

Journal of Trainee Teacher Education Research

**“All the world’s a stage”: Using drama to develop the
motivation and speaking skills of pupils
in a Year 9 French class**

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Abstract

This paper explores the use of drama in a Modern Foreign Languages context to encourage and develop the motivation and speaking skills of secondary school pupils. A Year Nine French class with a high proportion of students who lacked confidence, fluency and spontaneity in relation to their speaking skills and displayed high levels of extrinsic motivation but low levels of intrinsic motivation was taught a segment of a planned series of lessons in which the students received a sustained input of drama. Students were observed to enjoy and engage with the intervention lessons, with a noticeable positive effect on their intrinsic motivation, in addition to their oral confidence and spontaneity. It is hoped that this paper will encourage other Modern Foreign Language teachers to consider the consistent incorporation of drama in their own language lessons to motivate their pupils and ameliorate their students’ speaking skills.

“All the world’s a stage”: Using drama to develop the motivation and speaking skills of pupils in a Year 9 French class

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Introduction

Education in the United Kingdom has been subject to the market forces of neoliberalism since the 1980s (Troman & Jeffrey, 2012). As a consequence, this has led to a marketised, performance-based culture in schools (Ball, 2003). Unsurprisingly, schools are often concerned with their results and this arguably feeds into students’ attitudes towards their own learning: the emphasis is on performing well and securing a good grade in accordance with the students’ expectations. The extent to which students are motivated by their sheer desire to improve for the benefit of their own learning and development borne from their genuine interest in the subject (intrinsic motivation) rather than their grades (extrinsic motivation) can therefore be put into question. Teachers of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) face a difficult challenge in inspiring intrinsic motivation in their students given the status of English as a lingua franca and the climate in the UK in which “a frequently jingoistic press dignifies ethnocentrism and xenophobia as Britishness or Euroscepticism” (Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007, p.251).

Further to the challenge of inspiring intrinsic motivation in pupils, MFL teachers are also faced with the dilemma of developing students’ oral communication skills, specifically in relation to their confidence, fluency and spontaneity. Admittedly, speaking is arguably the most difficult skill to develop when learning any foreign language; however, it is not an unachievable feat. Teachers have to adapt their practice to encourage more students to talk in the classroom in order to facilitate the development of students’ speaking skills.

The consistent incorporation of drama-based activities, such as role play and process drama, can be an effective means to aid student improvement in the aforementioned areas, as exemplified by various research pieces on the topic of borrowed techniques from drama and theatre and their positive influence on student learning in a foreign language (FL) context (Bournot-Trites, Belliveau,

Spiliotopoulos & Séror, 2007; Piazzoli, 2011; To, Chan, Lam & Tsang, 2011; Gill, 2013). Although much research has been done into the use and impact of drama in FL classrooms, there is a noticeable lack of research that establishes the aforementioned areas for improvement as focal points of investigative research. The positive effect of drama in FL classrooms on motivation is often mentioned as an afterthought and is considered in a broad, general sense i.e. there is a lack of distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Similarly, the constructive change enacted by drama in developing students' speaking skills is often analysed through a global lens, as opposed to focusing on certain aspects of oral communication most affected by drama. Through this research project, therefore, I aim to contribute towards filling this gap in current research by narrowing my focus to the exact aspects of motivation and speaking I seek to improve in order to facilitate student development in those areas.

I arrived at my research topic through my close observation of a Year 9 French class that I had been teaching at my Professional Placement school for over three months. Over these few months, I had been struck by my students' requests for help being mainly framed in the context of obtaining a better grade. I found it disheartening that students were more motivated by performing well in assessments than by the actual content of the subject and the desire to learn for the sake of self-improvement and acquiring an additional skill. I consequently sought to alter this particular attitude of my students through this research project. Furthermore, given the students' evident lack of confidence in their speaking skills, I felt compelled to initiate a project that also focused on enhancing the students' speaking skills in relation to their confidence, fluency and spontaneity. These observations and considerations led me to my research topic, which concerns the impact of drama on the motivation and speaking skills of Year 9 French pupils.

This paper will begin with a brief discussion of the definition of drama in an educational context and with a review of literature relating to research that has considered the impact of drama on student motivation and speaking skills. I will then proceed to describe my research methodology and outline my four-lesson intervention. Finally, I will present and discuss my findings.

Literature Review

Drama in the MFL classroom

Drama is often associated with the use of scripted plays and the preparation of a performance for an audience. Although this type of drama activity can serve a useful purpose in the FL classroom, it is perhaps more suitable as an extracurricular foreign language activity. Conversely, drama in an FL classroom context places an emphasis on the process rather than the product as activities are undertaken without the objective of presenting in front of an audience other than the class itself. There is a wide array of drama-based activities that can be utilised in the classroom, including drama games, role play with an established context, improvisations and process drama, the latter of which has become the focus of many research pieces in recent years. As demonstrated by research on the use of drama in FL classrooms, the benefits of using drama are multiple; it is not only conducive to learner independence (Sirisrimangkorn, 2018, p.14), but it can also help to foster a collaborative and supportive environment (Healy, 2001, p.234). Drama can also help to reduce the affective filter that acts as a barrier to language acquisition (Piazzoli, 2011, p.561) and improve the speaking skills of language learners (Piazzoli, 2011; Gill, 2013). These two advantages of drama that I have identified will now be discussed with reference to relevant literature.

