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Conformity of Exercises in the Textbook *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1 (Kursbuch-Teil)* with Hans-Jürgen Krumm's Exercise Analysis Criteria

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the conformity of the exercises (*Übungen*) in the textbook *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* (*Kursbuch-Teil*) with the seven exercise analysis criteria proposed by Hans-Jürgen Krumm and to determine the extent to which the *Differenzierung* criterion supports students' diverse learning needs, as required by differentiated learning in the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum). The study employed a descriptive qualitative method with a documentation technique, complemented by simple frequency counts to illustrate the level of fulfillment of each criterion. The data consisted of 118 *Übungen* in *Lektion* 1 to *Lektion* 5 of the textbook, distributed as follows: 29 in *Lektion* 1, 29 in *Lektion* 2, 21 in *Lektion* 3, 20 in *Lektion* 4, and 19 in *Lektion* 5.

The results show that the textbook fulfills six of Krumm's seven criteria for good exercises, namely *Arbeitsanweisungen* (92.4%), *Fertigkeiten*, *Übungstypen*, *Übungsformen*, *Zusammenhang* (72.9%), and *Wiederholung* (94.1%). In contrast, the *Differenzierung* criterion shows a considerably lower level of fulfillment: only 19 of the 118 exercises (16.1%) display differentiation, while 83 (70.3%) show no explicit element of differentiation. It can be concluded that the textbook supports German language learning in a systematic and structured manner, but its support for differentiated learning as mandated by the Kurikulum Merdeka still needs to be strengthened. Teachers are therefore advised to modify and supplement the available exercises in terms of content, process, and product so that students' diverse learning needs can be better accommodated.

Keywords: *Übungen; Textbook; Deutsch echt einfach A1.1; Kursbuch; Kurikulum Merdeka*

1. INTRODUCTION

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Foreign languages are used in many domains, including international communication, education, business, entertainment, and research, as well as for personal purposes such as reading books or watching films, and they are usually learned at school or through language courses. German is one of the foreign languages taught in a number of senior high schools in Indonesia. In formal schooling, German language learning cannot be separated from the curriculum, which serves as the reference for educational practice. The curriculum currently in force in Indonesia is the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum), which has been implemented gradually since 2022 and serves as the main reference for planning and implementing learning in educational units, including German language learning in senior high schools (SMA).

One of the principles emphasized in the Kurikulum Merdeka is student-centered learning, which is realized, among other ways, through differentiated learning. According to the Learning and Assessment Guidelines issued by the Educational Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency (2025:25), educators are expected to design and implement differentiated learning based on students' readiness so that learning experiences become more meaningful. This concept draws on Tomlinson's view (in Marlina, 2019:2) that differentiated learning is an approach that accommodates, serves, and acknowledges learner diversity by considering students' readiness, interests, and learning preferences through adjustments to the content, process, and product of learning. This principle is also relevant to foreign language learning, including German, given that learners differ considerably in their mastery of language skills.

With regard to the objectives of German language learning, the Learning Outcomes for German Phase F issued by the Educational Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency (2022:6) state that students are expected to communicate orally and in writing about daily routines using simple sentences and to master the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (2022:12). This is in line with Harr et al. (2018:77), who state that foreign and second language competence in current didactics is formulated on the basis of these four skills. To provide learning that accommodates learner diversity while developing these four skills, teachers need adequate learning resources, one of which is the textbook.

A textbook is one of the teaching materials that teachers use to achieve learning objectives. According to Lestari (in Baeti, 2017:217), a textbook is a book containing knowledge derived from curriculum analysis and presented in written form, while the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 8 of 2016 states that textbooks are the main learning resource for achieving basic competencies. Textbooks not only provide language material but also guide the entire learning process, including through the exercises (*Übungen*) they offer students. Aqib (2010:97) defines an exercise as an activity that gives learners the opportunity to practice a particular skill on the basis of an explanation or instruction, and Makki and Aflahah (2019:30) add that exercises can develop students' abilities to think, remember, observe, memorize, and respond. Ideally, therefore, a textbook should not present material uniformly to all students but should provide varied exercises that support the implementation of differentiated learning as mandated by the Kurikulum Merdeka.

