JOURNAL OF

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EDUCATION, INNOVATION & COMMUNICATION

Creative Intercultural Collaboration in
the UK Modern Foreign Languages
Classroom: The quest for social justice

Journal of
EDUCATION
INNOVATION and
COMMUNICATION

Editors
Fotini Diamantidaki
&
Margarita Kefalaki

Edited by
**COMMUNICATION INSTITUTE OF GREECE
(COMinG)**

Journal of Education, Innovation, and Communication (JEICOM)

Volume 5, Issue 1, June 2023

ISSN: 2654-0746 (listed in the National Library of Greece)

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.34097/jeicom-5-1-June-23

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Dear readers,

We are very proud to present this issue to you as it is also very special to our hearts. Over the past year or so we had the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues and teachers from the UCL Institute of Education, London UK, in a time of turbulence and change for languages education. There is a lot of debate and challenges faced in languages education in the UK at the moment, but our issue highlights the successes and creative collaboration projects that do take place in the classrooms, witnessing the hard work and dedication of the teacher cohort.

It is very rare we see practice-based research being brought out to the fore in this way, as most practice and impact remains within the schools and the students as the principal recipients and very rarely arrives to academia.

So, this issue aims to highlight the ongoing successes taking place in the UK language classroom, that most of the times are lost amongst the negative debate surrounding languages education.

I would like to particularly thank Aine McAllister, Verna Brandford and Camilla Smith for liaising with the teachers and bringing to our attention their invaluable work,

We hope you enjoy reading the issue,

Dr. Fotini Diamantidaki

Creative Intercultural Collaboration in the UK Modern Foreign Languages Classroom: The quest for social justice

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Preface

Creative Intercultural Collaboration in the UK Modern Foreign Languages Classroom: The quest for social justice

Áine McAllister[1]

Verna Brandford[2]

Camilla Smith[3]

This issue features a series of articles which outline approaches to teaching and learning Languages foregrounding collaboration, and in which creativity is fostered and culture is drawn upon. It is worth noting that the innovative practices explored have been developed under challenging circumstances, in diverse contexts in London, UK and against the odds. The publication of the Teaching Schools Council's Modern Foreign Languages Pedagogy Review in England (Bauckham, 2016); the Ofsted Curriculum Research Review for Languages in England (Ofsted, 2021) and ensuing consultation and proposed changes to the GCSE syllabus and examination by the Department for Education (2022) have led to a linguistic-led shift towards language learning being structured around 'three pillars' of vocabulary, grammar and phonics. Language educators (Zhu et al, 2022; Porter et al, 2022; Woore et al, 2022) in the UK have been responding, commenting for example on the potential value of including culture as a fourth pillar and the role different forms of creativity play in facilitating effective, motivating and communicative languages teaching and learning. The articles in this issue are written by a cohort of recently qualified languages teachers who inform this ongoing conversation and landscape of Languages teaching and learning. They provide insights into the impact of collaboration including that of the pupils for deploying creativity and culture to teach and learn languages, particularly in the diverse linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic contexts in which the work in these articles was carried out.

The articles offer ways forward which acknowledge, address and could transcend an otherwise potentially restrictive focus on phonics, vocabulary and grammar. After all, motivation for languages study is organically affected by factors beyond these three pillars including: opportunities to explore culture, opportunities for learners to draw on their own cultural and linguistic contexts and the extent to which students are given the opportunity to feel successful and are encouraged to have high expectations of themselves, in a way that is relevant to them.

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[1] Aine McAllister, Lecturer in Languages in Education, International Centre for Intercultural Studies, Department of Culture, Communication and Media, IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society, email: a.mcallister@ucl.ac.uk

[2] Verna Brandford, Lecturer in Languages Education, MCIL, Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques. Department of Culture, Communication and Media, UCL, IOE's Faculty of Education and Society, email: v.brandford@ucl.ac.uk

[3] Camilla Smith, Subject Lead Languages PGCE; Association for Language Learning Council Member; Lecturer in Languages Education, Department of Culture, Communication and Media, UCL, IOE's Faculty of Education and Society, email: camilla.smith@ucl.ac.uk

The language of literacy: Developing student independence and confidence in the MFL classroom through a collaborative approach to literacy by Amy Cragg examines the potential of collaboration as a means of finding and implementing strategies that ensure improvements in students' self-reported independence and confidence in literacy, whether in reading or writing, in their languages study, within the MFL classroom. Drawing on evidence from collaborative discussions with colleagues and wider literature, the study shows that a scaffolded approach to reading has a tangible positive impact on student motivation and engagement. A mixed method of data collection is adopted to demonstrate students' affective and effective outcomes both before and after the intervention. The research shows a positive correlation between both types of outcomes and the implementation of a scaffolded reading strategy, evident in student appropriation of the strategy and student outcomes in reading exercises. Cragg writes convincingly about the value of real collaboration in which the personal contributions of all are recognised as valid (McAllister, 2023) for not only reflecting on one's own practice but also for creating the conditions for further action research.

In *Engaging with others to identify areas of learning,* Nicholas Mark Page evaluates how a community of practice of twelve collaborating Modern Foreign Languages teachers can improve students' literacy levels in the target language and develop learner autonomy. The group of practitioners identified reading as a neglected skill as students and teachers alike considered it to be easier than listening, speaking and writing. The community of practice agreed that taking a phonics approach in reading promotes fluency, which enabled the author to create a multipurpose intervention which combined reading aloud with reading comprehension over a series of lessons. The twelve collaborating practitioners agreed that the impact of this intervention would be measured by analysing the results of a student questionnaire and by collecting samples of learners' work. By reading aloud relatable, authentic texts, students enjoyed reading, confidently interpreted longer texts and improved their pronunciation.

According to Page, the formation of a community of practice in which collaboration occurred led to the enhancement of a phonics approach. He sets out the necessary conditions to ensure that a focus on reading authentic texts aloud can enable learners to make connections between their own experiences and the target language culture. He demonstrates that in this way learners not only develop confidence but also develop empathy; a key benefit of learning other languages and about other cultures (Byram, 1997), which of course are inextricably linked (Agar 1994, Risager, 2015, Shaules 2016).

In her article *Improving writing skills with Year 10 French students* Juliette O' Connor provides a sequenced approach for improving writing in a collaborative interactive environment in which students develop their own autonomy through peer and teacher feedback. She reflects on her experiences in a school in South London and the different approaches taken to improve writing skills in French lessons. By drawing on, and critiquing, current MFL research and practice, the author aims to highlight some of the potential barriers to learning, such as challenging socio-economic circumstances, as well as emphasising the ways in which teachers may mitigate against these. By focusing specifically on writing in French year 10 lessons, the author breaks down the

process of writing and helps both students and readers to improve their metacognition around key parts of the GCSE (2014) questions. The findings show that structured feedback and consistent praise can have a strong impact on attainment, helping to direct students' efforts and increase their confidence. It appears clear from her findings that considering approaches which include creative inclusion of aspects of culture, which move beyond the restrictions of the GCSE examination and the three pillars, can have a direct impact on outcomes for students.

Amy Flynn foregrounds the role of creativity in collaboration and emphasizes the importance of understanding community voices. Significantly, she strongly advocates for a recognition of learners' funds of knowledge and the breadth of their cultural and linguistic repertoires in the collaborative process. She assuredly conveys the impact of such an approach on learners. *In Promoting self-esteem, motivation and creativity through collaborative, pluri-lingual story translations* she discusses how a collaborative and creative approach to Foreign Language Teaching can improve self-esteem, motivation and academic attainment in a multi-cultural school community in East London. The research intervention drew inspiration from the learning context, as well as the Storyline method and experience of collaborative translation. It was designed in response to low self-esteem and motivation among Y7 (11-year olds) language learners and the school community following COVID-19 lockdowns, and was planned, delivered and analysed over a period of two-and-a-half months. Research findings indicate that the co-creation of new semi-structured social contexts for language learning, reflection and creativity motivates learners, "community collaborators" and teachers. By providing the necessary resource and feedback, participants collaboratively developed original multi-lingual story translations. This approach not only promoted the linguistic creativity of prior higher-attaining students, but also improved the translation skills of middle and lower attainers. Furthermore, it fostered a collaborative and dialogic culture, enhancing the self-esteem necessary for all learners.

In the final article *Raising learner motivation through a cultural pen-pal scheme: a collaborative study,* Dikshali Shah explores how a pen pal scheme can be an effective means of integrating and developing understanding about the target language culture. The intervention explored by Shah is underpinned by the premise of inclusivity, which is shown to enhance the learners' development of cultural awareness and curiosity. The article sets out how collaboration amongst colleagues at partnering schools was established to agree a shared goal and implement culture into lessons across schools. This study aims to raise motivation levels for language learning by giving KS4 students (15-16 year olds) the opportunity to interact with the second language community through a pen-pal scheme. Dornyei's (2001), language-related integrative values were applied to develop activities that can develop cultural awareness. Byram's (1997) savoirs informed assessing cultural understanding, reflecting on one's own culture, analysing cultural phenomena and carrying out comparisons. Evidence of these criteria were identified in two sets of email exchanges that KS4 students sent to their pen pal. To measure the impact of the intervention, pupil work was compared from the first and second email exchange to detect development in cultural understanding. Pre and post intervention questionnaires were employed before and after the two email exchanges, to gauge levels of motivation at School A and their interest in learning about target language culture and their attitudes towards direct contact with the target language community.

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The language of literacy: Developing student independence and confidence in the MFL classroom through a collaborative approach to literacy

Amy Cragg[4]

ABSTRACT

This research examines the potential of collaboration as a means of finding and implementing strategies that ensure improvements in students' self-reported independence and confidence in literacy, whether in reading or writing, within the MFL classroom.

Drawing on evidence from collaborative discussions with colleagues, as well as wider literature, the study demonstrates that a scaffolded approach to reading has a tangible positive impact on student motivation and engagement. A mixed method of data collection is utilised to demonstrate students' affective and effective outcomes both before and after the intervention.

The research shows a positive correlation between both types of outcome and the implementation of a scaffolded reading strategy, evident in student appropriation of the strategy and student outcomes in reading exercises.

Key words: MFL, Literacy, Reading, Scaffolding, Motivation, Second Language Acquisition

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[4] Amy Cragg, MFL Teacher, email: amy.cragg.19@alumni.ucl.ac.uk

INTRODUCTION

If we understand, in line with Paulo Freire, that educational justice must be effected by 'a total denouncement of fatalism' (Freire, 2012: 56), then it is clear that even the most engrained educational challenges can be offset by judicious intervention. In the context of the Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) classroom, these challenges can range from motivation (Macaro, 2008) to the facilitation of intercommunicative competence (Byram, 1997), yet one of the most significant and extensive in terms of its inter- and extra-curricular impact is literacy.

The very nature of the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) means that the impact of literacy skills in the MFL classroom is two-fold. Literacy in MFL does not just concern literacy in English but also literacy in a new and often unfamiliar target language (TL). While 'connecting literacy between languages builds on [the idea that] *all* teachers are teachers of language' (Swarbick, 2002: 163), Cummins emphasises the role that first language (L1) literacy skills may play in second language (L2) reading at all levels (1976). It would therefore be reductive to suggest that the TL provides all students with an even playing field in terms of literacy, given the inextricability of their literary confidence and competence in English and in the TL.

Knowing that the impact of poor literacy reaches much further than the walls of each individual classroom (Gilbert et al. 2018; Bostock, S. 2012), it must follow that any efforts to counteract the phenomenon should be equally expansive. To this end, this research will attempt to harness the benefits and analyse the efficacy of intra-, inter- and extra-scholastic collaboration with the aim of improving literacy levels both in my own classroom and further afield.

As well as collaboration across school departments, I will also draw on collaboration with colleagues and schools in both the school's multi-academy trust (MAT) network and the Teach First network. In the British education system, an academy is a 'school or educational institution established and run in accordance with the Academies Act 2010', which established state-funded schools that are independent of local authority control (Gov, 2020b). A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a charitable company that oversees the governance of more than one academy (Gov, 2021). Meanwhile, Teach First is a national community of educational professionals whose collective aim is to reduce inequality within education. While Teach First works with teachers at all stages of their career, their main remit is the recruitment and training of novice teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, teachers have practiced their work in isolation (Lierberman and Miller, 2008: 79), yet over the past 60 years (Friend, 2000: 132) we have increasingly recognised that collaborative cultures can offer the potential for transformative professional development (Kennedy, 2005). Indeed, 'professional learning communities' (PLC) (Dufour, 2004) and 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991) are now central to educational provision in the UK. In the former 'educators create an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support, personal growth as they work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone' (Dufour and Eaker, 1998: xi-xii). Communities of practice, on the other hand, are 'groups of people who share a

concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (Lave & Wenger, 1991). While ultimately different concepts, both communities of practice and professional learning communities can exist at a variety of different levels, whether that be in academy or local authority networks, the academic sphere, or networks that arise from specific training routes (Teach First as a major example).

In terms of my own experience in education, I am associated with a large UK-wide multi-academy trust (MAT), which includes 39 schools from London to Birmingham. In addition to sharing good practice, affiliation with this network allows teachers to trial innovative practices at a multi-academy level, ensure consistency in expectations and standardise results. While there may be scepticism about the latter focus on examination results, we see that collaborative assessment 'lends greater validity to the marks [awarded]' and 'helps [to] incorporate more information in the assessment process' (Bailey et al, 1991: 171), in turn leading to better outcomes for students. As a result, it is clear that collaborative practice is central to the networks' mission to 'transform children's lives through education' (multi-academy trust website, 2021).

Furthermore, as a result of my chosen training route, I belong to the Teach First network, whose mission as a provider is 'to make our education system work for every child' (TF, 2021). If we understand that the core mission of PLCs is to 'ensure that students learn' (Dufour, 2004: 1), it thus follows that I should draw on and share experience with colleagues from both these spheres to collaboratively confront the challenges students face with regards to literacy both at a national and a school level.

However, in order to ensure that collaboration is meaningful, it is essential to consider its very definition. Although collaboration and cooperation have been used synonymously in academic work (Kelchtermans, 2006), Sawyer usefully highlights that in the case of collaboration, working together includes the partners in the process doing all their work together as opposed to cooperation in which partners split the work and combine each of their partial results into the final outcomes (2006). While it may be argued that this definition ignores the possibility of more remote collaboration, it certainly highlights the need for a common aim at the centre of any collaborative enterprise (Vangrieken et al, 2015). With this argument in mind, the meaningfulness of my collaboration on this intervention was partly predicated on the identification of a common collaborative objective.

In my school context, this objective was very clearly defined from the outset. In 2021, the academy network launched an ambitious 3-year literacy target to ensure that all students in Key Stage 3 (students aged 11-14) and 4 (aged 14-16) currently more than 2 years below their chronological reading age make 15 months progress over the course of this academic year. This strategy would take various forms, including intentional teacher training on reading age test data and individualised reading strategies, as well as smaller scale pilot projects. If we understand that 'the school as a community entails teachers collaborating […] bonded together to a set of shared ideas and ideals, rather than individualism and isolation' (Leonard, 2002, Leonard & Leonard, 2001 in Vangrieken, 2015: 24), then it thus follows that my intervention could be usefully informed by the launch of this cross-network school priorities.
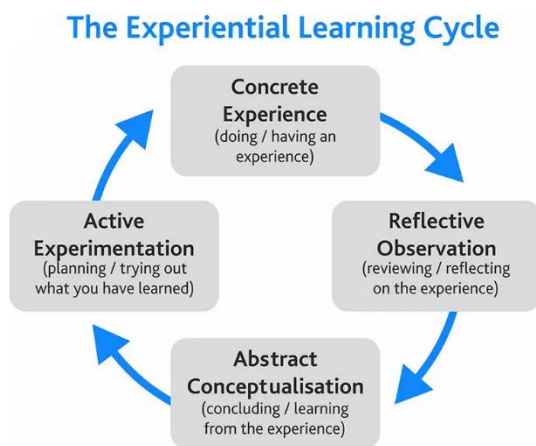
Figure 1: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (McPheat, 2021)

Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984), as a framework upon which the learning can be tracked, highlights concrete experiences as fundamental to provoking reflection and experimentation (see Figure 1). If we consider his theory in the context of this investigation, then this strategic launch certainly provoked 'reflective observation' on my own teaching in the subsequent weeks and thus led me to interrogate my own practice in a more formal context.

However, recognising the importance of capitalising on different communities of practice, I equally collaborated with Teach First colleagues who had also identified gaps in the literacy of their students. As part of this collaborative effort, we organised a series of calls through which we would design interventions focused on literacy. Prior to discussing our interventions, we established a set of meeting norms (such as alternating chair and minute taker). By doing so we ensured that the bases of power within the group were legitimate, therefore producing the least amount of resistance (French and Raven, 1959: 156) and accordingly, privileging effective collaborative discussion.

If the effectiveness of collaborative interventions should be based upon results (Dufour, 2004), then it was essential that we delineate a tangible action plan. For Service & Gallagher, the three steps of action planning are choosing the right goal, choosing a single goal and breaking down your goal into manageable steps (2017). Following this protocol, the group established a common objective upon which we could measure and share student outcomes. After some deliberation, the following objective was confirmed: *To find and implement strategies that ensure improvements in students' self-reported literary independence and confidence, whether in reading or writing.*

While the aim is broad, Kelchtermans highlights the importance of school context when considering collaborative efforts (2006) and thus the balance that must be established between collaboration and restricting groups members as practitioners in their own context. Indeed, for Bovbjerg (2006) teamwork is both about the exchange of ideas and recognising the individual ambitions for teachers in their own working context. In this sense, while the objective may have been delineated collaboratively, it was up to individual teachers' discretion as to the specifics of their intervention.

In this sense, my research approach was dually collaborative, incorporating the contributions and insights of colleagues from within the Teach First network, whilst explicitly engaging with and capitalising on the MAT's focus on improving literacy over a more extended period.

The key tension in the debate around improving literacy in the classroom lays between the teaching of reading strategy instruction and explicit phonics instruction (Woore, 2018). While it has been found that 10 minutes of explicit reading instruction a week is enough to show improved outcomes in reading comprehension tasks (Macaro and Erler, 2008: 106), we also note that 'in the absence of explicit phonics instruction, many Key Stage 3 MFL students are poor at phonological progress in French […] and make little or no progress in this area' (Woore, 2018: 12; Erler & Macaro, 2012).

Yet in many ways it is in the intersection of these two approaches to literacy that the most effective interventions can be designed.

In fact, in the 2018 report Foreign Language Education: Unlocking Reading, Woore (2018) found that students in all focus groups (instructed with differing phonemic and strategic approaches) made significant progress in reading comprehension, and thus there was little evidence that any form of reading instruction was more effective than another (2018: 6). While it may be easy to dismiss this report's findings as insufficient (surely one must be more effective than the other), perhaps it indicates that a hybrid approach is optimal when it comes to literacy instruction. For ultimately, we note that often it is students' 'self-efficacy' (Macaro, 2008), and not their inherent ability that hinders learning.

Figure 2: Summary of internal and external context-dependent factors of motivation (Williams and Burden in Bowers: 2017: 5)

Internal factors	subject to	External factors
(1) Intrinsic interest of activity	(1)	Significant others
(2) Perceived value of activity	(2)	The nature of interaction with significant others
(3) Sense of agency	(3)	
(4) Mastery	(4)	The learning environment
(5) Self-concept		The broader context
(6) Attitudes		
(7) Other affective states		
(8) Developmental age and stage		
(9) Gender		

Indeed, with this report in mind we are reminded that one of the most widely discussed barriers for MFL learning is motivation. In this regard, William and Burden (in Bowers, 2017) outline a range of internal and external factors that may influence students' motivation in the MFL classroom (see Figure 2). Of these factors we note that almost all internal and external can be linked back in some way to student literacy. While it would be reductive to assert that the introduction of explicit literacy strategy would alone create the optimal climate for motivation, it is certainly true that ensuring the accessibility of literacy material is fundamental to the long-term success of MFL learners.

Where we may conclude from this assertion that the solution lays in lowering expectations, we are reminded that 'an MFL classroom culture of low expectations, lack of challenge and light entertainment' may make 'pupils […] feel underrated and increasingly demotivated as they proceed through KS3' (Wingate, 2018: 152). In this sense it is not about the text per se, though it is true they should be chosen prudently, but rather the means through which the text is presented to students.

In this regard, we may recall Vygotsky's idea of the 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD), defined as 'the difference between the child's developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978: 85). Should this cognitive gap be too wide, the teacher risks a drop in student motivation and thus student success. The solution to ensuring this gap is bridged lays in 'scaffolding'. Defined as the 'process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be

beyond his unassisted efforts' (Wood et al 1976: 90), the judicious use of scaffolding should help ensure student progress.

Yet returning to the collaborative objective to both increase students 'literary independence' and 'confidence', it is the constructivist goal of 'appropriation' that must be sought through each pedagogical exercise. Defined as 'the grasping of a concept such that students are able to regulate their own learning' (Myles and Mitchell, 2004: 197), students' appropriation and independence are not necessarily synonymous but certainly mutually beneficial. As such, we are reminded that scaffolding should be more complex than simply a vocabulary support next to a reading text, as in essence it exists to be removed in order to facilitate students' self-regulation (Vygotsky, 1978).

Aware of the importance of 'recognising one another's contributions' in the context of collaboration (Bailey et al, 1991: 174), it was during an initial collaboration call with my TF colleagues that I was informed of an approach that could assist in ensuring my investigative aim was met. The approach suggested was Fitzgerald and Graves' 'Scaffolded Reading Experience' (henceforth referred to as the SRE), 'a flexible framework for teaching lessons involving texts […] designed to facilitate English language learners' reading development' (Fitzgerald and Graves, 2005: 68). Although this approach was established in the context of learners with EAL, it is equally applicable in the MFL classroom as 'reading in a new language may involve more complexity than native language reading' (Ibid: 69). As such, this strategy provided fertile ground for action research, defined as 'a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out' (Carr and Kemmis 1986: 162).

In order to measure the reliability of the action research, I used a mixed method of data collection; I analysed verbal and written evidence from students' books and responses within the classroom, as well questionnaires on motivation. I drew upon Bower's Process Motivational Model for Investigating Learning Pedagogical Approaches (PMM), in order to determine motivation over a period of time (Bower, 2017: 16).

METHODOLOGY

This research on the SRE in the MFL classroom consists of staging reading through 'prereading, during-reading and post-reading activities'. While a variety of activities are proposed by Fitzgerald and Graves, for the purposes of this intervention, I decided to focus on a set sequence (see Figure 3) to ensure consistency and to reduce language anxiety, which Gardner has highlighted as a key barrier towards motivation (2019: 6).
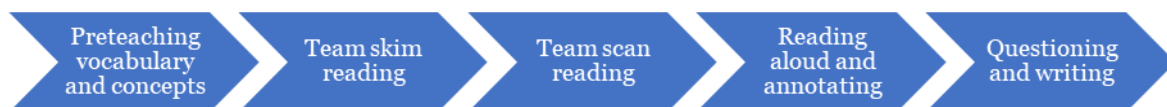

Figure 3: Pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading activities used in the intervention

My five-lesson sequence of learning will utilise this approach, alongside additional reading, to investigate the extent to which scaffolded reading activities promote student independence and thus confidence in reading, both in the TL and in their native language. The sequence is based on the topic of free time, though it was interrupted by one compulsory summative assessment lesson upon which I will not reflect in this action research.

The research was conducted in a non-selective, co-educational state-funded academy for 3-18 year olds, in inner London, rated as 'Good' with 'Outstanding' features by Ofsted in 2021. In the past 6 years, 72% of students have been eligible for free school meals (FSM) and 44.8% of students do not have English as a first language. The national average for these figures is 27.7% and 16.9% respectively (Gov, 2020a). In the context of this investigation, the percentage of students with FSMs is particularly significant as 'disadvantaged pupils fall behind their more affluent peers by around two months each year over the course of secondary school' (The Sutton Trust, 2012).

I have chosen to focus on a Year 8 Spanish group (see Figure 4) in which, ability, confidence and motivation are wide-ranging. Several members of the class are currently participating in a whole-school literacy pilot, and thus it seemed apt to harness this collaborative opportunity given that 'educators must work together to achieve their purpose for all' (Dufour, 2004: 3).

In the British education system 'Prior attainment' is the term used to refer to student performance at the end of key educational stages (Gov, 2016). This performance data then sees students classified as either Low, Middle or High Prior Attainers in the next stage of their education. The class contains mostly Low or Middle Prior Attainers (LPA/MPAs), though some students are High Prior Attainers (HPAs). As such, scaffolding and differentiation were vital elements of the planning process in this unit. Furthermore, given the challenges faced by students in the academic year 2020/21 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must consider and plan for the possibility that the students learning both in Spanish and across the curriculum may have been detrimentally impacted.

Pupil	Gender	Reading age	English ad an Additional Language (EAL)	Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Pupil Premium
1	M	15	Y	Y	Y
2	M	16	Y	N	Y
3	F	10	N	N	Y
4	F	14	N	Y	Y
5	F	12	N	Y	Y
6	M	9	N	Y	Y
7	F	11	N	N	N

8	F	10	N	Y	Y
9	F	17	N	N	Y
10	F	11	N	N	Y
11	F	13	Y	Y	Y
12	M	16	N	N	Y
13	M	11	N	Y	N
14	M	10	N	N	Y
15	M	10	N	Y	Y
16	M	14	N	N	N
17	M	12	Y	N	N
18	F	16	Y	N	Y
19	F	14	Y	N	Y
20	F	11	N	Y	N
21	M	14	N	N	Y
22	M	10	N	N	Y
23	M	16	N	N	N
24	F	17	Y	N	Y

*Students highlighted in yellow are participating in the whole-school literacy pilot

Figure 4: Student data (Anonymous, 2021)

In order to measure the extent to which students make progress when using the scaffolded reading approach, I have incorporated various Assessment for Learning (AfL) techniques into the sequence of learning. 'Formative assessment is now well established as a valuable practice in improving the involvement and attainment of pupils' (Black and Jones, 2006: 4) and is a foundational aspect of pedagogical practice. As such, I have drawn on a variety of AfL strategists, namely, Lemov (2015) and Black and Jones (2006), when planning the strategies that I integrated into my lessons. These strategies include cold calling (a term routinised by Lemov to refer to strategic, no hands-up questioning), rich questions, encouraging open discussion, the inclusion of success criteria, live marking and self and peer assessment. Student progress will be demonstrated by both photo and verbal evidence from analysing books and questioning students within the lessons. In addition, given the emphasis on 'self-reported independence and confidence' I also presented students with a questionnaire prior to the intervention that aimed to gauge their attitudes towards the four different skills in MFL. In line with Bower's PMM, this questionnaire focused on the 'perceived value of activities', 'learners' attitudes towards' them, 'learners' perceptions of their learning' and 'engagement in learning tasks' in order to ensure 'a more fluid nature of qualitative approach' (Bowers, 2017: 5). While I had intended to measure the impact pre- and post-intervention, circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic meant that the post-intervention re-assessment was not able to happen. As such, I will rely on anecdotal evidence from questioning of students throughout the intervention to inform my discussion of self-reported progress.

RESULTS

Returning to Kolb's experimental learning cycle, it follows that any active experimentation provoked by concrete experience should ultimately be reflected upon (Kurt, 2020). As such, it was not only essential that I, as researcher, critically evaluate this intervention, but also that I give the opportunity to students to evaluate it too. This approach was particularly important given that the collaborative aim established with Teach First colleagues was predicated on students' 'self-reported' independence.