Drama and intrinsic motivation

It is undeniable that motivation plays a fundamental role in everyday life, but its definition and application to FL teaching has always been a topic of controversy and disagreement. Early second language acquisition (SLA) motivation studies, including the work of the socio-educationalist Robert Gardner, suggested that a strong determination to learn the language and the desire to learn more about the language group and meet its members are factors that characterised motivation in FL learning (Gardner, 1985). As discussed by researchers in later years, however, the concept of motivation in relation to language learning is more complex and can be seen as a “dynamic interaction between the learner, and a complex system of social relations, cultural contexts and learning environments” (Coleman et al., 2007, p.247).

Motivation in educational settings can be divided into the following two strands: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. The former is associated with the “enjoyment of learning a second or foreign language for its own sake without any external coercion or pressure” (Wu, 2003, p.502). The latter is

related to a student's desire to receive praise, good marks or benefit from the potential gains of second language proficiency, such as getting a better job or a higher salary (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998, p.207). Intrinsic motivation is undoubtedly a more sustainable way of maintaining student interest in language learning and the use of drama in FL lessons can facilitate this, as exemplified by Bournot-Trites, Belliveau, Spiliotopoulos and Séror's study (2007) on the impact of drama on motivation in a second language context. As part of the study, sixty Canadian elementary students on a French immersion programme were separated into a control group and an intervention drama group respectively and were taught the topic of the arrival and expulsion of the Acadians between the years 1604 to 1755. The researchers found that as the students discovered more about the situation of the Acadians, the intrinsic motivation of the students in the intervention group had increased. According to teachers of the intervention lessons and the researchers who acted as observers, "learning for learning's sake was quite apparent" (ibid. pp.26-27) and students "showed a desire to continue in their learning" (ibid. p.23). Students in the control group, however, frequently enquired about the content of the test, thus indicating that they were motivated extrinsically by grades.

The results from the questionnaires following the final intervention lesson also testify to the greater intrinsic motivation demonstrated by the intervention group compared to the control group. However, it is important to note that students were not asked questions centered on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation prior to the intervention lessons. It could be argued, therefore, that students in the intervention group may have been more intrinsically motivated to begin with compared to the control group and thus they could have been exhibiting a pre-existing trait. The study could have benefited from a comparison of students' answers to questions based on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation prior to and after the intervention lessons in order to strengthen the finding that was made in relation to the increased intrinsic motivation of the intervention group. Nonetheless, the observations of the researchers and teachers alike offer a valuable insight into the positive impact of drama on intrinsic motivation and this finding aligns with the discoveries of other researchers.

The findings of To, Chan, Lam and Tsang (2011) in their study focusing on a primary school teacher professional development programme based on teaching English through process drama in Hong Kong also support the observations made in Bournot-Trites et al.'s (2000) study. To et al.'s study explores the experiences of twenty-five teachers and forty students who participated in a teacher development programme in Hong Kong initiated by the Hong Kong Art School from 2008 to 2009. The programme was specifically focused on teaching English through process drama, an aspect of

drama in which “participants are invited to play, to act spontaneously and to engage their imagination as they step into a co-constructed, imagined drama world” (O’Neill, 1995, as cited in Hulse & Owens, 2019, p.19). The researchers only drew on qualitative data by analysing the transcripts of the interviews they conducted with teachers and students. Based on the interviews with the teachers, the researchers found that observations relating to student motivation were the most pronounced. Teachers cited the “more relaxed and enjoyable” environment created through the use of drama (To et al., 2011, p.524) and the opportunity for pupils to “move about rather than just sit and listen to teacher talk” (p.524) as the two most prominent reasons behind increased student motivation. As suggested by the teachers’ reflections, drama engages the students kinesthetically, which stimulates their learning and subsequently increases their motivation. Although there is little discussion of the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, it can only be assumed that the teachers’ frequent references to the increased engagement and interest of pupils as a result of the drama intervention are an implicit reference to the increased intrinsic motivation of pupils.

In the section of the study that analyses the impact of drama in accommodating affective factors, the teachers’ voices are noticeably privileged. Given that more students were interviewed than teachers, the students’ voices should have been more present as they would have strengthened the findings made by the researchers. In spite of the lack of student voice in the aforementioned section of the study, the teachers’ reported reflections on increased intrinsic motivation as a result of the use of drama in an FL context are nevertheless insightful and correspond with reflections of both teachers and students alike in other studies.

Drama and speaking skills: confidence, fluency and spontaneity

The national curriculum document for languages in England explicitly outlines the following areas of improvement in students’ speaking skills: “confidence, fluency and spontaneity” (DfE, 2013). As FL teachers, therefore, it is important that every opportunity is taken to improve these aspects of students’ speaking skills. However, as identified by Ofsted in its report on the achievements and challenges of MFL teaching, few opportunities are afforded to many students “to communicate in the target language” and “to use it spontaneously” (Ofsted, 2011, p.6). Although the report mainly attributes this problem to “many teachers’ lack of preparedness to use it” (p.6), this issue could be in part “due to the fact that many teachers do not understand how best to promote... [the] development” of students’ speaking skills (Galante & Thompson, 2017, p.116). One promising strategy for

promoting the development of second language confidence, fluency and spontaneity is to use techniques borrowed from drama and theatre.

