Catering for Learner Diversity in the English Language Curriculum: Stretching the Potentials of Advanced Learners in the Secondary English Language Classroom

Learner Diversity

English Language

Advanced

Learners

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Pre-workshop reflection/sharing

- What are the characteristics of the more advanced learners in your classroom(s)?

- How do you cater for their needs?

- What are the major challenges? How do you cope with those challenges?

Outline of the workshop:

- Part 1: Reflection on and introduction to principles for catering for leaner diversity in general, and advanced learners in particular

- Part 2: Examination of a teaching unit aiming at developing the language and cognitive skills of advanced learners

- Part 3: Hands-on task: Brainstorming ideas on applying strategies for catering for the needs of advanced learners in secondary classrooms

Part 1:

Reflection on and introduction to principles for catering for learner diversity in general, and advanced learners in particular
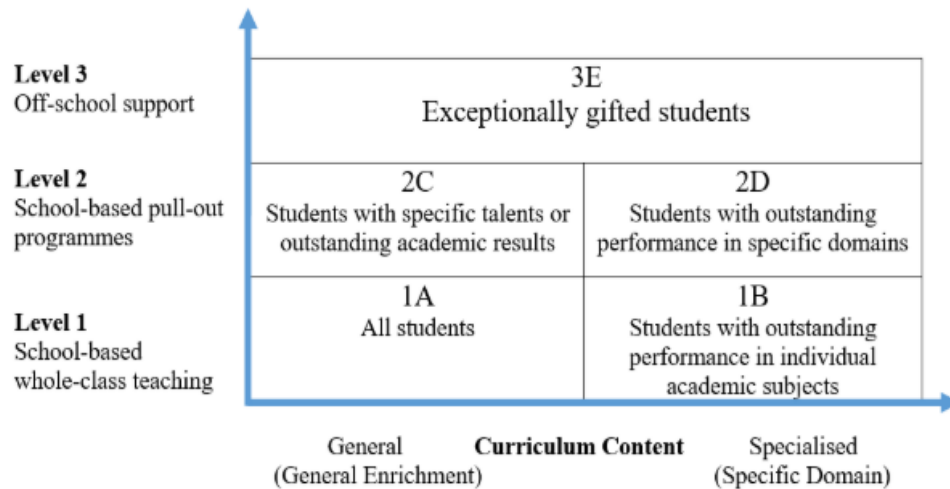
Brief Reflection:

Discuss the extent to which you agree with the following statements with a partner or in trios.

1. Learner diversity exists in my class(es).

2. Advanced learners' abilities are mainly reflected in their target language proficiency.

3. Advanced learners' needs can be catered for only in small classes.

4. Advanced learners' needs are most effectively addressed through designing tasks at different difficulty levels.

5. When considering catering for learner diversity, more attention is paid to the weak and less to the advanced learners.

Some principles for catering for the needs of the advanced learners in the language classroom:

The three-tier operation mode of gifted education in HK

The Three-tier Implementation Model for Gifted Education

Level 3 Off-school support	**3E** Exceptionally gifted students	
Level 2 School-based pull-out programmes	**2C** Students with specific talents or outstanding academic results	**2D** Students with outstanding performance in specific domains
Level 1 School-based whole-class teaching	**1A** All students	**1B** Students with outstanding performance in individual academic subjects
	General (General Enrichment) **Curriculum Content** Specialised (Specific Domain)	

http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/gifted/

- Level 1:

- A: Training in higher-order thinking skills and creativity for ALL students

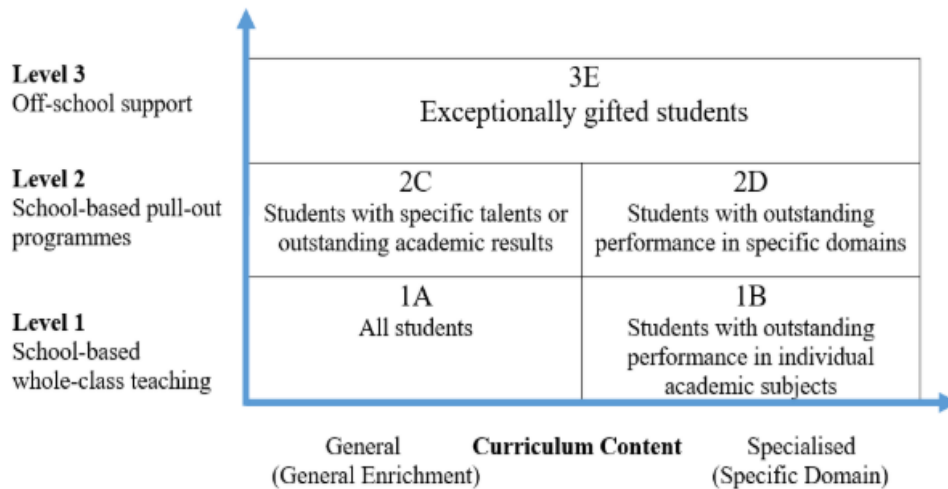Possible pedagogic implication: Open-ended tasks in the English language curriculum

- B: Appropriate grouping of students according to their needs across ALL subjects

Possible pedagogic implication: Streaming of students into different groups for different subjects

