Towards the development of
a departmental target language culture:
What classroom-based strategies are most effective
in promoting spoken target language use
in an English all-boys selective secondary school context?

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INTRODUCTION

Rationale and context

- Development of a target language (TL) culture
- The skill of speaking
- Language learning strategies
- Collaborative professional learning (CPL)

LITERATURE REVIEW

- What does second language acquisition theory tell us about speaking in the TL?

- Does explicit strategy-based instruction enhance pupils' speaking capacity in the TL?

- What pupil factors may constrain their TL speaking capacity in the classroom?

- Promoting collaborative professional learning: what are the facilitating factors, and what are the barriers?

"the process of learning another language after the native language has been learned"

Gass & Selinker (2008:7)

"inherent disagreement as to the process involved"

Mutton & Bartley (2006:29)

"no consensus on the nature of the relationship between SLA… and language pedagogy"

Ellis (2010:183)

"Perhaps the notion of strategies for language learning is as obvious as the notion that a carpenter needs tools"

Oxford (2017:xiv)

"Modern foreign languages in our schools are in a very fragile state"

Teaching Schools Council (2016:2)

"Teaching is often characterized as an isolated activity"

Hindin et al. (2007:349)

"CPL is not embraced in schools"

Duncombe & Armour (2004:152)

"[CPL] remains less a reality than a phantasmagoric ideal"

Stokes (2001:142)

"scepticism written all over their faces"

Swarbick (2014:45)

METHODOLOGY

- Research questions
- School context
- Sample
- Nature of the intervention

Research questions

- **RQ1:** Does classroom-based strategy intervention training change pupils' attitudes towards speaking TL, and affect the strategies they use in oral output?

- **RQ2:** To what extent is classroom-based strategy intervention training effective in promoting pupils' spoken TL use?

  (a) Does quantity increase?

  (b) Is quality impacted?

- **RQ3:** Is classroom-based strategy intervention training effective among both beginner (Y7) and intermediate (Y10) learners?

- **RQ4:** How can strategies identified as being successful in the intervention become part of the approaches adopted across the whole MFL department?
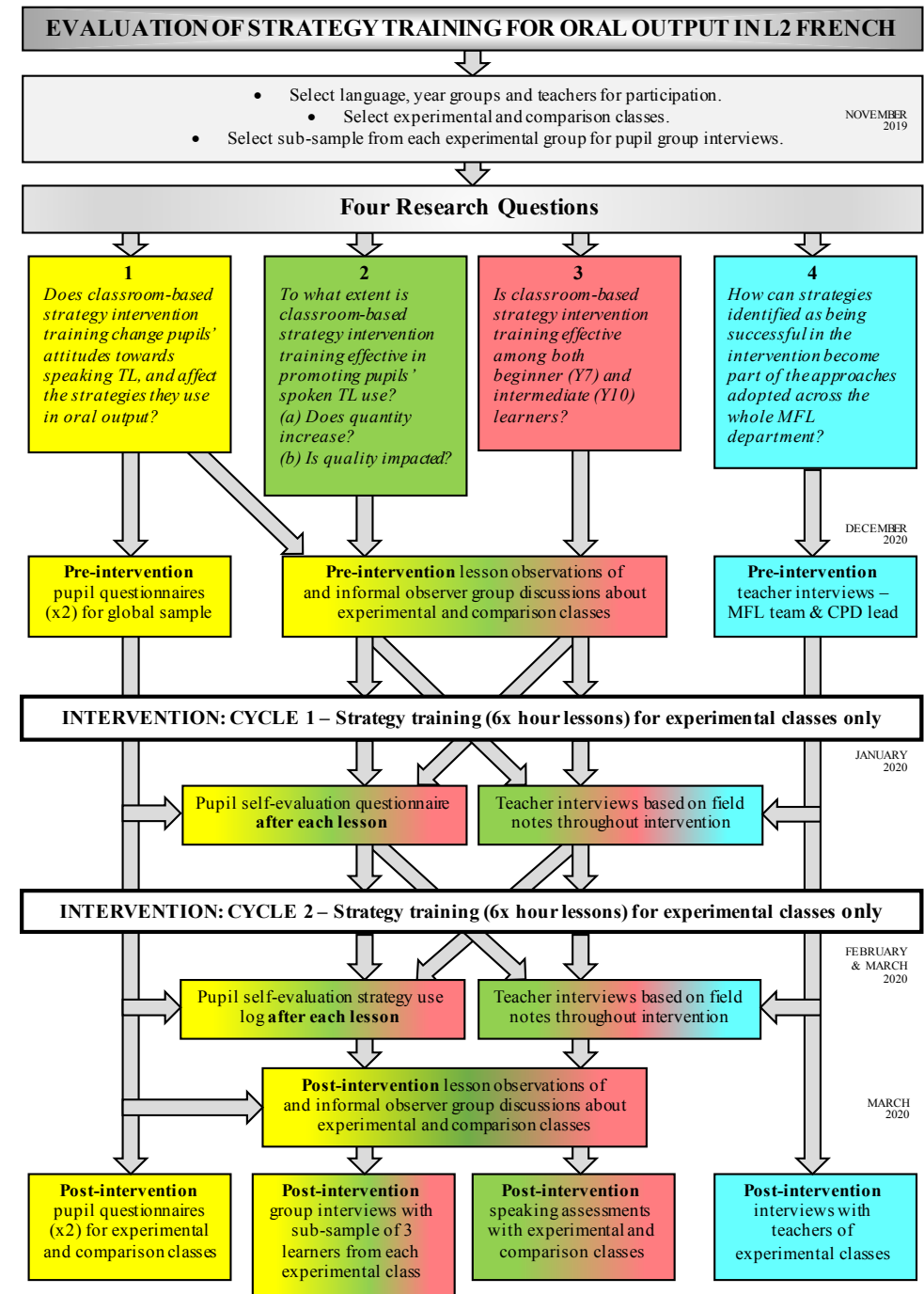
School context

