

Abstract:

Suggestions for whole class reading lessons with First and Second Language Learners – Vocabulary Work and Differentiated Materials

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In many countries, a considerable amount of students additionally speaks at home a language different from the language of instruction. In Austria, for instance, one out of 4 children at the end of fourth grade speaks German (the language of instruction in school) as second language (L2) (Statistik Austria, 2014). These L2 learners run a higher risk of developing reading difficulties (Schabmann, Landerl, Bruneforth, & Schmidt, 2012). As research has shown, L2 learners often have specific problems in reading comprehension, while they do not have problems in their decoding abilities (Melby-Lervag & Lervag, 2013; Verhoeven & van Leeuwe, 2012). Researchers explain this specific comprehension deficit largely in terms of deficits in vocabulary knowledge (Hutchinson, Whiteley, Smith, & Connors, 2003; Verhoeven, 2011). The increasing number of L2 learners in classrooms requires teachers to adapt their teaching methods and materials to the various learners' needs. This lecture will present suggestions for reading lessons with both first language (L1) and L2 learners. The provided suggestions are especially useful for whole class reading lessons in grades two and three. Firstly, recommendations for vocabulary work are given as vocabulary work should represent one of the main pillars reading lessons should be built on, not only for L2 but also for L1 students (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2005-2006). Tips for organizing, selecting and instructing appropriate vocabulary are presented. Beside vocabulary work, the individual needs of both L2 and L1 learners should be addressed through differentiation and individualized instruction. Research has shown that undifferentiated instruction leads to moderate gains only in high achieving students, while average and low achieving students lag behind (McGill-Franzen, Zmach, Solic, & Zeig, 2006). Within this lecture, secondly, suggestions are given for offering differentiated reading instruction by providing differentiated reading materials. Ways how to find appropriate reading levels as well as how to differentiate texts and tasks are described. All the presented suggestions are based on materials applied in the context of a project in Styria (Austria) within second grade classes of L1 and L2 learners of German (see Seifert, Schwab, & Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2014).

References:

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