The three-tier operation mode of gifted education in HK
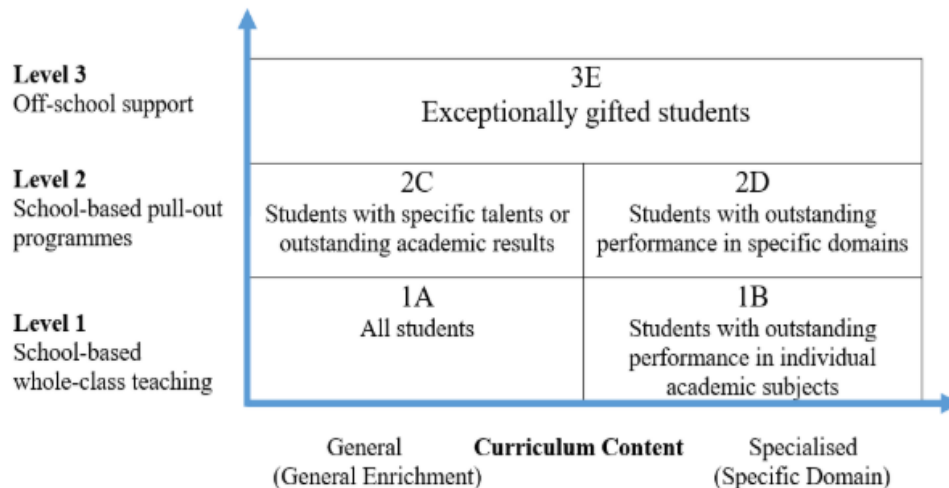
The Three-tier Implementation Model for Gifted Education

	General (General Enrichment)	Specialised (Specific Domain)
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Curriculum Content

http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/gifted/

- Level 2:

- C: Pull-out programmes for generic skills training for a homogeneous group of students

- D: Pull-out programmes for training students with outstanding performance in specific subject domains

Possible pedagogic implications: Project-based learning, English ambassador programme, English fairs/performance involving selected students

The three-tier operation mode of gifted education in HK

The Three-tier Implementation Model for Gifted Education

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	General (General Enrichment) **Curriculum Content** Specialised (Specific Domain)	

- Level 3:

- E: Challenging off-site enrichment and extension learning conducted by the EDB, The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education, tertiary institutions and other educational organisations/bodies

http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/gifted/

Needs and characteristics of advanced learners in the English subject

- What are the characteristics of the advanced learners in our secondary English language classrooms?

- Do they show:
  - more accurate and varied grammar and vocabulary?
  - better grasp of specific language skills like scanning and skimming?
  - higher motivation in accomplishing the language tasks?

- Do they also possess:
  - more critical attitude towards the topics of the activities?
  - more creative ideas?
  - better leadership skills?
  - …

Some differentiation strategies suggested by the EDB:

- Integrating multiple disciplines into an area of study (e.g. LAC, CLIL)

- Allowing in-depth learning of a self-directed topic (cf. phenomenal learning)

- Providing broadly-based curriculum content

- Providing learning activities that develop:
  - Abstract and higher order thinking skills
  - Independent thinking and open inquiry
  - Problem solving skills
  - Research skills
  - Self-understanding

To be realised in tasks integrating the four macro language skills

Some differentiation strategies suggested by the EDB(Cont'd):

- Presenting ideas and products that challenge existing ideas (e.g. contrasting views in the HKDSE reading paper)

- Evaluating outcomes through a range of measures which may include self or peer appraisal, observation, performance, products, criterion-referenced and/or standardised testing

- Flexible grouping

- Tiered instruction

Some differentiation strategies suggested by the EDB(Cont'd):

■ Differentiated instruction: Multiple Approaches to…

Content	input, what students learn and how students gain access to what they learn, including scaffolding support built into the input
Process	how students go about making sense of ideas and information, task conditions
Product	output, how students demonstrate what they have learned

Further References on Differentiated Instruction:

- ***How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-ability Classrooms (2nd Edition)*** *(Differentiated instruction provides MULTIPLE APPROACHES to* **content, process** *and* **product,** *p.4) by Carol Ann Tomlinson*
- **Principles that govern effective differentiation**

  http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/100216/chapters/Understanding-Differentiated-Instruction@-Building-a-Foundation-for-Leadership.aspx

Differentiated Instruction

1. Content Differentiation

# A Functional View of Language in Context (Adapted from Rose, 2005) (The Genre Egg Approach)

→ Scaffolding/challenging students for different levels of language of the target genre