The results gathered from the initial questionnaire were insightful because they highlighted an explicit link between student data and student confidence in literacy skills. When asked to identify the skill that they found the most challenging, students 3, 6, 8 and 22, whom we will note from Figure 4 are all planned participants in the whole-school reading pilot, specified reading as their weakest skill. Furthermore, where other students were able to identify coping strategies ('I look for words that look the same'; 'I see if they're the same in English'), these four students notably did not mention any.

For Zimmerman, this observation is inherently linked with students underdeveloped skills around 'self-regulation' (2002). Indeed, if 'self-regulation refers to self-generated thoughts, feelings and behaviours that are orientated to attaining goals' (Zimmerman, 2002: 65), then we see that self-regulation and the 'appropriation' of skill (Vygotsky, 1978) are inextricably linked. In this sense, Fitzgerald and Graves' SRE was here adopted to explicitly teach students these 'thoughts, feelings and behaviours' for success and eventually embed them.

The first stage of this process in each of my five lessons was pre-teaching vocabulary. Students are familiar with this approach as an embedded routine in our lessons, but for lessons 1-5 of this intervention I paid particular attention to the vocabulary in the reading exercises to ensure that the texts neither exceeded nor fell below $i+1$ content, or content appropriately building on what the students have already learnt (Krashen, 1985: 2).
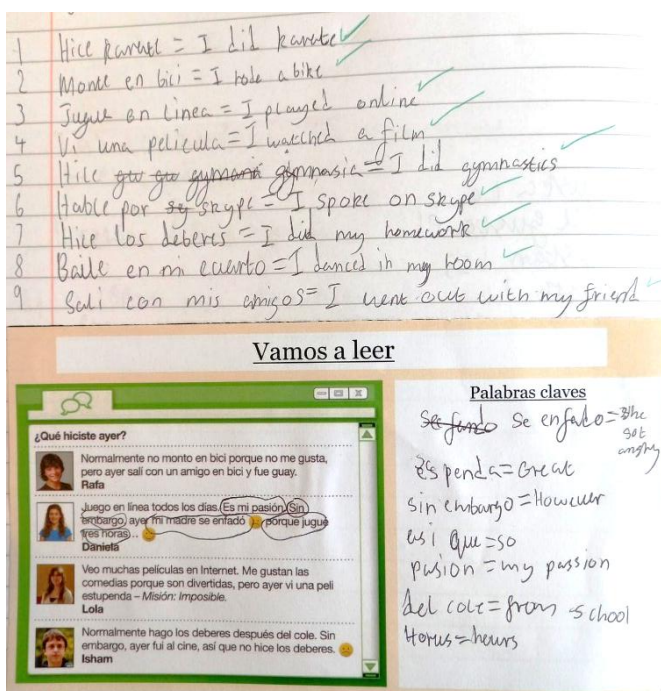

Figure 5 shows a clear example of an MPA's pre-teach vocabulary alongside their reading task. What should be noted here is the student's critical engagement with the vocabulary and text together, in other words, they have implemented the vocabulary from the pre-learning stage in their reading of the text. In this regard, we notice that during the reading phase, the student has not highlighted words that are present in the match-up exercise, thus indicating that they have utilised the exercise either implicitly or explicitly to progress their learning from individual phrases to contextualised language. This evidence speaks directly 'the critical assumption of AfL

Figure 5: MPA's pre-teach stage vocabulary

theorists that the ultimate aim of language learning is to "enable students to own and monitor their own progress as independent language learners"' (Jones and Wiliam, 2008 in McAllister, 2020) as it clearly demonstrates the student utilising the resources at their disposal in an independent manner in order to tackle more challenging exercises. In this sense, we see how pre-teaching vocabulary is an effective scaffold to ensure students' self-efficacy in subsequent processing and production tasks in the lesson.

Given that self-efficacy can also be a kind of metacognitive belief (Paris and Winograd, 1990), I felt it appropriate in the next stage of SRE to capitalise on what O'Malley and Charmot term, social or affective strategies (1990: 46). Cooperation, questioning and self-talk activities (Ibid) established a collaborative space for discussion in the during-reading activity stage (Fitzgerald and Graves, 2005) of each lesson. For example, each reading task presented to students was first approached by skim reading and scan reading in pairs.

While Pescamora does highlight the risks around inclusivity of low prior attainers in group activities (2018), we understand that seating arrangements have the potential to be a useful tool for inclusive classrooms (Wannarka and Ruhl, 2008) and thus seating plans here aimed to minimise the impact of discrepancy in confidence and ability. For example, students 20 and 24 are sat alongside one another, as I know that student 20 learns well when asking questions, which student 24, as an HPA, is likely to be able to answer. By contrast, students 3 and 6 are more effected by lack of 'metacognitive belief' in group activities and so pairing the two of them allowed them to 'assure [themselves] that a learning activity will be successful' (O'Malley and Charmot, 1990: 46).

Although this pair work undeniably provided students with a safe space to make errors in preparation for deeper reading, I found particular challenge in ensuring appropriate levels of stretch for all students. For example, I often found myself circulating around to HPAs in the final 30 seconds of the skim reading section and seeing that they had already read enough to ascertain basic meaning from the text. If we understand that differentiation implies a shift away from a traditional "one-size-fits-all" model to individualised teaching and learning in response to heterogeneity (Bondie, Dahnke, and Zusho 2019), then it becomes clear that the steps for reading could be usefully differentiated across the class to ensure 'educational equity in the school context' (Ibid).

Having noticed this challenge within the first lesson, I discussed potential means of mitigation with other members of my TF collaboration group, knowing that a well-considered, open and reflective style of working together (Gordon, 2018) would achieve the best outcomes for students. Solutions discerned in the conversation included: the possibility of giving students a limit of words that they could ask about in their glossary (step four of the reading process [see Figure 4]) and stretch activities within the skimming and scanning section. I trialled both strategies with the intervention group and while I found the latter strategy to engage students further, the former was insufficient in the context of the texts chosen.
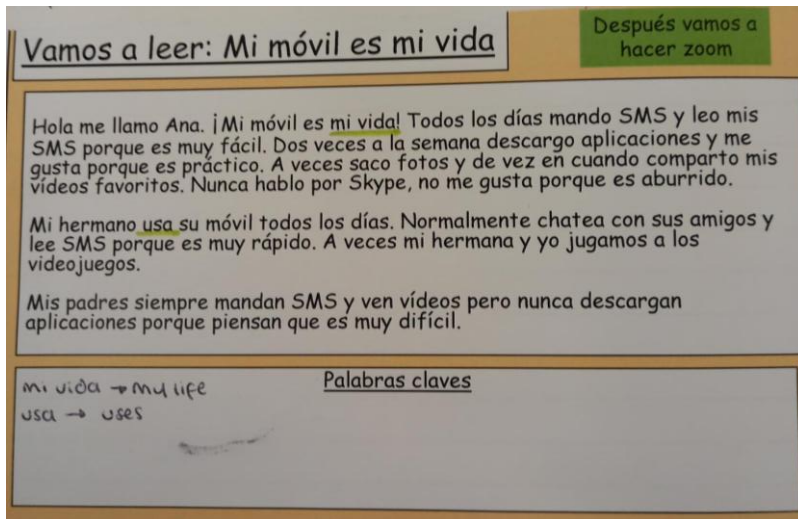
Figure 6: HPA's during-reading glossary

Taking Figure 6 as an example, we see a HPA's annotation and glossary to be relatively stark. While it is possible this approach is down to lack of engagement, my knowledge of the student suggests that it is more likely that they were simply the only words they did not know. As such, the complexity of effective planning with regards to the SRE becomes evident as we are reminded that the ZPD is not the region between the intellect of the class and its potential with guided assistance but the intellect of an individual child (Malik, 2017: 2). In this way, while it would be erroneous to suggest that the SRE is superfluous for HPAs, it is certainly true that the choice of textual material must be appropriate to every child's needs as 'if we do not offer cognitive challenge, […] then they are unlikely to take MFL seriously' (Jones and Swarbick 2004: 65).

That being said, during the post-reading/questioning stage of each lesson, the potential for scaffolding to the top was much better exploited. Although we see above that the limitations of the communal glossary exercise for HPAs in this particular context, Figure 7 demonstrates its merits in the context of LPA/MPA outcomes. Given that 'the likelihood that something will be read, understood and learnt […] depends in substantial part on the ability of working memory to adequately process and integrate new information into existing schemata' (Reid et al. 2021: 215), we see that student 3's glossary has appropriately eased cognitive load such that they were able to approach the initial comprehension questions (1-6) with confidence.

Figure 7: Student 3 (MPA with reading age of 10) post-reading exercise

Moreover, knowing that high-skilled readers are more able to select and recall information required to make inferences about texts (Cain, Oakhill, Barnes & Bryant, 2001), I was able to focus stretch tasks on what Bloom refers to as 'higher-order' skills such as inference and analysis (1956). Not only did this provide an opportunity to appropriately stretch HPAs but in conjunction with graded questioning in the main

task comprehension questions, this approach eased less confident readers into more challenging reading skills. Again, we see that student 3 has successfully attempted the first two questions of the stretch here. In this way, it is clear the SRE facilitates the confidence and 'self-regulation' that constructivists anticipate in effective learning.

Ultimately, while there were challenges in appropriately differentiating this approach for a mixed-ability group, I found the SRE ensured high levels of success, motivation and crucially independence from all students in this group.

CONCLUSIONS

This research has demonstrated the extent to which collaborative approaches to learning can improve instructional quality, self-efficacy and effectiveness (Mora-Ruano et al, 2019: 1) for both students and teachers in the MFL classroom. Through fully utilising human resources within a variety of communities of practice, I have been afforded the opportunity to critically assess my own practice and engage with collaborative efforts on a more profound level. By interrogating this approach to education early in my career, I have been able to diversify my practice to incorporate strategies that empirically provide the best outcomes for students.

Returning to the collaborative aim of this investigation, we are reminded that independence and confidence were at the heart of our group's perception of success. While it is certainly true that levels of confidence towards learning and learner outcomes increased during the period of the intervention, we may question the extent to which a short intervention of this nature could embed the routines in an enduring way. Drawing on Ebbinghaus' 'Forgetting Curve' (1913), I ensured that each lesson incorporated retrieval practice questioning on the SRE and was vigilant of the extent to which in the latter stages of the intervention, students set off on the task without instruction. It is certainly true that my in-lesson observation indicated a certain level of appropriation here, however, we must accept that it is the more enduring long-term approach towards this reading strategy that will equip students with the effective tools to self-regulate during reading.

In this regard, it is also important to recognise the extent to which the strategy depended on the material chosen. The barriers faced in this intervention principally concerned HPAs and how to best challenge them using the SRE. Yet in this challenge, there is, to some extent, an opportunity. For if Moore argues that it is important to '[not wait] to teach something until the child is deemed able to "absorb"/assimilate it' (2000: 19), then perhaps the SRE provides students with a framework through which to tackle more lexically challenging texts.

The most relevant application of this approach would be through the use of authentic material, in which this intervention, to its detriment, was lacking. By assimilating the SRE and authentic material, it is possible to both involve greater identification with the TL culture (Gardner et al, 2019: 12) and 'focus on helping learners to achieve more than they might think they can achieve' (Macaro, 2015: 6). Indeed, if language learning should inherently draw on TL communities as 'a resource and repository of meaning' (Cohen, 1985: 118), then it follows that the importance of using authentic material cannot be understated, particularly with regards to understanding cultural nuances in TL texts.

Although my individual findings here discussed are the basis of this investigation, it is worth mentioning that it forms just one part of a range of interventions within my communities of practice. While it is too early to gauge any results from the internal academy literacy pilot, colleagues in the TF collaboration group saw a range of results from their interventions across reading and writing. Where almost all members saw engagement improve through their interventions, it should be mentioned that the greatest engagement in reading was seen through reading strategies rather than vocabulary teaching. As a result, this observation confirmed my findings and further justified my modified inclusion of the SRE going forward.

Ultimately then, we see that collaboration within the context of education is largely beneficial. While contextual factors can pose challenges, through drawing on an 'explicit, reflective and communicative approach' (Lieberman and Miller 2008: 81), I was not only able to identify the most high-leverage aim upon which to focus, but also provoke enduring change in my own practice. By incorporating this approach more broadly, I hope to ensure that learners are equipped with the tools to be successful both in the context of the MFL classroom and further afield.

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Engaging with others to identify areas of learning

Nicholas Mark Page[5]

ABSTRACT

This study evaluates how a **community of practice** of twelve collaborating Modern Foreign Languages teachers can improve students' literacy levels in the target language and develop learner autonomy. The group of practitioners identified reading as a neglected skill as students and teachers alike consider it to be easier than listening, speaking and writing. The community of practice agreed that taking a phonics approach in reading promotes fluency, which enabled me to create a multipurpose **intervention** which combined **reading aloud** with **reading comprehension** over a series of lessons. The twelve practitioners agreed that the impact of this intervention would be measured by analysing the results of a **student questionnaire** and by collecting samples of learners' work. By reading aloud relatable, authentic texts, students enjoyed reading, confidently interpreted longer texts and improved their pronunciation.

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[5] Nicholas Mark Page, Head of French, Dixons Academies Trust, email: nicholasmarkpage@gmail.com

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to evaluate how a community of practice of twelve collaborating Modern Foreign Languages teachers can improve students' literacy levels in the target language and develop learner autonomy. A community of practice can be defined as a 'group of teachers who are engaged in achieving a common goal, share to a certain degree a set of values, norms, and orientations towards learning, and operate collaboratively with structures that foster students' independence' (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984, p. 287). As well as promoting learners' autonomy, such collaborative cultures create 'engaging classroom environments, where students ask questions, share ideas and understanding, and construct meaningful knowledge' (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 1). These conditions result in higher levels of achievement for students (Goddard, 2010) and offer the potential for 'transformative' professional development for teachers (Pounder, 1999).

This professional community of teachers collaborated to design their own literacy interventions appropriate to their school contexts, making decisions about them from their collaboration calls. The group of practitioners identified reading as 'a neglected skill, as teachers consider it to be easier than the other skills and pupils believe they are stronger in it than they are' (Wilson, 2014, p. 10) and according to Ofsted, the teaching of reading is a 'weakness in many schools', with 'schools often limiting reading materials to short texts found in textbooks or past examination papers' (Ofsted, 2011, p. 44). However, the professional community agreed that using authentic texts full of 'serious language' in the second language (L2), which is a language that is easily relatable to the learners' daily lives, 'making it full of force and meaning, giving them the drive to use it' (Hawkins, 1987, p. 220), would enable learners to enjoy reading, and confidently interpret longer texts within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygostsky, 1997). Ensuring that authentic texts are personally relevant to the learners in this 'socially structured setting' (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 172) would increase students' engagement in lessons (Bower, 2019), and there would be an improved comprehension and attitude to reading (Macaro, 2008), but the importance of phonics could not be ignored.

The community of practitioners also agreed that a phonics approach is more likely to promote fluency in L2, so I decided to focus my intervention on reading aloud. Being able to read aloud is an early achievement in first language (L1) acquisition for most learners, and 'it could be regarded as somewhat odd if a person, literate in that language, could not read aloud in a comprehensible way' (Gibson, 2008, p. 33). My experience in the classroom and relevant literature shows that learners enjoy reading aloud in L2 because 'they feel like the objective is not to perform, but rather to practise pronunciation and achieve comprehension' (Stevick, 1989, p. 108), even if their attitudes differ towards the target language (Macaro, 2008). Some pupils at my school are reluctant to practise pronunciation in speaking activities or orally contribute to whole class discussions about comprehension, but reading aloud is 'a way of reducing communication anxiety' (Foss, 1988, p. 409), and such a controlled, imitative activity can make students feel 'secure enough to make their first utterances' (Gibson, 2008, p. 32). However, the community of practice agreed that 'comprehension can sometimes be compromised by reading aloud' (Gibson, 2008, p. 33), and so it

should not be its sole purpose. This powerful collaborative conversation, in which colleagues were engaged in sharing 'goals, strategies, materials, questions, concerns, and results' (Dufour, 2004, p. 4), enabled me to create my own intervention appropriate to my school context.

The academy will be referred to as 'School X' so that the establishment and its pupils remain anonymous. Most of the student cohort live in a ward which is in the most deprived quintile nationally (Southwark Council, 2017). 40% of pupils have a reading age which is below their actual age (school data for School X, 2021) and keeping students engaged in lessons is the school's main challenge (Appendix 6). This challenging school context and the discussions from the collaboration calls enabled me to create a highly engaging intervention which focused on reading aloud to improve learners' pronunciation and their general comprehension of authentic texts in the target language. The twelve practitioners agreed that the impact of this intervention would be measured by analysing the results of a student questionnaire and by collecting samples of learners' work.

In the first part of this study, I will conduct a literature review of the collaboration and learning theories relevant to my approach in the classroom. I will then analyse the community of practice which has made positive contributions to this intervention. I will then evaluate the impact of this intervention before I consider the implications for future practice.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The fundamental theories for my sequence of lessons are Hawkins's concept of serious language (Hawkins, 1987), Bower's motivation model (Bower, 2019) and Gibson's (2008) and Stevick's (1989) analyses of reading aloud.

As well as second language acquisition theories, Harris's analysis of a 'culture of trust enhances performance' (2013, p. 1) in communities of practice has also influenced my teaching and vision. Harris states that 'leaders create the organisational conditions necessary for teachers to engage in collaborative relationships' (2013, p. 25), and this seems particularly relevant to this study as Teach First (TF) and the Institute of Education (IOE) at University College London created these organisational conditions, by arranging collaboration calls for the community of practice and distributing formal guidance to its members. This structured setting has enabled members to engage in 'open and honest conversations to reflect on their practices and identify ways in which they can improve' (Harris, 2013, p. 27). Yet, this culture of trust is lacking at School X due to the organisational conditions of the Continuing Professional Development programme (CPD), which have created weak 'social capital' (Harris, 2013, p. 12) as relationships among teachers are not characterised by 'high trust and frequent interaction' (Harris, 2013, p. 25). Harris's analysis is highly relevant in this study as the weak social capital at School X has not enabled me to confidently engage in conversations with other colleagues about this intervention, which has made me question the purpose of a professional learning community.

Literature produced by Dufour (2014) was highly relevant to this collaborative study, as he explains the purpose and goals of an ideal community of practice. Dufour (2014, p. 1) states that, 'to create a

professional learning community, focus on learning rather than teaching' and discuss 'goals, strategies, materials, pacing, questions, concerns, and results'. This explicit guidance regarding the expectations of the members of a community of practice enabled me to comfortably approach the professional community arranged by TF and the IOE, knowing that there would always be a 'colleague to turn to' (Dufour, 2014, p. 6) because of the community's common objective. Dufour (2014, p. 4) also describes how collaboration calls are 'explicitly structured to improve the classroom practice of teachers—individually and collectively' and this enabled me to truly believe that the feedback and comments from my peers would empower me with the knowledge to create a worthwhile intervention.

My intervention is influenced by Hawkins's theory (1987) about serious language. The serious language in these authentic texts 'serves as an intention to mean' and is personally relevant to the learners, which will play a key role in securing the desired outcomes of this project, as an 'absence of 'intention to mean' in language transacted in the foreign language classroom' (Hawkins, 1987, p. 237) is why students quickly become disengaged in reading activities. Serious language in authentic texts, which serves as a function to the learner, is effortlessly retained, whereas non-serious language in a reading activity, which the learner cannot relate to, is not effortlessly retained (1987). This theory is beneficial to the students at School X as they enjoy reading the target language (TL) in contexts which relate to their own experiences, and as their confidence grows in reading in French, they have taken an interest in the beliefs and routines of native speakers of francophone countries, reflecting an increased 'capacity for empathy' (1987, p. 216).

Bower's process motivation model (2019) is based on Coyle's three key aspects of motivation (Coyle, 2011, p. 10) which are 'learning environment, learner engagement, and learner identity'. If one of these aspects is missing from a classroom culture of student-centred learning (Piaget, 2003), students will become disengaged in reading aloud, and language acquisition will not occur.

Employing Bower's process motivation model has played an important role in this project as its focus is 'not on creating interest, but on sustaining the learner's interest over a long period of time' (Bower, 2019, p. 565). Reading aloud sustains the learners' interest over a long period of time because students can get more actively involved with the text, taking on roles with their partners in a secure, socially structured setting (Vygotsky, 1987) and decoding messages together if they are unsure. Bower highlights 'learner engagement' (2019, p. 564) as a source of motivation in her framework; reading aloud increases learner engagement as it is a shared experience in which students enjoy reading a text together in various ways, in lieu of sitting in silence and answering a few comprehension questions. Reading aloud can also improve 'group cohesiveness' and 'self-worth' in Bower's model (2019, p. 564) as students are aware that teamwork is essential to find elements of the task's solution (Vygotsky, 1987), and this awareness makes them accountable for their learning and gives learners a 'feeling of competence' within the group (Bower, 2019, p. 564).

Research about reading aloud carried out by Gibson (2008) and Stevick (1989) has strongly influenced my intervention at School X as they believe that all learners of a second language should be able to read aloud in a 'comprehensible way' (Gibson, 2008) (Stevick, 1989) in order to achieve

fluency. Not only are learners regarded as 'fluent' when they can read aloud in a 'controlled, imitative' manner (Gibson, 2008, p. 32), but they are practising several skills at the same time (Stevick, 1989). Both researchers state that whilst learners are reading aloud, they have the ability to navigate the sounds, the pragmatic meaning and the grammatical features of the text which enables them to 'extend and strengthen their network of associations among all these aspects of the language' (Stevick, 1989, p. 108). I believe that providing regular opportunities to extend and strengthen this network by reading aloud would greatly benefit the 40% of pupils at School X who have a reading age which is below their actual age (school data for School X, 2021).

Although reading aloud can help learners review all aspects of the language, Stevick (1989) and Gibson (2008) focus their research on using this tool to practise pronunciation and achieve general comprehension. Stevick (1989, p. 76) argues that 'a learner can read the same text aloud over and over for pronunciation practice, concentrating on one feature at a time and giving special emphasis to certain sounds'. In addition, Stevick (1989) claims that students become aware of different sounds as they repeatedly read the same text aloud. Gibson (2008, p. 33) argues that reading aloud enables learners to 'chunk the text into sense groups, even if they do not understand all the words—and to memorise new words'. However, Gibson recommends that achieving general comprehension 'should not be the main purpose of reading aloud' (2008, p. 33), and this activity should have multiple purposes, which is why I have decided to focus on improving pronunciation and general comprehension in this intervention.

Gibson (2008) and Stevick (1989) also argue that all students feel at ease when they are reading aloud because the objective is not to perform an unscripted conversation in front of the whole class but to focus on 'how you sound with your partner' (Stevick, 1989, p. 84). This lessens anxiety levels in the room, and preparation activities such as 'having the teacher read it out first' and providing 'indirect correction' (Gibson, 2008, p. 34) to the whole class create a supportive classroom atmosphere, which is crucial in School X considering its daily challenge of keeping students engaged in lessons (Appendix 6).

3 METHODOLOGY

The ideas shared in the community of practice enabled me to form the methodology for this intervention. TF and the IOE created the organisational conditions which foster collaborative dialogue amongst teachers (Harris, 2013) by arranging collaboration calls and distributing formal guidance to colleagues. The formal guidance, which included a step-by-step guide, lectures, seminars and a wealth of literature, made it clear to members of the community of practice that each meeting would be explicitly structured to improve classroom practice (Dufour, 2014). Topics formed part of this explicit structure in each collaboration call which were 'goal, design, implementation, assess and reflect'. In addition, maintaining such a rigid structure meant that roles were assigned to different members of the community in each collaboration call such as 'chair, note takers, monitoring hands up, timekeeper and rabbit hole monitor'. I believe that creating topics and roles in each collaboration call enabled colleagues to comfortably 'develop norms or protocols to clarify expectations regarding responsibilities and relationships' (Dufour, 2004, p. 4) as members of the professional community requested clarification when there had been a misunderstanding and

provided constructive criticism when they disagreed with an aspect of the call. However, it can be argued that 'serious problems could arise in situations where teachers have different goals, incompatible approaches or widely divergent teaching styles' (Bailey, 1992, p. 162). This is not the case within this community of practice, as the formal guidance, agreed topics, and rotating roles all contributed to creating a culture of trust where 'genuine listening', 'respect' and 'integrity' (Eddy, 2016) were the norms. Furthermore, having the same shared goal enabled the community of practice to constantly 'focus its efforts on overcoming the challenges' (Dufour, 2004, p. 4) related to literacy in Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) and creating interventions appropriate to the differing school contexts. Initially, producing a meaningful intervention was a concern for the majority of the professional community's members. Yet, all the teachers benefited from being part of this community of practice as 'those who are not very good at starting from scratch can benefit from using the ideas discussed in pre-teaching collaboration and make it into something of their own' (Bailey, 1992, p.162).

I have always been interested in reading in the MFL classroom simply because colleagues have little to say about it, or it is conceived by many practitioners 'as a tool for exposing learners to written vocabulary and short phrases already presented orally' (Macaro, 2008, p.99). I have also observed many successful readers who 'make use of combinations of top-down and bottom-up processes, rarely sticking to one strategy within those processes for very long' (Macaro, 2008, p.101), which enabled me to critically reflect on the variety of strategies being taught and employed in my classroom. These reflections were raised with the community of practice, and members concluded that a strategy which could provide 'social interaction and mediated, scaffolded activities between teachers and learners' within the ZPD (Vygostsky, 1997, p. 9) whilst offering learners an 'inspiring diet of challenge and interest' (Bower, 2019, p. 565) would be beneficial to all students. This socially-structured approach (Vygostsky, 1997) which would challenge all learners (Bower, 2019), led me to question the impact of reading aloud in MFL, creating the need for this intervention.

The focus of this intervention would have been on a one-year group, but I decided to carry out this intervention across all the year groups that I teach (Year seven to Year 10) as reading aloud is a skill, and 'government policy makers expect all teaching to include a large component of learning skills' (Harris, 2014, p. 23). This skill was taught over a series of lesson plans (Appendix 12), and the impact was measured by collecting students' work (Appendices eight to 11) and distributing a questionnaire (Appendix one).

4 RESULTS

This evaluation will follow the structure of the questionnaire in order to critically evaluate the impact of every aspect of this intervention. Question one reads, 'by having the text read to me by the teacher, I can identify words that I do not know how to pronounce' (Appendix one) and 98% of students from all year groups responded 'true' (Appendices two to five). As the overwhelming majority of the student cohort responded positively to this question, it can be argued that 'listeners should be given something to listen for' (Gibson, 2008, p. 32), such as words that they cannot

pronounce, before they have to read the text aloud themselves. I also believe that 'the proper production by the teacher of punctuation signals, stress, and intonation' (Amer, 1997, p. 46) enabled the students to locate words which they could not pronounce and this short preparation activity provided a supportive classroom environment for the most unconfident students (Gibson, 2008). Furthermore, as 'reading aloud by the teacher helps readers discover units of sound that should be read as phrases rather than word by word' (Amer, 1997, p. 46), students could listen to the pronunciation being modelled by the teacher as well it being read out loud in comprehensible chunks (Gibson, 2008) and as a result, they felt secure enough to make their first utterances in the following exercise (Stevick, 1989). However, I doubted that 'listening for words that you cannot pronounce' was a rather vague instruction, as Amer states that 'learners should be consciously aware of the objective of reading aloud' (1997, p. 46). Yet, 98% of students responded positively to question one, which demonstrates that learners understood the objective of the task and found it beneficial.