However, not all textbooks currently used in schools were designed, or have been re-evaluated, with this requirement in mind. It therefore remains unclear whether the exercises in these textbooks have characteristics that support differentiated learning. Notably, the principle of differentiation corresponds to one of the exercise evaluation criteria proposed by Hans-Jürgen Krumm, namely *Differenzierung*, which emphasizes the importance of exercises that

accommodate students' diverse abilities in heterogeneous learning groups (in Kast & Neuner, 1994:104).

Among the many A1-level textbooks used in schools, *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* was chosen as the data source for this study. Based on the researcher's experience during the Teaching Skills Program (PKM), teachers used this book as one of their references in designing learning activities, and the book is also used in several other senior high schools in Jakarta. *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* was published in 2020, two years before the gradual implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka began in 2022. This time gap raises a question that has not yet been answered empirically: to what extent are the exercises in the book, particularly with regard to *Differenzierung*, aligned with the demands of differentiated learning mandated by the current curriculum?

Deutsch echt einfach A1.1 consists of two components: the *Kursbuch* and the *Übungsbuch*. According to Neuner (in Hentinen, 2011), the *Kursbuch* is used primarily in the classroom and serves as the reference for the course of learning, whereas the *Arbeitsbuch* (*Übungsbuch*) is analytical and corrective in nature and is generally used by students for independent practice outside class hours. Given the relatively limited time allocated to German in senior high schools, teachers tend to prioritize the *Kursbuch* as the main reference for face-to-face classroom activities. This study therefore focuses on the exercises in *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* (*Kursbuch-Teil*).

To examine these exercises systematically, this study applies the analysis criteria proposed by Hans-Jürgen Krumm (in Kast & Neuner, 1994:100–105), which comprise seven aspects: *Arbeitsanweisungen* (work instructions), *Fertigkeiten* (skills), *Übungstypen* (exercise types), *Übungsformen* (exercise forms), *Zusammenhang* (coherence), *Differenzierung* (differentiation), and *Wiederholung* (repetition). Among these, the *Differenzierung* criterion receives particular attention, as reflected in Krumm's guiding question (in Kast & Neuner, 1994:104): "Gibt es genügend und verschiedenartige *Übungen*, um eine *Differenzierung* innerhalb heterogener Gruppen zu ermöglichen?", that is, whether there are sufficient and varied exercises to allow differentiation within heterogeneous learning groups.

Previous studies on the analysis of *Übungen* in textbooks include Meinarti (2013), who examined *Deutsch.com 1* using Albers and Bolton's theory of exercise forms, and Sari, AP, and Rijal (2021), who analyzed *Deutsch ist Einfach* for eleventh-grade senior high school students with reference to the Core Competencies and Basic Competencies of the 2013 Curriculum. The present study differs from these studies in two respects: it uses *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* (*Kursbuch-Teil*) as its data source, and it applies Hans-Jürgen Krumm's seven-criterion evaluative framework, which explicitly includes the *Differenzierung* criterion and can therefore be linked to the principle of differentiated learning in the Kurikulum Merdeka.

Based on the above, this study aims to describe the conformity of the *Übungen* in *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* (*Kursbuch-Teil*) with Hans-Jürgen Krumm's seven exercise analysis criteria and to examine the extent to which these exercises reflect *Differenzierung* as a characteristic that supports differentiated learning in the Kurikulum Merdeka.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Abdussamad (2021:79), qualitative research focuses on describing the state, nature, or essential value of a particular object or phenomenon. The study used a documentation technique, that is, the analysis

of documents in the form of writings, images, or a person's monumental works (Sugiyono, 2019:240), and described the data that had been collected systematically.