CONTEXT
TEXT
PARAGRAPHS

patterns within the text

SENTENCE
WORD GROUPS

patterns within the sentence

WORD
SYLLABLES
LETTER PATTERNS
SOUND PATTERNS

patterns within the word

Rose, D. (2005) 'Democratising the Classroom: a Literacy Pedagogy for the New Generation'. Journal of Education, 37:127-164
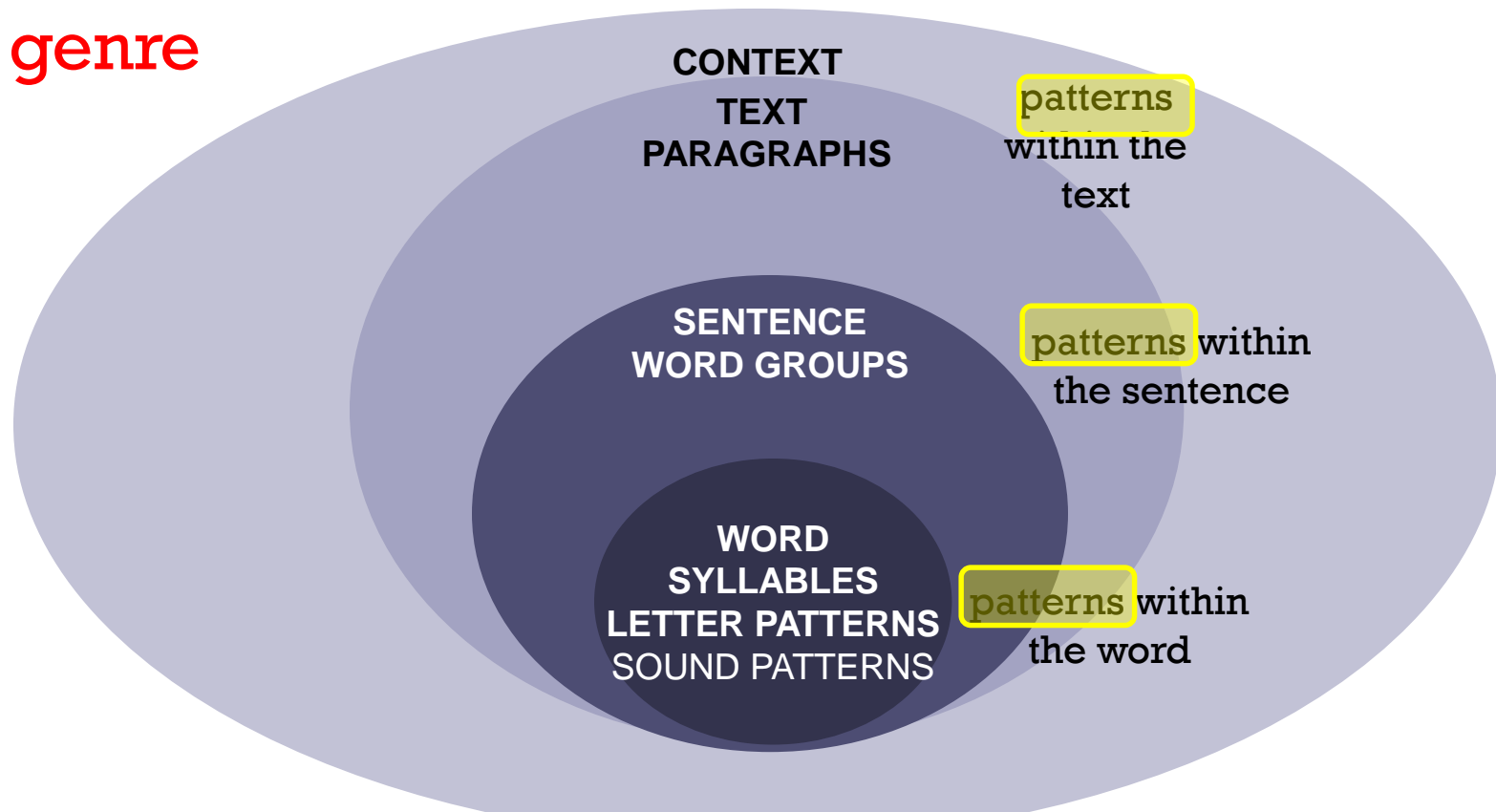
+ Content Differentiation:

■ Example: Reading-to-write an expository essay

→ Presenting/guiding students to analyse language features and rhetorical structure of an expository text through integrating both "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches
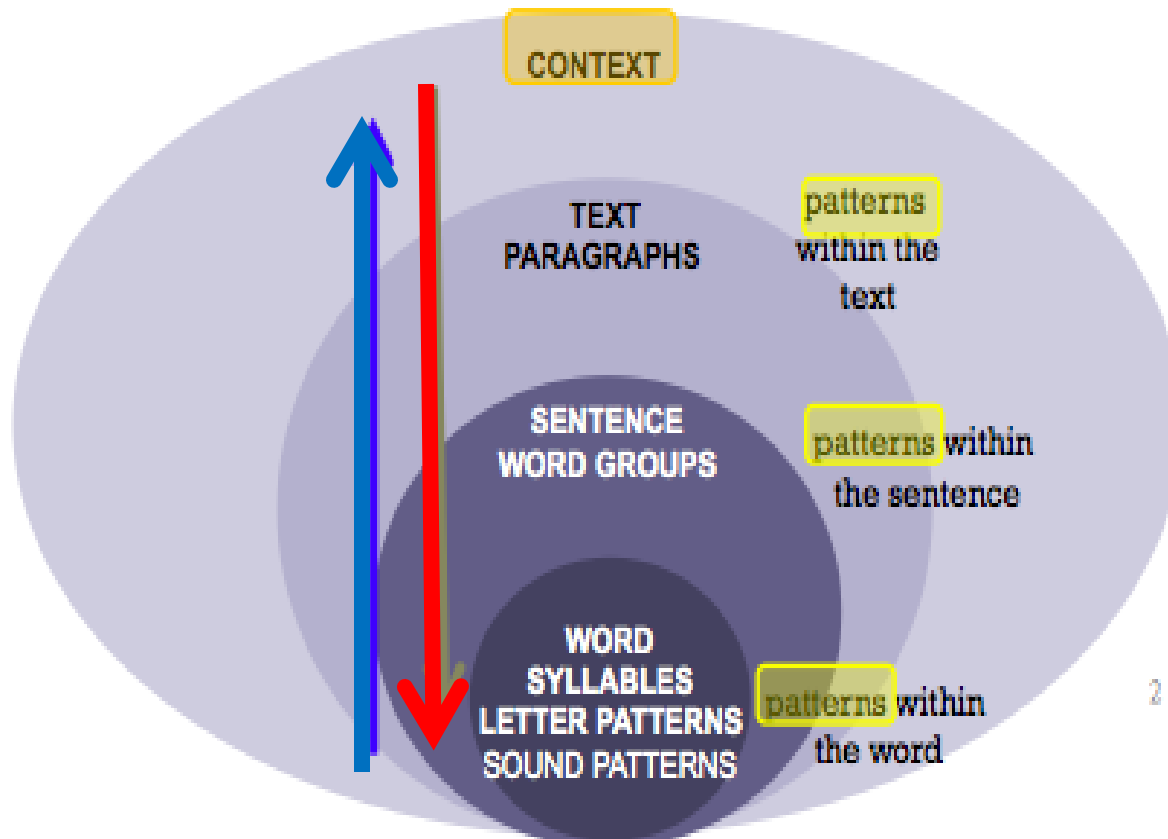
References:

