Examining the Impact of a Project-Based Learning Approach to Teaching French: How does it Encourage Confidence and Self-efficacy in Year 8 Girls' Independent Problem-Solving?

Jo Orgill

Shrewsbury High School, Shrewsbury, UK

Abstract

Over the course of 15 lessons from September to November 2021, I undertook a project-based learning (PBL) approach to teaching French with 15 Year 8 girls. They worked independently to produce a video tour of their school for our partner school in France. In a mixed-methods research design, I examined the impact of this student-centered approach to language learning on the girls' self-efficacy, confidence, and independent problem-solving skills. The PBL approach resulted in high pupil engagement, increased self-efficacy over time, as well as enhanced attainment and ability to problem-solve independently. The results led me to reflect on the importance of collaboration for girls in my setting as well as my use of pupil voice in my practice. This study contributes to the literature on self-efficacy in language-learning, with a particular focus on the benefits of a PBL approach for girls.

Glossary

Project-Based Learning (PBL): a teaching method where pupils develop knowledge and skills by actively engaging in a project for a real-life purpose over an extended period.

Self-efficacy: the belief in one's capability to achieve an intended outcome.

Confidence*:* a learner's impression of her competence.

Collaboration: working with others to achieve a shared goal with equal contribution from all.

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Shrewsbury High School is one of 25 schools in the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), whose mission statement is: "Where girls learn without limits." The school's recently renewed vision statement highlights the value of creativity and innovation in the curriculum, allowing girls to develop intellectual curiosity and equipping them with the skills to prepare them for life in an unfamiliar future. However, despite the strength and unity of belief in these ideals, staff have identified that the girls in our setting tend to be outcome-orientated and overly focussed on the judgement of their performance in assessments. As a result, they value being "spoon-fed" what they need to know and relying on the teacher to tell them what to do. This observation echoed my reflections on my own teaching practice: did my teacher-led approach foster a reluctance to problem solve independently? Yet problem solving is highlighted at an international level as a key skill needed to prepare young people to participate fully in a rapidly changing society (Bray et al., 2020, p. 1). In this project, therefore, it seemed all the more pertinent to consider how I could seek to challenge and empower girls at Shrewsbury High School to develop the skills they would need to tackle problems independently in their future lives.

When exploring the literature, I came across a teaching method hitherto unknown to me- Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Problem solving is embedded in the process of designing and carrying out an extended project, thereby challenging students to build their problem-solving confidence and capacity. By undertaking a project-based approach to language learning, my goal was to prioritise and promote the development of confidence in solving problems independently. Having also been struck by the significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and academic achievement (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Jaekel, 2020; Raoofi et al., 2012), I decided to investigate the question: *How does a project-based approach to learning French encourage confidence and self-efficacy in independent problem solving in Year 8 girls?*

As my research question assessed attitudes to learning, it was of paramount importance that the girls' voices were the driving force of the enquiry. Action research was, therefore, the ideal method of investigation, as the systematic collection of a range of different data allowed me to analyse my own students in my own classroom, in order better to understand them (Mertler, 2020). Furthermore, action research provided the opportunity to experiment creatively with my pedagogy, based on an understanding of existing educational theory and research and to reflect actively on the impact of a new approach and its implications for the wider school setting.

Literature Review

Problem solving is widely accepted as an essential skill for the 21st century, yet traditional curricula and pedagogy fail to equip young people adequately with the skills needed to meet professional standards (Griffin & Care, 2015, p. 3). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that girls, and in particular high-achieving girls, underperform in their ability to problem-solve compared to boys (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2015). Kevin Stannard, the GDST's Director of Innovation and Learning, in his report on the GDST perspective on girls-only education (GDST, n.d.), maintains that:

> Girls' learning needs, styles and preferences are different from those of boys…In particular, even today gender stereotyping and gender differences in expectations and, often, self-definition, tend to affect girls' behaviour, attitudes and choices, unless they are checked and challenged at school. (p. 5)

As educators of girls, it is clearly of prime importance to engage girls in learning opportunities that not only develop the skills they will need for the future, but which are tailored effectively to their learning needs.