The data source was the textbook *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* (*Kursbuch-Teil*) by Giorgio Motta, Silvia Dahmen, E. Danuta Machowiak, and Jan Szurmant. The data consisted of all *Übungen* in the book, totaling 118 exercises across five *Lektionen*: 29 in *Lektion* 1, 29 in *Lektion* 2, 21 in *Lektion* 3, 20 in *Lektion* 4, and 19 in *Lektion* 5. The data include all *Übungen* in each subtopic as well as in the *Zwischenstopp* section of each *Lektion*.

The data were collected by first re-reading *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* (*Kursbuch-Teil*) to identify the relevant data and then recording and scanning every *Übung* in all *Lektion* and *Zwischenstopp* sections.

The data were analyzed following the model of Miles and Huberman as cited in Sugiyono (2019), through the following steps: (1) reading the data repeatedly; (2) sorting the data, comprising all *Übungen* in each *Lektion* and *Zwischenstopp*; (3) analyzing the sorted data based on Krumm's criteria; (4) interpreting the results descriptively; and (5) drawing conclusions.

The analysis was carried out descriptively based on Krumm's criteria for *Übungen* (in Kast & Neuner, 1994:104), namely *Arbeitsanweisungen* (work instructions), *Fertigkeiten* (skills), *Übungstypen* (exercise types), *Übungsformen* (exercise forms), *Zusammenhang* (coherence), *Differenzierung* (differentiation), and *Wiederholung* (repetition). The results for each criterion were then quantified as frequencies and percentages to provide an overview of the level of fulfillment of each criterion across the entire data set.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 118 *Übungen* were analyzed, spread across *Lektion* 1 to *Lektion* 5 of *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* (*Kursbuch-Teil*): 29 in *Lektion* 1, 29 in *Lektion* 2, 21 in *Lektion* 3, 20 in *Lektion* 4, and 19 in *Lektion* 5. Of Krumm's seven criteria, six show a high level of fulfillment, ranging from 72.9% to 94.1% of the data, whereas one criterion, *Differenzierung*, is fulfilled in only 16.1% of the data and constitutes the main limitation of the textbook.

Table 1 summarizes the results of the analysis for each of Krumm's seven criteria. Because a single exercise may involve more than one skill, exercise type, or exercise form, the frequencies for the *Fertigkeiten*, *Übungstypen*, and *Übungsformen* criteria are not mutually exclusive, and their percentages therefore do not add up to 100%. The following subsections discuss each criterion in turn.

Table 1. Summary of the Analysis of *Übungen* Based on Krumm's Criteria

Criterion	Aspect Identified	Frequency (n = 118)
Arbeitsanweisungen	Clear and concise instructions in German	109 (92.4%)
Fertigkeiten	*Sprechen*; *Hören*; *Lesen*; *Schreiben*	60 (50.8%); 41 (34.7%); 32 (27.1%); 22 (18.6%)
Übungstypen	*Verstehen*; *Reproduzieren*; *Rollen und Situationen*; *freie Äußerungen*	68 (57.6%); 64 (54.2%); 15 (12.7%); 7 (5.9%)

Criterion	Aspect Identified	Frequency (n = 118)
Übungsformen	*Selbständige Übungen*; *Partnerübungen*; small-group exercises	82 (69.5%); 44 (37.3%); 38 (32.2%)
Zusammenhang	Connection to previous exercises or material	86 (72.9%)
Differenzierung	Differentiation evident in the exercise	19 (16.1%)
Wiederholung	Repetition of vocabulary or structures	111 (94.1%)

3.1. *Arbeitsanweisungen* (Work Instructions)

In terms of *Arbeitsanweisungen* (work instructions), 109 of the 118 exercises (92.4%) contain instructions that are clear, concise, and consistently presented in German. The use of imperative forms and the *du/ihr* forms of address is appropriate for adolescent learners, and in most exercises the imperative verbs direct students immediately to the activity to be performed. The remaining 9 exercises (7.6%) were classified as partially fulfilling this criterion because, although their instructions indicate the main activity, they do not explicitly refer to other supporting elements of the exercise, such as the accompanying images or written texts.