- *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-ability Classrooms 2nd Edition (Differentiating Content p.72) by Carol Ann Tomlinson*
- **Elements of Curriculum that can be Differentiated – Content**

http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/100216/chapters/Understanding-Differentiated-Instruction@-Building-a-Foundation-for-Leadership.aspx

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For example…

■ Reading to write an expository essay:

→ **Context level**: Activating students' schemata of the writing topic and encouraging their sharing of thoughts (through videos/ pictures/ pre-task)

→ **Text level**: Showing several expository essays of different styles and guiding students to analyse the rhetorical structure and language features

→ **Sentence level:** Guiding students to identify the sentence patterns for major academic functions (e.g. stating arguments, providing justification etc.)

→ **Word level:** Identifying useful vocabulary (words/phrases) from the sample texts and asking students to suggest alternatives (i.e. building range)

Differentiated Instruction

2. Process Differentiation

Process Differentiation: Audio, Visual, and Kinesthetic Activities

→ Designing teaching and learning materials and activities to cater for and develop different learning styles

e-learning

audio

others?

visual

kinesthetic

multimodal

drama
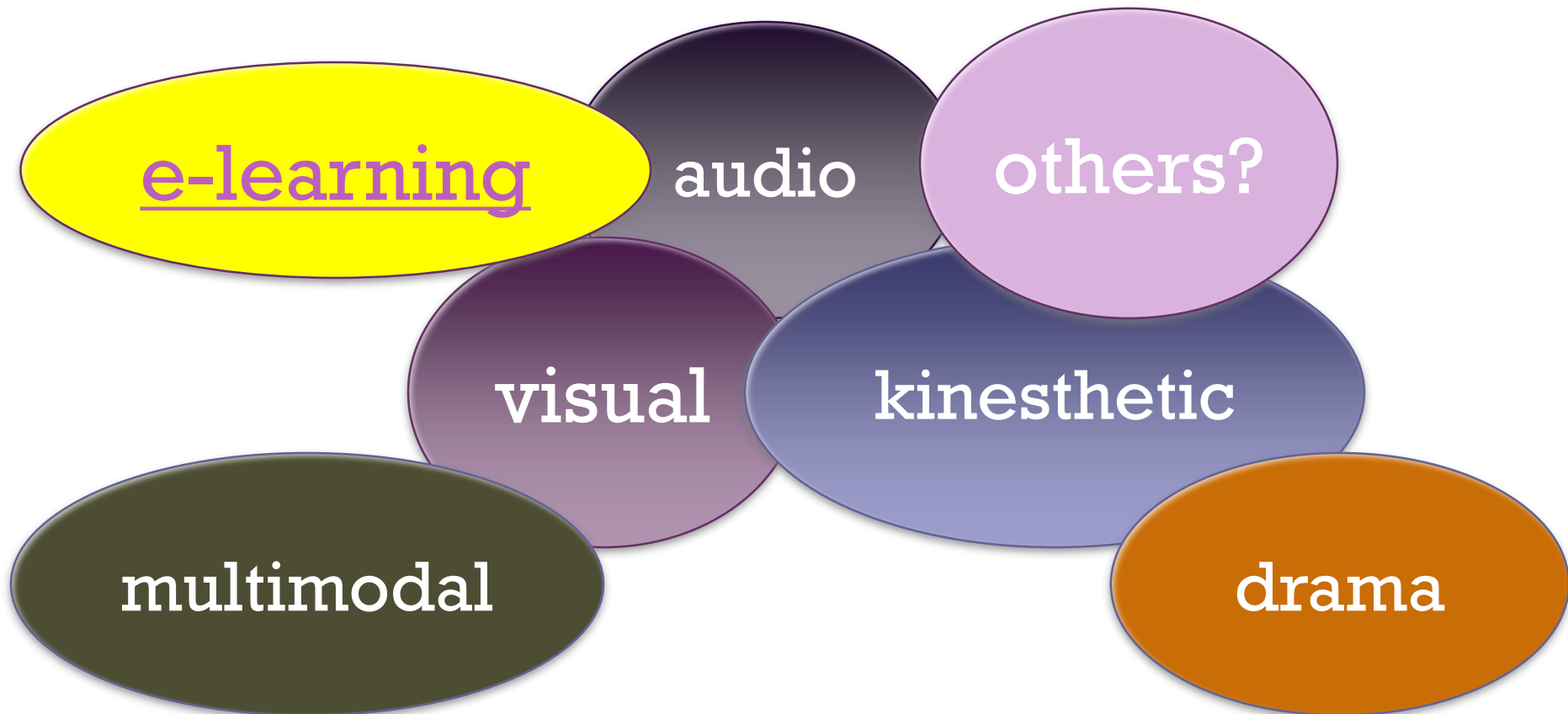
+ Process Differentiation: Flexible Grouping