In Piazzoli's (2011) action research project, which investigates the impact of process drama on reducing language anxiety, drama is found to be an effective medium through which a student's confidence, fluency and spontaneity can develop and flourish. Piazzoli's research entailed the planning and design of six process drama workshops based on the topic of contemporary Italian socio-cultural issues as part of a third-year course of Italian at a university in Brisbane, Australia. Upon completion of the drama workshops, Piazzoli made an interesting discovery: "students who at the beginning of the course had expressed a higher level of language anxiety were the ones to acknowledge benefiting the most from process drama" (p.565). The researcher includes a case study of a student who especially displayed very low confidence prior to the drama workshops to add strength to this finding. The student who was the focus of the case study demonstrated great strides made in relation to her confidence, fluency and spontaneity in response to the researcher's refusal to come out of role as a beggar child to aid her. This demonstrates that the use of process drama in an FL classroom can lead to the creation of an authentic scenario in which students are obliged to communicate for a real purpose, which can lead to an increase in their confidence, fluency and spontaneity. Piazzoli also cites examples of two other students who she identified as exhibiting very high levels of anxiety prior to the drama workshops. These two students reflected positively on their experiences of the drama workshops, noting that they felt more confident in communicating in Italian and were spontaneous in their production of spoken Italian.

While Piazzoli used several methods to collect her data, she makes no mention of what criteria she used to measure her students' spoken fluency, which slightly undermines her finding that oral fluency can increase as a result of drama intervention. However, this does not make her other findings concerning increased confidence and spontaneity any less valuable. Piazzoli measured the students' spoken confidence and spontaneity before, during and following the drama workshops based on the students' display and/or the students' perceptions of the aforementioned aspects of their speaking skills. Although an argument could be made that Piazzoli cites too few examples to demonstrate the several possible positive impacts of process drama, it is worth mentioning that Piazzoli had formerly taught the students whose examples of increased confidence, fluency and spontaneity she cites. It could be argued, therefore, that Piazzoli and her students' reflections are even more reliable given that Piazzoli was familiar with the students' capabilities before the research project came into

existence and was in the best position to judge the true extent of the students' progress in their speaking skills. It must be noted, however, that the students whose examples of increased confidence, fluency and spontaneity Piazzoli cites may have been more receptive to the drama teaching due to their familiarity with the researcher prior to the drama intervention. Although Piazzoli's findings are revealing, her findings would have been more convincing if she had also focused on the impact of drama on other students whom she had not previously taught and/or with whom she was not familiar.

Gill's research (2018) into the impact of drama on the oral skills of international university students in Australia reports similar findings to that of Piazzoli's. As part of the research project, ten students of non-English speaking background at Bond University were observed for twelve weeks to identify the effects of drama on oral English. The students' communication skills were judged against a criteria devised by the researcher that comprised of twelve items representing core elements of communication, including fluency. Observers rated students' communication skills at four different intervals throughout the twelve-week period. The figures from the first interval rating and the fourth interval rating indicate that all students progressed in their oral skills, thus giving credence to the possibility that the enhancement in the students' oral skills was an outcome of the drama-based programme. As the students' oral skills were rated through a global lens i.e. the objective of the rating tool was to get an overall picture of students' speaking skills as opposed to individual characteristics of their speaking, it is hard to gauge the impact of the drama intervention on the students' oral fluency. However, observers did note that there was a "greater willingness [of the students] to produce interactive oral English" (p.34), indicating that gains were made in relation to the confidence levels of students. According to this observation, students evidently felt more comfortable to communicate in English, a change affected by the drama intervention. This finding corroborates with that of Piazzoli's: drama-based activities in FL classrooms can afford students a safe space where their self-confidence flourishes. Research up until now has consistently demonstrated this phenomenon.

Given the lack of research that investigates the impact of drama on the motivation and oral skills of secondary school-aged pupils studying French, I have had to mainly draw on research focusing on primary school and university students studying English. Through this research project, I hope to fill this gap in research by exploring the impact of drama on the intrinsic motivation and speaking skills of Year 9 French pupils with respect to their confidence, fluency and spontaneity.

Research Design

The project I designed was envisioned to take place over four 60-minute lessons with a Year 9 French group, situated in an academy in an affluent area in the East of England. Students at the school are required to pick their GCSE options in Year 8 and subsequently commence studying their chosen GCSE options from Year 9 onwards. The class in question was chosen because of their evident display of extrinsic motivation and noticeable lack of self-confidence in their speaking skills, in addition to their lack of oral fluency and spontaneity. Of a total of eighteen pupils on the register, one pupil is a native French speaker. Given the native French speaker's background, any data collected that is related to the student's speaking skills has not been included for analysis.

Denscombe defines the aim of a case study as the following: "to illuminate the general by looking at the particular" (Denscombe, 2010, p.53). This project's narrowed focus on specific elements of motivation and speaking skills and its focus on "one case study rather than many" (i.e. a focus on one school rather than more schools) (p.53) would seemingly establish the project as a case study. However, unlike a case study, which seeks to investigate "phenomena as they naturally occur" (p.62) and does not entail pressure on the researcher to "change circumstances" (p.62), my research project sets out "to alter things" (p.126). The research project, therefore, is chiefly an action research project, seeking to alter the extrinsic motivation and the spoken confidence, fluency and spontaneity of a specific group of learners through the use of drama.

To carry out my action research project, I designed a sequence of lessons around the topics of food and clothes aiming to address the following two research questions (RQs):

1. Can the use of drama lead to an increase in students' intrinsic motivation?
2. To what extent will drama impact on students' speaking skills, specifically in relation to their confidence, fluency and spontaneity?