Sample

Nature of the intervention

- Pre-intervention
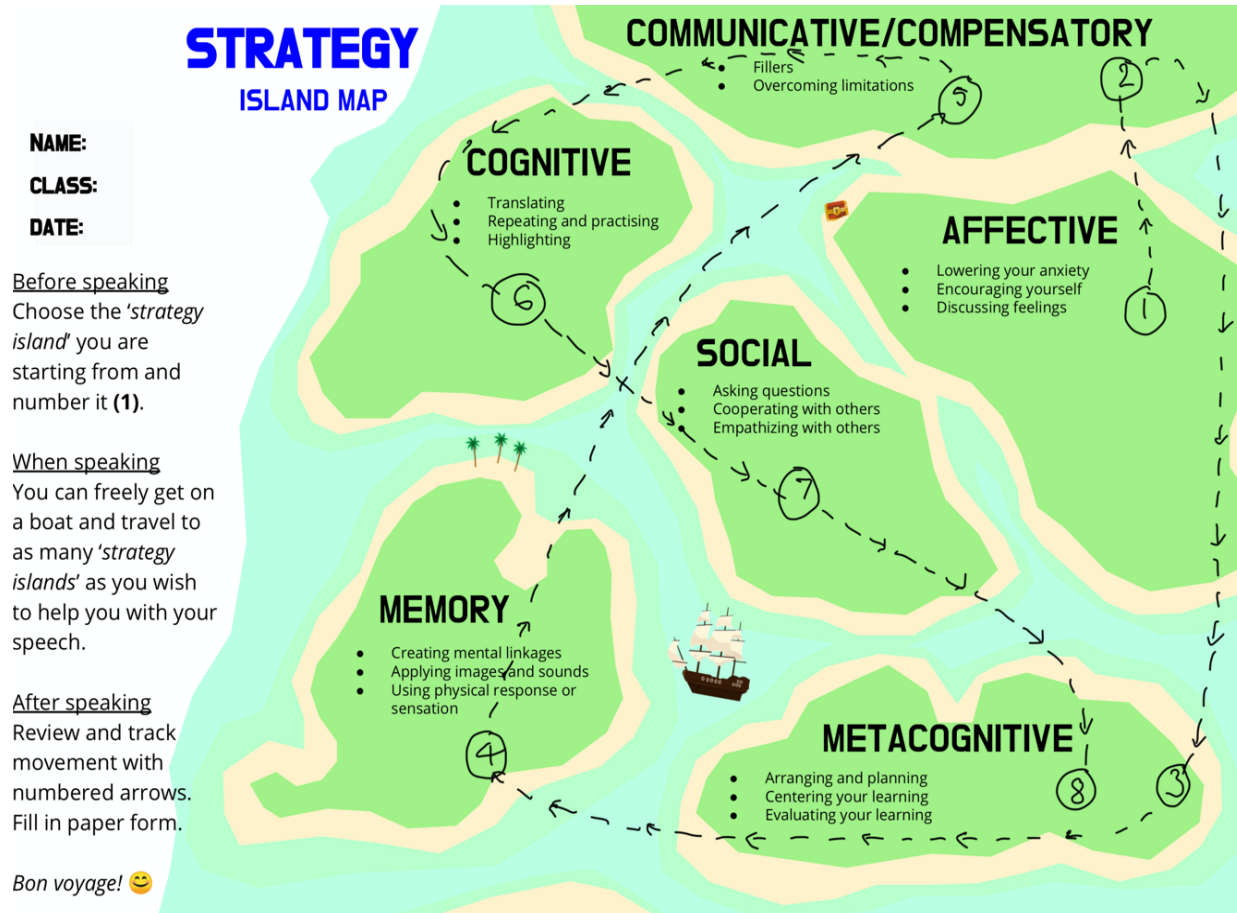- Cycle 1
- Cycle 2
- Post-intervention