→ Designing teaching and learning tasks with different modes of participation
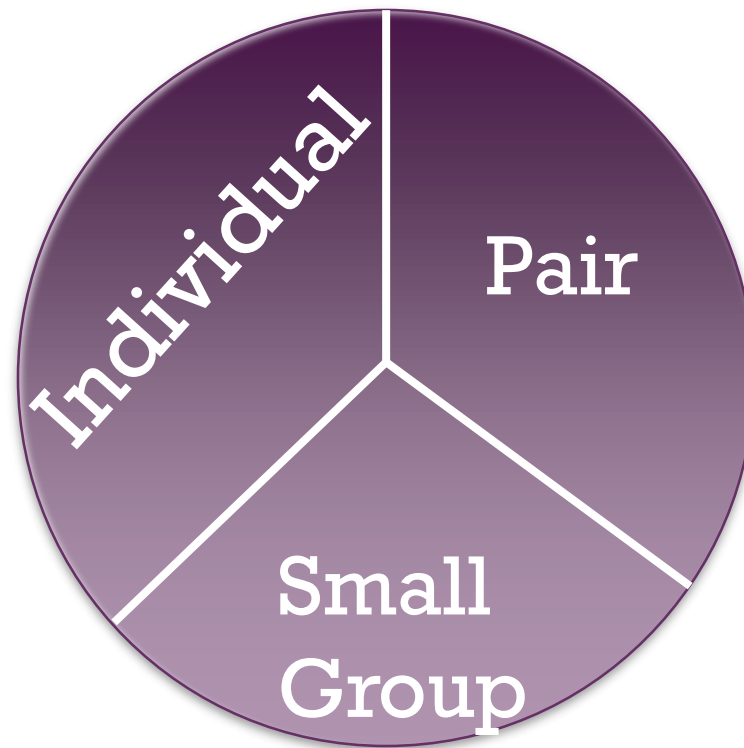
Process Differentiation:

Other ways of differentiating the learning process (the process/ the activity in which the learner comes to make sense of, understand and "own" the key facts/ concepts/ generalisations/ skills):

- Providing varied options at differing levels of difficulty/ based on student interests

- Allowing students to access additional teacher or student support for a task

- Introducing examples of learning tools like keeping a learning log / journal, using graphic organisers, cubing, role-play, think-pair-share. (Tomlinson, 2001, p.80)

- **References:**

- *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-ability Classrooms 2nd Edition (Differentiating Process p.80)* **;Instructional strategies that support differentiated Process** (p. 81)**:** multiple intelligences, interest groups, varied graphic organisers, complex instruction, concept attainment, independent study *by Carol Ann Tomlinson*

- **Elements of Curriculum that can be Differentiated - Process**

http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/100216/chapters/Understanding-Differentiated-Instruction@-Building-a-Foundation-for-Leadership.aspx
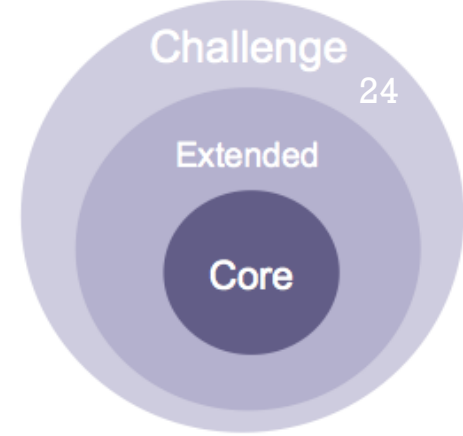
Differentiated Instruction

3. Product Differentiation

+ Product Differentiation: Core, Extended and Challenge levels of Students' Language Production