The sequence was planned to run over the course of two weeks. Table 1 below presents this sequence in outline. The sequence of lessons was devised in tandem with the school's GCSE scheme of work for French. As part of the scheme of work, I was required to cover the two pre-topics of the third GCSE French Edexcel unit "Jours ordinaires, jours de fêtes" (Bell, McLachlan & Ramage, 2017).

Lesson	Overview	Objectives	Language content
1	Introduce students to new GCSE topic: clothes. Recap prior knowledge related to the topic and associated grammar to give students the necessary input to tackle the role play activity in the following lesson.	To recognise vocabulary relevant to the topic, translate texts on the topic and understand and use relevant grammar in context.	Vocabulary related to clothing items and correct adjective agreements of colours.
2	Writing and performing role plays	To write and perform a dialogue based on the following context: a shop assistant assisting a customer in a clothing store.	Vocabulary related to clothes and shop etiquette. Also correct adjective agreements of colours.
Lessons 3 and 4 were not delivered.			
3	Introduce students to new GCSE topic: food. Recap prior knowledge related to the topic and cover necessary grammar input to tackle the process drama activity in the following lesson.	To use the new grammar point to describe typical daily meals.	Vocabulary related to food and the partitive article.
4	Performing as contestants in a special edition of the TV show <i>Come Dine with Me</i> .	To participate in an imagined special edition of the famous game show and win the coveted prize.	Vocabulary related to food and letter writing etiquette. Also the partitive article.

Table 1: Sequence of lessons

I aimed to involve one role play as part of the topic of food and meals and a process drama lesson based on the topic of clothes. Lessons one and three were primarily focused on content input so that students would be sufficiently prepared to undertake the drama-based activities in lessons two and four. However, I planned to ensure that drama was still present in lessons one and three by incorporating drama games such as charades in order to ensure that pupils had a continuous and sustained input of drama throughout the sequence of lessons.

My research project, including the lesson sequence and data collection methods, had been planned before the sudden and prolonged closure of all schools in England in March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I have included all the information on and explanations for decisions made in devising my research despite being unable to carry all of them out.

Data collection

The data collection methods I planned to use to investigate my two research questions are laid out in Table 2. This section will give a brief summary of those methods and outline my reasons for choosing and implementing each one.

Research question	Data collection methods
RQ1: Can the use of drama lead to an increase in students' intrinsic motivation?	Questionnaires at the beginning and end of the project Interviews at the end of the project My own observations
RQ2: To what extent will drama impact on students' speaking skills, specifically in relation to their confidence, fluency and spontaneity?	Speaking attainment levels at the beginning and end of the project Questionnaires at the beginning and end of the project My own observations

Table 2: Research questions and data collection methods

Speaking attainment levels

To investigate RQ2, I aimed to collect evidence of students' oral confidence, fluency and spontaneity. This evidence took form in an end of unit oral test in which the Edexcel GCSE French speaking exam format was used to judge students' oral performance before the intervention lessons. Both myself and the usual class teacher awarded students grades using the GCSE grading system and also marked students separately against a success criteria that I devised on the different aspects of oral communication that form part of the focus of this research project: confidence, fluency and spontaneity (see Appendix 1).

If I had been able to complete my teaching of the sequence of lessons, I would have carried out a post-intervention speaking assessment in order to gauge the extent of progress made in students' speaking skills with regard to confidence, fluency and spontaneity. Similarly to the way in which the pre-intervention speaking assessment was carried out, I would have ensured that students followed the Edexcel GCSE French speaking exam format by having them prepare answers to a past Edexcel GCSE French speaking exam paper. The post-intervention oral test was not intended to be a measurement of the extent of the students' knowledge and understanding of the topics; instead, it was devised with the aim of judging students' oral confidence, fluency and spontaneity. Thus, I would not have provided students with an overall grade, as was the case with the pre-intervention oral test. Instead, I would have judged and made note of how students performed in relation to their oral confidence, fluency and spontaneity against the success criteria that I devised and I would have provided students with informal verbal feedback on their performance as a whole.

Questionnaires

To investigate RQ1 and an aspect of RQ2, I had pupils complete a questionnaire (see Appendix 2) at the start of the project and I intended to have students complete a post-intervention questionnaire at

the end of the project. Both questionnaires were based on a five-point-Likert number scale to assess students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, in addition to their self-confidence in relation to orally communicating in French and their views on the use of drama in MFL lessons.

I opted to include questionnaires based on a five-point-Likert number scale as one of my data collection methods as I deemed it an effective way to collate and analyse the data more quickly and efficiently. Additionally, through the questionnaire, I was able to ensure that all participants were given exactly the same statements and there would be no scope for variation in the wording of the statements had I opted to interview all students instead.

It could be argued that by opting for the five-point-Likert number scale, I was restricting the pupils in their responses to the given options, which could have been a source of frustration for participating pupils (Denscombe, 2010, p.170). However, I was aware of this potential problem and therefore include an "Other" section for each statement so that students could note down an alternative option if they felt that the options offered to them were not sufficiently reflective of their views. By including the aforementioned section, I tried to ensure that the data I obtained was a reliable indication of the respondents' views.