Self-efficacy as a construct was first described by Bandura (1986) and has its roots in Social Cognitive Theory. According to Bandura, "self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to organise and execute the sources of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 36). In other words, it refers to an individual's belief in their ability to accomplish a specific task. Self-efficacy is clearly still relevant as a concept in education today; it has been shown by a substantial body of educational research to be a principal variable not only in predicting achievement but also in influencing effort, motivation, engagement, and the ability to persist in the face of difficulty or failure (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Raoofi et al., 2012; Talsma et al., 2018). Self-efficacy would, therefore, seem particularly relevant when considering the skills needed for effective problem solving. This notion is further supported by research by the National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC), which reported that students who have high levels of self-efficacy attribute success to effort and strategies used, believing that errors are a part of learning and that their own abilities will improve the more they learn (NCLRC, 2000).

The relevance of self-efficacy in relation to girls' learning, in particular, is highlighted in the OECD's (2015) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA): "gender disparities in performance do not stem from innate differences in aptitude, but rather from students' attitudes towards learning and … the confidence they have – or do not have – in their own abilities as students" (p. 3). In the context of foreign language learning in the UK, studies have suggested that students' perceptions of their lack of success in languages are linked to a lack of belief in their ability

(Fisher, 2001; Graham, 2004, 2007; Jaekel, 2020). This lack of success is a contributing factor in the decline in languages study at GCSE and A-Level and particularly affects girls (OFSTED, 2021). Considering the fundamental relationship between self-efficacy and learning, and Bandura's assertion that self-efficacy can "contribute to academic performance over and above actual ability" (Bandura, 1993, as cited in Zimmerman, 1995, p. 213), the need to develop self-efficacy amongst girls seems all the more critical.

Project-based learning (PBL) is a student-activated pedagogical approach that addresses the need to develop girls' problem-solving skills and enhance self-efficacy. PBL has its roots in the constructivist theory of learning, where knowledge is actively created by the learner through experience, rather than being passively transmitted by the teacher (Nie & Lau, 2010) and combines knowledge and understanding with skills (GDST, n.d.). As Patton (2012) explains, learning through projects is intended to teach content, but also requires critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and communication. According to Gijbels et al. (2005), "successful problem-solvers possess an organised and flexible knowledge base and master the skills to apply this knowledge for problem-solving" (p. 2). PBL would, therefore, seem to be well-suited to developing problem-solving skills. PBL also gains support in the World Economic Forum's (2020) recent report, *Schools of the future,* which advocates "learning ecosystems that are personalised and self-paced; accessible and inclusive; problem-based and collaborative; life-long and student driven" (p. 11).

Reviews of studies examining the effect of PBL on student achievement for both boys and girls indicate substantial evidence of a positive correlation (Thomas, 2000; Gijbels et al., 2005; Condliffe et al., 2017; Kingston, 2018; Kokotsaki et al., 2016), not least in its appreciation by students (Gijbels et al., 2005; Kokotsaki et al., 2016). It is, therefore, surprising that there has been relatively little research on the impact of PBL on self-efficacy, especially with girls, and especially in the context of language learning (Park & Hiver, 2017). Considering that "girls adapt better to … project-based activities" (Stannard, 2019 p. 5), it seemed worthwhile to explore the impact of project-based learning on girls' self-efficacy and ability to solve problems in their language learning–is believing achieving?

Research Context

Shrewsbury High School is an independent school for girls situated in the county town centre of Shrewsbury in the United Kingdom. Approximately 440 pupils are enrolled aged 3-18 years old.

My intervention was carried out with a class of 15 Year 8 girls (aged 12 to 13 years) over ten weeks from the beginning of the first term of the school year. The class had three, 60-minute French lessons per fortnight; therefore the project took place over the course of 15 lessons. The pupils had some prior knowledge of French and had developed basic skills in comprehension and language

production; it was important for them to have these basics on which the project would then build. Year 8 pupils were ideal participants as they are generally settled into the routines of school life yet remain well-motivated and open to new ideas. They are also young enough for attitudes to learning still to be malleable and not to be unduly influenced by imminent high-stakes assessments, for example national GCSE assessments at age 16. Having taught all the participants previously for one year, I had developed a relationship with them and knowing them as students helped inform my planning; for example, what level of scaffolded material I needed to provide to support the success of the project.

