

Differentiation in further education: pilot & evaluation



Jan Willem van den Akker, Sander van Kranenburg, Gerco Blom, Alice Middelkoop



International Conference,
Exhibition & Careers Fair
for ELT professionals
19 - 21 June

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Overview

- Introduction
- Context
- Research question
- Method
- Results
- Discussion
- Questions

Context

- Group of Dutch teachers of English
- Further education: age 16-20
- Assumed entry level of English A2-B1
- Levels vary A2-C1

The older the student population, the varied the level of English as L2.



Research question

How can we as teachers differentiate between different levels of English, keep the teachers' workload manageable and satisfy the students' needs?

Method/ prerequisites

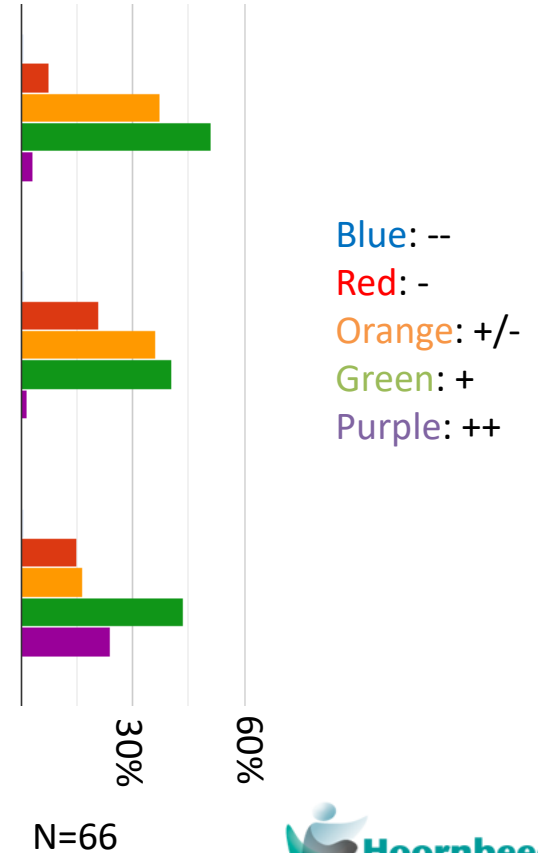
- Commitment in team
- Availability of materials
- Selection process with students
- Working at three levels: Pre Intermediate, Intermediate, Advanced
- Online and offline
- About 10 classes (ca 20 students each)
- 20 weeks

Teaching method

- Conversation about levels, motivation, confidence
- Placement test
- Different groups in class
- independently with the digital materials on reading, listening and vocabulary
- teacher guided lesson about grammar, speaking or writing
- plenary introduction
- feedback session

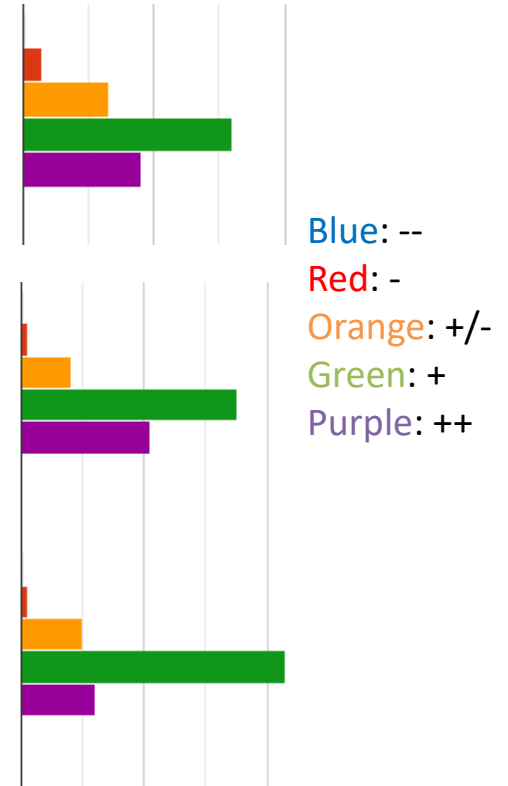
Results

- I was active for English this semester.
- My English improved this semester.
- I prefer English at different levels.



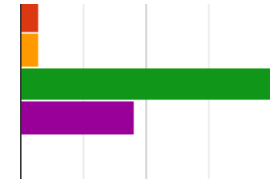
Results

- I prefer a plenary introduction of the lesson
- I enjoy English more if I can work at my own level
- I feel more confident if I have English at my own level

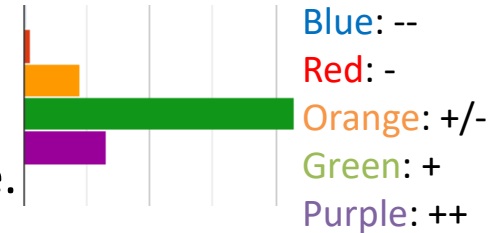


Results

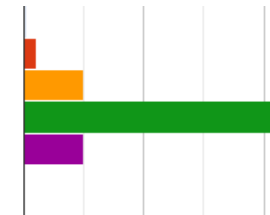
- I am more motivated if I have English at my own level.