These findings indicate that the textbook generally meets Krumm's expectation that work instructions should be understandable to learners and make clear what they are required to do (in Kast & Neuner, 1994). For A1-level learners, consistent instructions are particularly important, because limited proficiency means that unclear instructions can easily prevent students from completing an exercise. The repeated use of the same imperative patterns also allows students to become familiar with typical instruction formats, so that the instructions themselves gradually become part of the language input. At the same time, the nine partially fulfilled instructions suggest that teachers still need to check whether students understand how the accompanying images or texts are to be used, especially in heterogeneous classes in which some students may require additional explanation.

3.2. *Fertigkeiten* (Skills)

In terms of *Fertigkeiten* (skills), all four language skills appear throughout the *Lektionen*, although their distribution is uneven. *Sprechen* is the most dominant skill, appearing in 60 of the 118 exercises (50.8%), mainly in the form of pronunciation exercises and paired dialogues, followed by *Hören* in 41 exercises (34.7%). *Lesen* appears in 32 exercises (27.1%) and more often functions as a supporting skill, while *Schreiben* is the least represented, appearing in only 22 exercises (18.6%). This distribution shows that the book places more emphasis on receptive and reproductive skills than on free productive skills, which is consistent with the focus of the A1.1 level on developing oral comprehension first.

The dominance of *Sprechen* and *Hören* reflects the communicative orientation of the textbook and corresponds to the Learning Outcomes for German Phase F, which emphasize the ability to communicate orally about daily routines (Educational Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency, 2022:6). However, the Learning Outcomes also require students to master all

four language skills, including writing (2022:12). The limited proportion of *Schreiben* therefore means that the textbook alone may not provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop written production. Teachers can address this imbalance by extending existing speaking or reading exercises into short writing tasks, for example by asking students to write down the dialogues they have practiced or to produce short texts modeled on the reading passages.

3.3. *Übungstypen* (Exercise Types)

In terms of *Übungstypen* (exercise types), the book covers almost all of the exercise stages proposed by Krumm. The *Verstehen* (comprehension) stage is found in 68 exercises (57.6%) and the *Reproduzieren* (reproduction) stage in 64 exercises (54.2%), making them the two most frequent stages. The *Sprechen und Schreiben in vorgegebenen Rollen und Situationen* stage occurs in 15 exercises (12.7%), while the *freie Äußerungen* (free expression) stage is the least frequent, occurring in only 7 exercises (5.9%). This indicates that exercises that genuinely encourage free language production are still very limited.

The predominance of *Verstehen* and *Reproduzieren* shows that the exercises are arranged mainly to build comprehension and controlled practice before students are asked to use the language more independently. Such a progression is reasonable at the A1.1 level, where learners first need to internalize basic vocabulary and structures. Nevertheless, the low proportion of exercises at the *Sprechen und Schreiben in vorgegebenen Rollen und Situationen* and *freie Äußerungen* stages means that students have relatively few opportunities to transfer what they have learned to new communicative situations. From the perspective of differentiated learning, exercises at these more open stages are also important, because they allow more proficient students to produce more elaborate responses, while students who are still developing can respond at a simpler level.

3.4. *Übungsformen* (Exercise Forms)

In terms of *Übungsformen* (exercise forms), the book shows a fairly good variety. *Selbständige Übungen* (independent exercises) dominate, appearing in 82 exercises (69.5%), followed by *Partnerübungen* (pair exercises) in 44 exercises (37.3%) and small-group exercises in 38 exercises (32.2%), particularly in speaking activities. By contrast, creative and game-based elements (*Spielübungen*) are almost never found explicitly in the data.

The dominance of *Selbständige Übungen* indicates that students are often expected to work on exercises individually, which gives each student the opportunity to practice at their own pace. Meanwhile, the presence of *Partnerübungen* and small-group exercises shows that the book also provides space for interaction, which is essential for developing speaking skills. However, the near absence of *Spielübungen* suggests that the book makes little use of playful and creative activities that could increase students' motivation, particularly among adolescent learners. Variation in social forms is also relevant to differentiated learning, because flexible grouping, such as pairing students with different levels of proficiency or forming groups based on readiness, is one of the ways in which the learning process can be adjusted to students' needs.