Question two reads, 'by reading the text aloud, I improve my pronunciation' (Appendix one), and 83% of students across all participating year groups responded 'true' (Appendices two to five). The overwhelming majority responded positively to this question, as by reading the text aloud in pairs, they were more actively involved with the text, taking on shared roles with their partners in a secure, socially structured setting (Vygotsky, 1987) to achieve perfect pronunciation. This shared responsibility, which sustained the learners' interest over a long period of time (Bower, 2019), improved group cohesiveness and self-worth (Bower, 2019) in this student-centred learning environment (Piaget, 2003) as the students were thrilled to read the text aloud with their peers instead of reading it in silence. Reading the text aloud with their peers also provided them with an opportunity for social interaction within the ZPD (Vygostsky, 1997), which enabled them to rely on each other's skills to complete the task autonomously in pairs (Harris, 2014). In addition, the teacher contributed to this student autonomy by modelling the task in the previous activity (Harris, 2014) to ensure that they had the tools and knowledge to read the text aloud in pairs. Imitating the teacher, or the French native teaching assistant (TA) in many cases, enabled the students to become aware of different sounds as they repeatedly read the same text aloud (Stevick, 1989), and many of them replicated the TA's accent and intonation suggesting an increased capacity for empathy (Hawkins, 1987). As well as replicating the TA's accent and intonation, even the most unconfident students successfully reproduced correct pronunciation whilst reading aloud (Gibson, 2008) and it was highly noticeable that the students took this task very seriously. Learners were asked about their attitude towards this task, and all of them replied, 'it's a serious task because we want to sound good at French, and the text includes language that we use every day' (Appendix seven), demonstrating that these authentic texts 'served as an intention to mean' and were 'personally relevant to the learners' (Hawkins, 1987, p. 237). Voicing an awareness of their level in the L2 (Bower, 2019) and demonstrating a serious attitude towards this task confirms that the first two stages of this intervention, having the text read aloud to them by the teacher and then reading it in pairs to achieve perfect pronunciation, are aligned with the professional community's goal to improve learners' literacy levels.

Question three reads, 'by reading the text aloud with my partner, I understand what the text is about' (Appendix one). In years seven, eight and nine, 70% of students responded 'true' (Appendices two to four) and in year 10, 55% of learners responded 'true' (Appendix five). It can be argued that comprehension can be compromised by reading aloud (Gibson, 2008) as the students become too focused on trying to perfect their pronunciation. However, as learners have an unusual degree of ability to switch their attention rapidly among the sounds and the meanings and the grammatical features of the text (Stevick, 1989), reading aloud has provided the students with the opportunity to chunk the text into sense groups (Gibson, 2008), which enabled them to grasp the general idea of the text. In addition, if the learners had not read the text aloud to gain general comprehension, they would have read the text in silence, and more often than not, learners reading in silence 'tend to read word by word due to their limited linguistic competence' and 'guided by their anxiety to understand each word, sentences lose their integrity and consequently become meaningless' (Amer, 1997, p. 46). Moreover, sentences did not become meaningless in this socially structured setting (Vygotsky, 1987) because learners had a shared responsibility to discuss their general understanding of the text with their peers after reading it aloud before sharing their summary with the rest of the class (Appendix 12). Summarising the general idea was facilitated by the use of serious language in these authentic texts (Hawkins, 1989), as a personally relevant text increases learner engagement (Bower, 2019). I also believe that students confidently embraced this part of the intervention because they have become accustomed to exploring different reading strategies in their English lessons (Appendix six), such as 'finding the main idea of a paragraph, recognising topic sentences, distinguishing main idea from supporting details' (Macaro, 2008, p. 109), to mention a few. When students make links to other subjects because they have already acquired that knowledge in a different context, they see this as stimulating and relevant (Bower, 2019), which produces cognitive growth (Piaget, 2003). However, only 55% of the year 10 students reacted positively to this part of the intervention, which cannot be ignored.

Just under half of the students in year 10 stated that reading aloud did not help them understand the general idea of the text. Amer states that 'if reading aloud is made a regular and integral part of the teaching and learning process, it can have a positive effect, but unplanned, occasional reading aloud may not have a positive effect' (1997, p. 46). This research supports year ten's reaction to the questionnaire (Appendix five), as the students in this GCSE Higher French class only did occasional reading-aloud activities due to the length of the texts at that level and the amount of time it takes to read them. Yet, the students in years seven, eight and nine had four more opportunities to read aloud, which made it become, in their eyes, a regular and integral part of the teaching and learning process.

Question four reads, 'I prefer reading the text aloud with my partner to understand what it is about before I have to answer comprehension questions' (Appendix one). 60% of learners in year seven responded positively to this question (Appendix two), 50% of students in years eight and nine responded positively to this concept (Appendices three and four) and 60% of year ten students responded positively to this aspect of the intervention. By analysing the results of this questionnaire, it is clear that, overall, fewer students were in favour of this final aspect of the intervention compared to previous aspects. I believe that these results were strongly influenced by

learners being consciously aware of the previous objectives of reading aloud (Amer, 1997) because the teacher placed too much emphasis on improving pronunciation and understanding the general idea of the text (Appendix 12), which the learners rather enjoyed (Appendix seven). However, when the students had to read the text again to look for detail, the atmosphere completely changed in the classroom, as 'exercises such as "find the French for X" push learners into a different 'gear', quite apart from the one we would want them to be in if they were reading for pleasure' (Woore, 2014, p. 107). It can also be argued that 'students do not depend on reading aloud but use it as a resource which benefits their use of other resources' (Stevick, 1989, p. 85), and the most successful readers use a variety of strategies to understand and interpret the text in lieu of placing all their energy on one strategy (Macaro, 2008), which justifies the cohort's answer to question four. Yet, I believe that if the teacher had explicitly explained the process of reading aloud from beginning to end, from practising pronunciation to gaining a general understanding of the text to answering questions about detail, the students would have reacted more favourably to this final aspect of the intervention. Moreover, with 'appropriate practice, readers gradually realise that they can achieve a higher level of comprehension by reading aloud' (Gibson, 2008, p. 33), but only if the objectives of each task are made clear to them. Explaining to students why we do things increases learner engagement (Bower, 2019) as long as personally relevant, authentic material is used (Hawkins, 1987).

5 CONCLUSIONS

Overall, I believe that this reading-aloud intervention was a success across all year groups as it improved students' literacy levels in the target language and developed learner autonomy. The questionnaires, student feedback and output demonstrate that reading aloud enabled the learners to perfect their pronunciation in the TL and achieve a general understanding of the text before answering comprehension questions about detail. All students actively engaged in this socially structured intervention which enabled them to share their joy for reading with their peers, and this was due to the collaborative discussions which occurred within the community of practice. The community of practice provided a collaborative platform to develop an intervention appropriate to School X's context, which enabled students to switch their attention rapidly among the sounds and the meanings and grammatical features of the text whilst summarising their general understanding of the text with their partners. This multipurpose intervention provided the learners with further strategies to increase their literacy levels in the TL, which is crucial at a school where 40% of students have a reading age which is below their actual age. However, some aspects of the intervention need to be improved for future practice.

In the future, the objectives of each step of the intervention must be clearly defined so that students recognise the importance of every stage of the lesson, from beginning to end. Emphasising the goal of each component will enable learners to benefit from the variety of reading strategies which this intervention offers and will continue to contribute to their cognitive development. In addition, consistency is the key to this intervention's success in the future as students will continue to recognise reading aloud as an integral part of the teaching and learning process, which will increase literacy levels in the target language and develop their autonomy.

Finally, it was a privilege to be part of this community of practice as I benefited from using the ideas discussed in the collaboration calls and made them into something of my own. This community of practice, which did not follow a scripted meeting agenda and reserved genuine listening, respect, and integrity as its norms, offered transformative professional development for its members and led to the creation of numerous successful interventions to improve literacy levels in the target language.

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7 APPENDICES

Appendix I: student questionnaire

This is an anonymous questionnaire. Do not write your name anywhere on this sheet and answer the questions in English.

1) By having the text read to me by the teacher, I can identify words that I do not know how to pronounce.

TRUE / FALSE

2) By reading the text aloud with my partner, I improve my pronunciation.

TRUE / FALSE

3) By reading the text aloud with my partner, I understand what the text is about.

TRUE / FALSE

4) I prefer reading the text aloud with my partner to understand what it is about before I have to answer comprehension questions.

TRUE / FALSE

Appendix II: year seven responses to student questionnaire
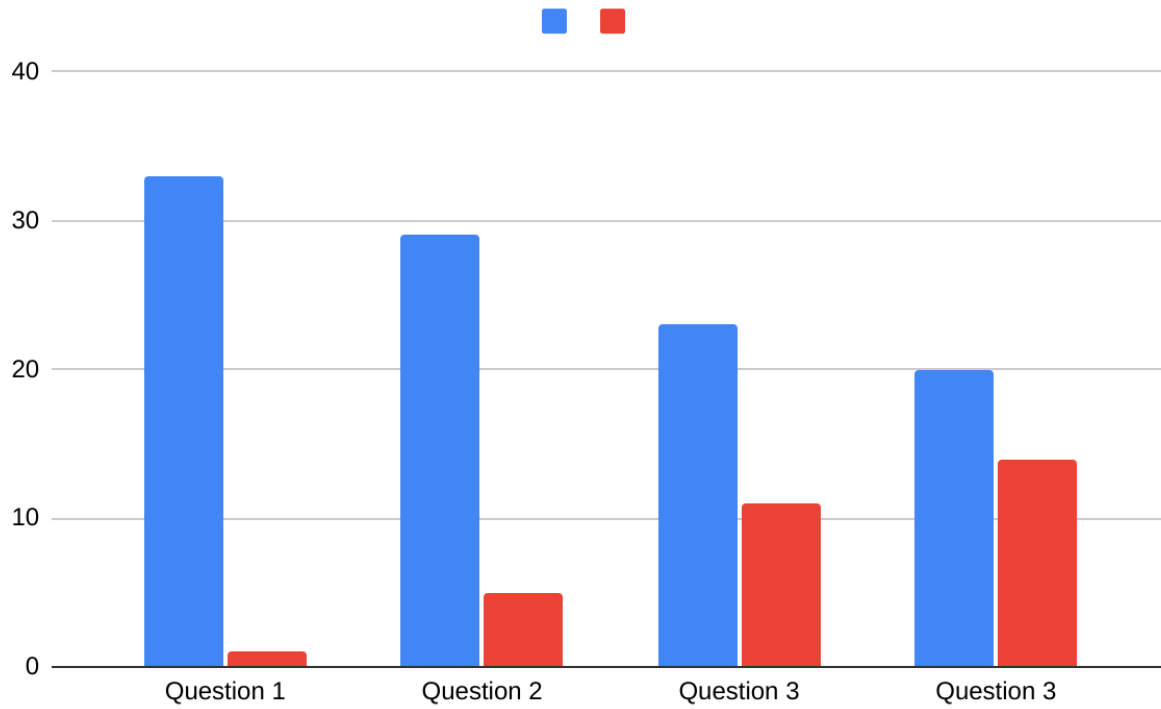
Blue = true
Red = false

Appendix III : year eight responses to student questionnaire
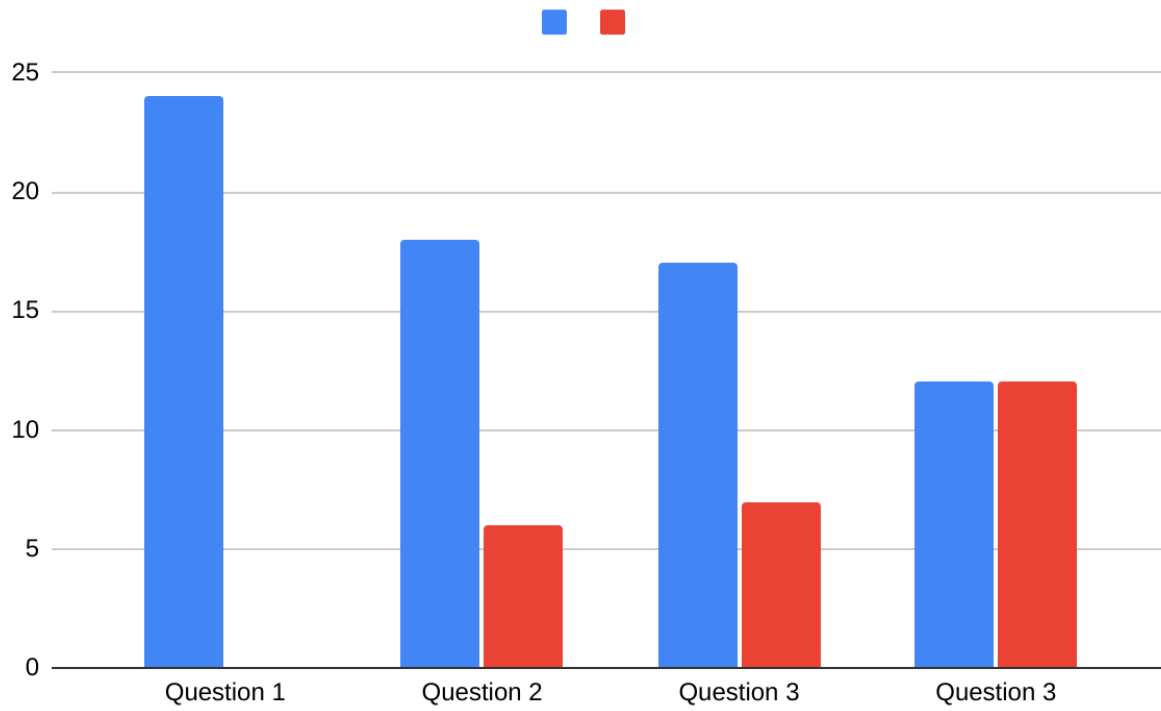
Blue = true
Red = false

Appendix IV: year nine responses to student questionnaire
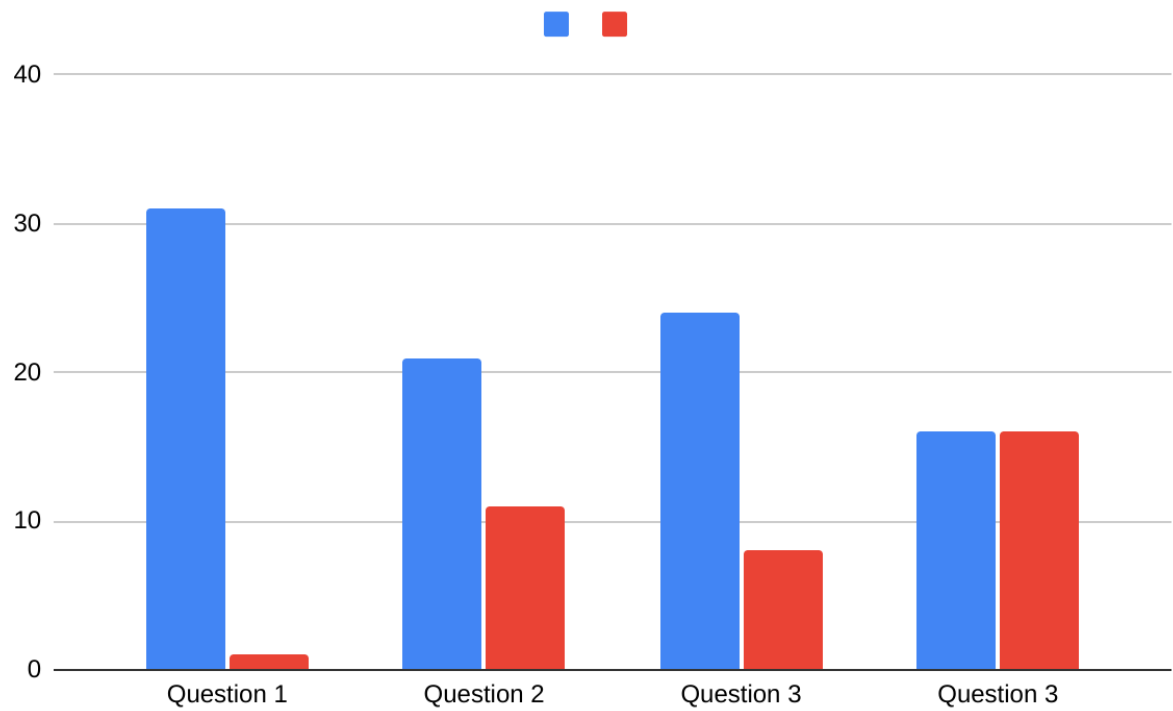
Blue = true
Red = false

Appendix V: year 10 responses to student questionnaire

Blue = true
Red = false
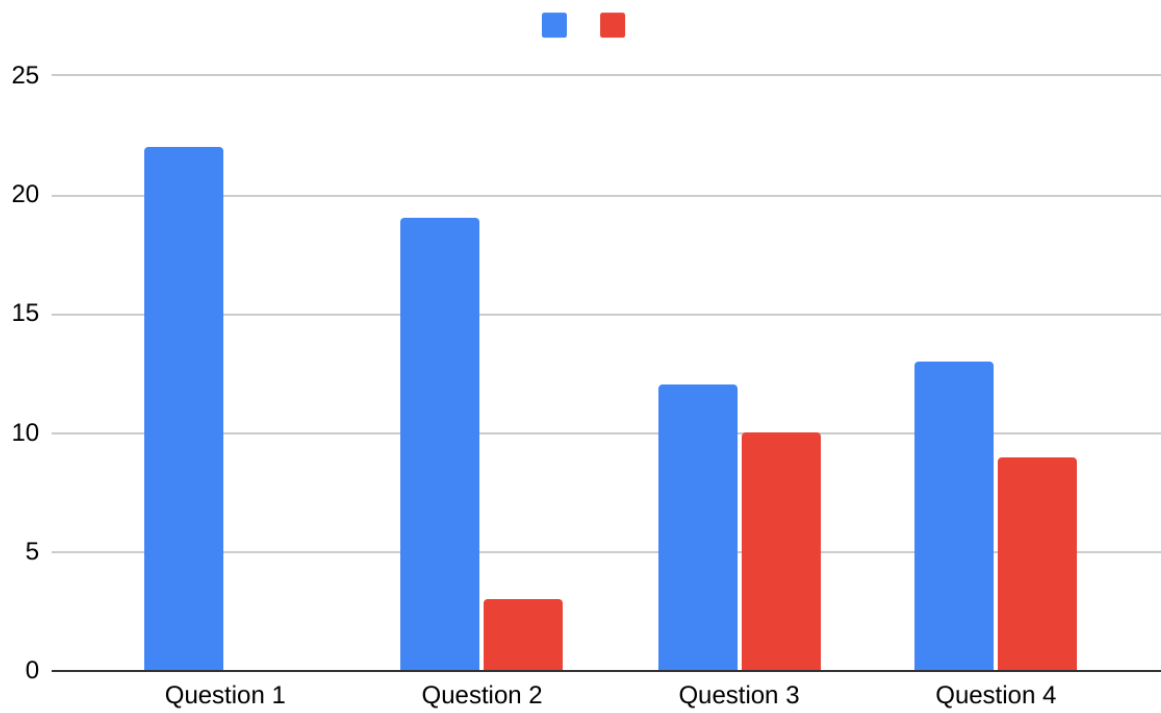
Appendix VI: meeting minutes with Assistant Principal at School X

Me: What would you say is our main challenge here at School X?

Assistant Principal: Keeping the students engaged in lessons.

Me: Thank you for that. What reading strategies do you explore with the students in your subject?

Assistant Principal: I teach English. We explore all possible reading strategies in English; no stone is left unturned. Every reader is different and if the strategy works for them, then it works for us. Regular examples include finding the main idea of a paragraph, recognising topic sentences, distinguishing main idea from supporting details etc.

Me: OK, thank you. Do you and the students read texts aloud in English lessons?

Assistant Principal: Of course. Reading aloud is a really good strategy for practicing intonation and gaining an understanding of the general idea of the text.

Appendix VII: conversations with students about reading aloud

Me: Why do you think about reading aloud?

Students: It's a serious task because we want to sound good at French and the text includes language that we use every day. It's fun as well because we can work with our partners.

Appendix VIII: work completed by year seven student

Lisez le texte modèle écrit par Isabella

Bonjour !

Je m'appelle Isabelle. Je suis très sympa et assez intelligente. Aussi, je suis très sympathique.

J'ai les yeux noirs et les cheveux mi-longs. Je suis assez petite et mince. Je ne suis pas moche et grosse. Je suis un peu belle.

Dans ma famille, il y a quatre personnes, mon beau-père, ma mère, mon frère et moi. Mon beau-père a une barbe et il porte des lunettes. Il a les cheveux courts et lisses. Aussi, mon beau-père est très sympa et drôle.

Ma mère a trois tatouages et elle porte des lunettes. Elle a les cheveux longs et bruns. Ma mère est vraiment intelligente mais un peu petite.

Trouvez le français
1) quite intelligent
2) Also
3) I am quite small
4) I am not ugly
5) In my family, there are four people
6) He has straight and short hair
7) My mother has three tattoos
8) My mother is really intelligent
9) a bit small

Répondez aux questions en anglais
1) How does she describe her personality?
2) What does she look like?
3) What does her stepdad look like and what is he like?
4) What does her mother look like and what is she like?

Le défi : write down all the intensifiers used and translate them

1. intelligent, sympathetic
2. medium length hair, quite small, thin, not ugly. large, or quite pretty.

3. he has a beard, glasses. He has short and straight hair. he is also very nice and funny.

4. 3 tattoes.

Appendix IX: work completed by year eight student

ACTIVITÉ 2: Lisez les textes et répondez aux questions

Visiter Paris en huit heures, c'est possible?

Je m'appelle Lucas et en septembre je vais visiter Paris.
Voici mon itinéraire:

10.00: D'abord, je vais aller au musée du Louvre, où je vais admirer la Joconde.

12.00: Ensuite, s'il fait chaud, je vais faire un pique-nique. Mais s'il fait froid, je vais manger un sandwich dans un petit café.

13.00: Puis je vais visiter la cathédrale Notre-Dame où je vais prendre beaucoup de photos sur mon portable.

14.00: Après, s'il fait beau, je vais faire une balade en bateau-mouche sur la Seine.

15.00: Bien sûr, je vais visiter la tour Eiffel! S'il ne pleut pas, je vais avoir une très belle vue de la capitale!

16.00: Finalement, je vais faire les magasins sur le boulevard Haussmann où je vais acheter des souvenirs pour ma famille et mes amis.

Oui!

La Joconde
Les magasins sur le boulevard Haussmann

1 What is Lucas going to admire at the Louvre?
2 What will he do at lunchtime, if the weather is hot?
3 What will he do if it is cold?
4 How will his phone be useful when he visits Notre-Dame?
5 Why is he hoping it doesn't rain when he visits the Eiffel Tower?
6 Why is he planning to go shopping before leaving Paris?

Prediction can be a useful skill in reading too! In exercise 5, try reading the questions first. Can you predict the answers? Then read the text to check whether you guessed correctly.

1) The Mona Lisa ✓

2) have a picnic ✓

3) he will eat a sandwich in a small café ✓

4) so he can take pictures. ✓

5) Because he wants a beautiful view of the capital ✓

6) Because he wants to buy souvenirs for his family and friends. ✓

Appendix X: work completed by year nine student

Texte modèle écrit par Darine

Normalement, je vais au centre-commercial avec mes amis et ma famille le samedi après-midi à 16h. C'est assez amusant car mon ami est trop marrant. En général, nous allons au restaurant le vendredi soir parce que c'est calme à 20h30.

Cependant, le mois dernier, nous sommes allés au théâtre avec mes amis à 13h20 le dimanche après-midi. C'était très nul car le spectacle n'était pas marrant et il n'était pas intéressant. Après le théâtre, nous sommes allés au café et nous avons bu un jus d'orange. C'était délicieux et amusant. Nous sommes partis à 23h et j'ai pris le bus à 23h10.

Le week-end prochain, je vais manger au restaurant avec ma meilleure amie et nous allons manger du poulet rôti car ça va être génial. De plus, nous allons voir un match de foot avec mon copain à 18h. Ça va être trop amusant. J'ai hâte !

Trouvez le français
1) Normally
2) It's quite fun
3) Friday evening
4) However
5) Last month
6) The show wasn't funny
7) It was delicious
8) I took the bus at 11:10pm
9) We are going to eat roast chicken
10) It is going to be so fun
11) I can't wait

Répondez aux questions en anglais :
1) Where does she go on a Friday?
2) What did she think of the show?
3) Where did they go after the show?
4) What time did they leave?
5) What time did they take the bus?
6) What are they going to eat?
7) What are they going to see?

Le défi : Which three sentences would you steal for your redraft? Why?

1) Shopping centere with family and freiends
2) It wasn't funny it was very bad.
3) To a café
4) at 11pm
5) 11:10pm
6) Roast chicken
7) a football match.

Appendix XI: work completed by Year 10 student

Lis le dialogue et réponds aux questions.

- Qu'est-ce qu'il y a dans la ville de tes rêves ?
- Dans la ville de mes rêves il y a quelques musées, un cinéma, des magasins et un centre sportif.
- Tu habites où en ce moment ?
- En ce moment, j'habite dans un quartier du sud est de Londres.
- Et tu aimes où tu habites ?
- Pas vraiment, je trouve que ce n'est pas très intéressant. En plus il y a trop de circulation et c'est très bruyant à cause des voitures et des gens dans la rue.
- Alors tu aimerais habiter ailleurs ?
- Oui, je préférerais habiter dans un endroit plus calme et plus joli.
- Où est-ce que tu voudrais vivre ?
- Je voudrais vivre au bord de la mer dans les cornouailles car j'adore l'air de la mer. En plus j'aimerais apprendre à surfer.

1. What is there in their dream town?
2. Where do they live?
3. What do they think about where they live?
4. Why?
5. What is their ideal place to live in like?
6. Where would they like to live?
7. What would they like to do there?

cornwall

Challenge: surligne et traduis les expressions d'opinions.

1. museums, a cinema, leisure centre, shops
2. in a neighbourhood South, east London.
3. finds it not very interesting, very noisy ~~too many people~~ traffic
4. because of the cars and people on the street
5. ~~more calm~~ pretty calm, pretty
6. ~~more calm~~ pretty by the sea ~~in the~~ Cornwall.
7. learn to surfing

Appendix XII: general lesson plan for all year groups
- **This lesson plan was adapted to each year group and class context**

Time	Teacher (T)	Students (Ss)
10'	Ss complete a translation activity containing language from previous lessons which will enable them to complete the tasks in this lesson.	Ss demonstrate that they can retrieve language from previous lessons, specifically grammatical concepts and topic-related vocabulary, to prepare them for this lesson.
2'	T asks Ss to translate the title and objectives into English and give the date in the TL.	Ss show that they understand what the lesson is about and what they will achieve by the end of the lesson.
5'	Ss complete a mix and match activity containing new language which will appear in the following reading activity.	Ss demonstrate that they can identify the meaning of these new language items by matching them up with the corresponding English words
10'	Ss complete a dictation, using language from the previous activity and do now activity. Ss show that they understand the language and write it correctly in a sentence.	Ss complete a dictation enabling them to hear the new language and record it in the written form with language that they have already learnt. This activity will enable them to 'notice' the construction of the new language in syntax
3'	Ss listen to a text being read out by the teacher. Ss read along and focus on locating words that they cannot pronounce.	Ss show that they can follow the speed, intonation and pronunciation of a text being read out to them without getting lost. Ss show that they can mentally practice pronunciation by specifically

		focusing on words that they cannot pronounce.
5'	Ss take it in turns to read the text aloud with their partners. T monitors correcting pronunciation errors if necessary.	Ss demonstrate that they have internalised the T's pronunciation, intonation and speed by reading the text aloud with their partners.
5'	Ss discuss the general idea of the text in English with their partners, before being questioned about it by the T	Ss show that they have understood the general idea of the text after having it read aloud to them and after having read it aloud themselves. Ss show that they are able to summarise the general idea of the text in English
10'	Ss respond to comprehension questions which focus on the details of the text. Ss quickly locate the answers, so T asks follow-up questions to develop Ss linguistic knowledge.	After being exposed to this text twice in the reading aloud activities, Ss demonstrate they can quickly locate the details of the text by answering a set of comprehension questions. Ss also show that they can go beyond the language in the text by answering T's follow-up questions.
10'	Ss complete an English to French translation activity to show that they have understood and acquired the language from the lesson	Ss translate sentences from English to French to show that they can retrieve the language from the lesson, understand its meaning and write it correctly in the written form.