An explanation of the project and its aims was sent to parents and permission for participation in data collection was gained from both students and parents via an online form. It was made clear that no pupil would be disadvantaged academically should they decide not to participate in data collection and that any reporting would be anonymised.

The Action

The scheduled topic for Year 8 in the Autumn Term in French was School Life. My previous approach was teacher-led: I would present vocabulary and structures in French on subtopics, such as school subjects, opinion phrases, school routine, and telling the time, and the girls would practise with a variety of activities designed and provided by me. I reimagined this with a PBL approach. In line with the essential criteria for a PBL project, I set the girls the real-life task of producing a video tour of our school in French for pupils and teachers in our partner school in Nancy, France. Assessment criteria were explained and a timeline for assessment checkpoints, as well as vocabulary tests (in line with department policy), was given. The girls also had access to a Padlet of differentiated resources (colour-coded according to difficulty) comprising presentations and activities on key topic vocabulary and structures. An introductory lesson challenged pupils to consider what they would like their French peers to know about our school and to plan how they would present this in their video. The girls then worked independently to produce a plan and to write a script in French. Pupils received formal feedback after lesson four and again once they had started filming after lesson eight. The finished videos were sent to our partner school in France, where they were shown to Year 8 pupils as well as at the school's Open Day.

Data Collection

A mixed-methods approach was chosen as the most appropriate research design. Mostly qualitative and some quantitative data were collected. The research question investigated attitudes to learning, which are best expressed narratively via pupil voice. Furthermore, the specific factors being looked at–confidence and self-efficacy–are not easily quantifiable. Qualitative methods allowed for the collection of rich data, enabling more in-depth understanding.

To maximise their validity, data were gathered from a variety of sources: semi-structured lesson observation notes, pupil surveys, exit tickets, and pupil interviews. A survey adapting examples in the literature on assessment of student confidence and self-efficacy ("Academic Self-Efficacy and Efficacy for Self-Regulated Learning," 2021; "Self-Efficacy in Discipline Scale", n.d.) measured the strength of pupils' self-efficacy and confidence. Pupils rated their confidence on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "not confident at all" to "completely confident" that they would be successful in nine key behaviours relating to self-efficacy and confidence, selected from examples in the literature (Bray et al., 2020; NCLRC, 2000).

Pupils filled in a survey after the first introductory lesson as they embarked on the project. They filled in the same survey around the halfway point of the project (lesson 9 out of 16) at the start of a lesson in which they had just received feedback on their work. The same survey was given after the final lesson of the project, when the finished videos had been submitted (but before marking). The same questions were given in order to maintain consistency, although in the final survey I included some extra questions designed to assess the girls' attitudes to working collaboratively.

At the end of every lesson, pupils filled in an Exit Ticket, where they rated their current level of confidence in the progress of their project. The tickets also had a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "I am completely lost" to "I have got this!" accompanied by smiley emojis. Pupils were encouraged to write a sentence to elaborate on their rating, thus providing the opportunity to clarify their choices or give further information, thereby providing richer data.

During lessons, I carried out semi-structured observations, noting examples from the list of nine key behaviours mentioned earlier. At some points, informal, spontaneous questioning took place in order to gain further insight into particular behaviours. Observations were also carried out by a colleague-observer on two occasions towards the beginning and end of the project.

Interviews were carried out with each group of four pupils who worked together during the project. These took place three weeks into the project (after pupils had begun to work collaboratively). Interview questions were designed to gather data on pupils' attitudes to the PBL approach, their perceptions of their ability to succeed in their video project, as well as the impact of working collaboratively.

Data Analysis

I approached the analysis of my data in two ways. Quantitative data from the Likert scales in the pupils' exit tickets, as well as survey responses, were put into a spreadsheet and converted into charts to allow visual tracking of pupils' reporting of confidence in relation to problem-solving skills over time. Qualitative data–written survey responses and written answers from exit tickets as well

as interviews and lesson observation notes–were transcribed and analysed according to the three-step process of "organisation, description and interpretation" (Mertler, 2020, p. 173) in order to identify themes which, alongside analysis of the quantitative data, provided insight and allowed conclusions to be drawn.