3.5. *Zusammenhang* (Coherence)

In terms of *Zusammenhang* (coherence), the textbook shows a considerable strength: 86 of the 118 exercises (72.9%) are clearly connected to preceding exercises or material, reflecting a logical and gradual learning sequence. A further 30 exercises (25.4%) do not yet show a direct connection, generally because they are opening exercises for a new *Lektion* or subtopic.

The high level of coherence shows that most exercises build on one another, moving from the introduction of new material to its gradual practice and application. This sequence helps students relate new vocabulary and structures to what they have already learned and supports the gradual development of their competence. The exercises without a direct connection are mostly found at the beginning of a new *Lektion* or subtopic, where their function is to introduce a new theme rather than to continue the previous one. These findings therefore do not indicate a weakness in the structure of the book but rather reflect the natural transition between learning units.

3.6. *Differenzierung* (Differentiation)

In terms of *Differenzierung* (differentiation), this criterion shows the lowest level of fulfillment of all seven criteria. Only 19 of the 118 exercises (16.1%) show differentiation, generally in productive and open-ended exercises that allow answers to vary according to students' level of understanding. In *Lektion* 1, for example, differentiation is apparent in only a few of the 29 exercises analyzed (including data 1, 6, 8, 10, 15, and 24), which present the material in two forms, namely audio and written text. However, most of these instances are superficial, because the differentiation lies only in the presentation of the material, while the exercise procedure remains the same for all students. Meanwhile, 83 exercises (70.3%) show no explicit element of differentiation in terms of content, process, or product.

From the perspective of differentiated learning, differentiation can be realized through adjustments to the content, process, and product of learning (Tomlinson in Marlina, 2019:2). The findings show that the differentiation found in the textbook is mostly limited to the presentation of input, for example through audio and written text, which may help students with different learning preferences access the same material. However, the exercises rarely offer different levels of difficulty, alternative ways of completing the task, or a choice of output forms. As a result, students with different levels of readiness are generally expected to complete the same task in the same way, which does not yet fully reflect the expectation of the Kurikulum Merdeka that learning be designed according to students' readiness (Educational Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency, 2025:25).

The low level of differentiation is closely related to the findings for the other criteria. The limited number of exercises at the *freie Äußerungen* stage, the small proportion of writing exercises, and the near absence of *Spielübungen* all reduce the range of activities from which teachers and students can choose. Conversely, the exercises that do show differentiation are generally productive and open-ended, which suggests that open tasks provide the most natural space for accommodating different levels of ability. In relation to Krumm's question of whether there are sufficient and varied exercises to allow differentiation within heterogeneous groups (in Kast & Neuner, 1994:104), the findings indicate that the textbook does not yet provide enough variation for this purpose.

3.7. *Wiederholung* (Repetition)

In terms of *Wiederholung* (repetition), the book shows very good conformity: 111 of the 118 exercises (94.1%) contain repetition of previously learned vocabulary or language structures, giving students ample opportunity to consolidate their understanding. Only 7 exercises (5.9%) contain no element of repetition, generally because they are the first exercises introducing new material or structures.

The high frequency of repetition indicates that the textbook systematically recycles vocabulary and language structures across exercises and *Lektionen*. Such repetition is important for beginners, because new linguistic elements need to be encountered several times in different contexts before they can be used confidently. The repetition found in the book also supports coherence between exercises, as previously learned material is reused as a basis for new activities. In terms of differentiation, systematic repetition can benefit students who need more time to master the material, although it may offer fewer challenges for students who have already mastered it.