EVALUATION OF STRATEGY TRAINING FOR ORAL OUTPUT IN L2 FRENCH

- Select language, year groups and teachers for participation.
- Select experimental and comparison classes.
- Select sub-sample from each experimental group for pupil group interviews.

NOVEMBER 2019

Four Research Questions

1
Does classroom-based strategy intervention training change pupils' attitudes towards speaking TL, and affect the strategies they use in oral output?

2
To what extent is classroom-based strategy intervention training effective in promoting pupils' spoken TL use?
(a) Does quantity increase?
(b) Is quality impacted?

3
Is classroom-based strategy intervention training effective among both beginner (Y7) and intermediate (Y10) learners?

4
How can strategies identified as being successful in the intervention become part of the approaches adopted across the whole MFL department?

DECEMBER 2020

Pre-intervention pupil questionnaires (x2) for global sample

Pre-intervention lesson observations of and informal observer group discussions about experimental and comparison classes

Pre-intervention teacher interviews – MFL team & CPD lead

INTERVENTION: CYCLE 1 – Strategy training (6x hour lessons) for experimental classes only

JANUARY 2020

Pupil self-evaluation questionnaire **after each lesson**

Teacher interviews based on field notes throughout intervention

INTERVENTION: CYCLE 2 – Strategy training (6x hour lessons) for experimental classes only

FEBRUARY & MARCH 2020

Pupil self-evaluation strategy use log **after each lesson**

Teacher interviews based on field notes throughout intervention

Post-intervention lesson observations of and informal observer group discussions about experimental and comparison classes

MARCH 2020

Post-intervention pupil questionnaires (x2) for experimental and comparison classes

Post-intervention group interviews with sub-sample of 3 learners from each experimental class

Post-intervention speaking assessments with experimental and comparison classes

Post-intervention interviews with teachers of experimental classes

Cycle 1: prescriptive 'broad brush' explicit training

STRATEGY GROUP	PRACTICAL IDEAS
Memory	Ask pupils to brainstorm past/current/possible memory strategy use; Kim's game; snap; imagery; objects (physical response); semantic map
Cognitive	Example sentences/text or sentence builders: repetition; highlighting; translation (gapped, oral, tangled), odd one out
Communicative Compensatory	Introduce fillers (authentic transcript); add fillers to example sentences/text or sentence builders from previous work; Just a minute; role play scenarios; interpreter; cartoon
Metacognitive	Language learning notebook (set goals/objectives, new phrases, grammar rules, strategies you enjoy and find useful, notes about conversations); plan for speaking tasks/tests; organise work; self-monitor; self-evaluate
Affective	Progressive relaxation; meditation; chair yoga; music; laughter; tongue twisters; jokes; positive statements in TL; rewards; discuss feelings; cooperation vs. competition
Social	Teach common questions for clarification and verification; dictation; speed dating; survey; cooperation and empathy

Pupil feedback questionnaire **Strategy training: Communicative / Compensatory** Initials: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