Discussion of Results

The goal of my study was to assess the impact of a PBL approach to teaching French on the confidence and self-efficacy of Year 8 girls. Having analysed my data it was clear that a *collaborative* PBL approach had a positive impact on engagement in French, led to overall higher levels of confidence in all the key problem-solving areas being looked at, enhanced problem-solving skills, and led to higher attainment for many.

A *Collaborative* PBL Approach Enhanced Pupil Engagement

My findings support previous findings that PBL is viewed positively by students (Gijbels et al., 2005; Kokotsaki et al., 2016). A very common comment in the post-project survey was that what the girls most enjoyed about the PBL approach was that it was "fun." Reasons given for this comment often focussed on having more autonomy and freedom. As one girl put it, "it was a fun way to learn more French and it was way more interesting than just sitting down in a classroom and learning a load of stuff." After the first introductory lesson explaining the project, the girls seemed excited by its "real-life" objective and began to look at resources and plan their script individually. However, by lesson two, two girls had asked me whether they could work in a group. I reiterated the expectation that each individual should produce her own video; however, at the beginning of lesson four, one girl asked on behalf of the whole class what the reasons for this were. When I explained, a discussion ensued and counter-arguments were given by the girls. I then agreed to allow them to work collaboratively. An insight into the girls' desire to work collaboratively was found in my analysis of lesson observations, which revealed a striking difference in the girls' behaviours pre- and post-collaboration regarding their engagement and was also supported by pupil comments in interviews and surveys.

During the first three lessons, I noticed that, although pupils remained focussed, there was little interaction with each other. At one point during lesson three, everyone was working in silence, focussed on completing their first "storyboard" for checking at the end of the lesson. Some girls lacked purpose in their choice of activity and some appeared quite lost and even a little worried. One girl asked whether she could work more on her project at home; further questioning indicated that she lacked confidence in her ability to get it all done in the time allocated in class. After being grouped in lesson four, however, the vast majority of girls consistently came into class with a sense of purpose; they often arrived talking about what they aimed to achieve that lesson, moved their

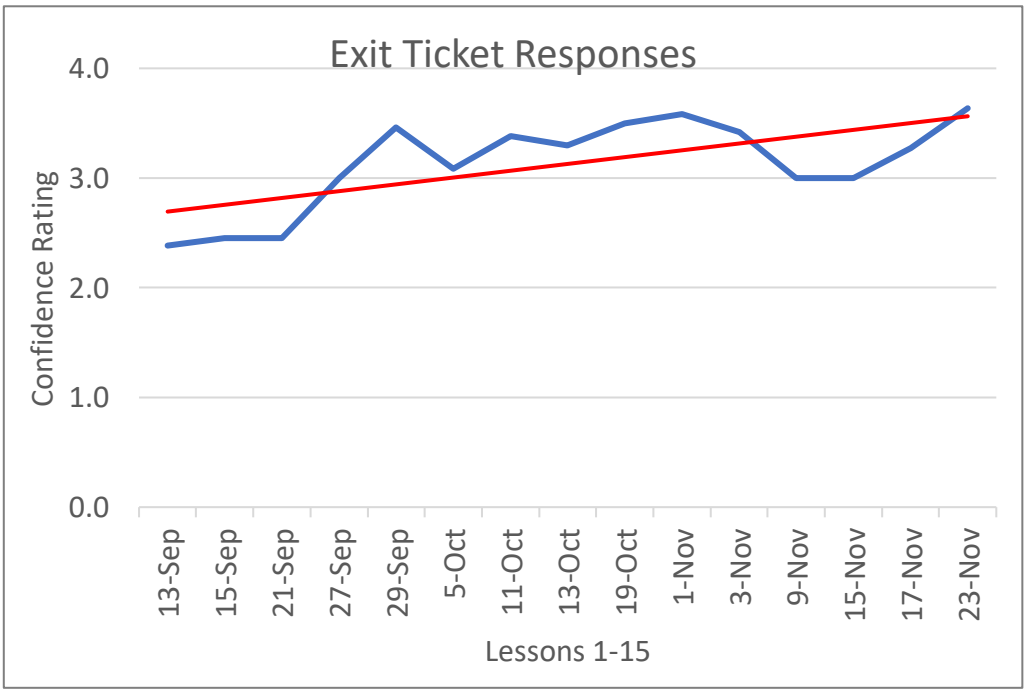
desks into groups independently, and opened their laptops without prompting. The classroom had a "buzz," with lots of laughter and engaged, productive talk. It was clear that the girls' positive view of the PBL approach was only enhanced by the ability to work collaboratively. As one girl explained in interview, "I feel like when we're working by ourselves … we were kind of … isolating ourselves, but now that we are working in a group we're … having more fun, working all together." Four girls reported that having fun working *together* was the best thing about the project. This supports findings in the literature that the ability to work collaboratively has a beneficial effect on motivation (Jung, 2021), which, for student-centred learning, is crucial (Shin, 2018).

