



# *Binnendifferenzierung* in German Language Learning: A Challenge for Teachers

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**Abstract.** This is a literature study about the term *Binnendifferenzierung* in *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (DaF) or German as Foreign Language (GFL) class. *Binnendifferenzierung* (aka. internal differentiation) is a methodic-didactic concept, in which teachers have to consider the heterogeneity of learners. Every learner is different. Their needs, motivations, abilities, interests, and ways of learning are different from one another. This study aimed to describe *Binnendifferenzierung* in the class so that it could be one of the references for German Language teachers. Library research and content analysis were used in this study. The results were, in the concept of *Binnendifferenzierung*, the teachers are required to create various forms or variations of the learning according to learners' conditions. The variations are, for example, based on the type of task, theme, social form, linguistic level, learning style, and so on. It is the teacher's challenge to conduct a class that could cover those differences to reach the learning objective in the context of DaF-class in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *Binnendifferenzierung* · DaF · teachers competence · foreign language learning

## 1 Introduction

Humans are created differently. Each individual is unique and has its characteristics. Likewise, in the context of classroom learning, each learner has unique characteristics and is different from one another. Their needs, motivations, abilities, interests, and ways of learning are also different. This is a challenge for teachers to create learning activities that can meet those differences to achieve learning objectives.

*Binnendifferenzierung* or *Innere Differenzierung* (internal differentiation) is a didactic methodical concept in German in the form of a learning strategy that takes into account the different characteristics and needs of each learner by providing several alternative models or forms of learning based on the learner's condition. *Binnendifferenzierung* refers to forms and variations of learning (e.g. exercises, assignments, texts, strategies, etc.), which take into account learning objectives, needs, abilities, language level, and type of learner [1–5].

Learning with the concept of *Binnendifferenzierung* is good to be applied in heterogeneous classes. Hafdarani [2] applies the concept of *Binnendifferenzierung* in German

class to reading skills, while Julaikah [3, 6] tries to apply it to listening and reading skills. The three studies showed positive results.

Learning German in the context of 21st-century learning in Indonesia has obstacles that need to be considered especially by teachers as facilitators in the classroom. Problems such as the lack of high-level critical thinking skills (HOTS) and passive learners in the classroom [7–15]. These problems are influenced by many factors, such as language barriers, limited vocabulary, anxiety, and different backgrounds and cultures of learners [11–16]. The term background has multiple meanings, including family background, culture, motivation in learning, background knowledge, academic abilities, and so on. It forms a heterogeneous class that challenges teachers to be able to organize effective and enjoyable learning among different learners. Binnendifferenzierung is one option that teachers can use to answer these challenges.

Students in Indonesia who learn the German Language are heterogeneous. They have different cultures and family backgrounds, different prior knowledge and motivation, and different skill and ability. This study aimed to describe Binnendifferenzierung in such a heterogeneous class which becomes a challenge for teachers.

## 2 Methods

This is a literature study that used library research and content analysis. The data were texts and information about Binnendifferenzierung in German Language Class.

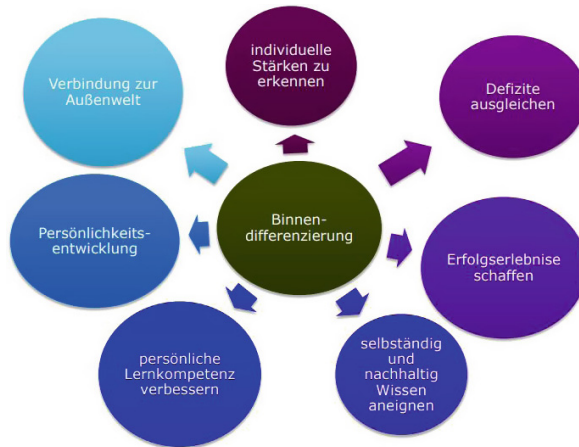
## 3 Findings and Discussion

### 3.1 What is Binnendifferenzierung?

*Binnendifferenzierung* or *Innere Differenzierung* (internal differentiation) is a didactic methodical concept in German in the form of a learning strategy that takes into account the different characteristics and needs of each learner by providing several alternative models or forms of learning based on the learner's condition. *Binnendifferenzierung* considers learning objectives, needs, abilities, language level, and type of learner [1–5].

*Binnendifferenzierung* designates forms of teaching and teaching offers (exercises, tasks, possibly linked to text offers), which take into account the different requirements, capabilities, and learning levels of the learners. Learners work on different learning opportunities at the same time. Internal differentiation is also referred to as inner differentiation or didactic differentiation and means all forms of differentiation that are made within a group of learners taught together - i.e. methods to deal with the differences between the learners without permanently dividing the entire group [17]. Internal differentiation is about the question of how each learner finds a way (autonomously) within a class or learning group, according to their learning requirements and learning abilities, to achieve the learning goals by designing the learning process differently for different types of learners.”