1. How much did you enjoy the communicative / compensatory strategy training? [Mark one box with 'X']	X	Additional comments (if desired)
a) I really enjoyed the communicative/compensatory strategy training		
b) I quite enjoyed the communicative/compensatory strategy training		
c) I didn't particularly enjoy the communicative/compensatory strategy training		
d) I didn't enjoy the communicative/compensatory strategy training at all		

2. How useful was the communicative / compensatory strategy training for your spoken French? [Mark one box with 'X']	X	Additional comments (if desired)
a) It was really useful for my spoken French		
b) It was quite useful for my spoken French		
c) It wasn't very useful for my spoken French		
d) It wasn't at all useful for my spoken French		

3. How likely are you to use the 'time fillers/phrases utiles' communicative / compensatory strategies again in French speaking tasks in the future? [Mark one box with 'X']	X	Why / Why not? (if desired)
a) Highly likely		
b) Quite likely		
c) Not very likely		
d) Not at all likely		

4. How likely are you to use the 'overcoming limitations in speaking' communicative / compensatory strategies again in French speaking tasks in the future? [Circle one answer]					Why / Why not? (if desired)
i.	Switching to the mother tongue	Highly likely	Quite likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	
ii.	Getting help	Highly likely	Quite likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	
iii.	Using mime or gesture	Highly likely	Quite likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	
iv.	Avoiding communicating partially or totally	Highly likely	Quite likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	
v.	Selecting the topic	Highly likely	Quite likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	
vi.	Adjusting or approximating the message	Highly likely	Quite likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	
vii.	Coining words (make up new words)	Highly likely	Quite likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	
viii.| Using a circumlocution or synonym	Highly likely	Quite likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	

Example of self-report of enjoyment and perceived usefulness of individual strategy group training

Cycle 2

Example of a completed *Strategy Island Map* and accompanying strategy use log

FINDINGS

- **RQ1:** Does classroom-based strategy intervention training change pupils' attitudes towards speaking TL, and affect the strategies they use in oral output?

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- **RQ3:** Is classroom-based strategy intervention training effective among both beginner (Y7) and intermediate (Y10) learners?

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RQ1: Pupils' attitudes towards speaking TL - pre

> *I worry about getting it wrong and* **looking like a silly billy**

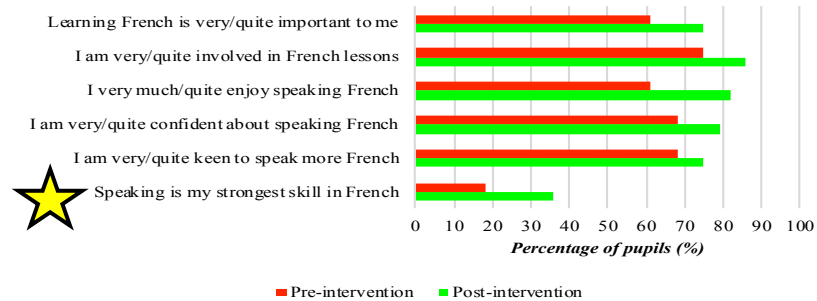# RQ1: Pupils' attitudes towards speaking TL - post
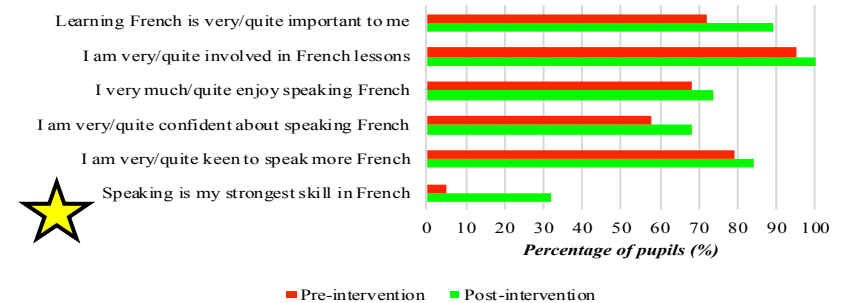