A Collaborative PBL Approach to Teaching French Enhanced Girls' Confidence and Self-Efficacy Over Time

It was clear from the analysis of exit ticket results that the girls' confidence in their ability to succeed in producing a high-quality video, i.e., their self-efficacy, improved over time (see Figure 1). There was a significant rise in confidence after lesson four– the lesson where the girls began to work collaboratively. Their comments on exit tickets at this time revealed a clear reason, with 8 out of 13 comments referring positively to the ability to collaborate: "I feel a lot more confident now we are working in groups", "Way more confident ❤ Group ,"and "Because we have started to work in groups I am more confident because I feel less stressed." Comments in the interviews also supported the positive impact of collaboration on confidence.

Figure 1

Average Confidence Rating in Exit Ticket



The most frequent reason for the girls feeling more confident when able to collaborate was that it lessened the “burden” of completing the project alone; as one girl put it, “there was so much on my plate I didn't know where to start … definitely in groups just shares out the amount of work and puts less stress on you.”

The ability to get help from peers was also cited as a reason for increased confidence. As one girl noted, for example, “in groups … if you have any problems or anything you can just discuss it with everyone in your group.” The third most common reason reflected an appreciation of each member’s ability to contribute different skills that would allow for a better quality final video. As explained by one girl, “personally I just feel … a lot more confident that it's going to be better because we’ve got more different contributions from other people, more ideas,” and another who commented that, “it's always good to see what someone else thinks and make your work even better than it already is.” This evidence of self-awareness supports previous findings that PBL elicits critical thinking skills and social competence (Jung, 2021).

Thirteen out of 14 girls in the post-project survey agreed (one) or strongly agreed (12) with the statement: “Working in a group helped me make a better quality video than if I had been working on my own.” In the post-project survey, over half the girls disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: “I could have made a good quality video if I had worked by myself.” Considering the importance of self-efficacy in relation to attainment (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Zimmerman, 1995), it is clear that, for most girls, collaboration played an important role in developing self-belief.

There were some exceptions, however, to the positive role played by collaboration in self-efficacy. Six girls agreed, one strongly, that they would have been able to make a good quality video had they been working on their own. Four of these girls were of higher ability (three belonged to the school’s More Able and Talented Program), which lead me to think that their experience of high achievement in the past has led them to expect to be able to achieve highly again (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Talsma et al., 2018). One of the two remaining girls commented in lessons, although she enjoyed working in a group, “I would have been ok doing it on my own.” The remaining girl belonged to a group that, according to my observations, tended to communicate less successfully. I frequently observed girls in this group working silently on individual tasks, particularly at the start of the project. They tended to need more prompting from me when it came to planning their goals for the lesson or in finding resources when stuck. The girl in question tended to be particularly passive, preferring another group member to tell her what to do. She commented in the post-project survey that her group did not help her when she was stuck – neither did she take a more proactive role in seeking help or sharing ideas. I concluded that for some girls, more explicit

intervention regarding effective communication skills is needed in order to maximise the potential to develop problem-solving skills via a collaborative PBL approach.

