

Flourishing in French: Promoting Speaking Skills in the Modern Foreign Language Classroom

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Flourishing in French: Promoting Speaking Skills in the Modern Foreign Language Classroom

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	5
1. Introduction	6
2. Literature Review	10
Part 1: Flourishing	10
2.1. Why Flourishing and what does it mean?	10
2.2. How to promote a sense of flourishing	11
2.2.1. Self-efficacy	12
2.2.1.1. What is self-efficacy?.....	12
2.2.1.2. Self-efficacy in the MFL classroom	12
2.2.1.3. Self-efficacy outside the classroom	13
2.2.2. The desire to learn	14
2.2.2.1. Progress, engagement and success.....	14
2.2.2.2. Mindset theory.....	15
2.2.3. Anxiety	16
2.2.3.1. Learner anxieties	16
2.2.3.2. Reducing anxiety in the MFL classroom	18
Part 2: Speaking Fluency.....	19
2.3. What is fluency?	19
2.4. How to measure speaking fluency	20
2.5. How to promote speaking fluency in the MFL classroom	21
2.5.1. Pedagogic fluency interventions.....	21
2.5.2. Improving memory	23
2.5.2.1. Memory and the brain.....	23
2.5.2.2. The importance of the working memory.....	25
2.5.2.3. Cognitive overload and fatigue	26
2.5.2.4. Retention.....	27
2.5.3. Phonological awareness	28
2.5.3.1. What is phonological awareness?	28
2.5.3.2. The benefits of phonological awareness.....	30
2.5.3.3. Phonological awareness in the MFL classroom	31
2.5.4. Chunking and lexicogrammar	33
2.5.4.1. A link with working memory and fluency	33
2.5.4.2. Chunking in the MFL classroom	33
2.5.5. Automatisatation	35

2.5.5.1.	What is automatisisation?	35
2.5.5.2.	A link with fluency.....	36
2.5.5.3.	Automatisation and its preceding stages	36
2.6.	Summary	37
2.7.	Research questions and hypotheses.....	38
3.	Methodology	40
3.1.	Participants	40
3.2.	Collaborators	40
3.3.	Overview of the research project and the intervention	41
3.3.1.	Step 1. Pre-intervention: December 2021	41
3.3.2.	Step 2. Intervention: January - March 2022	42
3.3.3.	Step 3. Post-intervention: April - June 2022	44
3.4.	Research instruments.....	45
3.4.1.	Speaking assessments	45
3.4.2.	Questionnaires.....	46
3.4.3.	Interviews	47
3.5.	Limitations of the methods.....	48
3.5.1.	Speaking assessments	48
3.5.2.	Questionnaires.....	49
3.5.3.	Interviews	49
3.6.	Ethical issues	50
3.7.	Methods of data analysis.....	52
3.7.1.	Speaking assessments	52
3.7.2.	Questionnaires.....	52
3.7.3.	Interviews	53
4.	Findings	54
4.1.	Research Question 1: What, if any, is the effect of the focused intervention on the learners' sense of flourishing?.....	55
4.1.1.	Questionnaires.....	55
4.1.2.	Interviews	56
4.1.2.1.	Pre-intervention interviews	57
4.1.2.2.	Post-intervention interviews.....	58
4.2.	Research Question 2: What, if any, learner gains can be identified as a result of a focused intervention on speaking fluency?.....	60
4.2.1.	Speaking assessments	60
4.2.2.	Questionnaires.....	63

4.2.3. Interviews	64
4.2.3.1. Pre-intervention interviews	64
4.2.3.2. Post-intervention interviews	65
5. Conclusion	71
5.1. Investigation conclusions in relation to the research questions	71
5.2. Wider implications of the investigation: department, Foundation and beyond	73
6. References	75
7. Appendices	86
Appendix A	86
AQA Speaking Assessment Mark Scheme	86
Appendix B	89
Research Project Explanation Script	89
Appendix C	90
Opt-out Form	90
Appendix D	91
Example Intervention Programme Tasks	91
Appendix E	92
Speaking Assessment Questions	92
Appendix F	93
Student Questionnaire	93
Appendix G	94
Interview Groupings	94
Appendix H	95
Question Guide for Interviews	95
Appendix I	97
Interview Transcripts	97