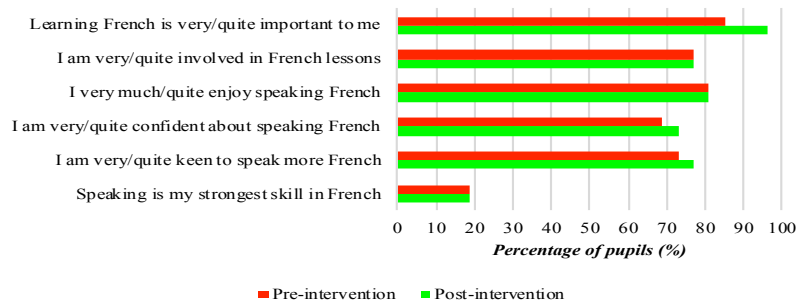**Year 7 Experimental Group 1 (7E1)**
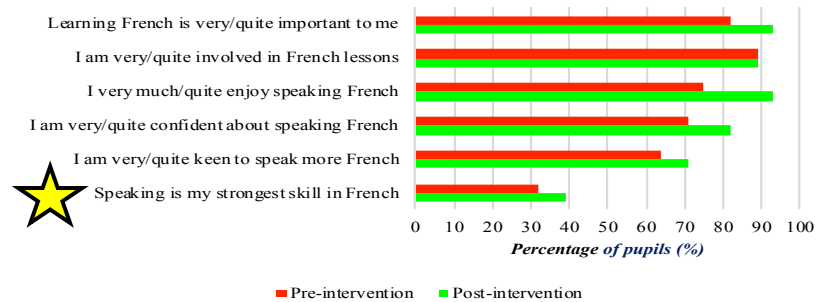
Year 10 Experimental Group 1 (10E1)
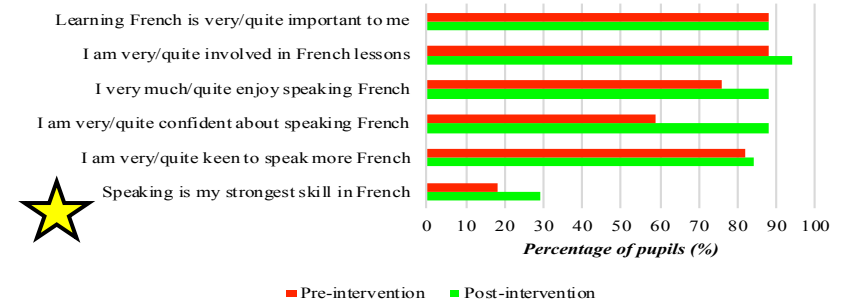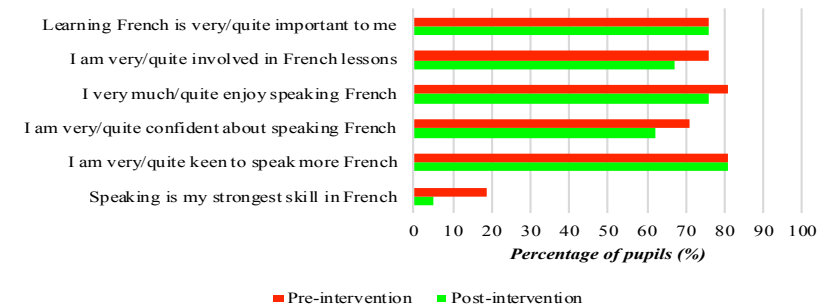
Year 7 Experimental Group 2 (7E2)

Year 10 Experimental Group 2 (10E2)

Year 7 Comparison Group (7C)

Year 10 Comparison Group (10C)

RQ1: Pupils' attitudes towards speaking TL - post

> *It has made me **feel a lot more confident about speaking French** because I know how to speak more accurately and am speaking much more.*

> *They loved using the **fillers**!*

> *I really enjoyed the **chair yoga** sessions because it really helped me to like **calm down and clear my head before speaking French**.*

> *I liked using it because I felt **more confident and resourceful when speaking**.*

