

Abstract

“In the work of written German there are no easy ways or shortcuts to success – and the one way or a “magic formula” does not exist”. The quote is taken from the Department of Education papers on the evaluation of the written tests in German conducted within primary school.¹ Among other things, the papers voice the need for more process writing. Also, attention is drawn to the individual differences in the performances of the pupils.

It is the main point of this report to investigate the possibility of finding a way, based on theory, to optimize the development of German writing skills of the individual student at the level of primary school. In relation to this the following general research questions are put forward:

- Is it possible to put forward a proposal based on theory of how to contribute to the elevation of differentiation in teaching within the development of German writing skills at the level of primary school?
- Can an input-based approach, whose principles so far primarily have been applied to the development of grammar skills, be employed for the elevation of the differentiation of the individual student’s inter-language² development?
- How can an electronically based exercise material for raising writing skills with special reference to a differentiated approach based on input be developed? In addition to this, evaluate the possibility of integrating electronically the input based approach with process writing.

Furthermore, in the report I look at the phenomena of deduction/induction and autonomy in order to investigate whether it is possible to incorporate these important aspects in an electronic model of writing as well. In addition, I look at asynchronous communication as a possible facilitator in the development of writing proficiency.

I discovered that an approach to language learning based on output is disharmonious with the ways, in which language learning acquisition takes place. I therefore shifted my focus to the input-based approach – an approach, whose principles so far primarily have been applied to the development of grammar skills – in order to investigate whether this approach made it possible to find theoretical proof of the prospect of adding a new dimension to the differentiation in teaching. The input-based approach focuses on input and the object of the approach is to intervene in the process of language learning and thus affect inter-language development.

I looked at the two alternatives within the approach that favour the so-called focused input in the development of the grammar skills; one being 'consciousness-raising for comprehension'³ and the

¹ See for example the 2000 evaluation: <http://pub.uvm.dk/2000/proever/3.htm>

² The foreign language variant a language learner employs. The interlanguage is based on rules and changes concurrently with language acquisition.

other being 'consciousness-raising for explicit knowledge'. In accordance with both of these approaches, learners are not able to notice features in input instinctively, but have to be made aware of these. I put forward the hypothesis that by combining the principles of the two approaches, it would be possible to consider the inter-language development of the individual to a higher extent. However, I can conclude that this was not possible within the actual field of inquiry.

On the other hand, I found that the idea of 'consciousness-raising for explicit knowledge' was applicable to the development of written proficiency. Within this approach, consciousness-raising is believed to lead to an explicit declarative knowledge whilst automation through practicing is believed to lead to explicit procedural knowledge as well as implicit procedural knowledge. By differentiating within this process the individual, depending on ability, is able to work with exercises up until a phase, which, in a given situation, corresponds with the existing processing capacity of the person in question. In so doing the risk of the learner suffering a cognitive overload is reduced.

By utilizing the differentiation potential of the electronic media, it is possible to allow for the characteristics of the inter-language and thus raise the differentiation of the individual student's inter-language development. I demonstrated this specifically in a model, which also illustrates how process writing can be incorporated into the model. I also developed exercises based on input for the different phases of the writing model. The exercises consider the deductive/inductive dimension. The model and the exercises are thought to be electronic. Some exercises are available in an electronic version. The model also allows for autonomy.

I found that a learning space for the facilitation of the single individual's writing proficiency could be established by incorporating asynchronous communication with native speakers.

"There are no easy ways or shortcuts to success in written German". With this report, I believe to have shown a way, a path which, as of yet, is uncharted in regards to the endeavour of developing writing skills– a way which is supported by theory.

³ Input approach, which focuses on consciousness-raising for comprehension of form-meaning relationships.