Challenge

Extended

Core

+ For example…
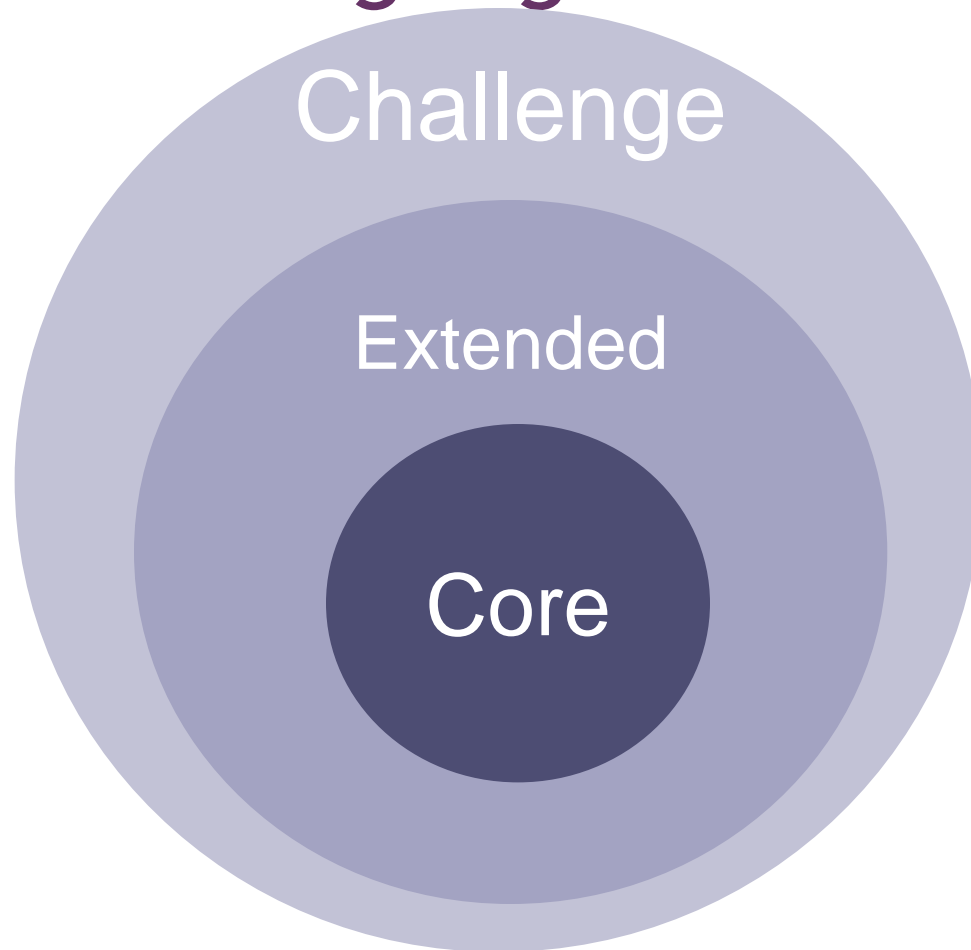
Challenge

Extended

Core

■ Speaking: **student presentation**

→ **Core**: Get students to present what they know/ they have learnt about a topic

→ **Extended**: Get students to present what they know and ask peers critical thinking questions on a topic

→ **Challenge:** Get students to present a topic in order to debate with other groups of students

Other ways of differentiating the Products:
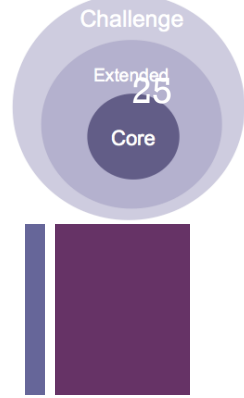
- Providing product assignments at **varying degrees of difficulty** to match student readiness.

- Using a wide variety **of assessments**

- Encouraging students to **express** what they have learned in **varied ways**

- Providing product assignments at **varying degrees of difficulty** to match student readiness

- Allowing for varied **working arrangements** (for example, allowing multiple drafts of student work as in process writing).

References:

- How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-ability Classrooms 2nd Edition (Differentiating Products p.85) by Carol Ann Tomlinson

- Elements of Curriculum that can be Differentiated - Product
http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/100216/chapters/Understanding-Differentiated-Instruction@-Building-a-Foundation-for-Leadership.aspx

Part 2:

Examination of a teaching unit aiming at developing the language and cognitive skills of advanced learners

Examination of a teaching sequence informed by the above principles

Let's go through this sequence from both the teacher's and the students' perspectives

Introduction:
- a sequence primarily targeting development of reading strategies
- integration of the other three macro skills
- open-ended tasks with flexible task conditions for promoting differentiated instruction (content, product, and process)

Stage 1: Speaking, Listening and Pre-Reading (Content Differentiation)

Group Interaction 1 (3 min):

- Get into trios and discuss the following question: What can be possible relationships between a smartphone and a glass of iced coffee? Brainstorm as many as you can and share your thoughts.

Stage 1: Speaking, Listening and Pre-Reading

Group Interaction 2 (2 min):

- You'll see both in the video I'm going to show you. What kind of video do you think it is? What's its purpose? Who are the target audience?

To what extent are these questions manageable for students at different levels of English proficiency? How would you expect answers from the advanced students to be different from the others? What kind of generic (in addition to language) skills can be targeted?

Stage 1: Speaking, Listening and Pre-Reading

Video-watching (3 min) & Group Interaction 3 (3 min):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T52BBA37gmY

https://www.engadget.com/2017/09/05/samsung-galaxy-note-8-review/

While you watch the first three minutes of the video, think about these two questions:

1. What kind of video is it? Who made it? For what purpose?

2. What is the reason for showing some iced coffee in the video? Is it a good way for the producer to achieve his/her purpose? Why/why not?

Share your ideas with your friends for three minutes after watching. Did you make the right guesses before watching the video?

Forming expectations on texts and text interpretation and being higher-order generic and language skills to be fostered, and a way to differentiate the content for students

Stage 2: While-Reading
(Content and Process Differentiation)

Group Interaction 4 (Skimming and scanning) (3 min): Read the first paragraph of a text quickly and answer the following questions.

Last year's Galaxy Note 7 was a big step forward for the Note line, pairing an impeccably built body with an updated S Pen and excellent performance. Then they started blowing up. The Galaxy S8 and S8 Plus did well to rehabilitate Samsung's image as a top-notch phone maker, and now the company is trying to make up for past mistakes with the brand-new Galaxy Note 8.

1. How many phone models are mentioned in the paragraph?

2. Which one do you think is the focus of the text? Why?

3. What do you think is in common between the text and the video we just saw? Do they share the same text type/purpose etc.?

Forming pre-reading/watching expectations on texts (both print and non-print) being a useful skill to understand or even evaluate them critically

Stage 2: While-Reading

Detailed Reading (5 min): Let's read the second paragraph of the text together and answer some questions together as we read it aloud.