RQ1: Pupils' strategy use in oral output - pre
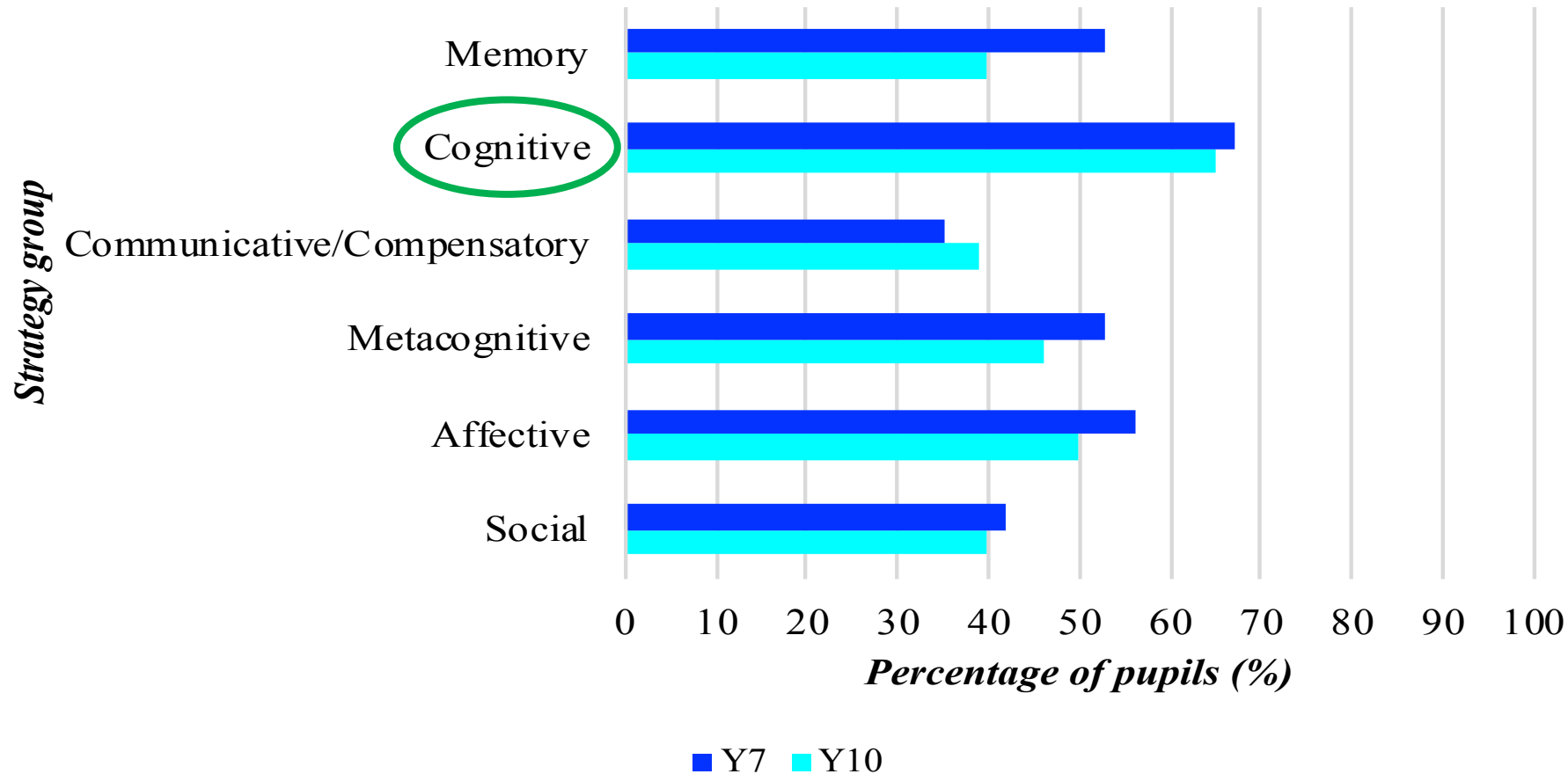
Figure 5. Bar Chart showing questionnaire data on Y7 (n=166) and Y10 (n=79) pupils' strategy use when speaking French reporting the amalgamated figures for 'almost always true of you' (76-100% of the time) and 'usually true of you' (51-75% of the time).

RQ1: Pupils' strategy use in oral output - Cycle 2

Table 9. Combined cumulative individual recorded instances of strategy group use by year group during the main speaking activity from each of the six lessons in Cycle 2.

Strategy group	Year group	
	Y7 experimental groups (x2)	Y10 experimental groups (x2)
Memory	144 (16%)	226 (17%)
Cognitive	157 (18%)	220 (17%)
Communicative/compensatory	217 (24%)	308 (24%)
Metacognitive	118 (13%)	177 (14%)
Affective	131 (15%)	187 (15%)
Social	122 (14%)	170 (13%)
Total:	889	1,288

Note: Y7 (n=56); Y10 (n=36). Percentage distribution show in brackets.