Improving writing skills with Year 10 French students

Juliette O'Connor[6]

ABSTRACT

In this article, the author casts over a school in South London and the different approaches taken to improve writing skills in French lessons. By drawing on, and critiquing, current MFL research and practice, the author aims to highlight some of the potential barriers to learning, such as challenging socio-economic circumstances, as well as emphasise the ways in which teachers may mitigate against these. By focusing specifically on writing in French year 10 lessons, the author breaks down the process of writing and helps both students and readers to improve their metacognition around key parts of current GCSE questions. The findings show that structured feedback and consistent praise can have a strong impact on attainment, helping to direct students' efforts and increase their confidence.

Keywords: Socio-economic, French Classroom, GCSE, Writing Skills, Feedback, Confidence, Praise

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[6] Juliette O'Connor, Deputy Head of MFL at King Solomon Academy. MA in Educational Leadership at UCL, UK, email: dtnvjoc@ucl.ac.uk

1 INTRODUCTION

The school's community

'An outstanding, inclusive, non-selective school. The community is the beating heart of the school'. These are the opening words of the Headteacher's welcome on the website of the school I work in. They pay tribute to the ethos of the school, which sees high-quality education as a tool to promote social justice. They also emphasise the importance of the community to the school. During an interview I conducted with him, the Headteacher explained that the school's community is broadly defined as 'anybody who inputs or is impacted by the school'. This means, first and foremost, students and their families, but also members of staff, the Trust, other local schools and local businesses. Some of these individuals share customs, norms, religions or values. Others are bound together by the place they live i.e. the borough of Lambeth, located in South London.

Importantly, learning a language draws on students' own notions of social identity and self-perceptions (Ellis, 2014; Jones, 1995). The GCSE EDEXCEL syllabus focuses heavily on topics which require students to understand their own identity by taking on new identities and personalities, as well as broadening students' intercultural horizons (Kramsch, 2009). For example, the exam may require students to describe a recent holiday whereas the reality may be that some of the students rarely go on holiday and have no recent experience on which to draw. By talking about their families and their favourite hobbies or holidays, the MFL GCSE syllabus requires students to express themselves in personal ways, which at times can require some students to stretch their imagination beyond their lived experiences. The new GCSE syllabus set to begin in 2024 has set out that speaking questions will be 'relatable contexts (...) within the range of students' own experiences' (Edexcel, 2023). However, what this will look like on the exam paper is as of yet unclear. Sadly, currently, in my school's community, languages are perceived as being difficult. Uptake for French GCSE is declining. French, in particular, has a negative reputation as a difficult subject with a heavy focus on grammar. After introducing my Year 10s (the control group I have chosen for this study) to the GCSE exams and what French A-Level looks like, one student said 'Nah miss I ain't doing that. It's suicidal.', as the rest of the class nodded. Self-confidence is something many of my students struggle with. Coming from a deprived area, with little to no experiences of travelling abroad and using foreign languages, students were also unclear on the purpose of learning languages beyond achieving a GCSE grade. This insularity needed to be combatted.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Self-efficacy and its impact on feedback

Self-efficacy beliefs are an important filter through which students interpret their success and mediate their behavior. They are metacognitive beliefs that learners hold with regard to their capacity to accomplish a task (Graham, 2007). 'Self-efficacy' 'self-confidence' and 'confidence'

will be used synonymously. In this paper, they will refer specifically to students' confidence in their abilities to write using the French language accurately (Ruegg, 2018).

According to Bandura (2006), students with the same level of ability will perform differently depending on their own perception of their ability. Ferris et al. (2013) also found that confidence influenced students' ability to benefit from teacher feedback. 'Students who lack confidence (...) will more quickly give up in the face of difficulty' (Pajares and Johnson, 1994: 327). They may also focus on their lack of ability and others' opinions about their work therefore increasing their cognitive load (Schharzer, 1986).

Feedback in L2 writing has at times been stated to decrease student confidence (Truscott, 1996). Research by Ferris (2002) and Krashen (1982) also stated that the more written teacher feedback a student gets, the more their confidence drops. However, providing no feedback has a negative impact on student learning (William, 2018). Ensuring a 'sandwich' approach to feedback is therefore optimal (Andrade and Evans, 2013) where praise is given, alongside constructive feedback, and then a final praise. This helps to combat the feeling of negativity and poor performance often associated with language learning.

2.2 Writing stages and the role of feedback

Macaro et al. (2015) break down the process of writing into three stages (1) the conceptualization stage (2) the formulation stage (3) the monitoring stage. The final monitoring stage is linked to feedback and marking, but the research literature does not always agree on how effective written corrective feedback can be. Some authors argue that it is a necessary stage of developmental process, similar to that which children have when learning L1 (Corder, 1967). Others however, such as Krashen, argue that error correction is not only unnecessary but potentially harmful (Krashen and Terrell, 1983; Truscott, 1996). These authors relegate written corrective feedback to a minor role. I tend to side with the more recent studies which have emphasised the positive effects of corrective feedback (Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007). Finally, research has emphasised the importance of commenting on and shaping the process of writing, rather than focusing solely on the end product and giving feedback only on that in the hope that it would help improve students' writing (Macaro et al., 2015). This links back to the idea of community and the setting of high expectations. Expectations must not be lowered simply based on socioeconomic status (Ramalho, Garza and Merchant, 2010). Focusing on student strengths and enhancing family involvement through positive praise and phone calls home are key to harnessing students' potential. (Haberman, 1995; Johns, Schmader & Martens, 2005).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The stages of writing applied

As I began to work on the skill of writing with my Year 10s, I was drawn towards the research of Macaro et al. which outlines the three stages of writing (Macaro et al., 2015, p.71). Their

work clearly breaks down the different processes which are involved in writing. The first stage, the conceptualisation stage, is where the learner generates the ideas and concepts he wishes to communicate: 'What do I need to talk about to answer the question? I am going to…'. This is often generated in their first language (L1). The second step is the formulation stage. This is where the concept is given language through which it can be expressed. Importantly, in this stage the student has to mediate the tension between the sophistication of the language they wish to employ and their knowledge of the second language (L2) (Pachler, 2014, p.63). This is also a barrier I regularly witness with my students, who often ask me for vocabulary or chunks of sentences which have not been introduced before or which they could express more simply in another form. For example, during a mock exam one student asked me 'Miss, how do you say 'X is the best TV programme ever created?' ('X est la meilleure émission jamais crée!'). I told the student that I could not help, but that perhaps he knew how to say 'My favourite TV programme is… It's the best!' (Mon émission préférée est... C'est la meilleure!'). Students often know a lot more than they think they do, and it is simply the ability to manipulate the language during this formulation stage which needs to be improved. This leads into the final stage: monitoring. Monitoring happens at different stages throughout the writing process. The student for example will check: is this what I wanted to say? Am I using the right language? However, monitoring can also come from peer-to-peer support, when students swap books and mark each other's answers. A teacher may also provide this support.

3.2 Improving French writing results

As a teacher I believe that all my students can bring something valuable to a lesson and that getting to know each pupil individually may give me an insight into their experiences of school, the community and wider society (Gale, Mills and Cross, 2017; Bruner, 1996; Bourdieu, 1991). I chose to focus on a Year 10 class as I wanted to tackle one of the school community's biggest setbacks in the last decade: exam results. My year 10 class is a small class of 7 students, whose targets range from 5 to 9. The hope is that their exam results will be outstanding, however historically my school's MFL exam results have been significantly below the national average.

In 2007, my school was founded at the request of the local community, with a strong body of parents advocating for an inclusive, non-selective school. However, since its opening in 2007 the school has struggled to achieve results on a par with the rest of the borough's schools. Only 24% of students achieved a grade 5 or above in their English and Maths GCSEs in 2019, against 39% of students in the local authority and 43% across England. When one takes into account progress across a longer number of years, using the Progress 8 score, which tracks a students' progress from the end of KS2 to the end of KS4, the picture is also bleak. My school belongs to the 20% of schools in the country who score -0.5 or less, i.e. 'below average' according to the Department of Education. Results are therefore something which the community has struggled with.

After the lockdown which saw the closure of UK schools from January to March 2021, I knew that writing without scaffolding or support was something my students were dreading. Covid had taken away a lot of their confidence, and also led to a lack of practice. A number of students had messaged me on Google Classroom to let me know that they were struggling. They had had

access to laptops and online translation tools which had made them lazy in terms of their writing. Indeed, I was noticing an alarming increase in the number of homework tasks in which Google translate had been used to produce answers. Once back in school in March, we would have 3 weeks in person teaching before the spring holidays when we would be aiming to finish a module on hobbies and what you do in your free time: 'tes passetemps et ce que tu fais dans ton temps libre'. We had reached the stage in this module when students had been introduced to all the vocabulary and grammar in this unit of work, but now needed to assemble all of this into a coherent answer. It was a perfect time to implement my writing intervention.

For my intervention I wanted to focus on combining practice, in which the learner had to generate an action, interpret feedback and try again to get nearer the goal, with production, in which the learner produced something for the teacher to review (Laurillard, 2012). When planning my intervention, I focused on modelling and shared writing. I planned to model the three stages of writing (the conceptualization, formulation and monitoring stages) for my students. This included showing pupils models of the genre they needed to emulate, but also ensuring that the support was withdrawn at an appropriate stage to allow for progress and independence. Thinking aloud and shared writing were two approaches I incorporated into my sequence of lessons. This involved talking students through writing strategies, from the initial conceptualization 'What is required of me? Ok so what hobbies do I enjoy? Why? I need to write 80 words' to the formulation stage 'Ok so thinking about writing conventions, when I am writing an email to a friend, how can I start my answer? Cher, chère…'.

Through a series of five 100 minute lessons, I guided my students through a repetitive sequenced approach to writing. Firstly, we established together the clear aims and purpose of the task we were given. The task was always an exam question, taken either from past papers or from practice examples given by the exam board.

3.3 Example question

'Écris un e-mail à Dominique. Tu dois faire référence aux points suivants :

- Tes émissions préférées à la télé

- Ce que tu n'aimes pas faire et pourquoi

- Une activité récente

- Tes projets futurs concernant un nouveau passe-temps.

Écris 80-90 mots en français.'

We would set out together what was required by the question, the register needed and the tenses needed to answer the question. Secondly, I would provide my Year 10s with a model answer, exploring the features of the example and what made it a great answer. Students would carry out activities with the text, such as adding in their own comparatives or adjectives used to demonstrate more complex use of language, sequencing sentences or manipulating and using vocabulary. Thirdly, to demonstrate how such a text could be written we would look at some

specific grammar points or key expressions. Fourthly, we would compose an answer to the question together. Importantly, we would work on sentence starters and how to structure the beginning and end of a letter or an email (depending on the format that was required in the question). Finally, the independent writing took place. For the first three lessons, this process was scaffolded. The attempts were open-book and I would answer any questions students had about vocabulary or grammar, allowing for confidence building. This repetitive process which we did across three lessons, culminated in a summative assessment in which students had to produce their own answers to an exam question without any scaffolding available. This final stage of the writing process was key to address OFSTED's recommendation that 'Students' writing, especially in Key Stage 4, too often relied on model texts or scaffolding'(OFTSED, 2011). This series of stages, which was adapted from the DfE's guidance aimed to deconstruct the language learning process to ensure that students were taught strategies explicitly to move from word to sentence to more complex paragraphs.

An advantage of this model was that by repeating the process of writing multiple times over 3 weeks, by planning, drafting, editing and acting on corrective feedback, students gained confidence and felt a sense of achievement. Having a tangible example of what they could produce on paper was also a way to also show them that they were more than capable of producing excellent answers. Of course, it would be a gradual process, but creating the awareness that they could do it was already a massive step.

4 RESULTS

To judge the impact of my intervention, I looked at two key sets of data. The first was data collected from the students' formative and summative assessments, including the word count & the grade obtained on their writing pieces. The second was a survey, conducted pre and post intervention which asked students to rank on a scale of 1 to 10 how confident they were about their writing skills and how likely they thought it was that they would achieve a grade 5 or above on their French GCSE.

The intervention

'Writing is part of a process with equal focus on the writer as he is writing as well as on the finished product' (Macaro, 2003). We write everyday as a means of communication. I am writing now to communicate my ideas. We write emails and text messages. Yet this is the skill my Year 10s struggle most with and the skill that the English and History departments also reported most difficulty with. In a survey conducted with my Year 10 students, on a scale of 0 (not confident at all) to 10 (super confident), students on average said they were a 3.7 (not very confident) with their writing skills. 43% of respondents suggested that being taught how to structure/answer the question was what they needed to improve.

4.1   Student voice survey (conducted pre-intervention)

On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident do you feel about your writing skills?
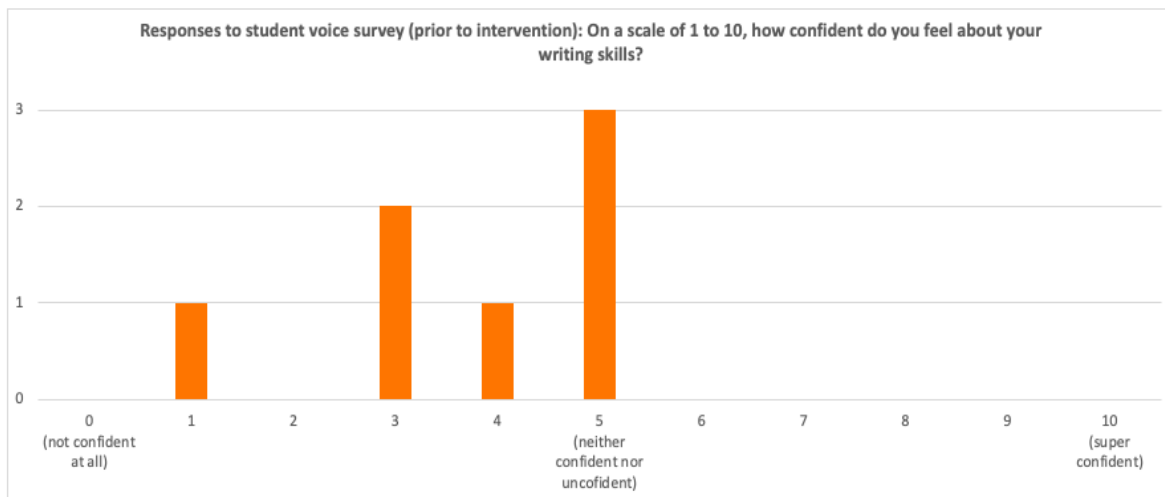
When asked about how likely they thought they were to achieve a grade 5 or above in the GCSE writing part of the exam next year, while 3 of them thought this was a possibility, the majority saw this as unlikely.

4.2 Student voice survey (conducted pre-intervention)
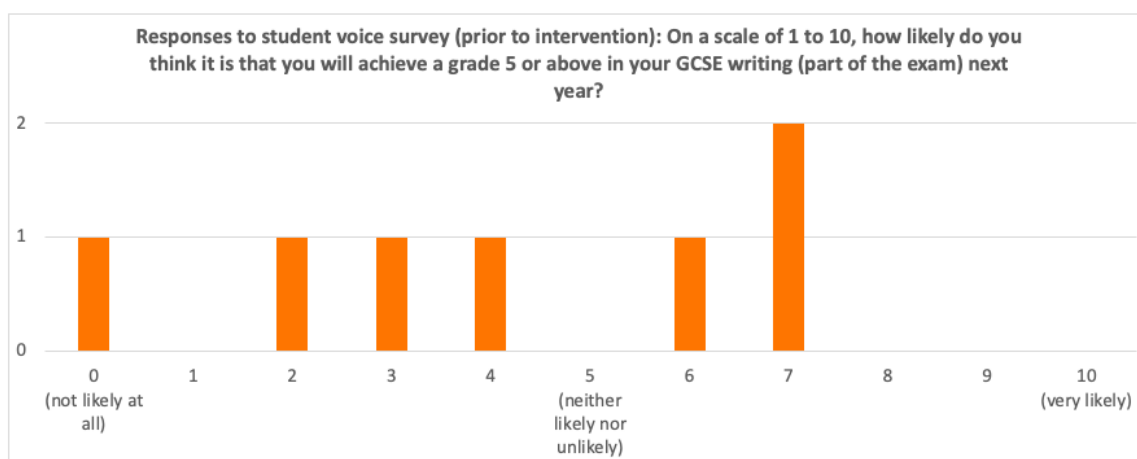
These answers definitely surprised me as their teacher. My prediction is that all seven of my Year 10 students will achieve a grade 5 or higher next year and that, based on the work I have marked, their writing skills are fairly strong. What is missing is confidence.

Students write with two broad aims in mind: learning to write and writing to learn (Manchón, 2011). This dual process plays out in MFL, where students need to first learn how to write in an additional language, dependent on audience, genre and language structures (learning to write). However, in order to be successful at this, students also need to learn the new language, for example by copying new vocabulary into their books and practicing this vocabulary through tasks (writing to learn). These two processes are intertwined and co-created (Manchón, 2011). My role is therefore to give my students the tools and structures needed to communicate.

The biggest hurdle in the process of writing is to bridge the gap between the concept that the learners have in their head and the linguistic resources they have at their disposal to express it (Macaro et al, 2015). This is something I regularly witness with my Year 10 students, as they repeatedly ask 'Miss, how would you say this?'. Often these questions come in the form of entire structures/sentences which the students hope to translate directly from English into French. This continuous attempt at compromise between the knowledge the learner possesses and what he is trying to say is what I wished to explore further with my intervention. The aim of my paper is therefore to take a look not only at the end product of a writing task, but the process of writing, and how and why students struggle with it.

4.3 Data from assessments

	Formative Assessment (open book): grade out of 20	Summative Assessment (closed book): grade out of 20
Student 1	9	13
Student 2	11	15
Student 3	12	15
Student 4	15	17
Student 5	16	20
Student 6	17	20
Student 7	17	20

Figure 1: Assessment data from formative and summative assessments

	Formative Assessment: number of words written	Summative Assessment: number of words written
Student 1	24	86
Student 2	43	82
Student 3	65	134
Student 4	87	137
Student 5	86	141

| Student 6 | 92 | 139 |
| Student 7 | 91 | 145 |

	Foundation
	Higher

Figure 2: Word-count from formative and summative assessment

The grades obtained were moderated by the two other French teachers in the department against the EDEXCEL exam board's criteria to ensure that they were as impartial as possible. The second set of data came from a survey conducted before and after the intervention which asked the students a series of questions about their confidence in their writing skills and what they thought they needed to do to improve.

4.5 Student voice survey (conducted post-intervention)
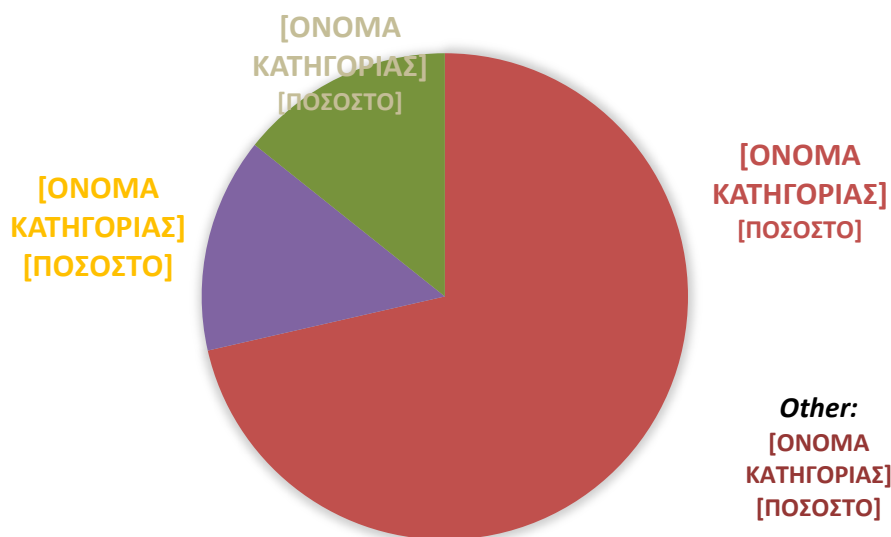
Judging from the first set of data, the intervention was a success in that students' grades increased from an average of 13.8 out of 20 on the formative assessment to an average of 17 out of 20 on the summative assessment. Importantly, this increase occurred in the more difficult, high stakes, summative exam. However, not only did their grades improve, the amount they were writing was also increased from an average of 71 words on an exam question which requires 80-90 words to an average of 120 words. 'Making accurate and productive use of assessment' (Standard 6 of the Teachers' Standards for England) meant that I could evaluate the extent to which the learning objectives I had planned for had been met, but also provided learners with the evidence needed to inform further learning (Pachler, 2014). The feedback given on their first two formative assessments meant that I could adapt my teaching to ensure that it met the students' needs (Black and William, 1998), and that students were able to assess themselves against the exam board's success criteria. Pupils were aware of how they could improve their writing and knew precisely what they needed to do and what grade they could expect. By structuring my feedback in a way which highlighted the positives as well as giving students clear guidance on how to improve their work, the success criteria were made explicit to

students (Black and Williams, 1998). However, I believe the most important step was providing opportunities for pupils to self-assess (Black and Williams, 1998). This meant providing models, where pupils could work in pairs or as a class to understand what was required of them. The models I used were often of a student in the class or a model answer offered by the exam board. Therefore, students were provided with three key elements – the *desired goal*, evidence about their *present positive* and some understanding of a *way in which they could close the gap* (Sadler, 1989).

Interestingly, I was also able to compare my Year 10s to another class of Year 10s, a control group with whom I did not carry out the intervention. As my reading had led me to expect, the class of Year 10s who received feedback on their writing outperformed students in the control group, who had received no feedback, on the summative assessment (Ferris and Roberts, 2001). While the average for the class who I did the intervention with was 17 out of 20 on the summative assessment, the average of the control group was 14.4 out of 20. These findings were something that I shared with colleagues in my department and we spoke at length about the importance of feedback. My head of department has been openly sceptical about providing feedback on formative writing tasks and so I was keen to share with her the impact it had made. My research was well-received and we agreed that the more corrective the feedback, the better (Ellis, 2009). As such, we came up with our own book scrutiny scheme in which we would check each other's feedback on students' work in order to learn about the different ways we can implement feedback and which may be more effective.

From the students' perspective the shift was also clear.

Teacher: 'What do you think I can do to help you improve your writing skills?'

Student: 'Nothing, I need to do it. Although, I'd like to get feedback the way we have in the last few weeks.'

This exchange shows the extent to which the student's view of the problem had changed post-intervention. For the students, the single most important thing they could do to improve the quality of their writing was no longer 'being taught how to structure / answer the question' or 'having a model' but had shifted to 'learning vocabulary' and importantly 'getting feedback from my teacher on what I can improve'.

5 CONCLUSIONS

My intervention's aim was to show my students their potential. In large part, this was a success. Following my intervention, the students were more inclined to take ownership of their learning and were able to identify what they could do to improve their writing skills. This, in turn, boosted their confidence and led them to have higher expectations of what they could achieve. When asked about how likely they thought they were to achieve a grade 5 or above in the GCSE writing part of the exam next year, 71% of respondents said this was likely, compared to only 28% prior to the intervention. Key to this increase in confidence was practice, including the use of past exam questions, as this encouraged the students to believe that they had the required

knowledge to complete the question and achieve a grade 5 or higher (Macaro et al, 2007; Macaro et al, 2015; Sheen, 2007; Black and William, 1998).

Upon reflection, I think that one of the potential drawbacks of my intervention was its heavy focus on exam questions rather than on creativity and spontaneity. As OFSTED remarks, 'writing is rarely imaginative and exciting in MFL classrooms' (OFSTED, 2011). While it is important to tackle the community's weakness (exam results), it is also possible to encourage confidence and communication in other ways (Macaro et al., 2015). For example, rather than simply focusing on exam forms (writing an email or a blog), working with song, rap or poems could have helped boost learner confidence (Barton, 2006). Furthermore, going forward, I think it is important to stress the interlinked nature of the GCSE syllabus and how learners can reuse vocabulary and grammar from this module in other contexts. Being able to recycle language and adapt it for different situations is what will differentiate them from lower achieving students (OFSTED, 2011). Another important step, which I hope to take in the future, is to engage more with other departments and the wider school community to find out how they provide feedback on writing pieces, especially in subjects such as History and English which require students to write longer pieces on their exam.

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Promoting self-esteem, motivation and creativity through collaborative, pluri-lingual story translations

Amy Flynn [7]

ABSTRACT

In this article, I discuss how a collaborative and creative approach to Foreign Language Teaching can improve self-esteem, motivation and academic attainment in a multi-cultural school community in East London. The research intervention drew inspiration from the learning context, as well as the Storyline method and experience of collaborative translation. It was designed in response to low self-esteem and motivation among Y7 language learners and the school community following COVID-19 lockdowns, and was planned, delivered and analysed over a period of two-and-a-half months. Research findings indicate that the co-creation of new semi-structured social contexts for language learning, reflection and creativity motivates learners, "community collaborators" and teachers. By providing the necessary resource and feedback, participants collaboratively developed original multi-lingual story translations. This approach not only promoted the linguistic creativity of prior higher-attaining students, but also improved the translation skills of middle and lower attainers. Furthermore, it fostered a collaborative and dialogic culture, enhancing the self-esteem necessary for *all* learners to progress.

Keywords: Collaboration, Creativity, Community, Motivation, Self-esteem, Pluri-lingualism, Storyline, MFL, Language, Learning.

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[7] Teacher of Modern Foreign Languages, London, UK, email: artflyed@outlook.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Overarching themes of Donne's 400 year-old *"No man is an island"* resonate across societies and school communities today. As Donne reminds us "we are all part of the main […] involved in mankind", community responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent research have emphasised the significance of engaged communities in promoting societal well-being (Bodas et. al, 2022). This is crucial for effective learning and national progress. In order to equip young individuals with the necessary "knowledge, skills and qualifications" to "contribute to economic growth", as prescribed by the UK Department for Education (2023), community engagement in education is vital. As educators, we can incorporate community collaboration and valorisation of community resources into our subject curricula design. In this research, I argue that a structured, creative and collaborative approach to language learning, co-developed with learners and "community collaborators", cultivates feelings of success and connectedness. This is essential for motivation, self-esteem, creativity and progress, both at an individual level and community-wide.