The data obtained from the pre-intervention questionnaire was analysed by calculating the number of times that the five different options in response to each statement were chosen and examining the results accordingly. If students had been able to complete the post-intervention questionnaire, I would have similarly calculated the number of times that the five different options in response to each statement were chosen. I would have also compared the results to those of the pre-intervention questionnaire with the aim of gauging the extent to which the results had or had not changed.

Interviews

I intended to interview all students in order to gain a more in depth understanding of how the students felt that they benefited from the use of drama in their French lessons. It is true that interviewing all students may have been time-consuming and the results may have been difficult to analyse since "the interview method tends to produce non-standard responses" (Denscombe, 2010, p.193). However, I would have separated the eighteen students into three groups and interviewed them for up to ten minutes each and I would have carefully coded students' answers according to particular themes during the analysis stage to overcome the identified potential issues. It could be debated that

“consistency and objectivity are hard to achieve” (Denscombe, 2010, p.193) as interviewee statements can be affected by the identity of the interviewer. Due to the “interviewer effect” (p.193), the results could be adversely affected. However, I planned to overcome this potential issue by asking the actual teacher of the class, who was not to be present in any of the intervention lessons, to interview the students instead and record the students’ responses using a voice recorder. The interviews would have allowed me to gain a more detailed insight into the students’ views on the benefits (or lack thereof) that they gained from the drama activities as they would have had the opportunity to explain and expand on their ideas and views.

Personal observations

I drew on my own personal reflections to explore RQ1 and some features of RQ2. Following Wu’s notion of intrinsic motivation as “enjoyment of learning...for its own sake without any external coercion or pressure” (Wu, 2003, p.502), I focused on and made note of the extent to which students displayed that they were intrinsically or extrinsically motivated during the intervention lessons and the level of confidence exhibited by students when communicating orally in French. I also focused on and made note of demonstrations of spontaneity. Every time students displayed some level of enjoyment (e.g. informally rating a lesson as “good” or “very good”), confidence (e.g. not refusing to perform) and spontaneity (e.g. finding alternative ways to express intended messages), I would make note of my observations in my notepad during the lesson and subsequently write up my notes in the self-evaluation section of the lesson plan form for that particular lesson. Although the analysis of these observations will be purely based on my own reflections and can be therefore considered a subjective interpretation of one person (Denscombe, 2010, p.199), I aimed to be as objective as possible in my personal observations of the lessons that I was able to teach (lessons one and two).

Research ethics

Prior to the commencement of my investigation, I signed the Faculty of Education’s Ethics form and read and adhered to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines (2018). Throughout the entirety of the project, I communicated with my faculty supervisor, my mentor and the class’s usual teacher to make sure at all times that the research was ethical, for example, that it would not disadvantage the students’ learning as they were still expected to cover the relevant content

of the Edexcel GCSE French scheme of work in order to be on track in their learning of their chosen GCSE option subject.

In accordance with the BERA guidelines (2018), I ensured that students were made to feel comfortable about their participation during the course of the study. I reassured students that they could opt out of the study at any time and I communicated to them that their personal information would not be shared publicly. I also assuaged students' fears concerning the post-intervention speaking assessment by assuring them that the final speaking assessment following the intervention lessons would not have any bearing on their school attainment scores.

Students who are referenced in the following section of the research project have been assigned a pseudonym corresponding to the alphabet to maintain student confidentiality.

Findings

RQ1: Can the use of drama lead to an increase in students' intrinsic motivation?

As I was unable to teach all of my intervention lessons, I will discuss my findings with reference to the results from the pre-intervention questionnaire and my personal observations of taught lessons (lessons one and two of the sequence).

Before I proceed with the analysis of the results obtained from the pre-intervention questionnaire (see Table 3 next page), I would like to highlight that despite affording students the opportunity to express their views if they disagreed with the given options, none opted to do so. This suggests that students were content with the options offered to them and deemed them to be appropriately reflective of their views. It is for this reason that I have not inserted a further column in the table below to indicate and list the alternative options of pupils.

The results from the pre-intervention questionnaire indicate that at least half of all students are unsure if they like French and an overwhelming majority of students (thirteen out of eighteen) are also unsure if the content of the subject is interesting. The evident indifference to French displayed by at least half of the pupils in the class could be connected to the types of activities that students typically complete in French lessons, as demonstrated by students' responses to statement ten. Many students (twelve out of eighteen) indicated their uncertainty concerning their enjoyment of typical activities

completed by pupils in the subject. The results therefore reveal that prior to the intervention lessons, at least half of all pupils in the class were not especially intrinsically motivated.

Pre-Intervention Questionnaire Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Intrinsic motivation	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I like French.	2	7	9		
2. I find the content of this subject interesting.	1	3	13	1	
3. I like knowing how to correct my errors for the purpose of improving my French.		5	13		
Extrinsic motivation	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
4. I like being praised by my teacher when I do well in French.	4	13	1		
5. What matters most to me about this subject is getting a good grade.	6	10	1	1	
6. The possibility of failing is what worries me most about this subject.	4	10	3	1	
7. I think that French will be useful for my professional career.	1	3	7	7	
Self-confidence	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8. I feel confident in my knowledge of French.	1	1	10	5	1
9. I feel confident when speaking French.	1	1	6	9	1
Drama	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
10. I enjoy the type of activities we do in French.		5	12	1	
11. I prefer physical activities to sit-down activities.	6	11	1		
12. I think that drama activities in French, such as role play and charades, are fun.	6	10	1	1	
13. I like doing drama activities, such as role play and charades, in language lessons.	5	11	2		
14. I want to do more drama activities, such as role play and charades, in French.	5	11	1	1	
15. I think that drama activities, such as role play and charades, make me less worried about speaking French.	5	11	1	1	