*Binnendifferenzierung* means all forms of differentiation made within groups of learners taught together – that is, methods for dealing with differences between learners without permanently dividing the whole group [17]. *Binnendifferenzierung* does not



**Fig. 1.** *Binnendifferenzierung* goals (Ciecharowska, 2018)

aim to create a homogeneous class. The most important goal of *Binnendifferenzierung* is an equal opportunity and optimal support for everyone [17]. Besides, it is to consider the various requirements of the learners, so that by working with the most successful learning methods for each student, they can be optimally promoted.

*Binnendifferenzierung* goals in learning German based on Fig. 1 include building connections to the outside world (*Verbindung zur Außenwelt*), recognizing individual strengths (*individuelle Stärken zu erkennen*), compensating for deficiencies (*Defizite ausgleichen*), creating successful experiences (*Erfolgs-erlebnisse schaffen*), gaining knowledge independently independent and sustainable (*selbständig und nachhaltig Wissen aneignen*), improve personal learning skills (*persönliche Lernkompetenz verbessern*), and as a form of personality development (*Persönlichkeitsentwicklung*).

### 3.2 Variation of *Binnendifferenzierung*

According to Julaikah (Julaikah, 2018), the variations of *Binnendifferenzierung* can vary, including: (1) based on tasks (type of exercise), (2) based on themes (3) Based on *Sozialformen* (social forms such as group work, partners, or individuals), (4) based on the level of ability (level of understanding), (5) based on the way of learning (type of learner). In addition, *Binnendifferenzierung* can also be distinguished based on the materials, texts, methods, and media used [1–4, 6].

Roughly speaking, there are the following possibilities for internal differentiation (Aschemann, 2011) a) Differentiation according to performance requirements/degrees of difficulty (level differentiation) b) Differentiation according to learning content or topics c) Differentiation according to learning goals d) Differentiation according to Media, materials or text types e) Differentiation according to methods or (closed/open) task types f) Differentiation according to learning times g) Differentiation according to learning techniques/learning strategies (promoting individual learning styles) h) Differentiation according to source languages (temporary dissolution of the “mixed group”).

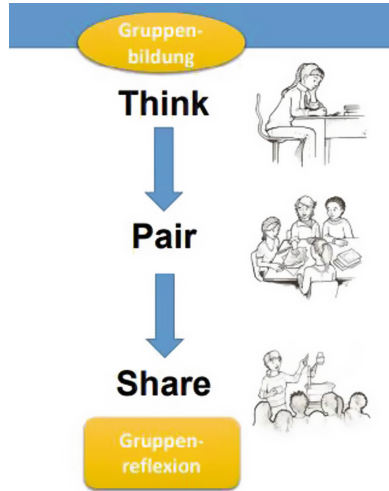


Fig. 2. Structure of Think-pair-share (Haensel, n.d.)

### 3.3 Binnendifferenzierung in DaF-Classes

*Binnendifferenzierung* in the context of learning German in Indonesia can be implemented in all skills, both receptive and productive skills. Teachers can adapt to the conditions and needs of learners in the classroom. The teacher can determine what form or variation of *Binnendifferenzierung* is needed to meet the learning objectives. Thus, teachers need to understand their student's characteristics and plan the learning activity.

The easiest way of *Binnendifferenzierung* is 1. Ask individual questions 2. Provide individual assistance (advice) 3. carry out individual corrections 4. and ask open questions to the group (whereby the participants decide who contributes how [17]). The teacher asks students one by one while going around the class to find out the problems that arise from each student. It can help students solve problems in the context of learning.

*Binnendifferenzierung* can also be applied to various learning approaches. One of them is cooperative learning using the think, pair, and share methods. Learners must first be divided into several groups. Learning with the think-pair-share method, learners go through three learning phases, the first is think, which is individual learning, the second is pair, where learners will share knowledge in groups, and the third, share, learners will present in front of the class to convey what they have learned and shared with other groups (Fig. 2).

## 4 Conclusion

Inner differentiation is a teaching principle that teachers often apply unconsciously. If internal differentiation is carried out as a measure for adaptive lesson design, it should be used in a planned manner and based on the learning level of the group. To apply *Binnendifferenzierung* in the class, teachers have to know the characteristics, abilities, and needs of their students. Besides, the need to prepare and plan the learning. It is huge

work and challenging. However, the right internal differentiation can meet the needs of every learner, which can lead to successful learning.

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