The "school community" is defined, in this article by teachers and former students, as "all the different families who live around the school, people who help the school to function and its service users". Located in Tower Hamlets, a multi-cultural area of East-Central London, the school community reflects the borough's long history of migration, most notably from Bangladesh (Tower Hamlets' Partnership, 2018). High levels of intersectional poverty, inequality and reported distrust in government are also characteristic of both the school community and borough. Institute for Community Studies UK (2021) research indicates that empowering influential community members and organisations is crucial for effective collaboration with residents of Tower Hamlets. Therefore, educational approaches must be carefully co-designed to nurture the intellectual, spiritual, physical, emotional and social parts of each learner, including self-esteem, motivation and relationships (Mahmoudi et al, 2011). Such holistic development ultimately contributes to the well-being of individuals, their community and nation.

The school at the heart of this particular community is a single-sex academy for students aged 11-18 *(*Appendix I*)*. In 2020-2021, 90% of students identified as "Bangladeshi", one of the most socio-economically disadvantaged communities in England. Yet, since 2013, female Bangladeshi students have academically outperformed their White British counterparts (Strand, 2015) and in 2019, the school exceeded the English state-funded schools' national average (Gov UK). Therefore, Bangladeshi ethnicity and heritage in the UK today present as assets to be celebrated in the MFL classroom. In 2021, the school had the largest percentage of students (94%) studying languages (French/Spanish/Bengali) at GCSE in the area, far more than the national average (44%). Given that 73.2% students speak a language other than English at home (>90% Bengali or Bengali Sylheti), there exists a clear opportunity to embrace non-dominant capital in the classroom. By harnessing cognitive benefits of pluri-lingualism, such as creativity and problem-solving (Lüdi, 2021), we can counteract negative impacts of the dual experience of

bilingualism and poverty during early years (Cobb-Clark et al., 2021). This includes delayed linguistic development and propensity to develop social and emotional problems like low self-esteem. Research participants describe communication barriers and emotional rifts seen within families in this community, where "p*arents' emotional language is Sylheti and girls' is English.*" (Appendix II/III). With approximately 2 million students speaking over 360 first languages (Gov UK, 2022) enrolled in UK state schools, and facing growing socio-economic challenges, educators must collaborate with communities to maximise the social and emotional learning benefits of pluri-lingualism. Doing so could enable "learning gains of +4 months over the course of the year" and ultimately "improve children's outcomes" (EEF,2019).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Power, identity and creativity

The concept of 'Power' in pedagogical relationships has long-fascinated philosophers. Foucault (1987), Chomsky (2003), Freire (1968), Hooks (1994) and Corbett (2001), among others, have engaged in debate surrounding minority power domination, the liberation of learners from societal shackles and the complex interplay between community, institution and 'self'. Each advocates for collective self-actualisation (Wiliam,2006), where *all* can realise their potential and pursue continuous growth, as per Maslow's Hierarchy (1954). Yet, learners and community members with valuable experience and expertise of contexts relevant to curricula, continue to be absent in design processes (Sbaiti et al, 2021). As per Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) principles, engaging such individuals and those with additional learning needs and protected characteristics in learning and research design (Hazell, 2020), can effectively eliminate power disparities (Belone et al, 2016). In this specific case, it disrupts existing dynamics, whereby Educator-researchers possess "expert power" (French & Raven,1959), and promotes the self-worth and creative potential of the community, while fostering truly inclusive language learning experiences.

Self-esteem and personal identity are key intrinsic motivations in young people's choice to learn languages post-age 14 in England. Language class is often the first time where, through creative writing, learners can explore their identity while developing as linguists *(*Ludtke, 2020). To promote life-long language learning in today's plurilingual classrooms, we must co-design creative experiences which celebrate different language varieties and their users (Nee et al., 2021). As such, we invest in learners' identities, intrinsic motivation (Brophy, 2013) and self-esteem. Yet, given the fluid nature of identity and motivation (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009), particularly in the age of migration and internet communication (Kramsch, 2009), opportunities for creativity must be regular and incorporate structured reflection.

2.2. Collaboration, motivation and the teacher

There is "no single way of achieving a high-quality language education" (Conlon, 2022). However, a truly motivating, *inclusive* and *progressive* languages education necessitates

fostering creativity, collaboration and emotional engagement with second and third language cultures (Graham et al., 2022; Porter et al, 2022), while responding to individual needs (Wei et al, 2022; Dörnyei,2020). Adaptive teaching techniques, such as shared success criteria, strategic questioning and multi-perspective peer dialogue (Guo et al, 2022), with structured opportunities for reflection, foster learner motivation. Yet, this relies on mutual trust (Kucharska, 2017) and a collaborative learning culture, where all actors work together as per Freire's concept of "critical co-investigators" (1968). Gayton (2018) highlights the Teacher's key role in learner development and motivation; creating a safe community for dialogic exchanges and understanding progress. If we are to facilitate collaboration, motivation, creativity and progress as educators, before investing in knowing individual learners, it is imperative that we also know and continually invest in ourselves.

2.3. Working with Storyline

Storyline is a creative, learner-centred approach to teaching and learning, founded on Vygotskian theory and pioneered by Bell, Harness and Rendell in the late 1960s. It is a holistic and multi-skill approach in which no one skill is taught discreetly (Brandford, 2007), with multiple cross-curricular benefits. Benefits include increased learner autonomy (Little, 2007) and ownership (Harkness, 2007). This is achieved through "structured freedom" (Kocher, 1999), allowing learners to utilise personal experiences to create characters and narratives, while internalising feelings and emotions. The storyline provides a meaningful context, supporting learners' consolidation and recall of subject knowledge (Krenicky-Albert, 2004; Brandford, 2016). This process helps embed language into long term memory, which is necessary for linguistic creativity and attainment in foreign language learning. Learners' desire to impress with a final creative product (Kocher, 2007) increases their intrinsic motivation (Ushioda, 2007, 2011). Simultaneously, metacognitive teaching practices (Bloom, 1956) promote their awareness of strengths and weaknesses as learners, writers, readers, editors and group members. Structured reflection, dialogue and creative co-design enable students to understand what and why they are learning and to identify cross-curricular links, necessary for Maslow's self-actualisation (Appendix IV) and holistic development.

The Storyline approach has been applied internationally to a range of disciplines and contexts, in unique formats to promote different outcomes. Examples include its application in French and German Language learning (Brandford, 2016), facilitating school transition (Creative Dialogues Project) integrating cognition and emotion (Ahlquist in Karlsen and Häggström, 2020) and enhancing digital skills (Romstad in Karlsen and Häggström, 2020). Inspired by innovative implementations of Storyline and community research findings, I fused Storyline with a collaborative and creative translation approach. This involved actively involving community members through a "community collaborator" partnering concept and integrating non-dominant languages into structured learning.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research and Analysis Approaches

This study uses a collaborative and evidence-based practitioner-enquiry approach. To maintain flexibility and avoid overly rigid cycles (Koshy, 2010), the approach is underpinned by three complementary models: Nunan's Action Research cycle; Boyd and White's (2017) ten steps for teacher-practitioner research; and Riel's (2019) model of collaborative action research (Fig.1). Riel's model depicts robust learner-researcher partnerships, actively discouraging reliance on one party and valuing the inclusion of diverse perspectives. It also highlights the importance of continuous shared growth, aligning with a foundational pillar of the school's educational philosophy: "life-long learning". This commitment to continuous growth and partnership ensures that the research will enable flexibility to adapt to evolving needs and circumstances of both learners and researchers.

The systematic, cyclical structure of Nunan's framework similarly promotes regular reflection. It involves revisiting "reciprocally interacting variables" (Nimehchisalem, 2018), such as changeable needs and drivers of the community, "at a higher level each time", thus enhancing understanding (Koshy, 2010). Yet, regular reflections must be scaffolded to cultivate collaborative environments, characterised by supportive social learning cultures (Rogers,1983) and communities of practice (Vangrieken et.al,2017), necessary for motivation and progress. Furthermore, unlike Nunan's model, Boyd and White's illustrates collaboration alongside the management of ethical risks; crucial to consider when managing the fluidity, openness and unpredictability of research in school community contexts.

3.1.1. Figure 1: Collaborative action research model (Margaret Riel, 2019)
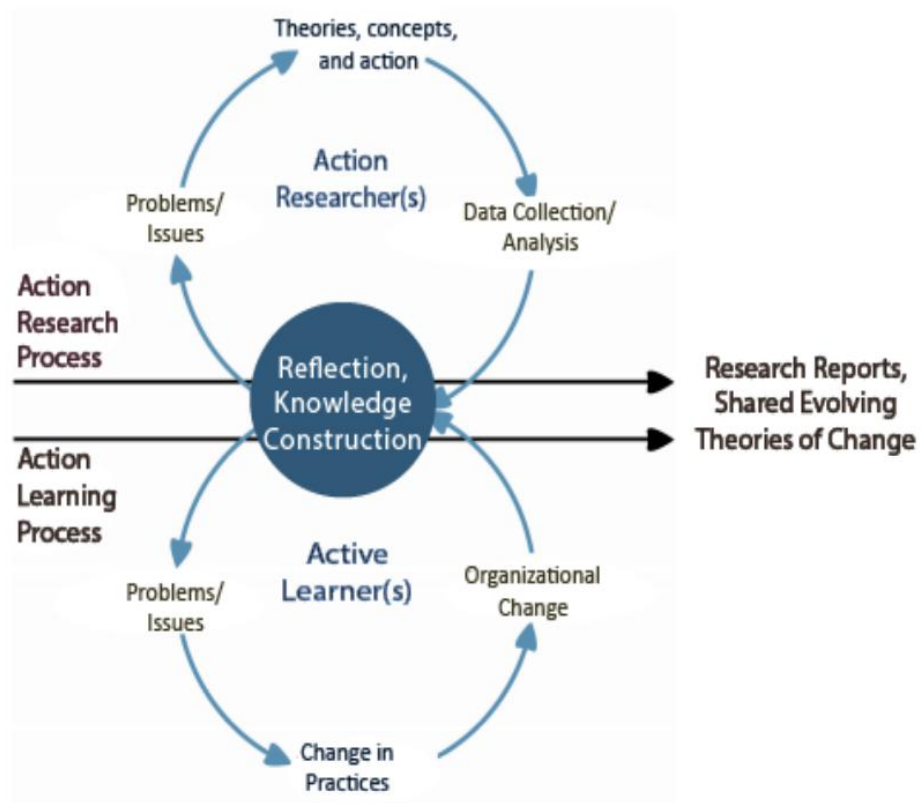
A mixed-method, triangulation approach to data collection prevents complex interdependent factors from being viewed in isolation and misinterpreted (Andrew & Finch, 2005), deepening one's understanding of the research problem (Cresswell, 2006). Qualitative data, including interview transcripts and recordings, questionnaire responses, student work and teacher observations (Appendix V), were collected to gain insight into learner and community perspectives on engagement, collaboration and self-esteem. This data provides valuable insight into learner and community understanding of "their own and others' behaviour and beliefs" (UK Research and Innovation, 2022). Yet, thorough research outcomes necessitate communication between qualitative and quantitative data sets (Regnault, Wilnoss & Barbic, 2017). Therefore, I concurrently collected and analysed quantitative attainment, SEN and community data to enhance the quality of my findings.

To identify assets and barriers of the school community, I analysed the first mixed-method data set critically and thematically. This informed the intervention design and research question: "***To what extent does a collaborative and creative story translation approach promote students' self-esteem, motivation, linguistic creativity and attainment in MFL?***"

3.2. Tools

Data collection tools were chosen based on intended outcomes: understanding of students' and the community's language learning motivations; student self-esteem; and linguistic creativity and attainment. The semi-structured interview format facilitated opportunities for open dialogue between the participants and researchers.

3.3. Sampling

The sample class included 29 Y7 students, of whom 17.2% have a diagnosed Special Educational Need compared to the national average of 14.9% (DfE, 2019). 76% of the class speak English as an Additional Language compared to 13.7% of UK pupils with EAL (Bell Foundation, 2021) and around two thirds, well above the national average, are eligible for pupil premium funding (Sutton Trust, 2021). Although unreflective of the national average, the SEN and EAL statistics are indicative of the wider school community and inner-London comprehensive secondary schools (Gov UK, 2022). The students in the sample group were mixed ability, comprising 16 "MAPs" (middle-attaining pupils), determined by prior attainment data, and an almost equal number of students at either end of the attainment spectrum (6 HAPs and 7 LAPs). Despite 67% of state secondary schools in the UK offering up to 3 hours of Languages at KS3 (Collen, 2020), there is no public data stating the percentage of students taught in mixed-ability MFL groups. However, the sample would arguably be representative of mixed-ability classes in UK state secondary schools. Class data that includes learners from either end of the "attainment" spectrum, also provides a sense for the divergence in experiences and learning outcomes (Kimmons, 2022) with this approach.

3.4. Interviews

During the pre-intervention research stage, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the school community (Ex-students/teachers; Associate Head Teacher; Learning Support Team; School Liaison Officer; Head of Y7), provided a multi-perspective understanding of the community learning barriers and assets. Stakeholders were selected for their range of influence, expertise and experience, with some former students now teaching in the school for 30 years and others recent recruits working in a pastoral support capacity. Questions, provided in advance, enabled interviewees to lead conversations and share noteworthy perceptions. Reflective space between meetings enabled participants to construct a narrative of their "biographically intelligible self" and then refine their "narratives, understandings and framings of experience" (Hughes, 2020). This allowed for better understanding of specific assets and barriers to learning within the community, while promoting participants' self-reflection necessary for their own self-esteem and motivation.

3.5. Questionnaires

Students were asked nine questions (Appendix VI) in questionnaires at the intervention start and end to track their language learning motivations and encourage self-reflection. To measure students' feelings during the intervention, I used the Blob Tree (Appendix VII), a psycho-

analyst test to determine emotions in experiential learning and intelligence development contexts. At the start, middle and end of the intervention, students were asked *"How do you feel about Spanish?",* prefaced with *"in terms of your learning experience and relationship with Spanish",* before circling a "character" on the Tree. This encouraged reflection and promoted emotional literacy, while reflecting students' intrinsic motivation for language learning. It also showed the impact of the intervention on their self-esteem in the language-learning context.

3.6. Observations

Observations of teacher and student behaviour changes over the intervention period complemented other data collection tools, providing another lens through which to assess the impact of the intervention. Behaviours observed included collaborative work between learners, critical questioning and learner participation resulting in increased engagement and thus motivation. However, given inherent learner differences (Covington, 1998), outward observable effects such as engagement may vary. Therefore, a range of measures, including multi-perspective dialogue (Guo et al, 2020) were employed to track learner motivation. In line with the collaborative nature of this research, observation results were shared and discussed with participants, allowing for structured reflective discussion, and feedback regarding both the educators' teaching and the learner experience. This enabled both myself and participants to see progress, thus affecting our self-esteem and motivation.

3.7. Reliability, validity and ethics

One issue often cited with mixed-method, teacher-practitioner research is bias. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) argue that not all variables in dynamically-changing social contexts can be controlled and measured precisely. However, "classroom studies often trade reduced internal validity, such as bias, for better external validity" (Rose & Johnson, 2020). As the learner sample group reflects the school student population, the results could be generalisable within such community. Yet, generalising findings beyond such context could compromise the external validity of the research.

Data is stored securely and privately. Furthermore, participants' anonymity is protected in the presentation of the study findings. Participants read a research information sheet and provided consent for their input to be included in the study (Appendix VIII). Students' voice recordings will not be shared publicly, even anonymously, without prior consent from students and families.

4. INTERVENTION

4.1. Planning and implementation overview

Informed by my understanding of the community, the intervention was conducted over five fifty-minute lessons with a "community collaborator" workshop between the end of April and beginning of May. Figure 3 illustrates each stage of the intervention planning and implementation process, encompassing pre- and post-intervention phases. This comprehensive framework enables effective involvement of community collaborators, facilitates an

understanding of students' existing funds of knowledge, encourages cyclical feedback and supports progress reflections.

4.1.1. Figure 3: Intervention Timeline
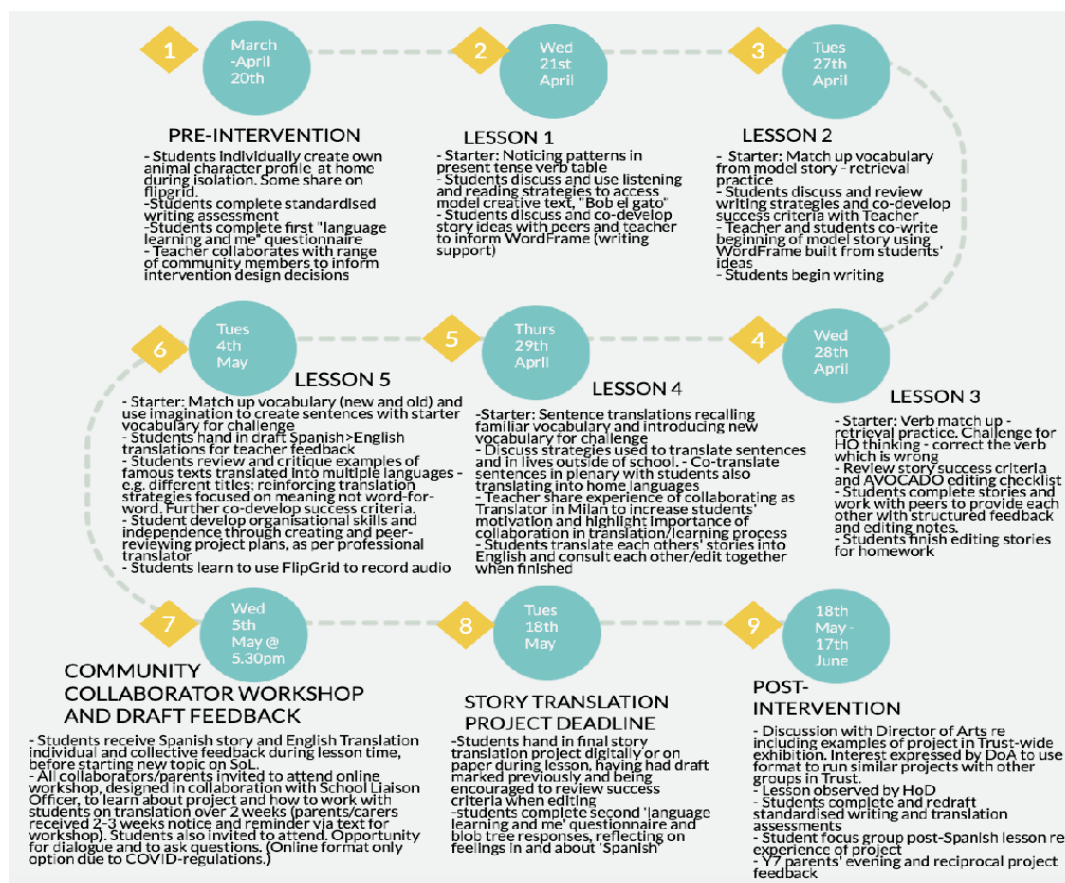
4.2. Community-centred design: minimising barriers and maximising assets

98% of the school students identify as "Muslim"; an asset of the school community based on relative academic success among young Muslim girls. Fostered partly by parental high expectations (Khattab & Modood, 2018), the school had the highest percentage of outgoing students in Education, Employment or Training in 2017 (98%) (Gov UK, 2017) in comparison to other local schools. However, despite such asset, interview findings suggest that frustration is growing in the community due to increased living costs, leaving parents unable to support children to reach increasingly high expectations. With economic disadvantage and poverty comes technological disadvantage; overcrowding; unemployment; health issues - specifically mental health issues. The school works to fill the community "cultural capital" gap (concerning class and economic status), through partnerships with theatres and other professional organisations such as Bank of America and WOW (Women of the World). Consequently, students' attainment is reliant on community collaboration that maximises community assets.

The school also works to address self-esteem and confidence deficits among women in the community (Appendix IX). Acknowledging that "it takes a community to educate a child" (Ogden, 2014), the school began running creative community workshops in 2017 to cultivate relationships with families, to involve them in their girls' education and develop self-esteem among mothers. Prior to COVID, the school offered courses such as ESOL, Fruit Carving, Health and Social Care, Theatre Writing and Opera with the English National Opera. However, community enrichment activities stopped due to lockdown, with only two workshops continuing online and technological barriers preventing participation. The languages classroom must therefore build on schools' existing work by creating further opportunities for collaboration to promote self-esteem and confidence across the community.

During the peak of the COVID outbreak in the UK, grief also struck the community. With significant numbers of students and staff losing loved ones, mental health issues already prevalent in the community worsened. Where families did not share the same emotional language, the devastating effects of grief were exacerbated. In the sample group, several previously-highly motivated students struggled to engage in classwork, homework or peer relationships on returning to school (Appendix X). Cases of low self-esteem and friendship challenges were disproportionately high among Y7 students, having experienced a lack of transitional and consistent tutor support. Given that self-esteem is necessary for academic success (Prihadi and Chua, 2012), the languages classroom must provide creative and collaborative opportunities for students to form healthy relationships and build self-esteem. In this intervention, students collaborate on the planning, writing, editing and peer reviewing of stories against co-designed success criteria. (Fig.4)

4.2.1. Figure 4: Co-designed success criteria and planning support sheet

Having actively enjoyed Spanish pre-lockdown, students showed a striking dip in self-esteem, motivation and attainment, with a nervousness to communicate and aversion to independent thinking on returning to school post-lockdown. Assessment data also revealed a downward trend in attainment since lockdown, with clearest gaps evident among students struggling with independent learning, positive relationships and accessing technology. Re-establishing a safe, collaborative culture was therefore necessary to re-build students' self-esteem and social skills. In this intervention, a student volunteer led the class in brainstorming ideas (Fig.5) for a Spanish sentence builder, used to write their stories. By co-designing activities, students see the impact of collaboration and teachers are motivated by seeing students use language they chose.

4.2.2. Figure 5: Brainstormed ideas for Spanish Sentence Builder; a scaffolded resource for creative story writing

Y7 students' lack of motivation was not unique to Spanish, but evident throughout school life. Despite notable lethargy and low self-esteem, experience teaching Y7 Music showed me their potential for creativity. Thus, drawing on students' creative assets was important to counteract residual lethargy, hindering students' learning. I aimed to address the lack of self-esteem and motivation in my Y7 Spanish class by highlighting the students' existing funds of linguistic knowledge and exploiting opportunities for creativity and collaboration. Additionally, I sought to break down the existing communication barrier in the wider community.

In this intervention, students identified a "community collaborator" who speaks a language other than English or Spanish, with whom they could work to translate their story into a third

language of their choice. The "community collaborator" was invited to an online workshop with the School Liaison Officer and Bengali interpreter, where they learned about their roles in the project and strategies to employ with their student to complete a written or audio third language translation. Collaborators also asked how they could continue learning languages with their student partner. This collaborative dynamic outside of the classroom provided students with another social space within which to practice and learn languages, thus increasing motivation of both students and collaborators.

To prepare the workshop content and map the collaborator engagement approach, I worked closely with the School Liaison Officer. She ensured all communications were written in "clear, simple English" (The Bell Foundation, 2020) and included greetings and key terms in major languages spoken within the community. Such approach aimed to maximise community engagement from the outset. Clear modelling and guided practice of the collaborative translation process, with opportunities to share knowledge and ask questions during the workshop, instilled confidence in collaborators to work effectively with their attached students. At a macro level, this also continued the school's existing work to build bridges and skills in the wider community.

Where a vast proportion of students (76%) are exposed to another language at home, most understand that language grammar differs and some are fully literate in the first language (Thompson, 2017). As many School students read the Qur'an but do not speak Arabic, eliciting from students reading strategies already used with their families was necessary to tailor required support. Encouraging students to apply these in the languages classroom, specifically to their reading and translation of the model story (Fig.8), promoted self-esteem and linguistic creativity.

**4.2.3.   Figure 8: Model Story (Translation in Appendix XI)**

Adaptive teaching is essential for motivation and attainment among learners with complex needs and competing priorities. By adopting an appropriate Assessment for Learning (AfL) approach for individual students at each stage, all students can develop their own creative texts, participate in collaborative peer translation work and learn with a "community collaborator". In this intervention, students used the Sentence Builder (Appendix XII) co-designed in the brainstorming session to guide their writing. Clear instructions with structured activities facilitated students' independent learning. However, for *all* to complete a multi-lingual story translation in the allotted time frame, additional 1-2-1 support is needed. When implemented successfully, this approach supports self-esteem, motivation and progress also of those with additional learning needs.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Self-esteem

Where effective community collaboration is present, story writing and translation projects increase students' self-esteem. All students who completed the story in three languages with collaborators who attended the online workshop, showed an increase in self-esteem (observed and self-proclaimed via Blob Tree results). They also showed an increase in writing and translation assessment scores (Appendix XIII). Despite absence of collaborator support, those who collaborated to complete the story and translation in 2 languages also showed increased self-esteem (Fig.9). Conversely, a decrease in self-esteem was observed among 3 students who did not complete the story translation, signaling the importance of understanding students' existing capabilities and language proficiency to define the degree of additional support required.

5.1.1.   Figure 9: Impact of story translation completion and collaborator attendance at workshop on students' self-esteem.
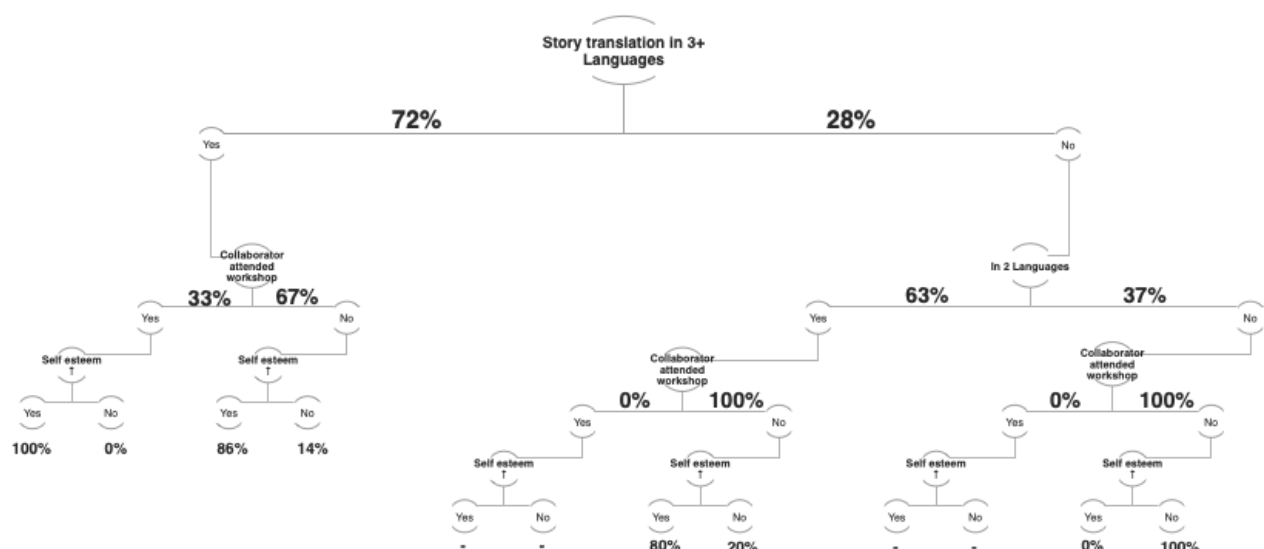
Students' written and recorded translations and Blob Tree responses showed a decrease in self-esteem among students receiving feedback pertaining to grammatical errors with familiar words. However, corrective feedback regarding unfamiliar vocabulary did not affect students' overall self-esteem. To increase learner self-esteem, the story translation approach is reliant on students receiving feedback and showing progress. Yet, students must become accustomed to the "process of learning, getting things wrong and understanding the way the target language works" (Conti, 2015), if they are to be linguistically creative.