Table 3: Pre-intervention questionnaire results

However, the results in relation to the statements that were specifically designed to gauge students' extrinsic motivation confirm what I had initially suspected at the beginning of the project: the students

are very extrinsically motivated. Nearly the entire class (seventeen out of eighteen students) noted that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the following statement: “I like being praised by my teacher when I do well in French.” As exemplified by the students’ responses to the statement, recognition from the teacher serves as a motivating factor for nearly all the students in the class. Most students (sixteen out of eighteen) noted that getting a good grade in French is what matters to them most in the subject, suggesting that they are extrinsically motivated by grades. Most students are not extrinsically motivated, however, by the potential benefits that French could bring to their career prospects. Seven students disagreed and seven students stated they were unsure about the usefulness of French in their professional careers. This finding is not particularly surprising given the status of English as a lingua franca. In spite of most students’ lack of display of extrinsic motivation relating to the potential economic benefits of learning French, it is nonetheless evident that prior to the intervention lessons, nearly all students were extrinsically motivated by grades and praise.

As discussed previously, the lack of intrinsic motivation demonstrated by at least half of all pupils could be linked to the typical activities that students are expected to complete in French lessons, which largely involve little kinesthetic movement. However, students’ responses to statement twelve make it apparent that students perceive drama favourably, which implies that students’ engagement levels could be increased through the implementation of drama. Based on the students’ responses to statement thirteen, it is very likely that the pupils’ previous experience of drama activities in MFL lessons informed their views. Responses to the pre-intervention questionnaire suggest that an overwhelming number of students enjoy drama activities and would like more to be incorporated in French lessons, with sixteen students responding with either “Strongly agree” or “Agree” to the following statement: “I want to do more drama activities, such as role play and charades, in French.” One possible solution to try and overcome the previously identified problem concerning students’ enjoyment of the subject is therefore proposed: the incorporation of more drama activities. Although I do not have all the necessary data, I draw encouragement from the fact that students very likely based their answers on their previous experience of drama in MFL lessons, offering a valuable insight into how students perceive drama to be fun and engaging in the context of language learning.

I also base this proposed potential solution on the personal reflections that I made after the first and second intervention lessons whilst engaging in the usual practice of evaluating my taught lessons. Several observations made after the second lesson, which consisted of students coming up with role play dialogues and performing in front of one another, are particularly illuminating.

During the second intervention lesson, which involved students creating and performing role play dialogues, I noticed that all students were on task. I did not circulate the classroom whilst students were in the process of writing their role play dialogues because I wanted students to produce the dialogues to the best of their ability without my assistance. I nonetheless kept a close eye on the students from the front of the classroom and I was able to gauge the extent to which students were on task. According to my personal reflections, all students were on task. Being on task, of course, does not necessarily signify that students are enjoying the task at hand. However, the students were engaged in animated conversations in their respective pairs while coming up with their dialogues, which suggests that students were enjoying the task of producing and performing a dialogue. At the end of the lesson, when I asked students to rate the lesson informally by raising the appropriate number of fingers to indicate how much they had enjoyed the lesson on a scale from one to five, nearly all students indicated the number four, which equated to a good level of enjoyment. The remaining pupils raised five fingers, demonstrating a very high level of enjoyment. No student indicated a number less than four. As exemplified by the students' informal ratings at the end of the lesson, the students evidently had a positive experience of drama. Since students enjoyed the drama lesson and enjoyment forms one of the fundamental bases of intrinsic motivation (Wu, 2003, p.502), it could be said that the implementation of drama in MFL lessons can help to potentially inspire an intrinsic motivation in pupils. Admittedly, however, my identity as the students' teacher could have prevented students from being more honest in their informal ratings of the lesson. The analysis of the informal ratings of the students should be therefore treated with some caution.

It should be noted that one student, pupil F, asked if they were going to be assessed on the role play toward the start of the lesson. Although this student may have initially been extrinsically motivated, the student became intrinsically motivated during the course of the lesson, as demonstrated by their comment to me at the end of the lesson. Once the pupils had been dismissed, pupil F approached me and expressed to me that they had enjoyed the lesson and requested that I plan a similar activity in the future. It must be acknowledged that I did not solicit comments about the lesson from the pupils; the student unexpectedly shared their views of the lesson with me at the end of the lesson. It is reassuring that students such as pupil F, who exhibited very high levels of extrinsic motivation in relation to grades prior to the intervention lessons, enjoyed the lesson without any external pressure (i.e. grades), which could be owed to the incorporation of drama in the lesson. Based on pupil F's comments, by the end of the sequence of the drama intervention lessons, I would have expected more students who demonstrated high levels of extrinsic motivation in the pre-intervention questionnaire

to have developed a greater sense of enjoyment for French lessons and thus become more intrinsically motivated.

RQ2: To what extent will drama impact on students' speaking skills, specifically in relation to their confidence, fluency and spontaneity?

All pupils undertook an end of unit oral test prior to the intervention lessons and were judged against a criteria devised by me on their confidence, fluency and spontaneity. As I was unable to teach all of my intervention lessons, I do not have any results from the post-intervention oral test to compare to the results of the pre-intervention oral test. Due to this lack of quantitative data, I will analyse the qualitative data collected from the pre-questionnaire and draw on personal observations to make judgments about the impact of drama on students' speaking skills.