A PBL Approach Enhanced Problem-Solving Skills and Attainment in French

The girls' confidence, as measured in the pre- and post-survey results, increased for all but one of the nine key behaviours chosen from the literature (Bray et al., 2020; NCLRC, 2000) relating to self-efficacy and confidence in problem solving. The most marked increase was in the ability to "deal with a difficulty when it arises." Only a quarter of the girls reported feeling confident with this skill at the start of the project, but this increased to over three quarters at the end. This suggested decreasing reliance on the teacher, which was a theme that also emerged from my observations in lessons and was even more marked when pupils were working collaboratively as they clearly sought help more often from peers. One girl explained how she felt after having found out independently how to tell the time in French: "It's good … I don't need the teacher to tell me what to do." Another girl who rated herself as only "quite" good at French at the start of the project, commented after a lesson in which she had been encouraged to find out herself how to express something, grinned at me at the end of the lesson, gave a thumbs up and said: "I'm amazing at French!" Indeed, this girl exceeded expectations (based on baseline data and subject target grades) in terms of her final achievement in the project, supporting the belief that self-efficacy increases motivation which therefore drives one to succeed (Jung, 2021).

Confidence in the ability to respond positively to feedback also significantly increased over the course of the project, with 13 out of 14 girls reported feeling "very" or "completely" confident at the end of the project, compared to seven out of 14 at the start. In response to some informal questioning in class about how receiving feedback affected their confidence, one girl explained: "Well, it kind of makes you feel less confident because you've done something wrong, but then it kind of makes you more confident because you know you can put it right." Receiving feedback would, therefore, seem to be an important element in relation to girls' self-efficacy in problem solving.

Of the nine key behaviours previously mentioned, the only one in which girls reported feeling somewhat less confident at the start of the project was in speaking confidently in French, something which was also communicated in comments regarding what, if anything, they were worried about as they began the project. It is possible that the perception that speaking in French is difficult impacted negatively on self-efficacy at the start of this project (Graham, 2007). It is also important to consider affective factors in this age group of girls; many feel self-conscious speaking in front of others and, as one girl pointed out in interview, "I am not really used to videoing myself." The mid-project survey showed that confidence had in fact decreased. The fact that a high

proportion of feedback was on pronunciation may have affected pupils' perception of their ability at this stage. As one girl explained, "it (feedback) makes you feel bad because you have done something wrong but good because you know how to do it right." Yet, by the end of the project, confidence in speaking had increased overall in the group, with everyone reporting that they felt either "quite" (eight), "very" (three) or "completely" (three) confident. One girl commented on her penultimate exit ticket, that she was "a lot more confident with French pronunciation," while another justified giving a "4 rating at the end of the project as "being a lot more accurate in pronunciation." Feedback clearly had a positive impact here.

In lessons, I observed that pupils in some groups were more adept at finding appropriate resources, suggesting ideas, and planning and organising their time than others. It was apparent that in one of the four groups, in particular, one pupil tended to take a leadership role, coaching others and driving progress. In another group, two members tended to be passive, waiting for instructions from their peers or for prompts by me. Another pupil in the same group was uncomfortable with a PBL approach, commenting in interview that she was "one of those people who likes sitting in the lesson and the teacher tells you what to do. I like it better … but … this [project] is kind of up in the air, so it's harder for me." It was evident from lesson observations that at the start of the project, this girl did struggle to work independently – she asked at least one question to me per lesson during the first five lessons, such as "Am I allowed to …?" and, "How do you say…?" However, she subsequently tended to take the lead in her group, becoming more adept at answering questions for herself, using her own resources, and even directing others what to do (this was the same girl mentioned earlier who commented that it was good that she did not need the teacher to tell her what to do).

I concluded that for some girls, a PBL approach seemed to enhance problem-solving skills to a greater extent than in others. Having looked at pre-existing baseline ability data, there seemed to be some correlation with academic ability in this respect, in that more able girls' skills flourished given the opportunity, whereas less able girls' skills developed less markedly. This corroborates my earlier conclusion that some girls may benefit from some more explicit coaching ahead of, or during, the project to better equip them to develop their skills. Having said that, a very high proportion of the girls (13 out of 14) reported being "very" or "completely confident" that they would be able to succeed should they undertake a similar project again. This lead me to conclude that the PBL approach had indeed encouraged the girls' belief in their ability to problem solve independently. Believing was, therefore, for most, definitely achieving.