Where students showed originality in visual and audiovisual presentation of story translations, students' self-esteem increased to the detriment of their linguistic accuracy and creativity. One HAP (Appendix XIV) did not veer away from using the WordFrame yet still made errors in Spanish and English story writing. Learners attending the focus group stated that more time to complete stories and translations in class would benefit their accuracy. The success of the creative approach therefore relies on sufficient time for structured reflection, feedback and editing.

5.2. Motivation

Motivation for learning languages more broadly increased. In post-intervention questionnaires, students cited greater motivation to learn Spanish and other modern languages including Arabic, Korean, Bengali, Japanese, Italian and Chinese, in comparison to pre-intervention questionnaires (Figure 11). As "language choice intersects with issues of symbolic power and identity" (Kramsch, 2009), such shift could reflect the recent national turn away from traditionally valorised European languages towards languages of other global powers with large cultural exports such as South Korea, China and Arab countries. The overt valorisation of other non-traditionally taught languages in the UK and cultivation of students' individual L2 identities could also have prompted such shift.

Post-intervention questionnaires also showed that students were increasingly motivated to learn languages to "communicate" and "to understand culture I'm interested in" (Fig.12). Consequently, the collaborative, creative story translation approach promotes intrinsic motivation for language learning.
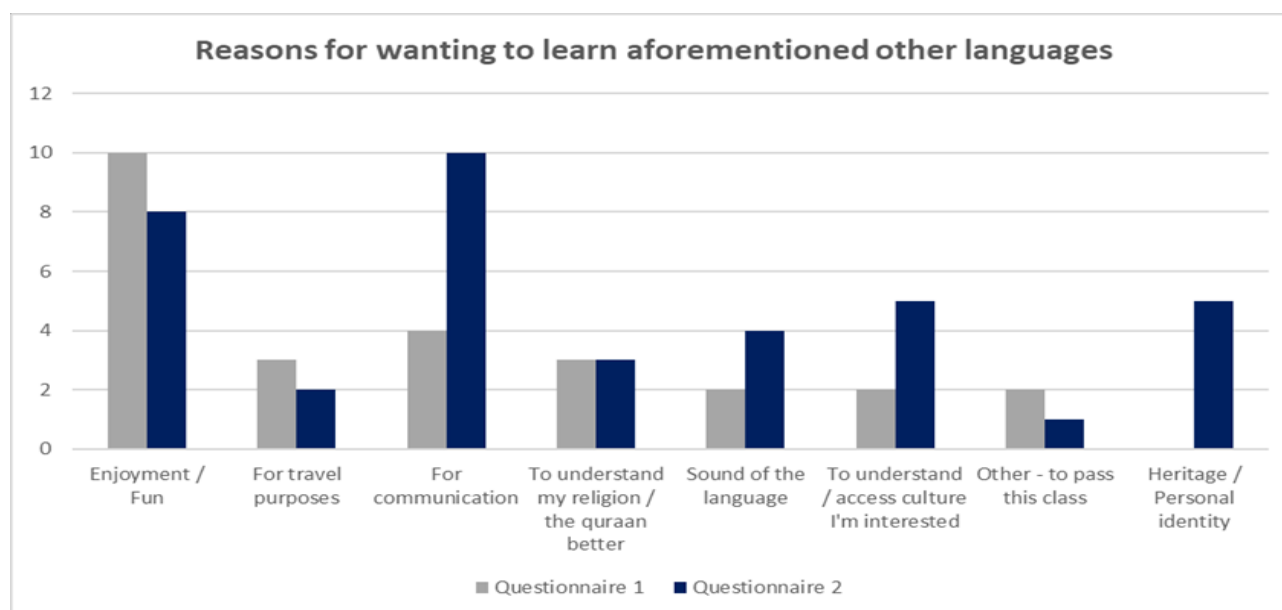
5.2.1. Figure 12: Intervention questionnaire responses showing learner motivation

Co-creation of the WordFrame and clear success criteria resulted in increased observed and self-proclaimed motivation among learners. According to learners, the project provided an appropriate level of challenge where they could say what they wanted to say. Some also used *Wordreference* to find new vocabulary to increase the originality of their stories, thus displaying motivation and linguistic creativity (Appendix XV). Post-intervention, more students also shared answers verbally and completed extension tasks in lessons to acquire additional language, reflecting an increase in motivation. However, it is important to recognise that "language acquisition is a complex phenomenon influenced by many factors" (Cenoz, 2011). Moreover, considering that each individual possesses a unique learning profile and lived experience (Appendix XVI), it is not possible to attribute behavioural changes solely to one aspect of the intervention or the intervention as a whole. It is undeniable that students feeling more settled in school with peers had an impact on behaviour.

The most conclusive finding of the study is the impact of the collaborative dialogic approach on classroom culture, essential for building students' motivation and self-esteem. According to the Cambridge Faculty of Education (2021), opportunities for sustained, purposeful dialogue allow young people to "*elaborate and develop their thinking and make ideas meaningful in their own terms.*" On observing the group after the intervention, the Head of Spanish noted high quality collaborative classroom learning (Fig.13). This intervention has therefore contributed to the re-establishment of an effective, collaborative class culture, promoting student self-esteem, motivation and attainment.

From Les-son Ob-serva-tion evid-ence Form	PADDLE:	P1	P2	P3	A1	A2	D1	Dif1
	++/+/+-/-	+	+	++	+	+	++	NA

Key strengths
Use of mini-plenaries
Challenging activities
Use of extension activities
Use of modelling
Expanding cultural capital through explanation of language labs
Effective questioning through breaking down concepts (oficina del director)
Areas of excellence:
Positive classroom environment
Collaborative work between learners
Range of skills evidenced over time

5.2.2. Figure 13: Post-intervention observation sample by Head of Spanish

5.3. Linguistic creativity

Linguistic creativity of students' story translations was measured using three norm-reference measures from the Abbreviated Torrance Test for Adults (ATTA); Fluency, Originality and Elaboration (Goff and Torrance, 2002). Results showed that HAPs are more confident to take risks and use language creatively, with some MAPs also displaying creative language use. The HAP's extract below displays fluency, originality and elaboration, with the underlined phrases original and adding detail:

"Es un día fantástico, en el jardín, hay un gato, se llama Freyja. Está con su mejor amiga, Mara el pingüino. Están jugando en paz. Freía tiene el pelo negro, liso y suave y los ojos fucsias, una cosa excepcional para un gato." (Appendix XV)

Without technology and online translator access, linguistic potential of some students was limited. However, where translation tools were available, we cannot rely on story data alone to show an accurate depiction of students' linguistic abilities and creativity. Including classroom writing and translation assessment results in the dataset provided a holistic picture of students' progress. One student produced creative and accurate story translations (Appendix XVII), but confused basic verbs (Appendix XVIII) in the assessment. Such comparison provided relevant AfL data, necessary for planning for progress.

5.4. Attainment in MFL

Owing to the carefully scaffolded, collaborative intervention design, all LAPs (including students with complex additional learning needs) made progress linguistically, evidenced by increased writing and translation assessment scores post-intervention (Fig.14). Challenging, co-designed success criteria left scope for creativity, enabling the highest attainers to also make progress, with all HAPs assessment scores increasing or continuing at 100% post-intervention. Of the 5 MAPs whose scores decreased post-intervention (Fig.14), none completed 2+ pluri-lingual translations or had community collaborators attending the workshop. This shows that effective community collaboration is key to progress for all MAPs. However, MAP and LAP translation assessments did evidence an increased ability to translate sentences based on meaning as opposed to word-for-word: an essential skill for multi-lingual communication.

5.4.1. Figure 14: Intervention scores
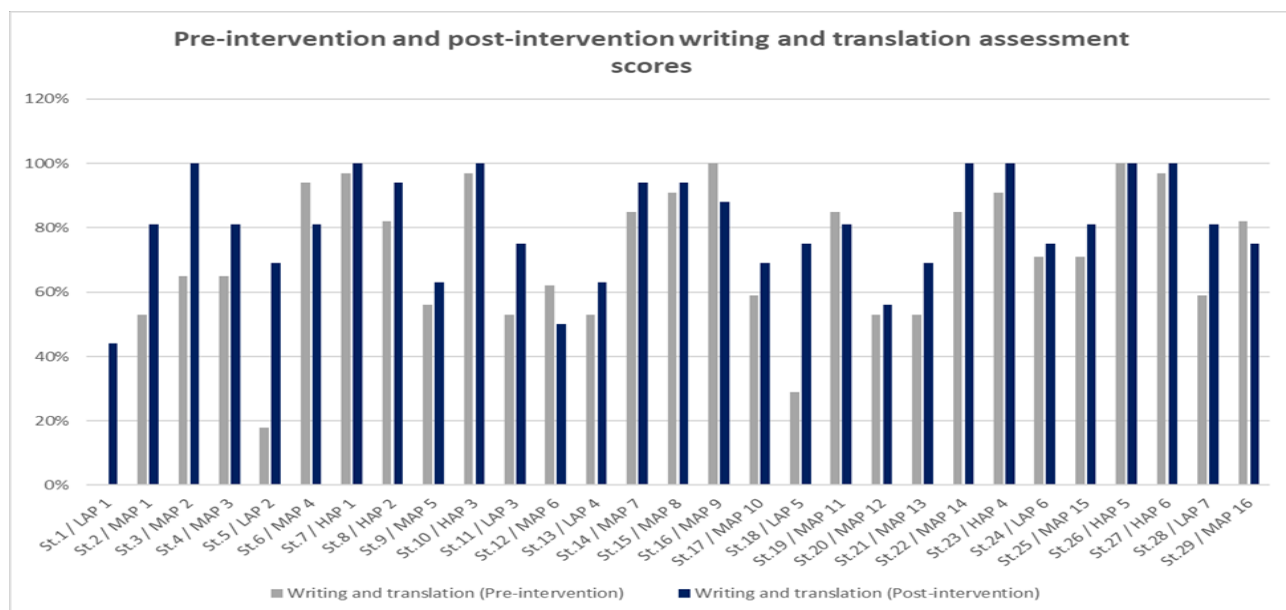
The intervention impact extended beyond the classroom. Three "community collaborators" expressed gratitude for their involvement, reporting that it had supported their own literacy in English, their child's in their home language and confidence to learn with their child. Younger family members had also used their daughters' stories to learn Spanish. Thus, the project, in part, contributed to addressing communication barriers in families and strengthening community relations, essential for language learning success.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The language learning space does not exist in isolation: it is subject to the same systems, policies and issues prevalent in the wider school community. As Corbett (2001) argues, we must understand the complex, interleaving dynamics of the community, the institution and the 'self', to establish a positive classroom climate that "feels respectful, inclusive and supportive of learning" (Hazell, 2020). Teachers must hone a delicate balance of flexibility and control to manage complex dynamics, while actively catering for individual difference and collaborating with members across the community to maximise available assets.

A collaborative and creative story translation approach, which valorises students' identities (Dörnyei, 2005) and builds on existing funds of knowledge (Bordieu, 1979), promotes learners' self-esteem, motivation, linguistic creativity and attainment. Yet, its success relies on effective community-wide collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978), structured reflection (Dewey, 1933) and adaptive teaching whereby all students can feel successful (Ushioda, 1996). Educators must resist social-constructivist or behavioural teaching approaches as a reactive response to classroom and broader education challenges. Instead, they should pursue a critical-constructivist and humanist learning philosophy underpinned by Corbett's pedagogy. This approach promotes respectful dialogue with community members and fosters collaboration necessary for progress in language learning. Today, being a teacher is not easy, especially in the area of foreign language teaching. However, it can be enjoyable and rewarding if teachers feel that they have a creative part to play as "designers of education" (Bell & Harkness, 2006), as is evident in this approach.

To enhance the validity of findings in future studies, five reflective questions (Appendix XIX) inspired by Roller's "Reflections on the Experience" questions (2014) can enable teachers to engage with their deep-seated feelings and identity as a teacher (Boyd, 2022). Scheduling "community collaborator" workshops outside of festive periods pertinent to the community, and increasing dual coding in collaborator session slides, would promote engagement in future iterations. This approach also presents an opportunity, missed here, to advance learners' racial literacy and critical thinking through the co-writing, and subsequent cross-curricular exploration, of original texts with members of the target language community. Stories modelled and co-written on different topics could raise collective awareness of global racialised hierarchical structures (Guinier, 2004, in Glowach et al, 2022) and promote curiosity regarding target language cultures.

Given the evolving global shift towards blended learning, one might explore a blended story translation approach, comparing its impact on students of different genders and linguistic backgrounds. Exploring how this approach impacts the creative abilities of "emerging bi-linguals", as well as pluri-linguals, would build on Hofweber and Graham's research (2017). Measuring the impact of creative story writing and translation projects on students with low literacy across languages and low independence levels would feed into current school-wide Literacy priorities. Such initiative would aim to promote students' cross-curricular learning and

support overall attainment. Yet, my current research does not provide conclusive enough evidence to draw conclusions about such groups of students.

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8. APPENDICES

Appendix I : Number of students per year (2020/2021) in the girls only school. Figures

Year	Total
Year 7	240
Year 8	239
Year 9	239
Year 10	209
Year 11	205
Year 12	198
Year 13	149
Year 14	15
Totals	1494

obtained from School Data Officer.

Appendix II: Interview with two Science Teachers and one English Teacher*

*All three are current teachers and former students of the school. The interview was conducted in March in informal setting over lunch and the notes were recorded together.

Definitions shared with interviewees:

Assets: useful or valuable aspects of a community. For example, in the context of this module parents and carers are considered assets within a community. Consider other assets.

Barriers: barriers to success that a community may face. This does not mean deficit.

1. **Who does the school consider to be its "community"?** The physical community around the school – all the different families who live around the school. All the people who help the school to function – teachers / cleaners / site staff. Also, the service users who are a large proportion Bangladeshi family.

2. **What made you want to teach here in this area – what drew you to serve in this community rather than elsewhere?** Because I wanted to give back to the school that gave me so much. Working within the same community that I grew up in – I can give more than someone who didn't grow up here within the community. I feel connected to this school. We are the women we are today because of where we started – strong headed, opinionated, standing our own ground… the friendships we've built here. For an inner-city school, its achievements are phenomenal. Large proportion of ex-students who have come back to work here. We felt the need to want to be here. Didn't want to work in any other school. I was placed here as part of my training. I met lots of my teachers that were still here. I got told off in the staff room by one of my old teachers – and I had to tell her I was a teacher now. I felt proud coming back here. I had to do a speech at an achievement assembly and the headteacher said "Welcome home Parul". My dad and grandad used to do a lot for the community and it's engrained in you that you should give back to the community. My siblings all work within the community. You feel so proud when you see students you've taught within the community – e.g. a pharmacist and nurse - giving back to the community. I feel so proud. I taught teachers in my son's school.

3. **What have you learned about this area's community both before and since coming here? ('demographic' / 'geographic'?)** We've grown up here. Even though we've moved out, we still have strong connections and family here. This feels like home. The language – we're bilingual so we can slip into both languages quite easily so this feels like home.

4. **How do these characteristics present "barriers" to learning?** Financial aspects within community present barriers to learning and funding within education – celebration of identity has gone. We should be proud of who we are, of our roots, identity and culture. Some schools are afraid to celebrate these things because they want to be inclusive. We shouldn't be afraid to celebrate Bengali heritage. Is there no money to do this? Funding allocated to different things which are prioritised differently. Priorities more corporate – not individual kids. Demographic of community now – parents are poorer and children don't have things. No trips – school used to subsidise trips and now they can't. Trips are too expensive so can't take part now. Parents are working more and cost of living is more. Equipment is more expensive compared to when I was growing up. More funding in youth services. Lack of adult/parental influence and role models from families as parents work so much/ people so busy. Lots of parents not educated to a certain level and language barrier between parents and kids – it's worse now! Many parents speak Bengali/other dialects and don't understand any English. Kids only speak English and can't speak Bengali. Parents struggling and can't support kids. Kids growing up in western culture and religion. Parents not able to understand or connect. Kids and parents mean well but there is a communication barrier within families. Expectations risen – kids have to be the best and they can't keep up. Parents frustrated cause they can't communicate with and support their kids. This creates tension.

5. **How are these characteristics viewed as an "asset" by the school and made use of in supporting learning?** Filled with cultural references- creating a level of understanding of and acceptance of people around you. Everyone has different experiences – create a level of experience can experience in school confinement. They share ideas with each other. Sabina does a lot with the community (community liaison officer). Creates projects, courses and links with community. Works with local primary school

(bigland green). Students understand they are of a colour even though they've grown up here. Second generation have different priorities. All of our networks are here but all of our parents' networks are there. Utilising people within community who are well connected within the community as role models – employing ex-students who are female, Bangladeshi.

6. **What "assets" does this school community face compared to the last school you taught at and what "barriers" does this community have compared to elsewhere?** This school is a lot more progressive than other schools. Constantly re-assessing environment and curriculum to push the girls further. People are not rigid - majority of staff body is very adaptive and can change with changes. This is a key success to this school. Students are already trying to learn another language that they have grown up with but don't know well enough. Parents might be competing with investment. They don't have energy to learn another language which has very little relevance in their day to day lives. Although uptake of Bengali is low – maybe because language you speak and language you're taught is starkly different?

7. **How does the school engage with these "assets" and "barriers" and seek to minimise or ameliorate them?** Dedicated family liaison officer in order to build bridges and relationships within community. E.g. parents don't understand elements of curriculum. Dedicated person to explain these things. Needed someone from community to communicate with parents. Aim is for girls to exceed expectations. People that represent community in staff body who connect with children.

Appendix III: Notes from interview with School Associate Head Teacher*

The interview was conducted in person in the AHT's office in March and notes were reviewed together.

Q1: Who does the school consider to be its community?

The community will be "the families that the school serves" in addition to that our school and families sit within the context of Tower Hamlets (the wider community).

Traditionally Bangladeshi families want children to be educated separately - that's why we are heavily Bangladeshi.

Q2: What made you want to teach here in this area - what drew you to serve in this community rather than elsewhere?

I've been in this school for 32 years, didn't come here to serve this community.

Previously I taught in Hackney at Woodberry Down (students were mainly black and white working class - very few asian). I came here because I wanted to be in Inner London and I knew that the community was different. I stayed because I realised it's a community I wanted to serve.

Specifically, I stayed because of my drive for social justice and seeing the complexities and layers of disadvantage that our girls experience - through the eyes of race, class, gender, culture etc. Misogyny is everywhere and I don't excuse cultural practices that are mysogynist. Seeing these layers of complexity around disadvantage, I felt that I could make a different and felt at home here - the community was warm and welcoming, incredibly hospitable. Students' behaviour used to be immaculate. When I came, there was no drama, no trips or visits. Girls were silenced by society, by culture and by family expectation. I wanted to be part of the journey and transformation of possibilities for the girls.

The school has changed dramatically, previously about 30/40% of students hadn't been to primary school. Literacy was very low in English and we had a big EAL department. Girls didn't used to wear Hijabs - there has been a radical change since 9/11 - where the community have wanted to say "this is who we are" - there was collective community thought around being strong together and a strong identity. 9/11 tipped the balance - there was no more hiding of "who we are".

Q3: How do the characteristics you've mentioned present as "barriers" to learning?

The evident barrier is disadvantage - economic disadvantage and poverty.

The barrier is no longer about expectations for girls - this has changed.

With this disadvantage comes:
- technological disadvantage
- Lack of physical space and overcrowding
- Worklessness / unemployment
- Health issues - specifically mental health issues.

Increasing language barrier at home - before, mums spoke no English, while dads and brothers spoke some, therefore they ruled the house. The girls now have power. *Girls now speak English and parents only speak Sylheti - parents and children therefore struggle to communicate. There is tension within families where girls are loosing home language. Parents' emotional language is often Sylheti whereas for the girls, it's English - communication within families is a big issue.*

Q4: How are any of these characteristics or other viewed as an "asset" by the school and made use of in supporting learning?
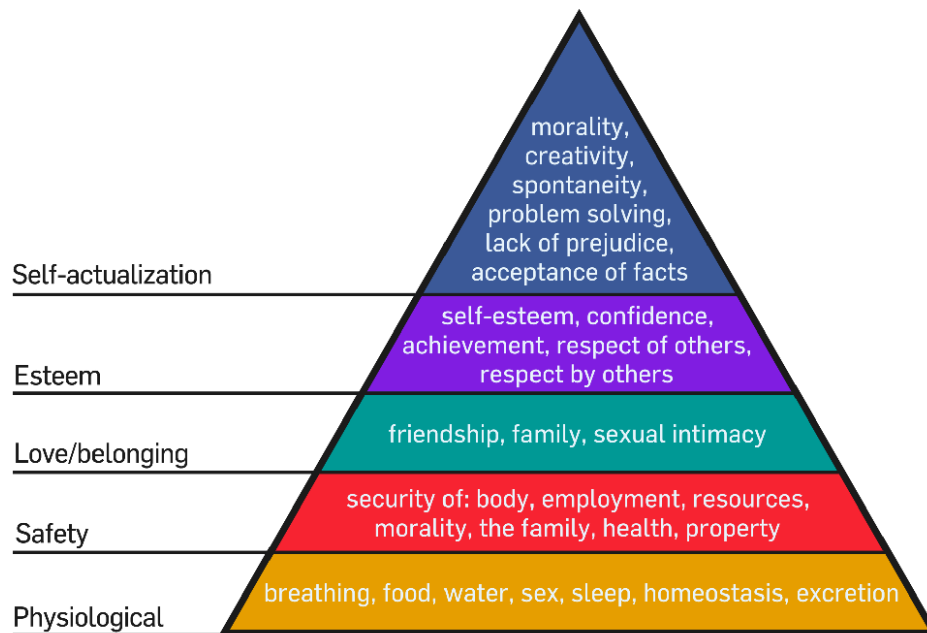
Assets include:
- ambition for your children
- Respect for education
- "You must respect you teachers - they are like your parent" (generally)
- An established relationship of respect and trust with the families the school serves. Building trust took a long time.

Q5: How does the school engage with these assets and barriers and seek to minimise or ameliorate them?

To address barriers:
- we are filling cultural capital gap - no working class girl has access to theatre ("cultural" relating to class/economic status and not about ethnicity)
- Don't quite fill gap around sport
- Girls don't have networks so we're working to create networks for girls - we work with WOW, Bank of America - creating a platform where girls can have a voice and from which they can be seen and heard
- Bigland Green Centre has had huge impact within community - workshops have been run around parenting skills/IT Skills/Language/Volunteering system/Employability skills and qualifications etc. Mums were targeted first then dad's came as wished to be included
- Fruit carving was run as a workshop where parents could learn skills to start up a business - a way into employment and empowerment. Support was also available around mortgages, benefits. Mental health, domestic abuse on site - this was possible through the trust built between families and school. Families see school as safe space.
- Community Liaison officer who organises community programme/workshops comes from school - classes are largely free or funded by Tower Hamlets. School then picks up gap in budget for any additional community learning.

Appendix IV: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)

Appendix V : Research data collection outline

When?	What?	Why?	How?
March 2021	Student questionnaire	To find out more about students' - languages they speak / want to learn, interests, favourite way of learning languages etc.	Collected via Microsoft Forms Analysed Thematically
March/April 2021	Interviews (x 7) with key stakeholders in School community (Ex-students/teachers; Associate Head Teacher; Learning support team; School Liaison Officer; Head of Y7)	To gain deeper understanding of barriers and assets within the school community To gain clearer idea of collective definition of the school community	Four Face-to-face interviews and one online interview. Transcripts and notes recorded, compared and contrasted.
March - June 2021	Academic / Online research	To understand how school community compares to others To understand how other interventions and pedagogies have promoted students' self-esteem, motivation and linguistic creativity.	Collected via Internet and Library

April-May 2021	Blob Tree at beginning, middle and end of intervention	To encourage students to reflect on and become conscious of how they're feeling To measure students' intrinsic motivation and understand how the intervention has impacted their self-esteem	Approximately thirty-second one-to-one conversations with students during lesson starter and activities, where students are asked: *"How are you feeling in and about Spanish?"* And respond by pointing to a person on the blob tree. Analysed categorically.
May 2021	Student stories and translations	To measure students' creativity - linguistically and otherwise	First draft submitted of English and Spanish via paper. Second draft submitted on paper or online via email including links to Flipgrid audio. Students also used Canva to improve the presentation of their stories. Analysed against collaboratively-designed success criteria and fluency (understanding of lanuguage), originality (using language outside of sentence builders) and elaboration (extended sentences) descriptors.
May 2021	Lesson observation at end of intervention	To provide another observational perspective on classroom culture	In person lesson observation by Head of Spanish. Feedback provided via formal lesson observation form.
May 2021	Student questionnaire	To discover how students' attitudes to language learning varied from questionnaire during lock-down	Questions handed out at beginning of lesson on story deadline day. Students completed on paper and handed into teacher/researcher. Results inputted into spreadsheet, thematically analysed and contrasted with March questionnaire.
May 2021	Student assessment data	To measure writing attainment pre and post-intervention and to see how far students are using new language and strict structures not learned in class.	Standardised writing and translation assessments based on language covered throughout Year 7. Results recorded as percentages.

June 2021	Qualitative follow-up - Focus group with students on experience of intervention	To understand students' individual and collective experiences of the intervention - what they learned, enjoyed anything they'd do differently in the future	Students asked to stay behind for 5-10 minutes at end of lesson to provide feedback on story project. Approximately 10 students stayed.
June 2021	Feedback from parents at Y7 parents' evening	To understand how parents and families experienced project and any changes seen since.	Asked Y7 Spanish parents during parents' evening appointments if engaged with project support materials and how found collaborator session if attended and any evident impact seen since.

Appendix VI : Student questions for first questionnaire

1) *Which languages do you speak?*
2) *Which languages would you like to speak?*
3) *Why would you like to speak these languages?*
4) *What are the opportunities to learn and use these languages in your community?*
5) *How do you keep learning more vocabulary in languages?*
6) *What is your favourite way to learn languages?*
7) *What do you find hard about learning a language?*
8) *What do you think stops you from learning a language well?*
9) *What will you do now, outside of school, to keep learning more vocabulary in the languages you are familiar with already?*

Appendix VII: Blob Tree (Wilson and Long, 2005)

Appendix VIII : Research information sheet and consent form for participants (anonymised)

Information for participants

Thank you for considering to participate in this research which will take place from February 2021 - March 2021. This information sheet outlines the purpose of the research and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

1. What is the research about?
The aim of this research project is to explore the school's community and to identify local strengths and challenges, which can be limited or maximised to support students' Modern Foreign Language learning through a specially designed intervention. Information for this research will be collected through interviews, online research and a student questionnaire. This research is for my Post-graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) at UCL.

2. Do I have to take part?
It is up to you whether or not you decide to take part. You do not have to take part if you do not wish to. If you do decide to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form which you can sign and return to me via email or when we meet.

3. What will my involvement be?
You will be asked to take part in an interview about the school community. It will include a range of questions about your experience of and reflections on the school community (e.g. what is the school community, what are its barriers to learning, assets etc.). The focus of the interview will be on how the school is engaging with the community's assets and barriers and seeking to minimise or develop them and what gaps still exist.

Assets: useful or valuable aspects of a community. For example, in the context of this module, parents and carers are considered assets within a community.

Barriers: barriers to success that a community may face. This does not mean deficit.

4. What will my information be used for?
I will use the collected information for my PGDE Module 3 research submission at UCL. The information obtained will be treated confidentially and all answers will remain anonymous.