The results from the pre-intervention questionnaire demonstrate the students' clear lack of confidence when communicating orally in French. In response to statement nine, "I feel confident when speaking French", almost all students (fifteen out of eighteen) stated that they were either uncertain about or disagreed with the statement. One student noted that they strongly disagreed with the statement. This result corroborates with my previous experience of working with the pupils: students were anxious about communicating orally in French. Anxiety is recognised as an affective state that poses a barrier to language learning (Piazzoli, 2011, p.561); in the case of the students, anxiety impedes their progress in their French speaking skills. Interestingly, students recognise that drama can help to ease their anxieties and help their confidence, as demonstrated by the students' positive responses to statement fifteen in the pre-intervention questionnaire.

During the second intervention lesson, students unexpectedly exhibited high levels of confidence as they were unafraid to perform in front of another. Surprisingly, no student refused to perform. Admittedly, I communicated to the pupils that everyone would be required to perform; their lack of resistance, therefore, could be attributed to this. However, given my prior experience of working with the class and some students' outright refusal to read aloud their work when requested due to their anxiety, I was pleasantly surprised that all students were willing to participate and perform, displaying a confidence that I had not previously witnessed during my time working with the class. This confidence that the students had developed in the lesson could point to the safe environment that was established due to the drama activity in which students felt that they could disassociate themselves from their personal identities and "take on other personae" (Piazzoli, 2011, p.569). In doing so, their

anxiety may have subsided as the adopted role “protects the individual from the consequences of inaccuracy” (Healy, 2001, p.233). Subsequently, by the end of the sequence of lessons, I would have anticipated students’ confidence in their speaking skills to continue to improve in the post-intervention oral test following the drama lessons given the students’ apparent display of confidence just two lessons into the sequence of intervention lessons.

In addition to the display of confidence shown during the second intervention lesson, some students also demonstrated an impressive level of spontaneity in their role play dialogues. There were two pairs who did not follow the suggested role play dialogue format, instead choosing to create new situations using language that they already knew. One example involves one pair communicating that a certain item of clothing was not in stock. Despite students being unaware of how to translate the phrase “out of stock” into French, students impressively came up with an appropriate alternative option to the phrase, manipulating the language that they knew and at their disposal to express their intended message. This was a clear example of spontaneity and I would have anticipated to witness a possible increased improvement in students’ spontaneous answers in their post-intervention oral test, similarly to that of Piazzoli’s findings (2011), as discussed in the literature review. It is interesting to note that unlike Piazzoli, whose process drama sessions entailed her playing a role and her refusal to come out of role led to students making use of the language that they already knew to communicate spontaneously, I stayed in my usual role of teacher during the role play lesson. Although students could have asked me for help and I would not have refused to help had it been requested, students did not seek my assistance, instead opting to work independently and make use of the language at their disposal to communicate their intended messages. As a result of this observation, I would have expected students to continue displaying autonomy during the intervention lessons and I would have expected a similar level of independence in students making use of language that they already know to communicate spontaneously during the post-oral test.

Unfortunately, given that I was unable to teach the entire sequence of lessons, I was unable to assess the extent to which the oral fluency of students had or had not improved as a result of the intervention lessons. I had aimed to solely measure and observe students’ oral fluency in both the pre and post-intervention oral tests. Since I was unable to conduct the post-intervention oral test with the pupils, I have regrettably been unable to make a judgment on the impact of drama on students’ oral fluency.

Discussion

This study has presented the findings of two specific research questions in detail and my findings tentatively indicate the following: drama can help to intrinsically motivate pupils and improve students' spoken skills with regard to their confidence and spontaneity.

In terms of student motivation, which forms the focus of RQ1, I was able to answer the question to a certain degree based on observations made and results obtained from the pre-intervention questionnaire. In relation to RQ1, I found that drama can help to increase the intrinsic motivation of pupils due to results obtained from the pre-intervention questionnaire: an overwhelming majority of students indicated that they perceived drama activities as fun and engaging. I confess that this finding was made primarily on the basis of students' responses to the pre-intervention questionnaire; the results from the post-intervention questionnaire could have potentially suggested otherwise. However, had that been the case, it could have possibly suggested that my planning and delivery of the drama activities were flawed since students based their pre-intervention questionnaire answers on their previous experience of drama in MFL, thus pointing to their broader experiences of drama with different MFL teachers. The results gathered from the pre-intervention questionnaire corroborated with my own personal observations of students in lessons and the studies of other researchers explored in the literature review, including the study of Bournot-Trites et al. (2007). Similarly to one of the conclusions articulated in Bournot-Trites et al.'s study relating to the increased intrinsic motivation of pupils as a result of the use of drama, my findings enable us to gauge a better understanding of how students who are extrinsically motivated by grades can be encouraged to become more intrinsically motivated through the medium of drama.

With regard to RQ2, which considers the impact of drama on students' speaking skills in relation to their confidence and spontaneity, I was able to answer the question to a certain extent based on observations made. I was unable, however, to judge how far students had progressed with regard to their oral fluency because I was unable to teach all of the intervention lessons and conduct the post-intervention oral test. Overall, my main findings were that students' confidence can be improved and their spontaneity can be developed as a result of drama intervention. As discussed in the Findings section, these conclusions were principally based on my observations of students displaying confidence and isolated examples of students demonstrating spontaneity in one lesson (lesson two of the sequence). It could be argued that the compulsory nature of the performative segment of lesson

two led to the lack of student resistance to perform. Furthermore, it should also be noted that a resistance to perform does not necessarily equate to confidence; however, given my previous experience of teaching the students and the resistance of some students to simply read their work aloud when requested, I would argue the contrary. My findings also coincide with those of other researchers such as Piazzoli (2011), whose findings reaffirm the benefits of drama in encouraging and promoting students' oral confidence and spontaneity.

