

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

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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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1 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.

2 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.

The Experiential Learning Cycle

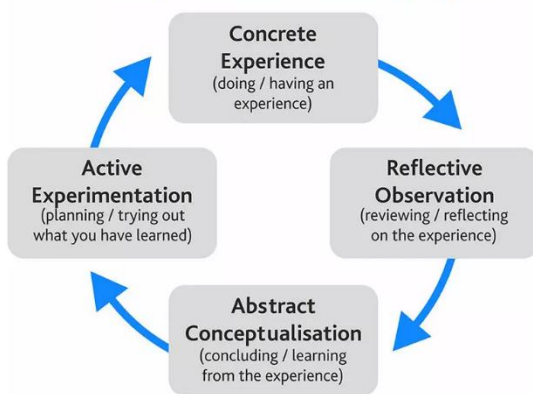


Figure 1: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (McPheat, 2021)

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)	others
(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).

3 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).

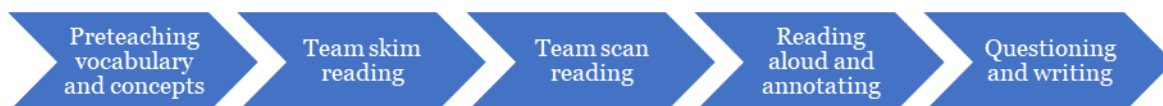


Figure 3: Pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading activities used in the intervention

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 and 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.

4 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).

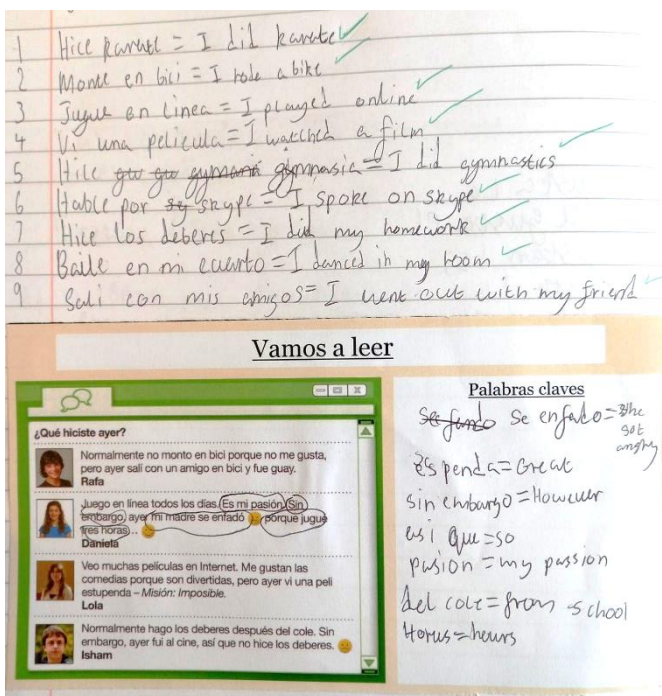


Figure 5: MPA's pre-teach stage vocabulary

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 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.

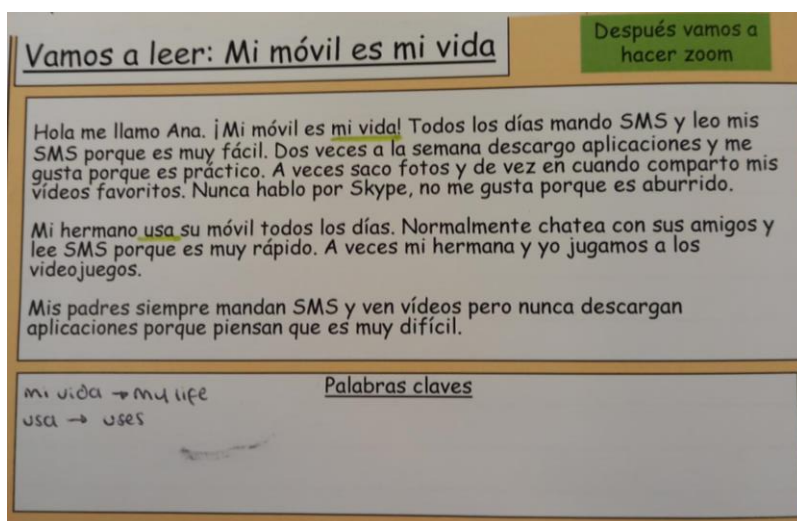
Given that self-efficacy can also be a kind of metacognitive belief (Paris and Winograd, 1990), I felt it appropriate in the next stage of SRE to capitalise on what O'Malley and Charnot term, social or

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 Charnot, 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.



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

Figure 6: HPA’s during-reading glossary

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

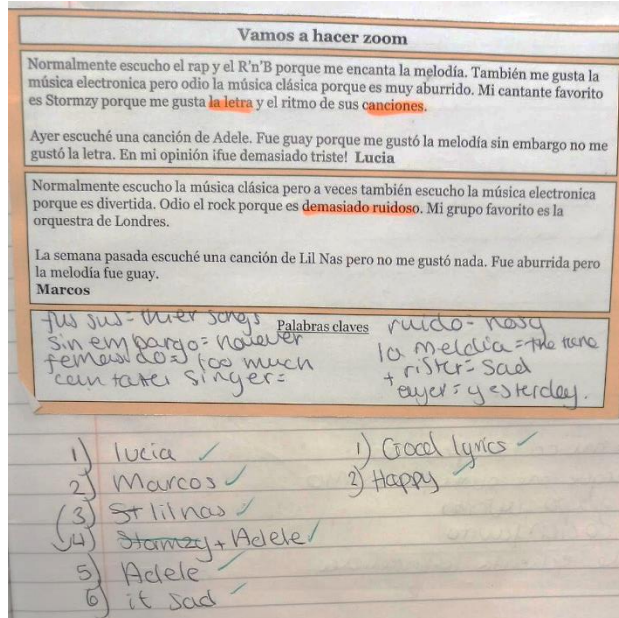


Figure 7: Student 3 (MPA with reading age of 10) post-reading exercise

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.

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.

5 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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