5. Will my taking part and my data be kept confidential? Will it be anonymised?
Records from this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Only the researcher will have access to the files and any audio tapes. Your data will be anonymised – your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. All digital files, notes and transcripts will be given codes and stored separately in locked files. The data will be disposed of once the project is complete and final grades are confirmed.

Limits to confidentiality: confidentiality will be maintained as far as it is possible, unless you disclose something which implies that you or someone you mention might be in significant danger of harm and unable to act for themselves; in this case, we may have to inform the relevant agencies of this, but we would discuss this with you first.

6. What if I have questions?

CONSENT FORM

Leading Learning in Communities: *How can barriers and assets of the school community be limited and maximised to promote students' Modern Foreign Language learning ?*

Researcher: Amy Flynn

I have read and understood the research information above. I have been able to ask questions about the research and my questions have been answered.	YES / NO
I consent to be a participant in this study	YES / NO
I agree to the interview being audio recorded	YES / NO
I understand that the information I provide will be used for *the researcher's PGDE Module 3 research assignment* and that the information will be anonymised.	YES / NO
I agree that my (anonymised) information can be quoted in research outputs.	YES / NO
I understand that any personal information that can identify me – such as my name and institutions I am affiliated with will be kept confidential and not shared with anyone *other than the researcher.*	YES / NO

Please retain a copy of this consent

form. Participant name:

Signature: _____

Date _____

Interviewer name: Amy Flynn

Signature: _____

Date _____

Appendix IX : Notes from Interview with School Liaison Officer*

The interview was conducted in March via Zoom (due to COVID isolation). The interviewee wished to just talk freely instead of answering my questions in a structured way. The notes below were reviewed with the interviewee at the end of the interview.

The school's community? = parents of pupils and neighbouring surroundings - wider community. Started adult learning classes - only for our parents. But then became popular and built Mulberry Bigland Green to offer to wider community

- Started in 2007 - not great attendance. Schools did home visits and realised barriers at home - not adequate learning areas at home. Parents needed understanding for why education is important for children and not engaging with school. Parents didn't send letters or take notice of them. Parents lacked confidence and self-esteem - ran creative classes - Sabina attended classes with them to build relationship initially.
- Workshops - health and wellbeing / mental health / students' options - how can parents support students to choose / Drug and alcohol workshops.
- Students weren't encouraged to take dance.
- Ask for adult learning classes newsletters - in office - e.g. ESOL / ,maths / parenting /exercise / TA classes / bag decorating for Y7 parents to understand barriers / trip to olympic park / theatre with parents and children and some just for parents e.g. English national opera and Donmar warehouse - budget also available for adult learning classes - trips to Windsor castle and leeds castle etc.
- Barriers tackled - parents did accredited courses and have now gone to work through courses. Barrier is now COVID - parents can't do courses but having workshops through zoom for those who can access. Many not accessing. Technological barriers - main issue.
- Family learning after school - fruit carving / cake decorating after school etc. ESOL classes - ideas store run classes and WEA - welfare education association. Smart training - offer TA and childcare classes. Parental Engagement team - offer courses (school buys into these courses) e.g. emotional first aid. SLO has been offering parenting courses - how to communicate with children. Lots of events in community - share events and museums and cultural things in community with parents and families. Health and wellbeing workshops run in local community. Alumni theatre company - parents and learners can take part in this - have devised plays in past. Have had directors come in. Wrote a play together and performed in English. ENO have run 8 weeks of Opera workshops - had famous opera singers come in and work with parents. Children taking part in these. Sabina organises workshops for international women's day - end of day Bengali music performance at end. WOW - women of the world festival - take students and parents there to attend event. Students run workshops and have stalls. - Teachers recruit students to do this and think they'd benefit. Community day on Saturday where everyone is welcomed - not just targeted courses / events / programmes.
- Parents feel safer coming into school than independently go to colleges - aim is to empower them to be able to do this, so next stage is to apply for college and uni.

Appendix X : Notes from Interview with Learning Mentor team

This team provide social and emotional and low-level counselling support for students across the school. This team previously included a qualified school counsellor and two more full-time "learning mentors". This team is now comprised of two sole "learning mentors", one full-time and one part-time.

The interview took place privately in the learning mentor office and was not recorded, due to interviewee preference. The interview took the form of "free-speech" on the part of the interviewee, following prior reflection on interview questions sent via email.

Questions sent to learning mentors to reflect on prior to meeting:
1. Do you have any data that shows how the most recent lockdown might have affected girls' well-being? e.g. increase in referrals
2. How has the recent lockdown affected students in your experience/opinion? How are the effects showing up for you in your role?
3. How are the school community responding or not responding to the effects you are seeing?
4. What themes are you seeing among Y7 students in terms of their social and emotional well-being?

Notes from interview:
- Due to a massive backlog in referrals (whereby the learning mentors would find out key details about individual cases and not be able to consult students due to limited capacity), referrals are now processed differently. We now do not know who the new referrals will be until a space becomes available. During the lockdown, requests for learning mentor support slowed down due to several declining remote mentoring, where they would participate online from their homes.
- Some cases which would have been shorter term, have now become longer term, having fallen through the gap of internal "learning mentor support" and CAMHS support where the threshold is increasingly high, being seen "not bad enough" for social care. Of the 17 previously being seen, 3 cases have now been escalated to CAMHS and Social Care in addition to others who have not been seeing us, and 3 other cases have seen an increase in domestic violence during lockdown.
- From our experience, working within the school community, we have witnessed:
  - a large increase in student anxiety, having come about as a result of lockdown;
  - One particular case concerned a student with a student with low mood now developing an eating disorder over lockdown;
  - One student with low mood has now been prescribed anti-depressants.
  - Students' sleep patterns are all over the place as a result of lock-down and this has affected students' self-esteem. Students stay up all night and sleep all day and then fall behind in their learning which increases their sense of anxiety and lowers their self-esteem. 11 students have accessed our Sleep Hygiene group.
- We are aware of students seeing their doctors independently of the school for mental health related concerns. Due to the new "Hub system" as a result of the COVID pandemic, it is now harder for students to come to us subtly and just drop-in. Previously, prior to this year, numbers for drop-in/unscheduled appointments were in their hundreds. Students no longer have access to this.
- Acknowledging this and the increase in bereavement cases in our school, we have responded to demand and started a bereavement group which students can choose to join. 52 students in our school have lost siblings or grandparents in the past year and 11 have lost parents, largely to COVID. The Y7 bereavement group is starting tomorrow; one attendee has lost a parent to COVID. Studies show that group bereavement therapy is best started at around 6-months after the bereavement, hence the group only starting now. We will be starting more groups to respond to recent cases of bereavement in the coming months.
- There is now no school councillor. Our role previously used to concern bullying, mediation, fall-outs. Our role now entails dealing with self-harm, domestic violence and bereavement. Despite not having the training or necessary support to deal with such a level of cases, we need to take the referrals because there is no-one else to see them and no-one else to refer to. Prior to COVID, some students were on the waiting list for 6 months and since then, we have lost 24 places from the counsellor and the students counsellor also is no-longer here. The counsellor has not been replaced for financial reasons. Supervision for counsellors and learning mentors has also been cut for financial reasons. Over this time, the number and severity of cases has gradually gone up.
- There also used to be a nurse running eating disorder sessions. We will now be getting a school social worker but they haven't been here during COVID or the last lock-down. Drug and alcohol awareness sessions also used to be run, but these no longer happen. CAMHS have not been coming to the school during COVID.

- The threshold for the Educational Welfare Practitioner service (part of CAMHS) is really low and the CAMHS threshold is extremely high. Therefore those with eating disorders are not being seen and are falling through the gap. Individual teams are aware of and acknowledge the problem.
- Themes we are seeing concerning the social and emotional well-being of Y7 Students are:
  - Disordered sleep patterns - staying up all night and sleeping all day leading to falling behind in work and therefore increase in anxiety and lowered self-esteem;
  - Y7 transition has been really tough - normally Y7s take a while to settle in and build their confidence. However, lots of Y7 students and Y7 tutors had to isolate in the first term and this has continued either side of the lockdowns, meaning that students have had no routine of settling in.
  - Y7 students have nothing to talk about or nothing to say because they haven't done anything, which has been really hard for them. They are therefore finding it hard to relate to each other and form friendships.

Appendix XI: Short story English translation

Liar liar, pants on fire...
There's a cat called Bob. He's 73 years old and is quite wise. He's also fat and fluffy. He's fat because he's lazy, but he's very funny. He's funny because he has strange habits. He takes a siesta at two in the afternoon everyday. Not a moment before, not a moment after. At two on the dot. He has long, soft and red hair and green eyes. He doesn't wear glasses. They say that redheads have ten lives instead of nine. I don't know if that's true.
This is Bob's ninth life. In this moment, he's not scared. He's content.
It's Wednesday and it's time for Bob's siesta. However, in this moment, his friend, Rosa the bear, enters the flat and started shouting "There's an earthquake! You need to leave!"
Bob jumps off the sofa where he sleeps and makes his way towards the door, but he can't leave. He isn't scared because Rosa is a *mentirosa* (liar). Before he even has time to think about it, there is an earthquake for real! The room goes black.
Two minutes and two seconds later, Bob wakes up. But Bob is no longer a cat, he's a human with a mum, five sisters and he still has red hair. Maybe this is life number ten.

Appendix XII : Sentence builder co-constructed with learners, used to support story writing.

Appendix XIII : MAP 9 Post-intervention Standardised Writing Assessment completed in class without books

Writing Task: 40 Words

- tu carácter ✗
- tu aspecto físico ✗
- tus idiomas ✗
- tu instituto

Tengo = I
Tiene = he/sh...

LEAVE LINES

¡Hola! Me llamo Aleya. Soy una persona aburrida pero a veces puedo ser divertida. No soy deportista porque soy muy perezosa. Soy nunca maldavado. También soy nunca activa. En el pasado era antipática pero ahora soy amable. Tiene el pelo castaño y liso. No tiene el pelo corto. Tiene los ojos castaños y pupilas grandes. No tiene ni bigote ni barba. Soy baja pero me gustaría ser alta. Hablo inglés y un poco bengalí. También hablo un poco español. No hablo francés. Me gustaría aprender coreano. ✗

Mi instituto es ... ... Es un poco feo pero el patio es bonito. Mi instituto no es espacioso, es muy estrecho. Mi escuela primaria era más espacioso. En mi instituto hay un gimnasio enorme. Mi instituo tiene un árbol grande. Mi instituo no. En mi instituto no hay una piscina. Aunque no hay una piscina, ojalá fuera había una piscina. Me no gusta mi escuela porque es incómodo y desagradable.

Redraft:

¡Hola! Me llamo Aleya. Soy una persona aburrida pero a veces puedo ser dive...

Appendix XIV : HAP 6 Creative Story Translation in 2 languages (submitted with Bengali audio recording)
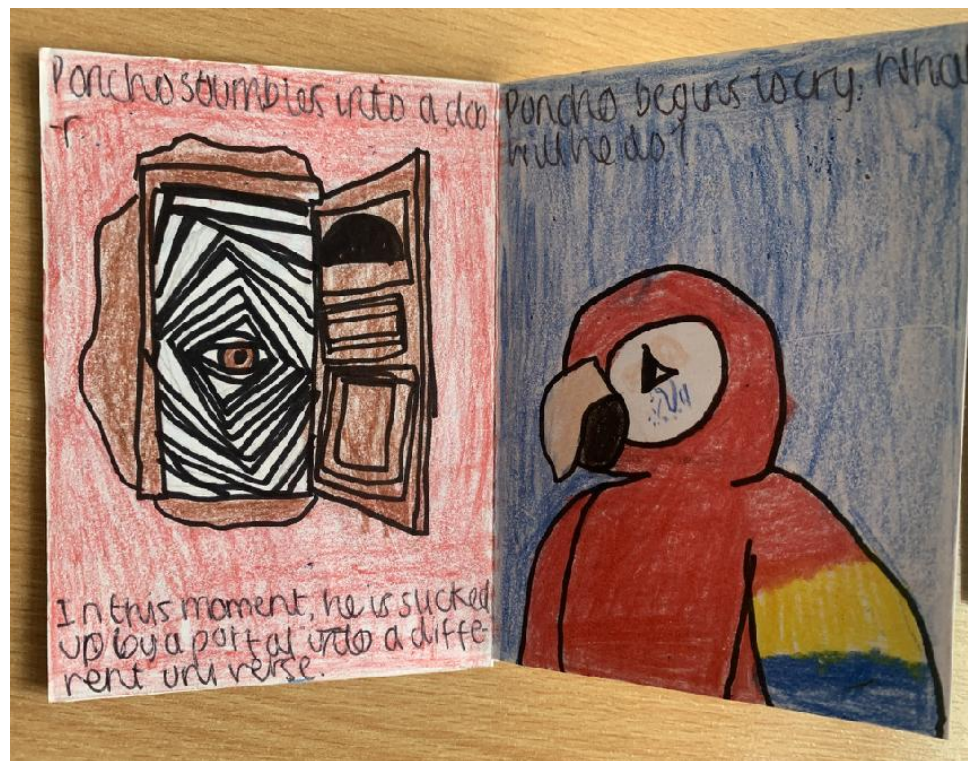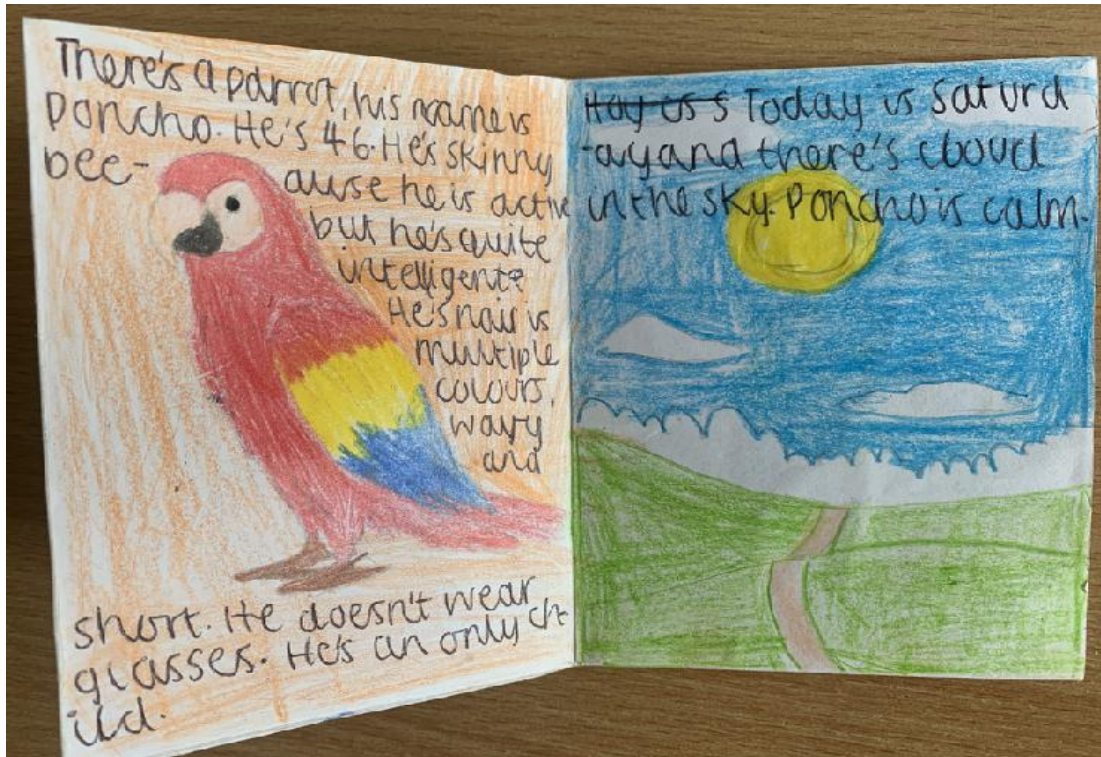
XV : HAP 5 Creative Story writing and translation

Freyja, Mara y el extraterrestre

Es un día fantástico, en el jardín, hay un gato, se llama Freyja. Está con su mejor amiga, Mara el pingüino Están jugando en paz. Freía tiene el pelo negro, liso y suave y los ojos fucsias, una cosa excepcional para un gato. También Mara tiene el pelo liso y suave. Tiene el pelo negro y blanco como un pingüino normal, pero tiene los ojos amarillos porque es un pingüino feliz.

En este momento, hay una invasión extraterrestre. los extraterrestres secuestran Mara y fría y viajan a Marte. Mara tiene miedo y un poco frío por la baja temperatura, "Freyja, necesito ayuda, ¡hace frio y tengo mucho miedo! ¡Por favor! ¡Sálvame!" Mara comienza a llorar en silencio. "no tengas miedo Mara. ¡Yo sé cómo volver! Solo espera y mira que hago," dice Freyja cuando aterrizan, se esconden en secreto.

Los extraterrestres miran al otro lado, Freyja coge mara y corren hacia la nave cercana. Freyja enciende la nave y comienza a conducir hacia la tierra. "¿Ves? No necesitas preocuparte porque estoy aquí contigo. Ahora, ¡vamos a casa!" dice Freyja, contenta, "Muchas gracias, Freyja, me salvaste, ¡eres la mejor!" dice mara, aliviada. Freyja y mara vuelven a casa, pero no saben que un extraterrestre los está siguiendo…

¿Qué pasa después? ¿Viven? ¿Mueren? ¡Espera la siguiente parte, adiós! – (NAME) 7y

Freyja, Mara and the alien

It's a fantastic day, in the garden there is a cat called Freya. She is with her best friend, Mara the penguin. They are playing peacefully. Freya has black, straight, soft hair and fuchsia eyes, very rare and beautiful for a cat. Mara has straight, soft hair as well. She has black and white hair like a normal penguin, but she has yellow eyes to show that she is a happy penguin.

In this moment, a spaceship lands and an alien invasion begins. The aliens get hold of Freya and Mara and fly away to Mars. Mara is scared and feels a little cold because of the very low temperature, "Freya, I need help, it is cold and I'm so scared, please! Save me!" Mara silently starts crying, "Don't be scared Mara, I know how to get back! Just wait and watch what I do." says Freya when they land, they secretly hide.

The aliens look the other way, Freya holds Mara and they both run to the nearest spaceship. Freya activates the spaceship and starts to head back towards Earth. "See? You do not need to worry at all because I am here with you, Now let's go home!" says Freya delighted, "Thank you so much Freya, you saved me, you are the best!" says Mara, relieved. They go back home but they don't know that an alien is following them…

What happens next? Do they live? Do they die? Find out in the next part, bye! – (NAME) 7y

Freyja, Mara e l'alieno

E una giornata fantastica, c'è un gatto, si chiama Freya. Sta con la sua migliore amica, mara in pinguino. Loro stanno giocando in pace. Freya ha il pelo nero, liscio e morbido e ha gli occhi fucsia, una cosa rara e bella per un gatto. Anche Mara ha il pelo liscio e morbido. Lei ha il pelo bianco e nero come un pinguino normale però ha gli occhi gialli perché è un pinguino felice.

In questo momento, c'è un'invasione extraterrestre. Gli alieni sequestrano Mara e Freya e viaggiano su Marte. Mara ha paura e un po' freddo per la bassa temperatura, "Freya, mi serve aiuto, fa freddo e ho molta paura! Per favore! Salvami!" Mara comincia a piangere in silenzio, "Non avere paura Mara, Io so come andare indietro! Solo aspetta e guarda cosa faccio," dice Freya quando atterrano, si nascondono segretamente.

Gli alieni guardano l'altro lato, Freya tiene Mara per mano e loro corrono verso la nave spaziale più vicina. Freya accende la nave aliena e comincia a condure la nave verso la Terra. "Vedi? Non ti devi preoccupare perché io sto con te. Adesso, andiamo a casa!" dice Freya, contenta, "Grazie mille Freya, mi hai salvata, sei la migliore!" dice Mara, sollevata. Freya e Mara vanno a casa però non sanno che un alieno lo stava seguendo…

Che succede dopo? Sono vive? Sono morte? Aspetta la prossima parte, ciao ciao! – (NAME) 7y

Appendix XVI: Learner profiles to illustrate individual differences

HAP 5:

HAP 1 acquired Bengali from her parents and grew up speaking and learning both Italian and English in the Italian primary state education system, where there is a heavy emphasis on Grammar. She began attending a primary school in Tower Hamlets during KS2 and arrived in Y7 literate in both Italian and English, with an ability to speak and produce spoken Bengali and as an avid reader. Although she speaks Bengali at home and ofter translates for her parents who do not speak English, she regularly communicates with her Italian friends in Italian. This enables her to maintain her knowledge of and fluency in Italian. She is equally confident speaking Italian and Bengali but believes her Italian is stronger. With her knowledge of Italian, she finds Spanish relatively easy and commonly notices patterns and exceptions in the language. She is frustrated by her inaccessibility to functioning technology and internet, having borrowed a laptop from the school over the lockdown period but never previously having owned one. Although her parents are very supportive of her education and attend parents' evenings where they can, their socio-economic status and lived experience, having not passed through the British education system themselves and not owning a computer or tablet, presents a barrier when supporting their daughter. She completed her story in Spanish, English and Italian using a borrowed laptop. She was unable to record her Bengali version due to a lack of access to sound recording technology and parents' unavailability.

LAP 3:

LAP 3 speaks a mix of Somali and English at home. Although very articulate in spoken English, her literacy level is non-existent in Somali and very low in English. She strongly dislikes writing and struggles to focus and sit still. Having grown up in London with a Somalian mother, she has no interest in learning Somalian, but would rather learn Spanish, Polish or Russian, "because they seem nice" based on her experience of TikTok videos. Her favourite way to learn languages is verbally and using Duolingo, however, she also enjoyed reading and talking about an interactive story in Spanish with the translations over lockdown. She has a very active imagination and regularly makes up stories, songs and actions to entertain her peers. She has access to a computer at home for learning. Her mother speaks English and is aware of her daughter's character. She is very willing to work in partnership with the school to develop her daughter's literacy where she can, although works many hours and is often unavailable to support her work at home. LAP 3 also struggles to organise herself and regularly forgets her book, having left her Spanish book on the bus and lost her draft story which she worked hard to complete. She completed a story.

LAP 3 also has the following support plan:

Needs: LAP 3 is an Additionally Supported Student. Her main difficulties appear to be lack of focus and concentration, however they do impact on her engagement in lessons and literacy. Her reading age of 11.2 (standardised score 98) is in line with her chronological age. She scored standardised score of 99 in spelling and 93 in reading comprehension. Both results are in the average range. She can be easily distracted and therefore finds it hard to focus on one activity. She is often distracted by her pen, or small objects on her table. She may find it hard to follow instructions, avoid tasks that require sustained attention and move from one incomplete activity to another. Additionally, she struggles to keep an eye contact for long during a conversation and tends to look around. She experiences difficulties staying on task, not fidgeting is difficult for her although she tries really hard.

Strategies to use to help LAP 3:
- Keep instructions clear and simple, checking that she understands by repeating the instructions to her individually.
- Give short, simple instructions and encourage her to talk through a task before attempting it.
- Set short, clearly-defined targets.
- Praise small achievements and set up an agreed reward system for good focus rather than using sanctions for inappropriate behaviour
- Speak in a calm manner and prompt her to get back on task.

- Give her opportunities to explain her anxieties.

- Allow time-out to refocus.

- Be consistent with managing behaviour.

Appendix XVII : MAP 9 Creative Story Writing and Translation completed with Dutch-speaking "collaborator"

AMIGOS CALVOS

Hay un gato se llama Leo. Tiene once años. Es muy activo deportisto. Pero a veces puedo ser perezoso. Leo no gusta escuela. Mañana hay escuela. Leo no está entusiasmado porque hay escuela. Leo tiene el pelo gris y suave con rayas blancas. Y también tiene bigote largo y blanco. Pero ahora, Leo es calvo porque de escuela. La amiga de Leo, Snow el conejo, se siente mal porque ella lo entiende. Leo y Snow no son inteligentes. "¡Ay no!", grita Leo. Snow tiene un idea. "¡Me quedo calva!", dice Snow. Son muy tontos los dos. Se queda calva. Ahora se llaman "Amigos Calvos".
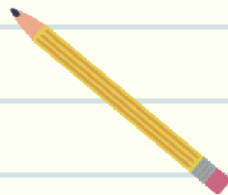
BALD FRIENDS

There is a cat called Leo. He is eleven years old. He is very active and sporty but sometimes he can be lazy. Leo does not like school. Tomorrow is school. Leo is not excited because of school. Leo has grey, soft hair with white stripes. He also has white, long whiskers. But now, Leo is bald because of school. Leo's friend, Snow the bunny, feels bad for him. Leo and Snow are not itelligent. "Oh no!", cried Leo. Snow had an idea. "I will go bald!", said Snow. They are both very stupid. She went bald. Now they are called "Bald Friends".
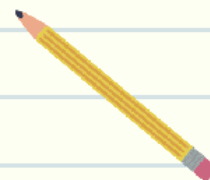
KALE VRIENDEN

Er is een kat genaamd Leo. Hij is elf jaar oud. Hij is heel werkzaam en sportief maar soms ook heel lui. Leo hudt niet van school. School is morgen. Leo is niet opgewonden door school. Leo heeft grijs, zacht haar met witte strepen. En ook witte, lange bakkebaarden. Maar nu is Leo kaal geworden door school. Leo's vriend, Snow het konijn, heeft medelijden Leo. Leo en Snow zijn niet wijs. "Oh nee!", huilde Leo. Snow had een idee. "Ik ga kaal!", zei Snow. Ze zijn allebei heel dom. Ze ging kaal. Nu heten ze "Kale Vrienden".

Appendix XVIII : MAP 9 Post-intervention Standardised Writing Assessment completed in class
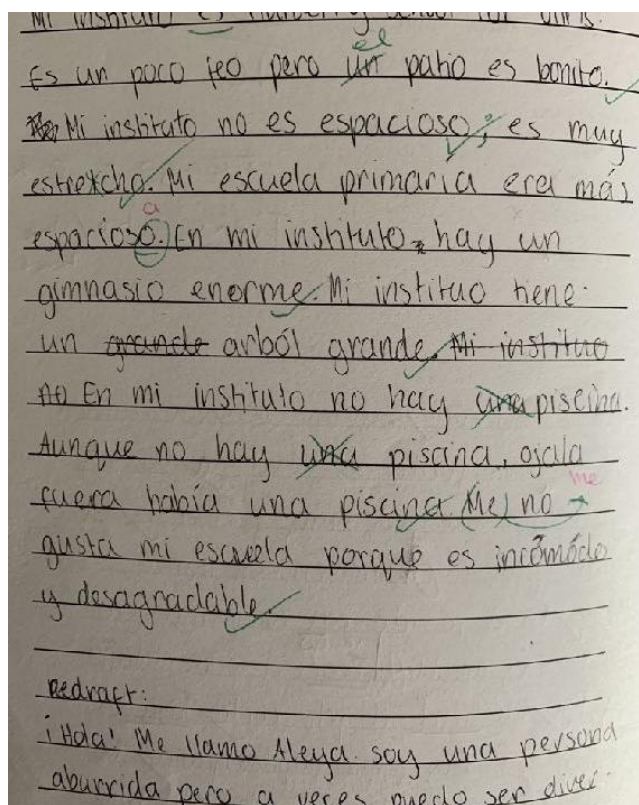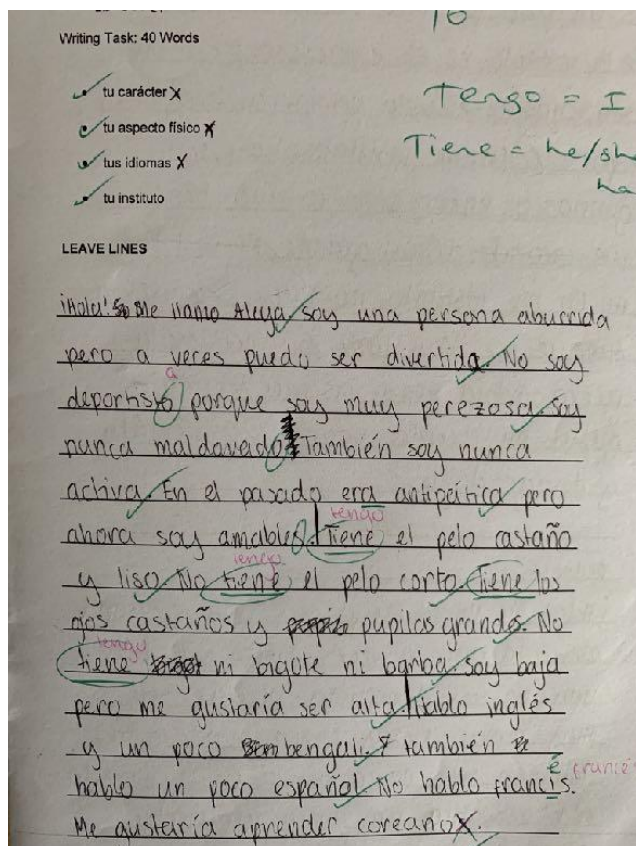
Appendix XIX : Reflective questions inspired by Roller's "Reflections on the Experience" questions (2014) to minimise bias

1) What assumptions have I made?