RQ2: Effective in promoting pupils' spoken TL use

The spoken assessments were
a far cry from last term's work!

RQ2: Effective in promoting pupils' spoken TL use

Table 12. Descriptive statistics for post-intervention speaking assessments.

		Year group					
		Y7			Y10		
		Class/condition					
		7E1	7E2	7C	10E1	10E2	10C
Total score	Mean	29.0**	28.1**	15.9	25.4*	30.2**	21.2
	(SD)	(4.7)	(4.4)	(4.0)	(5.9)	(5.2)	(5.9)
	Median	30	27	16	25	32	22
	Range	18	15	20	20	17	22
	Max	35	35	30	34	35	31
Number of words	Mean	111.4**	92.3**	34.7	149.8**	142.8**	106.1
	(SD)	(29.2)	(22.6)	(17.0)	(37.8)	(42.6)	(39.5)
	Median	118.5	93	32	155	147	103
	Range	127	105	61	143	150	164
	Max	170	142	74	226	211	212

Note: Maximum possible total score = 35.
SD = Standard deviation (of the mean). E = Experimental. C = Comparison.
7E1 (n=28); 7E2 (n=28); 7C (n=26). 10E1 (n=17); 10E2 (n=19); 10C (n=20).
*Signifies $p<.05$ (when compared to comparison group in the same year group).
**Signifies $p<.01$ (when compared to comparison group in the same year group).

RQ3: Effectiveness among Y7 and Y10

- Explicit SBI has benefits for **both beginner** (Y7) and **intermediate** (Y10) learners.
- Self-report levels of **enjoyment** were **higher in Y7** than in Y10.

RQ3: Effectiveness among Y7 and Y10

- Experimental classes from **both year groups demonstrated a more positive attitude towards spoken TL** use following intervention.
    - Y7 appeared to have a more positive outlook than Y10 at T1, and this remained the case at T2;
    - Y10 were overall less WTC in TL voluntarily in class in front of their peers than Y7;
    - Y10 pupils also self-reported a higher level of anxiety towards speaking TL at pre-intervention than Y7;
    - Y10 also self-reported a keener desire to have more opportunities to speak French;
    - SBI was extremely effective in supporting Y10 in this aim: over the course of the intervention, there was a striking increase in Y10's confidence and self-efficacy in oral output.

RQ4: Adopting successful strategies across the department - pre

Table 6. Number of teachers who identified particular factors as facilitators or barriers to CPL participation.

Facilitating factor identified	Number of teachers (of 8*)
Shared school vision	5
Support from colleagues	5
Teacher willingness	3
Relevant/valuable content	2
Barrier identified	
High workload/lack of time	7
Teacher reluctance	7
Irrelevant/worthless content	3
Lack of support from colleagues	3
Anxiety	2

*Note: Seven MFL teachers and the Head of CPD (see Chapter 3).

RQ4: Adopting successful strategies across the department - pre

Time is such a precious commodity for teachers and often we chase our tails and don't have time to engage.

I think a departmental space where you are meeting on an informal basis most days is one of the most valuable times and places for sharing professional practice because it kind of takes away the fear a bit.

I don't feel that, for languages teachers, it's that useful doing collaborative stuff with people from other subjects because languages are so different, like they just don't get it. It's just too different and we are a little bit isolated sometimes from the rest of the school community.

You can be an island in teaching.

I think that teachers tend to be quite cynical about professional learning and development, and experienced teachers can be like entrenched in their position.

RQ4: Adopting successful strategies across the department - post

I found Cycle 2 more successful than Cycle 1 because **the collaboration was much more real in Cycle 2**, and I became increasingly involved. Perhaps closer collaboration at the start may have forced everyone to collaborate more proactively.

I'm surprised how much **I enjoyed the whole process** … I've learned a huge amount.

Delivering resources created by other people can be a bit **tricky**.

Lack of time means that the sharing of learning is **limited** and benefits to the whole team **curtailed** … perhaps **regular departmental CPL slots** would be a good idea.

CONCLUSIONS

- Significance of the current study – productive; *all* strategies; rare

- Limitations – one context; no longitudinal data; teacher/researcher effects

- Implications for practice – multi-dimensional benefits; Y7; broad brush; autonomy; collaboration

- Ways forward – roll out; shrewd; similarities between teachers and pupils; future research

QUESTIONS

Thank you for listening!

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