Figure 1. An example sentence builder grid devised by Conti et al. (2021, p. 110)..... 7

Figure 2. An example substitution table devised by Palmer (1923, p. V) 8

Abstract

This practitioner research study explores the effects of a focused intervention programme run across ten lessons with two Year 8 French classes (N=34) at a preparatory boarding school in the UK. The study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. *What, if any, is the effect of the focused intervention on the learners' sense of flourishing?*
2. *What, if any, learner gains can be identified as a result of the focused intervention on speaking fluency?*

Baseline data were collected via speaking assessments and semi-structured student interviews. Following the intervention programme, data were collected again using speaking assessments, student questionnaires, and semi-structured student interviews. Findings identify a boosted sense of flourishing (self-efficacy, enjoyment, and confidence) and a range of learner gains in speaking fluency (phonological awareness, ambitious language, and spontaneity) in light of the intervention programme and across all three methods of data collection.

Sampled speaking assessments (n=6) showed recording duration, pace (word and syllable), and overall marks have all increased by around one third post-intervention, indicating an improvement in speaking fluency. Results from student questionnaires (n=28) show that half of all students perceived improvements across all response categories. Almost all students perceived improvements in at least half of the response categories. Interviews revealed that, although students still have the tendency to experience emotions of worry, stress, or frustration when speaking in French, the intensity has decreased post-intervention.

1. Introduction

Teacher views and assessment data indicate speaking is the skill that has been most negatively impacted in Modern Foreign Language (MFL) lessons at my school throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This area proved more of a challenge to teach and practise during extensive periods of remote learning and subsequent months of numerous restrictions within the classroom. Barriers in these lessons included technological issues; inflexibility in seating plans; group work restricted to seated pairs; minimal movement around the classroom; no chanting, raised voices or singing. Unlike reading, writing or listening exams, summer speaking exams were cancelled due to logistical issues. Students at my school have not sat a face-to-face speaking assessment since November 2020. This trend is also seen on a national scale, with the removal of language speaking examinations at GCSE and A-Level in summers 2020 and 2021. As the most recent Language Trends report (Collen, 2020) points out, "It will be interesting to follow the impact of a worldwide pandemic on the international dimension of language learning in the years to come" (p.8).

Research suggests that opportunities to practice speaking skills must be plentiful and the key to success in language learning is *little and often* (Smith & Conti, 2016). Nation (2007) states that 25% of classroom time should be spent developing fluency. This is because the goal of learning an L2 (second language), arguably, is to use it naturally. Fluency plays an essential role, not only on a societal level regarding integration, but on a communicative level too. Communicating, without lengthy pauses or misunderstanding, requires fluency (Yang, 2014). This study, therefore, aims to address these issues and close a gap in my students' learning.

In my current context, there is a departmental focus on the 'Conti Approach' (Conti, 2022). At my school's request, this research paper will form part of my department's

review of this approach, with the vision of rolling it out across other schools in the Foundation if successful. As such, Conti remains a key reference throughout this research paper. A specific departmental focus is the use of sentence builders in all MFL lessons. As stated in Conti & Smith (2019), sentence builders are scaffolded chunks of language (see Fig. 1) that enable students to form completely accurate sentences, introducing new vocabulary with coupled translations to reduce cognitive overload and automatise lower order skills. These date back as early at least as 1916, referred to by linguist Harold Palmer as substitution tables (see Fig. 2). "An ideal compound substitution table is one composed in such a manner that all elements are mutually intercombinable" (Palmer, 1923, p. iv). I wish to assess what speaking fluency currently looks like in my school context and trial out new teaching methods that promote speaking fluency, keeping sentence builders at the forefront.