Samsung had a lot to prove, and it mostly succeeded. There's no doubting that the Note 8 ($929) is a great smartphone — it packs all the usual flagship amenities, not to mention a dual camera that works very, very well. The problem is, the Note 8 feels a little... by-the-book. Samsung, frankly, got so much right with its other huge phone, the Galaxy S8 Plus, that the Note 8 doesn't feel as triumphant an improvement as the Note 7 did in comparison with the S7 line. Don't get me wrong: The Note 8 is still Samsung's best smartphone, and one could even argue it's the best big phone out there. Just know that it's a pretty conservative update, and that it's going to cost you.

Stage 2: While-Reading

Sample detailed reading questions for advanced learners

1. What did Samsung have to prove? Why did the writer use the past tense in the first sentence?

2. Which expression means 'certainly'?

3. A 'flagship' in a fleet is the one the commander of that fleet is quartered. What does flagship mean in this context?

Stage 2: While-Reading

Sample detailed reading questions for advanced learners

4. The phrase 'not to mention' can be replaced by…?

5. 'A dual camera' is an example of …?

6. What information do we expect to get from a book? What does it tell us about the meaning of the expression 'by-the-book'? Is it a positive or negative comment about Note 8? What tells us so?

7. Which adjective in the paragraph means the opposite as 'by-the-book'?

8. What disadvantage(s) of Note 8 is/are mentioned in the paragraph?

9. What does 'could' in 'one could even argue…' mean?

10. Draw a graphic organiser to visualise the writer's comparison of the four phones: S7, Note 7, S8, Note 8.

…

Stage 2: While-Reading

Why detailed reading?

- Fostering simultaneous global (for abstract ideas) and local (for specific concrete details) reading

- Space for open inquiry (vs closed questions in traditional reading comprehension exercises)

- Higher order reading (i.e. reading between the lines, identifying semantic and syntactic clues for inferencing/interpreting etc.)

- Problem solving through identifying syntactic and semantic clues for determining implicit meanings (e.g. the writer's attitude)

- Developing awareness of various writing styles (for their own writings)

Stage 2: While-Reading

Individual Reading (5 min): Skim and scan the following paragraphs of the first half of the text on your own and share your answers to the following questions with a partner.

1. Why does the 'summary' section come at a rather front position?

2. Among the different aspects of the smartphone reviewed, which do you think is the one that appeals to the writer most? Why?

3. There are some other sections following the first part of the text. What do you think they are?

Guiding students to analyse the language features and the rhetorical structure of the text in relation to its purpose along the genre egg model for content differentiation

Stage 2: While-Reading

Individual Reading:

Hands-on Task: Do you think these questions are challenging enough? Any suggestions on even more challenging questions for the most advanced students?

1. Can you identify any examples of metaphor and simile used by the writer? How does that help convey meaning?
2. Why does 'two' in '(or two)' refer to?
3. Can you identify any features/components of Note 8 where there's no negative comments from the writer?
4. What does the writer mean when he says 'if only the company spent just a little more time on the Note 8's single speaker'?
5. How does the writer compare the Android system in Note 8 and Galaxy S8? Which phrase suggests that to us?
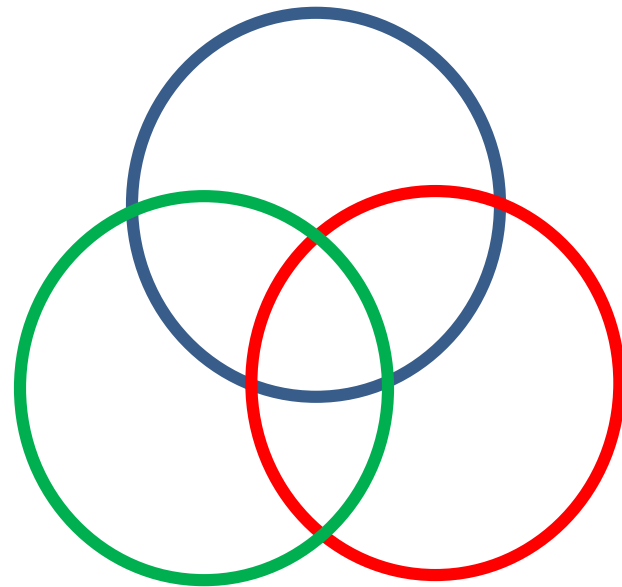
Stage 2: While-Reading

Why individual reading after collaborative reading?

- Developing self-understanding through connecting their understanding of the text to their everyday experience and/or existing knowledge about the topic of the reading text

- Raising individual students' awareness of the typical language features and rhetorical structure of the target genre (i.e. understanding the 'texture' of the text/genre) and thereby understanding a text at different levels of language (c.f. the genre egg model for content differentiation), which are higher-order and transferrable reading skills

Stage 2: While-Reading

Venn Diagram Task (30-40 min)

Comparing texts of the same genre: Google 'Samsung Note 8 reviews'. Read/watch either the print or non-print version of at least one more review on the phone and complete a Venn Diagram comparing the reviews on an A3 paper:

Which template is more challenging, in what sense(s)?