In terms of the quality of the language in the girls' final videos, achievement was the same or better than expected at this stage in Year 8, with all pupils achieving elements of meeting

expectations, and over half exceeding expectations. Four girls commented that they felt they had learned less via the PBL approach, although two commented that they felt they had learned more. In fact, the majority of girls, including those who felt they had learned less, included additional vocabulary and some girls included grammatical structures, which I would not have taught had I delivered this topic in my usual way. One group had found out how to use object pronouns, which is a structure not usually taught until Year 9, and which is credited positively at GCSE. Through questioning as well as assessing these girls' use of language in their final videos, I would conclude that the grammatical rules governing some of the "extra" structures were not fully understood, but the wider range of vocabulary used by many added interest, variety, and authenticity to the final videos beyond what my usual resources provide.

Conclusions

My action research findings demonstrate that a PBL approach to learning French had a positive impact on attainment, self-efficacy, and engagement amongst these Year 8 girls, although its success seemed to be heightened by, or perhaps even depend on, the ability to collaborate. The girls particularly valued working together, citing that it greatly enhanced their enjoyment. Furthermore, the girls were able to articulate clearly specific reasons why collaborating helped them, namely the ability to seek help from a friend, an appreciation of others' ideas, and contributions which can enhance the quality of work and the spreading of the "burden," leading to a decrease in anxiety and lessening any feeling of isolation. The positive effect on engagement as well as the increase in self-efficacy over time, which in turn positively influenced motivation and achievement, convinced me that the PBL approach is worthwhile.

In order to address the fact that for some girls, the PBL approach did not encourage independence in problem solving as strongly as for others, in future iterations I would consider introducing some explicit instruction on strategies for collaborating effectively. I would also intersperse student-led lessons with some teacher-led, direct instruction, particularly with a grammar focus, to support robust learning. Considering the positive impact of collaboration on the girls' motivation, which in turn drove achievement both in French as well as the development of their problem-solving skills, I will also consider how to include a greater element of collaboration in my "normal" practice.

It would be worthwhile to conduct a further study in order to evaluate to what extent the girls may be able to apply skills learned in this project in another context, especially across academic disciplines. It would be interesting to discover whether the girls' assertion that they would be very confident to complete another PBL project would hold true, and whether collaboration would remain such a valued element for them.

Reflection Statement

By undertaking this action research project, it has been exciting for me to be able finally to bridge the gap between academic reading and application of research in the classroom. From initial discussions with colleagues to identify possible worthy avenues of research, to exploring the literature, designing my PBL intervention and collecting and analysing my data, I have felt engaged in reflecting on my practice in a way, which for me, has never before been so systematic, nor in such depth. My own self-efficacy in terms of belief that I can make a meaningful, evidence-based, and worthwhile difference inside the walls of my own classroom has, perhaps ironically, also increased.

I have also been delighted and inspired by the reaction of the girls to working on their video projects. It has been a pleasure to see them so motivated and looking forward to their French lessons. Comments such as "I look forward to French," "It is fun to do something different," and "We laughed so much today, it was FUN," were very rewarding and prove how worthwhile turning my usual teaching on its head has been.

What has perhaps been most rewarding of all about the experience for me, however, has been the improved dialogue between myself as teacher and my pupils. I have found it refreshing and empowering to have the girls tell me their views, which they have done articulately and with frank openness, and for which I wholeheartedly thank them. As a result of this action research project, I intend to seek pupil opinion much more regularly as I now consider pupil voice to be an essential tool when it comes to reflective practice.

I will not hesitate to repeat the PBL unit with Year 8 next year and I am looking forward to tweaking how it is delivered in response to feedback and findings during the course of this project. I also hope that by discussing my findings with colleagues in my department as well as in the wider school community, that I will inspire colleagues in other subjects to experiment with a PBL approach or to undertake their own action research project.

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