- When I had a question, the teacher was available.

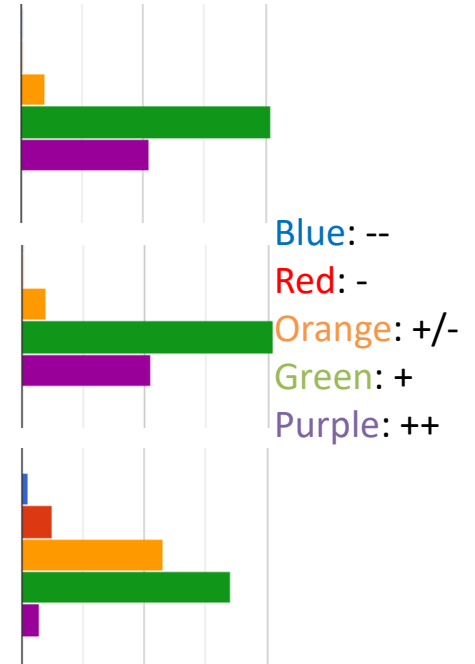


- I feel free to ask questions in class.



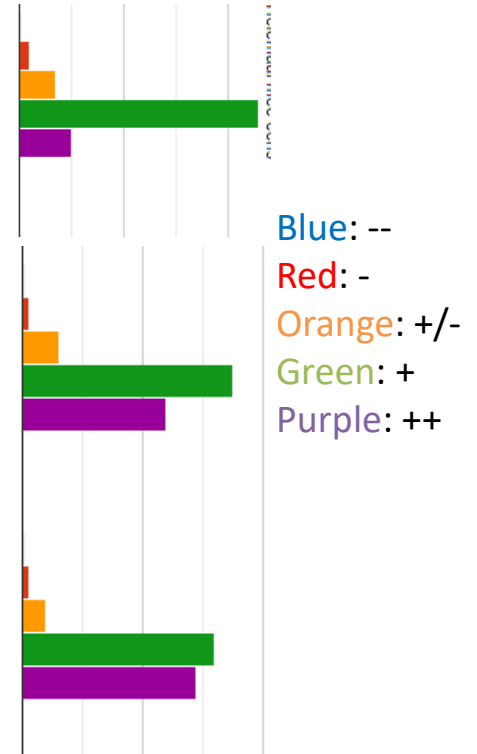
Results

- I could focus on the most important parts of English.
- I prefer a test at my own level.
- I was well prepared for the test.



Results

- The teacher motivated me.
- The teacher was able to adapt the lessons at my own level.
- The teacher valued each level equally.



Open questions

- What are you happy about?

I am so happy that I was able to do the assignments.

Sometimes I felt bored, but now I learned something new.

Good explanation by the teacher for the weaker students.

I felt respected & appreciated.

I noticed that my English is better than I thought.

The teacher stimulated me to learn.

Open questions

- Do you have a tip for improvement?

Less grammar in the test.

Working with various groups in class creates more noise.

Sometimes we couldn't log in the system. That caused a lot of unrest.

More (serious) groupwork.

Discussion & conclusion

- Differentiated language teaching enhanced the students' motivation
- Differentiated language teaching increased the students' confidence/ self-efficacy
- Despite differences students feel respected and challenged
- A greater dependency on digital tools
- Sometimes more unrest and noise in the classroom
- It slightly increased the teachers' workload
- It appeared an asset in Covid times during online education.

Summary

While the gap is widening between the higher and lower levels of English in further education, differentiating is becoming more difficult and sparser. As a team we developed a plan to differentiate interlocking digital and off line materials. The results show the manageable workload for teachers and satisfaction of students.

Questions?

Goodbye.

{for now}

Mail: mia@hoornbeek.nl

Literature

- Berben, M., & Van Teeseling, M. (2020). *Differentiëren is te leren (vo/mbo). Omgaan met verschillen in het vo en mbo*. Amersfoort: CPS.
- Keijzer, J., Verheggen, K., & Van Gils, D. (2021). *Differentiëren in het talenonderwijs. Kleine ingrepen, grote effecten*. Coutinho.
- Dornyei, Z., & Ryan, S. (2015). *The psychology of the language learner revisited*. Routledge.