Some Suggestions on Review Texts

- http://www.techradar.com/reviews/samsung-galaxy-note-8-review

- http://www.knowyourmobile.com/mobile-phones/samsung-galaxy-note-8/24395/samsung-galaxy-note-8-review-price-specs-release-date

- http://indiatoday.intoday.in/technology/story/samsung-galaxy-note-8-review-a-note-worthy-comeback/1/1052648.html

Good idea to provide suggestions? Why/why not? The students' choices being respected? Potential to develop research skills of the advanced students?

Stage 2: While-Reading

Alternatives in setting the review reading task for achieving differentiated instruction (varying the product):

Asking students to:

- rate the credibility of the three product reviews

- compare the rhetorical structure of the three texts

- judge any bias of their delivery

- identify the respective writers' use of figurative language/imagery/any other linguistic devices for expressing their opinions (e.g. metaphors, similes, personification, exaggeration)

Stage 2: While-Reading

The "Equaliser" Model for planning differentiated lessons (content, product, process)

→differentiating students' readiness in terms of rate, depth, pace, structure of learning etc.

Reference:

How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-ability Classrooms 2nd Edition The How To's of Planning Lessons Differentiated by Readiness p.47) by Carol Ann Tomlinson

Stage 3: Post-Reading and Pre-Writing

Text analysis 1 (15 min): With reference to the print reviews you have read, choose the one that you like most, identify the rhetorical structure of the text type and complete the following table:

Section	Why is it important to the text?
Title	- Stating the product reviewed - A brief comment to attract readers' attention

Stage 3: Post-Reading and Pre-Writing

Text analysis 2 (15 min): With reference to the print review you have chosen, identify the main language features (e.g. tense, sentence pattern, vocabulary etc.) of each of the sections you have identified and complete the following table :

Section	Main language features
Title	- Noun phrases in capital letters - Short adjectives connected with and/but

Good idea to combine this with the previous table? Can we do text analysis with less advanced students? Can we differentiate the task for content, product and/or process?

Stage 4: While-Writing

Review Writing Task (60 min): Write a review on a product or a service of your choice. It can be:

- a product that you possess (e.g. mobile phone, tablet, clothing items etc.) or

- a service you're using/subscribing to(e.g. dental care, YouTube Channel), in which you can simply reflect on your own experience, or

- one which you are interested in buying or subscribing to (where you may do an Internet search for its information and reviews).

You may even review a product/service that does not yet exist in the world.

Variation in creativity, generic and language skills catered for in the task?

Stage 4: While-Writing

Step 1: With reference to the purpose and the rhetorical structure of the review genre (Stage 3), design a graphic organiser for the major sections and sub-sections of your review text:

a mind map Vs a concept map

Stage 4: While-Writing

Step 2: Match the language features at and beyond the word level you have previously identified (at Stage 3) with the corresponding sections of your review text. Add abbreviations and symbols representing those features in appropriate positions of the graphic organiser you have designed.

Step 3: Follow the blueprint shown in your graphic organiser and write the review. You will share your graphic organiser and text together with the rest of us, so make sure the two align with each other and proofread both before you submit your work.

Does this kind of language scaffolding help only low ability students? How about the advanced counterparts?

Stage 5: Post-Writing and Speaking

Peer review appreciation (20 min): Get into trios. Take turns and share your review and the graphic organiser with the other two members. Do not just read aloud the text. Then the other two members will give you feedback using the two-stars-and-a-wish format:

Stage 5: Post-Writing and Speaking

TV Advertisement Production: Among the three products/services that your group has reviewed, select one to produce a TV advertisement on. Each group will then take turns and 'act out' the advertisement in 1 minute. While you are preparing the advertisement, consider the following questions:

1. To what extent is a TV advertisement similar to/different from a written review? Compare and contrast the two in terms of: purpose(s), target audience, organisation of content etc.

2. What would be the language features typically found in TV advertisements? How can meanings be communicated most effectively and efficiently in them?

You may answer these two questions in the form of a graphic organiser.

Stage 5: Post-Writing Alternative

Poster Production: Among the three products/services that your group has reviewed, select one to produce a poster to promote it. Each group will then take turns and present the poster in 1 minute. While you are preparing the poster, consider the following questions:

1. To what extent is a poster similar to/different from a written review? Compare and contrast the two in terms of: purpose(s), target audience, organisation of content etc.

2. What would be the language features typically found in a poster? How can meanings be communicated most effectively and efficiently in them?

You may answer these two questions in the form of a graphic organiser.

Pre-, while and post-tasks:

Torrance Incubation Model of Creative Teaching and Learning:

Step 1: Heighten Anticipation – get the students' attention, arouse curiosity and motivate them to learn

Step 2: Deepen Expectations – lead the students to expect and to create meaningful learning

Step 3: Extend the Learning – make the students learn within and beyond the lesson

References:

- An Instructional Model for Enhancing Incubation, by E. Paul Torrance, in the Journal of Creative Behavior, 13(1), pages 23-35 (1979)

- For a brief intro to Torrance's Creativity Skill Set:
https://creativity-school.weebly.com/torrance-incubation-model-tim.html

Part 3:

Hands-on task: Brainstorming ideas on applying strategies for catering for the needs of advanced learners in your secondary classrooms. Share your ideas briefly with the rest of us.

A Wrap up

Possible dimensions to look at for differentiated instruction:
- Content
- Process
- Product

Stretching the Potentials of Advanced Learners:
- Tiered instruction
- Varying task conditions (process& content) in addition to task types (product)
- Using multimodal input and output
- Encouraging higher order and abstract thinking
- In-depth learning of self-directed topics

Book Recommendation:

- Carol Tomlinson's *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*