2) How might these assumptions have affected my observation conclusions?

3) How has my personal profile and context affected my conclusions?

4) To what extent have my emotions or feelings towards key stakeholders affected my interpretations?

5) How has the physical setting or logistical considerations of the research affected my conclusions?

Raising learner motivation through a cultural pen-pal scheme: a collaborative study

Dikshali Shah [8]

ABSTRACT

Collaboration amongst colleagues at partnering schools was established in order to decide a shared goal and implement culture into lessons across schools. The aim of this study is to raise motivation for language learning by providing KS4 students the opportunity to interact with the second language community through a pen-pal scheme. Dornyei's language-related integrative values were applied to develop activities that can raise cross-cultural awareness. Byram's *savoirs* informed the assessing of cultural understanding, reflecting on one's own culture, analysing cultural phenomena and carrying out comparisons. Evidence of these criteria were identified in two sets of email exchanges that KS4 students sent to their pen-pal. To measure the impact of the intervention, pupil work was compared from the first and second email exchange to detect development in cultural understanding. Pre and post intervention questionnaires were employed before and after the two email exchanges, to gauge levels of motivation at School A, surrounding students' interest to learn about foreign cultures and their attitudes towards direct contact with the target language community. The study found that the initial idea of the pen-pal sparked students' motivation however, further email exchanges were needed for impact to be made. The study also confirmed that culture and language are inter-related.

Keywords: Collaboration, learner motivation, culture, KS4 Spanish, pen-pals

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[8] Teacher of MFL - dikshali.shah.19@ucl.ac.uk

INTRODUCTION

Vangrieken et al describes collaboration within schools on a continuum between cooperation and collaboration (2015: 17). Reflecting upon opportunities for collaboration, shared lesson planning within the department is more 'cooperation' than collaboration as this is completed individually, despite the department having a uniform structure for all Modern Foreign Language (MFL) lessons. Vangrieken et al's observations influenced the collaboration sessions with colleagues to help integrate cultural opportunities into lessons. This involved the motivation to collaborate, efficiency and impact, for example, on workload.

Before the first collaborative call, 100% of colleagues were positive about the prospect of collaborating. Overall, whilst there was a positive attitude to collaboration, colleagues commented on time restraints and a lack of focus being the main barriers to collaboration. One colleague noted: 'I have been doing less collaboration than I thought, and instead been fulfilling roles that have been divided up in a team. Thus, collaboration in theory is efficient for best practice but needs to be done properly'. Overall, colleagues observed that having clear aims, a common goal and being organised could lighten workload and be efficient. This aligns with Vangrieken et al's claim that teacher collaboration can positively impact workload and teacher morale (2015: 27). In the light of this, Cat Scutt, Director of Education comments upon the importance evidence-informed teaching, where, 'by drawing on evidence, teacher's practice, and in turn, students' outcomes, can be improved'. (Scutt, 2020). This was used to integrate cultural work and thereby increase student motivation.

Hennebry notes that teaching culture in the UK curriculum is framed as optional, whereby 'developing an appreciation of the richness and diversity of other cultures *could* include different aspects of other cultures and [enable] students to recognise that there are different ways of seeing the world' (2013: 141). Hennebry goes on to state that UK teachers reported that the UK curriculum was too 'prescriptive' and mention that there are too many 'obstacles' to teaching culture such as the lack of time and too much emphasis on 'linguistic proficiency', where MFL teachers felt 'ill-equipped' with strategies for teaching culture (2013: 148). Learning to appreciate culture is not as difficult as learning the target language and the premise that underpinned this intervention was inclusivity. The purpose of an MFL education, as outlined in the MFL GCSE guidance is to develop awareness and understanding of the culture and identity of the countries and communities where the language is spoken (2015: 3). Given that the KS4 curriculum does not include sufficient opportunities for direct contact with the target language culture, the aim of this study was to provide students with the opportunity to engage with the target language culture. Collaborating with colleagues at partnering schools, it was decided that learning must be fun and dynamic. A pen-pal scheme was introduced for Year 11 Spanish students at School A in London, United Kingdom with students at School X in Argentina.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research in this field is very much focused around the use of cultural resources, such as 'objects', 'magazine articles', or 'visual and audio material' in the classroom (Jones, 1995: 2). Jones defines cultural awareness as 'knowledge about' as well as 'thinking about' and 'talking about' culture (1995: 1), how pupils can gain cultural awareness without leaving the country, and talks about starting points whereby students can acquire an understanding of foreign conventions, attitudes and values (1995: 2). Jones' study mentions a cultural awareness project between students in Ankara (Turkey) and Getafe (Spain), whereby students exchanged objects that reflected their culture and sent them in shoeboxes abroad (1995:25). Such findings were useful for my practice and influenced by intervention design, involving a pen-pal scheme between students at School A and students at School X in Argentina. Although a reliable source and case study, the report did not justify the incorporation of cultural elements in lessons. Incorporating culture was more than simply 'knowledge about' or 'awareness of' foreign cultures and practices, as Jones states. Whilst 'use of realia and photographs, can provide a personal context for the presentation of target culture(s)' (Brown, 1986:185), I was keen to harness curiosity about the foreign culture through the target language.

Other existing research papers developed Brown's views further, and explored the importance of galvanising *curiosity* towards the target language culture. Coleman et al deduces that if students have a personal connection with the target language culture, they are then motivated to learn the target language (2007:247). Similarly, the Evans and Fisher report stated that motivation for learning another language stemmed from learning about other cultures, and that the two are not mutually exclusive (2010: 490). As it stands, 'integrative motivation' is low in the UK, namely, the motivation to learn a language in order to communicate with and feel a personal connection to the target language community (1985:54). Thus, whilst there is an innate curiosity to learn about other cultures, it is not addressed enough in the KS4 curriculum, and students are not given enough opportunities to interact with the target language culture. The Evans and Fisher report highlights the importance of learning the target language via 'real communication', whereby 'effective and enjoyable language learning is by-product of meaningful interaction rather than an explicit object of study' (2010:490). Students can therefore communicate for real purposes, and express their own views in the target language. Pachler comments on 'context embeddedness' (2014:245) and the importance of students engaging with *relevant* material which is necessary for raising motivation.

Consequently, I decided to focus on a strand of the Evans and Fisher report based on *communicating for real purposes* with the target language culture, in order to raise motivation for pupils. This underpinned the premise of establishing a pen-pal scheme with School X in Argentina. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MFL department at School A has not been able to provide opportunities to visit the target language country. Brown states that contact with a target language country leads to 'finding out more about the respective countries and cultures' and 'can lead to acculturation later in life' (186: 195).

I looked for subject-specific strategies to establish communication for real purposes within the language classroom. Brown states that the teacher plays an important part in 'facilitating the development of cultural awareness' through choosing relevant activities that will require 'careful

planning and structuring' (1986: 201). Dornyei and Byram provide integrative cultural opportunities to raise motivation. Zoltán Dornyei observes the relationship between cultural awareness and L2 language-learning. He notes that enhancing a learner's language-related values can help to build motivation (2001: 51). I therefore adopted the following four strategies outlined by Dornyei to help build the 'integrative values' and to raise cross-cultural awareness which constituted as my group's shared aim:

1. Enhancing the learners' language-related values and attitudes – Contact with L2 speakers would develop learners' cross-cultural awareness. By writing to pen-pals, students would focus on cross-cultural similarities (as well as differences) in their 'real communication'. Dornyei discusses 'making the strange familiar', and suggests that L2 speaking pen-friends or 'keyboard friends' are a good strategy for generating initial motivation.
2. Making learning stimulating and enjoyable – Contact with the target language culture with the pen-pal scheme was how I intended to raise engagement and motivation; incorporating culture to raise engagement was also my colleagues' shared aim. Lessons would ensure material was relevant for learners. The content of the letters written to the pen-pal in Argentina would focus on the issues that affected year 11 students.
3. Creating learner autonomy – my aim was for students to feel increased ownership over the task by virtue of sending an email to their pen-pal. They would send the email for homework, which was a creative independent task.
4. Making success criteria as clear as possible – use of sentence starters and writing frames would help students to understand 'which elements of their performance and production, are essential', which would enable students to successfully write a letter to their pen-pal.

Bruner's concept of spiralling (1960), informed my planning for the final two lessons, having reviewed the response from the Argentine students. Year 11 returned to previous learning to revise understanding and concepts by revisiting them (Moore, 2012: 22). Bruner writes that 'acquired knowledge is most useful to the learner when it is related to and used in reference to what one has known before' (1996: xii).

Michael Byram proposes a model of intercultural communicative competence, known as the five *savoirs*. Byram's model involves *knowledge (savoirs)*, *attitudes (savoir être), skills (savoir comprender)*, critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager)* and finally, the skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre)* (1997: 35). Whilst all *savoirs* are relevant to the intervention design, *savoir apprendre* and *savoir être* are of paramount importance, and also related to my colleagues' shared aim. *Savoir être* refers to interest in discovering other cultures and the willingness to question values in one's own culture (1997: 34). This project's aim was to raise motivation to learn the target language and give students the opportunity to connect with the second language community and build bridges between their cultures. *Savoir apprendre* enables students to acquire new knowledge of a culture and they would operate this knowledge in *real communication and interaction.*

Andrea Dlaska proposes a counter-argument stating that cultural learning could put learners' linguistic progress at risk, since linguistic progress may be 'compromised by combining language

study with such weighty and unwieldy subject matter' (2000: 250). Despite this, it is arguable that both language and culture are inextricably linked. Learning the target language and real communication links the speakers to a community. Hennebry notes how language is 'instrumental in the socialising process' enabling students to express their emotions and thoughts (2013: 136). He goes on to state that language is the main tool for 'transmitting culture', 'linking individuals into communities of shared identity' (2013: 136). Language and culture have a symbiotic relationship and language is key to discovering this new culture. These views influenced the intervention design.

METHODOLOGY

Collaboration between colleagues at partnering schools was used to formulate the research question: how can we incorporate cultural elements into lessons in order to increase learner motivation in MFL? Thus, the shared group aim between colleagues sought to incorporate culture as a 'fifth skill' into schemes of work and lessons, making language learning more 'real' and engaging for students. This informed the pen-pal intervention of this study.

Participants

Participants involved Year 11 students at School A (age range 15-16), in their second year of the AQA GCSE course. Students from School X in Argentina also participated in the email exchange. Year 11's data was analysed.

Structure of collaboration

Once the shared aim was decided, collaboration was set up according to the following three facets: administrative, professional and psychological (Teach First, 2021: 3). Considering the administrative aspect, there were five calls and the method of communication was a shared google document for documenting best-practice and steps for collaboration. Considering the professional aspect, WhatsApp was used to liaise with each other between calls and set the agenda on the shared google document. There would also be action points following each call, for example, pedagogical readings were divided between to the group to discuss following the first call. Meetings were efficient and each person would contribute in turn. Contributions in the third call involved presenting research and opinions on theoretical reading to the rest of the group. Thus, contributions from others would allow each teacher to inform their intervention and adapt teaching practice. In the fourth call, colleagues' interventions plans were discussed.

Intervention Design

Following collaborative discussions with colleagues, it was decided that the intervention would take place during homework at School A. Brown observes that it is important to ensure that projects that

involve 'use of email or the internet in MFL teaching' or a form of exchange with a partner school, must be 'properly embedded in the scheme of work', with clear aims and objectives (1986: 192). In the light of this, students carried out two email exchanges with their pen-pal over a series of five lessons.

The first lesson taught Year 11s how to talk about the environment using the verb 'deber', and enabled me to make the lesson content relevant to students as Dornyei mentions. Students were able to talk about what they ought to do to protect the environment, and what they already do at home. The first lesson instigated Dornyei's (2001: 51) 'learner autonomy' as students completed a writing task that mentioned they steps they took to protect the environment.

In order to make content *relevant* and engaging for learners which was the collaborative aim (Dornyei, 2001: 55) lesson 2 developed lesson 1, encouraging students to think about actions taken at a *local* level to protect their environment. The present subjunctive was taught in the context of students discussing strategies to tackle local issues. Again, learner autonomy was embedded through the first email exchange for homework, where students wrote an email stating what they do at home to help the environment, what they would like to do with their family, and what is currently done in the town that they live in. In this way, Bruner's spiralling technique was used, whereby information provided to students which had been scaffolded in lessons 1 and 2 formed the structure for the email. The success criteria were made clear and students were given a writing frame to complete the task (1996: xii). The email task enabled me to enhance students' *savoir être,* and encourage students to reflect on their own culture, thereby enhancing their cultural knowledge.

Lessons 3-5 built on the use of the present subjunctive and introduced impersonal verbs, to talk about possible solutions for tackling global issues that were mentioned by the Argentinians. Lessons 4 and 5, 'piensa globalmente', from the AQA course, enabled me to enhance my students' critical cultural awareness as they considered global solutions, as outlined by Byram (1997: 37). Year 11s then completed their second email, addressing the themes from their pen-pal, and writing about what concerned them most in the world and what they would do to improve it. Based on responses to email task 1, it was possible to provide students with relevant sentence starters in order to complete their second email exchange successfully.

Data Collection Tools

Students at School A, London, were set pre and post intervention questionnaires before and after the two email exchanges with students in School X, Argentina, asking questions on students' interest to learn about foreign cultures and their attitudes towards direct contact with the target language community. The questionnaires made use of open and closed questions in order to identify changes before and after the intervention. Further proxies were included to determine Year 11's attitudes to both language and culture (informed by Hennebry). 3-5 different options were included, using Likert scale to avoid a positive response bias with respondents simply answering 'yes' to questions on enjoyment. This allowed me to gain a more nuanced understanding. Survey questions were informed by Byram's savoirs, focusing around attitudes towards and knowledge of the L2 culture. In this way, the students' perspective coupled with colleagues' collaborative input, underpinned

with pedagogical literature would avoid a deficit mindset: the focus would be on improving future teaching practice and avoiding inaccurate conclusions.

Sampled work

Work was sampled from 3 students which reflect a range of abilities across Year 11s. However, it is possible that cognitive bias may have influenced selection of students' work for analysis. Although all students were given the same criteria and time-frames to complete the activities, some may have spent longer completing the homework task compared to others.

Data Analysis

Byram identifies possible areas of assessment of cultural understanding such as asking appropriate questions, reflecting on one's own culture, analysing cultural phenomena and carrying out comparisons (1991: 389). Thus, evidence of these criteria would be identified in the two emails that Year 11 sent to their pen-pal. To measure the impact of the intervention, I will also compare pupil work from the first and second email exchange to see if there is a development in cultural understanding.

Brookfield's reflective model of experiential learning (2017) was used in order to evaluate the intervention and assess the impact. With my mentor, I discussed my lesson plans prior to the two email exchange interventions. Given the collaborative nature of this paper, I will include my mentor and Teach First colleagues' perspectives in my evaluation of the intervention, which forms part of Brookfield's lens. Brookfield's model involves inclusion of the student perspective. It was important for me to understand Year 11's perspectives in order to evaluate the impact of the intervention in order to see if there had been a change in attitude. Interpretative analysis was then conducted using Byram's *savoirs* as the theoretical framework.

Ethics

Ethical approval was granted by University College London. Participants at School A, London and School X, Argentina signed a consent form for participation and use of their data before the project took place. Students were given a briefing on the aims, methodology and recruitment for the study. All student names and data were anonymised.

RESULTS

First, I will begin with comparing student responses from the two exchanges with school X in Argentina.

Student 1, has made good use of the sentence starters and examples provided in lessons 1 and 2 to construct their email. There is evidence of the student 'analysing cultural phenomena' as Byram suggests, with the description of practices 'en mi región', (in my area) and of their own practices. In the first and second email, Student 1 does not ask questions about the target language culture in
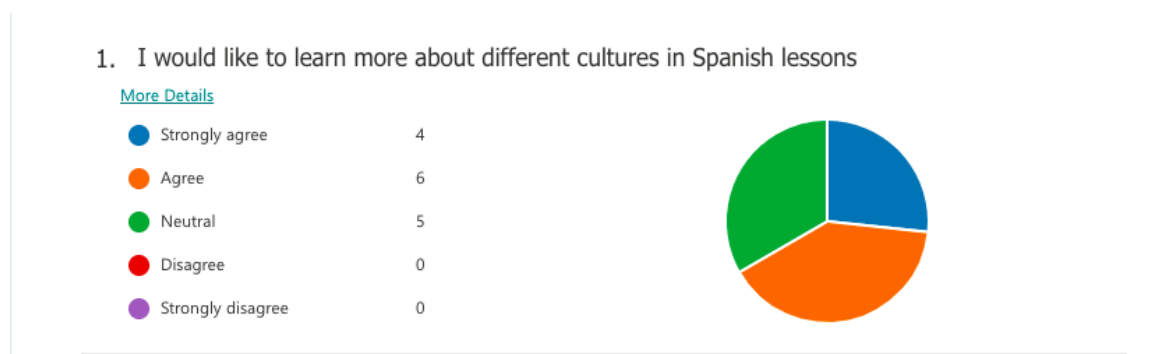
response to their pen-pal's email or carry out comparisons, responding to specific details in their pen-pal's response, which does not demonstrate Byram's *savoir apprendre*.

Student 2, has provided a full account of global issues ranging from gender inequality, racial discrimination and unemployment. Student 2 demonstrates that they have been able to draw links between their own culture and that of the target language community, demonstrating Byram's *savoir être*. Student 2 asked pertinent questions about the L2 community in class, and gave positive contributions about what common practices were shared between Argentine culture and their own culture during class discussion. Student 2 later mentioned that exploring such commonalities made them feel more connected to the target language culture.

Student 3's first email reads well, and the student has been able to provide more information when reflecting on practices in their local culture. Dornyei's strategies of 'making success criteria as clear as possible' were drawn upon, by providing live feedback during the independent practice phases of lessons 1-2, and by *demonstrating* success. Student 3 therefore shows evidence of benefiting from this and making progress with successful use of the subjunctive phrases taught in the lesson. By asking leading questions in their second response, student 3 demonstrates curiosity in the target language community, by adding personalising touches to their email.

Pre and post intervention questionnaire analysis

Considering the students' perspectives (Brookfield's lens), in the pre-survey, 67% of students said they would like to learn more about different cultures in lessons and 100% of students selecting neutral-strongly agree options for wanting to have direct contact with foreign cultures (figure 1).

1. I would like to learn more about different cultures in Spanish lessons

More Details

● Strongly agree		4
● Agree		6
● Neutral		5
● Disagree		0
● Strongly disagree		0

5. I would like to have more direct contact with foreign cultures

More Details

●	Strongly agree	5
●	Agree	5
●	Neutral	5
●	Disagree	0
●	Strongly disagree	0

Conversely, in the post-survey 45% of students responded with 'neutral' to feeling 'more in touch' with the foreign culture with direct contact through the pen-pal scheme, with 3 students disagreeing to this statement (originally, in the pre-survey, none of the students had disagreed to any of the statements regarding motivation for contact with the target language community).

Figure 1: Students' pre-intervention questionnaire

1. The pen pal scheme improved my knowledge of local/global issues faced by argentine culture

More Details

●	Strongly agree	0
●	Agree	1
●	Neutral	8
●	Disagree	0
●	Strongly disagree	2

2. I felt more 'in touch' with the foreign culture with direct contact through the pen pal scheme

More Details   💡 Insights

●	Strongly agree	0
●	Agree	3
●	Neutral	5
●	Disagree	1
●	Strongly disagree	2

Figure 2: Students' post- intervention questionnaire

One must note that 73% of students responded with neutral to the scheme having an impact on their knowledge of local and global issues. Considering the data provided by the post-survey, one can infer that students would have benefitted from further exchanges on alternative topics (figure 2).

Analysis of teacher-collaboration model used and limitations to model:

The post-collaboration survey demonstrates that collaboration was useful for reducing workload. Taking the pedagogical strand of Brookfield's lens, pedagogical literature was used to inform evaluations. During the first three collaboration calls, there was an element of anchoring bias, where colleagues were focusing mainly on using cultural content in lessons as a means of improving engagement, without giving much importance to language. Having explored this idea further through theoretical reading, it is evident that culture and language were very much inter-dependent (also informed by my experiences of teaching culture), in unison with Hennebry's proposal. A colleague mentioned 'students can share their ideas in English and there are no right or wrong answers so long as they are engaging with the content. Thus, all students will come out having learnt something if not linguistic skills – they will still have a deeper understanding of the culture and knowledge of how to relate and respect each other'. Nonetheless, it was predominantly through real, *direct,* communication, that Year 11 students would potentially feel more engaged, and had the ability to relate to and be open up to the target language community. There may have also been an element of confirmation bias with those colleagues who included 'cultural realia' or cultural stereotypes in lessons as that has been known to raise engagement in the past through colleagues' experiences of bringing cultural objects into the classroom as a 'show and tell' technique. Thus, there was also an element of French's 'expert power' occurring within the collaboration group, whereby colleagues who had explored culture in the past through previous research may have dominated discussions during our intervention planning phase (1959: 155). Bovbjerg notes that collaborative groups may result in more 'closed social systems', forming 'exclusive groups in the organisational structure of the school' (2006: 244). However, this was not a problem as the collaboration occurred amongst teachers across Teach First London schools, and so change to our practice occurred on an individual-basis across MFL lessons at respective schools. Nonetheless, one participant in the post-survey notes how it is important to make collaboration more focused around common agendas. Considering Vangrieken's spectrum, it is arguable that there were still elements of cooperation. Conducting individual research on different interventions may not have been the most effective way to practise collaboration.

Certain shortcomings that were present during collaboration include being driven by self-interest (to advocate ideas related to culture, and ignore language) but also agreeing to ideas, constituting 'contrived collegiality' (Vangrieken et al, 2015: 29). There was often little communication between calls, which often meant questions went unanswered. Dividing the workload and sharing readings was a positive aspect of collaboration and something the group would like to maintain. Having conducted further research, Thomson and Holloway's paper on staff development procedures at a primary school suggests that as long as teachers have a commitment to improvement, and there are provisions to support collaborative initiatives in school, it is beneficial to staff development (2015: 324). Thus, sharing best practice with colleagues in a 'Teaching and Learning' clinic, this will make collaboration less contrived. To develop this further, monitoring collaboration and encouraging feedback would avoid Vangrieken's

'contrived collegiality' that was experienced during my collaboration with colleagues, but rather, encourage a more critical-reflective attitude. Given the restrictiveness of the schemes of work or what schools permit, it is also important to establish collaboration amongst colleagues within the same school.

Limitations

Considering my colleague's perspective, students 'would have benefited from a third exchange' for sustained impact to be made on pupil learning and progress. My colleague also commented on the importance of making the lesson content as engaging as possible to sustain learner motivation. The module will later cover sporting events, and there is scope for students to write to each other about national sport, which is likely to highly engage the L2 Argentine community as well as the Year 11s.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, whilst the initial idea of the pen-pal sparked motivation amongst Year 11 students and allowed for skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre*) and fostered cultural outlooks and attitudes (*savoir être*), further email exchanges were needed for impact to be made. Considering Dornyei's four strategies for generating motivation that informed my intervention, students were given clear success criteria. Nonetheless, students would have benefitted from formative feedback on their emails which would have prepared them well for future exchanges. Learner autonomy was generated during the homework phase, however, as sentence starters were provided, there was arguably a lack of individuality and authenticity to year 11's emails. Students' language-related values could have been developed further through choice of topic. Commentary and reflections on the local environment may not have made learning 'stimulating and engaging' and one can speculate that it may not have allowed for the cross-cultural awareness that is discussed by both Dornyei and Byram. Byram's theory also focuses on the spontaneity of interpreting foreign documents (1997: 37). As suggested by Byram, in the future Year 11 students and students from the target language community could work together to identify commonalities in their local issues and to design solutions together, over a zoom interaction. If Argentine students initiate the first email, it would also encourage my students to interpret foreign documents 'spontaneously', triggering spontaneity, as suggested by Byram. This would also further generate Dornyei's learner autonomy, enabling students to feel more 'connected' to the L2 community in real-time communication rather than relying on writing frames and sentence starters to construct emails (which obliterated authenticity). Students will be given tools and vocabulary support, but should not feel wedded to use this. Thus, trialling another pen-pal exchange with a Year 7 Spanish class will be fruitful, where students can introduce themselves (name, age, introduce their family and talk about their hobbies) to their pen-pal, this would allow for Coleman's more 'personal connection' to the target language culture. Considering Dorynei's observations, such topics may be stimulating and more *relevant* to their lives, therefore having a positive impact on motivation.

Given that there is a large focus on the skill of writing during the pen-pal scheme, it begs the question whether culture can really be given the importance it deserves as a 'fifth' and separate skill. The pen-pal scheme demonstrated that culture cannot be accessible without language and scaffolding, as outlined by Brown in his description of communicating for real purposes. This brings one back to my group's shared aim. There is scope for learner motivation to be enhanced by incorporation of culture, although my intervention does not necessarily demonstrate this. Whilst a colleague suggested that 'learning to appreciate culture is not as difficult as learning the target language, therefore all students will feel engaged', it ultimately becomes an *affirming the consequent* fallacy. Students can feel more connected to the target language culture when communicating for real purposes, yet in accordance to my own philosophy, both language and culture are inter-dependent, and are paramount for generating motivation.

Moreover, I hope to continue raising my students' motivation through innovative schemes such as foreign exchanges once exchange trips can run after Covid-19. I have been delegated the task to plan a trip for the next academic year, and thus I am keen to collaborate with a local school and run an exchange through this partnership. Enhancing learner's language-related values will generate motivation (Dornyei, 2001: 51) and obliterate insularity with cross-cultural contact, a notion discussed by Coleman. To fully achieve the group's common goal, I would now like to incorporate the use of TikTok videos as a means of implementing authentic cultural material in the classroom. This is an idea borrowed of two colleagues following collaboration to improve my future practice.

I am keen to use both language and culture together to continue raising motivation amongst my students, and I hope to collaborate with colleagues in other schools in order to achieve this.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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