Fantasie Jahr*, or fantasy year, detailing what activities they would engage in over the course of one year. Six students have chosen this Aufgabe: Yasmin, Queen, Aura Lintang, Daffa, Putri, and Ravenska.

## Binnendifferenzierung -Aufgabe D

Schreiben Sie einen kurzen Text. Sie könen auch über ein Fantasie-Jahr schreiben.



In brief the following is a description of the exercises differentiation carried out.

**Table 1. Writing Assignment** 

No.	Task	Kind of Assignment
1.	Aufgabe A - (Exercise A)	Writing Vocabulary and Sentence
2.	Aufgabe B- (Exercise A)	Writing short text with keywords
3.	Aufgabe C- (Exercise A)	Writing with cartoon-based picture
4	Aufgabe D- (Exercise A)	Writing a free-form text.

In the process of implementation, four instruments were used and each with its own level of difficulty. *Aufgabe* A represents the easiest type of exercise, with subsequent tasks increasing in difficulty up to *Aufgabe* D. These four types of assignments are structured sequentially, all aimed at achieving a common learning objective: proficiency in writing in German. Students choose the *Aufgabe* that best suits them. Throughout this process, each student's learning experience varies depending on the type of task they choose. However, at the end of the learning process, all four types of assignments are discussed together. This is where the purpose of implementing *Binnendifferenzierung* becomes evident. Despite the different formats of learning assignments, they all lead to the same goal: achieving the learning objectives. The variation in assignment formats is intended to accommodate the diversity and heterogeneity of students' abilities in this course.

In the implementation of *Differenzierung nach Aufgaben*, the exercise formats are as follows: (a) Vocabulary exploration and deepening exercises, (b) Constrained writing (providing supporting words or keywords), (c) Writing based on cartoon illustrations, and (d) Writing on a free-form theme.

(2) Differenzierung nach Sozialformen (differentiation by teaching method)





This type of exercise differentiation can be conducted in various teaching formats, such as classical (Plenum), individual (Einzelarbeit), group (Gruppenarbeit), and partnered (Partnerarbeit) learning.

The writing materials are taught in different formats: (a) individual, (b) paired/partnered (Partnerarbeit), and (c) group (Gruppenarbeit).

In this second implementation, students are allowed to choose the social form they prefer: (a) individual, (b) partnered (in pairs), or (c) group (in groups of 3-4). The text used in this implementation remains the same, but the social form varies. Some students work in pairs, some individually, and others in groups of 3-4. The choice of social form in this implementation is determined by the students themselves, based on their individual interests and comfort with the desired social form. Frey (8) highlights that 'Vorteile der Gruppenarbeit: der Menschen hilft: konkrette Probleme zu lösen. Schwerdtfeger {15} stated "Unter innerer Differenzierung versteht man die Möglichkeit, den Lernprozess für verschiedene Lernende unterschiedlich zu gestalten.

## **CONCLUSION**

The implementation of *Binnendifferenzierung*, or differentiation, in foreign language learning is one of the alternatives employed by German language instructors for DaF (German as a Foreign Language) classes. Utilizing this approach helps accommodate the heterogeneity and diverse learning characteristics among learners. Differentiated instruction provides opportunities for both individual and group learning phases. The selection of these forms requires careful consideration and planning, tailored to the classroom conditions and the learners themselves, as both individual and group forms have their own characteristics and positive aspects. Another positive aspect is that group learning can assist learners in solving problems more effectively than individual learning.

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