3.8. Implications for Differentiated Learning in the Kurikulum Merdeka

Overall, the exercises in *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* (*Kursbuch-Teil*) fulfill six of Hans-Jürgen Krumm's seven criteria for good exercises, particularly in terms of clarity of instructions, variety of exercise types and forms, coherence of material, and systematic repetition. However, the book still has limitations in differentiation, with only 16.1% of the data genuinely supporting it, and in the development of free production skills, particularly *Schreiben* (18.6%) and the *freie Äußerungen* stage (5.9%). These limitations are understandable given that the book was published in 2020, two years before the gradual implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka began in 2022; the demands of differentiated learning were therefore not yet a reference when the book was compiled.

Based on these findings, the use of *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* (*Kursbuch-Teil*) in classrooms that implement the Kurikulum Merdeka needs to be complemented by teachers' own adaptations. In terms of content, teachers can prepare tiered versions of the same exercise, for example by providing a word bank or sentence starters for students who need support and additional or more complex items for students who are ready for a greater challenge. In terms of process, teachers can vary the way students work on an exercise by allowing them to choose between individual, pair, or group work, or by grouping students according to their readiness. In terms of product, teachers can allow students to demonstrate their understanding in different forms, such as an oral presentation, a short written text, or a visual product.

These adaptations do not require the existing exercises to be replaced. Rather, the exercises that already fulfill Krumm's criteria, particularly those with clear instructions, coherent sequences, and systematic repetition, can serve as a basis for differentiated tasks. Open-ended exercises at the *Sprechen und Schreiben in vorgegebenen Rollen und Situationen* and *freie Äußerungen* stages are especially suitable for this purpose, because they allow students to respond at different levels of complexity. In this way, the strengths of the textbook can be maintained while its limitations in differentiation are addressed.

Compared with previous studies, the present study offers a different perspective on textbook evaluation. Meinarti (2013) focused on exercise forms based on Albers and Bolton's theory, while

Sari, AP, and Rijal (2021) evaluated a German textbook against the Core Competencies and Basic Competencies of the 2013 Curriculum. By applying Krumm's seven criteria and giving particular attention to *Differenzierung*, the present study shows that a textbook may perform well on most general criteria for good exercises while still providing limited support for differentiated learning. This finding suggests that textbook evaluations conducted in the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka should not only examine the general quality of the exercises but also explicitly assess their potential to accommodate students' diverse needs.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. The analysis was limited to the *Kursbuch* component of *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* and did not include the *Übungsbuch*, which may contain additional exercises that support differentiation. In addition, the analysis was based on the textbook as a document and did not examine how teachers actually use the exercises in the classroom. The findings should therefore be interpreted as describing the potential of the textbook rather than the actual practice of differentiated learning in schools.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of 118 *Übungen* in *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* (*Kursbuch-Teil*) against Hans-Jürgen Krumm's seven exercise analysis criteria, it can be concluded that the textbook shows good conformity with the criteria for ideal exercises, with six of the seven criteria showing a high level of fulfillment. The criterion with the highest level of fulfillment is *Wiederholung* (94.1%), indicating that the textbook consistently gives students opportunities to repeat and consolidate previously learned vocabulary and language structures.

In contrast, *Differenzierung* is the least fulfilled criterion, as most exercises do not explicitly show any element of differentiation in either material or procedure, so the activities tend to be uniform for all students. This finding warrants particular attention, given that differentiation is the main focus of this study in relation to the demands of differentiated learning in the Kurikulum Merdeka, and it can serve as input for developing exercises that are more responsive to students' diverse abilities.

Thus, although *Deutsch echt einfach A1.1* (*Kursbuch-Teil*) fulfills most of Hans-Jürgen Krumm's criteria for good exercises, its use needs to be supported by teachers' modification or addition of exercises, for example by providing tiered levels of difficulty or a choice of output forms (oral, written, or visual), so that the principle of differentiated learning required by the Kurikulum Merdeka can be implemented more optimally in the classroom. Future research is recommended to examine other components of the textbook, such as the *Übungsbuch*, as well as its use in classroom practice.

Author contribution statement

Author 1: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing Original Draft, Writing Review & Editing.
Author 2: Supervision, Validation, and Final Approval of the Manuscript.
Author 3: Supervision, Writing Review & Editing, Validation, and Final Approval of the Manuscript.

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