It is fair to state that the outcomes of this research project do not represent definitive findings about the role of drama in making students more intrinsically motivated and more confident and spontaneous in their speech. One of the reasons for caution is the number of lessons taught. As I was unable to teach all of the lessons in the sequence because my school placement was suspended due to the COVID-19 crisis, I was not able to maximise the students' exposure to drama as planned and gather all the necessary data. As a consequence, my findings are based on limited available data gathered from only two lessons. Another limitation is the size of the group studied. Data gathered from eighteen students is arguably too small a number to assert that drama can intrinsically motivate and improve the oral confidence and spontaneity of all students. If I were to conduct similar research in the future, I would endeavour to study a larger number of students representing a wider range of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and speaking abilities to gain a more in depth understanding of the extent to which drama can improve the motivation and spoken skills of secondary school pupils studying languages.

As limited as this study might be, it is hoped that this research project will act as a springboard for further enquiry into the impact of drama on the motivation and spoken confidence and spontaneity of secondary school students studying modern foreign languages.

Conclusion

In accordance with the fourth standard of the Teachers' Professional Standards (DfE, 2011), I aim to "promote a love of learning" (p.11) through my teaching in order to help sustain pupil interest in language learning and inspire students to pursue languages at GCSE, A Level and beyond. Given the worrying decline in the number of students who are opting to study languages beyond KS3, KS4 and KS5, it is more important than ever to ensure that I consistently commit and adhere to this standard. In line with my objective to fulfill the standard to "promote a love of learning" (p.11), I hope to

continue inspiring and engaging students during my NQT year and beyond by using stimulating teaching methods that can help to facilitate student interest in language learning, including the use of drama, which has formed the focus of this research project.

The benefits of incorporating drama in foreign language lessons are multiple and this research project has highlighted just some of the few advantages that drama can bring to MFL teaching and learning, including the engagement and interest that it can generate in pupils. Furthermore, this research project can help provide other MFL teachers with an understanding and appreciation of how drama can potentially help to enhance students' speaking skills in relation to their confidence and spontaneity, which need to be especially developed according to the objectives laid out in the national curriculum document for languages in England (DfE, 2013).

It must be recognised that this study focused on students who exhibited high levels of extrinsic motivation with regard to grades and the findings are not, therefore, applicable to all students, including those who may display a lack of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In light of this, it would be interesting for other teacher researchers to initiate projects that focus on the implementation of drama in classes with students who exhibit both low intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in order to determine how far the medium of drama can intrinsically motivate such pupils. Additionally, given the lack of data that was obtained in relation to students' oral fluency due to my inability to teach all of my intervention lessons and carry out the post-intervention oral test, I would recommend that other teacher researchers consider investigating the impact of drama on students' oral fluency, an aspect of students' speaking skills that also needs to be developed and improved.

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Appendix 1

Speaking success criteria

	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Confidence	Student is very nervous (avoids eye contact and is very quiet when speaking).	Student is nervous (makes very little eye contact and is quiet when speaking).	Student is comfortable (makes eye contact and speaks at a normal volume).	Student is very comfortable (makes eye contact regularly and speaks at a normal volume).
Fluency	Student speaks very slowly, pauses often and is difficult to understand.	Student speaks slowly, pauses a fair number of times and is somewhat understandable.	Student speaks at a good pace, pauses sometimes and is understandable.	Student speaks at a native speaker-like pace, rarely pauses and is completely understandable.
Spontaneity	Student is unable to answer questions that require spontaneity, even after prompting.	Student is able to answer questions that require spontaneity, but with heavy prompting.	Student is able to answer questions that require spontaneity with some prompting.	Student is able to efficiently answer questions that require spontaneity with no prompting.

Appendix 2

Pre-intervention questionnaire

Questionnaire

- The aim of this questionnaire is to obtain data in relation to aspects of your learning for my research project.
- The questionnaire is anonymous and participation is voluntary.
- There is no right or wrong answer. Be as honest as possible.

Instructions:

- For each statement, tick a number from a scale of 1 (you strongly agree) to 5 (you strongly disagree).
- If you think that none of the options reflect your views, write your answer in the “Other” box.

1. I like French.
2. I find the content of this subject interesting.
3. I like knowing how to correct my errors for the purpose of improving my French.
4. I like being praised by my teacher when I do well in French.
5. What matters most to me about this subject is getting a good grade.
6. The possibility of failing is what worries me most about this subject.
7. I think that French will be useful for my professional career.
8. I feel confident in my knowledge of French.
9. I feel confident when speaking French.
10. I enjoy the type of activities we do in French.
11. I prefer physical activities to sit-down activities.
12. I think that drama activities in French, such as role play and charades, are fun.
13. I like doing drama activities, such as role play and charades, in language lessons.
14. I want to do more drama activities, such as role play and charades, in French.
15. I think that drama activities, such as role play and charades, make me less worried about speaking French.

Please write in the space below if you would like to add any comments.