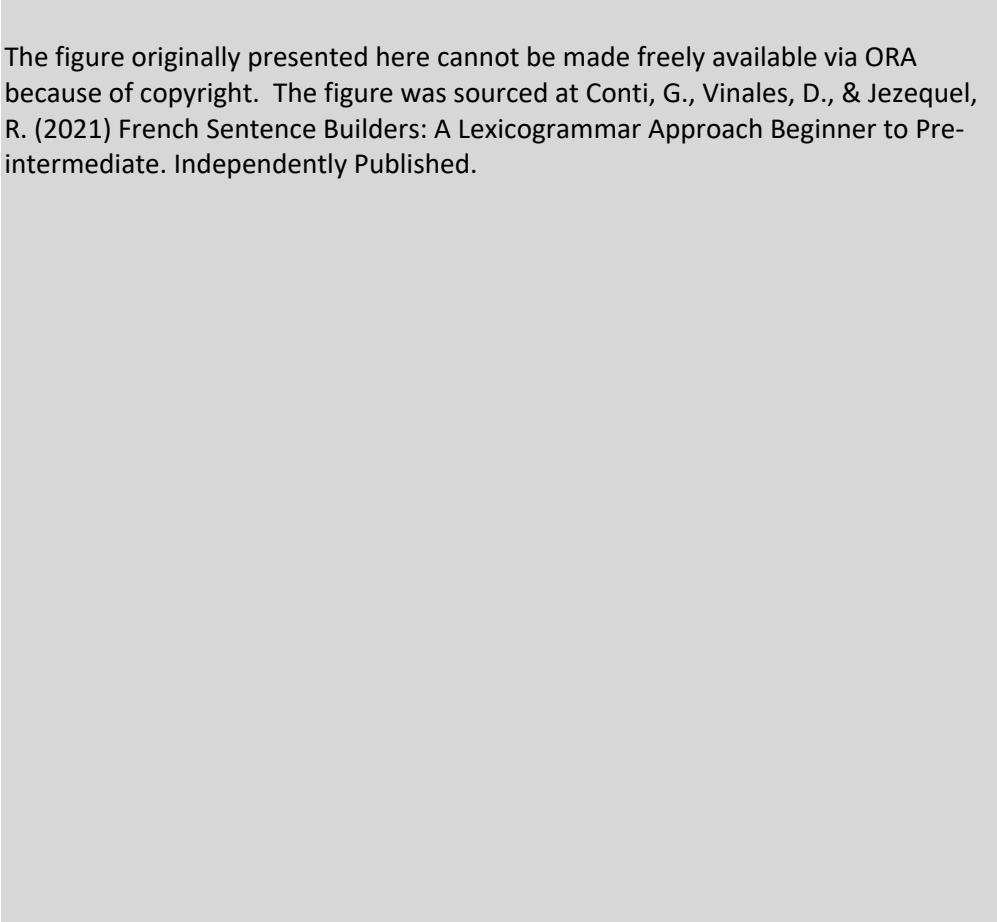


Figure 1. An example sentence builder grid devised by Conti et al. (2021, p. 110)

The figure originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The figure was sourced at Palmer, H. E. (1923). *Colloquial English Part 1: 100 Substitution Tables*. W. Heffer & Sons.

Figure 2. An example substitution table devised by Palmer (1923, p. V)

A second focus of this study is to reignite a sense of flourishing in the development of speaking fluency amongst students now that most classroom restrictions have been lifted. As one of my school's four values, *flourishing* is a term familiar to students. For the purposes herein, I honour my school's definition of 'flourishing' as "to thrive, be healthy in mind and spirit and to reach one's potential" (School X, 2022, p. 2). I strive to reduce any negative feelings towards speaking tasks, boost confidence and thus create a sense of flourishing. Viñales (2019) suggests that his learners are the "happiest, most confident students ever" (para. 27) since adopting sentence builders as a teaching aid. Similarly, this study hopes to boost learner confidence across all ability levels.

Looking at the wider picture, over the past 15 years the UK government has made a significant push for progress in speaking. The Ofsted (2008) evaluation of language learning was carried out following a rapid decline of take-up post age 14 in secondary schools, despite an increase in MFL provision in primary schools. The report highlighted speaking as "the least well-developed of all the skills" (p.5). Across the sample schools (N=60), speaking was deemed good in under a third, adequate in two thirds, and unsatisfactory in three. A focus on *phonics* then ensued, becoming a buzzword around 2010 when the government made a push to improve *phonemic awareness and phonic knowledge* (DoE, 2010). Ofsted (2011) reported that primary schools should continue to develop speaking skills in MFL and the national curriculum for languages (DoE, 2013)

aims to ensure all pupils "speak with increasing confidence, fluency and spontaneity" (p. 1). Its prominence continues today in the recent Ofsted curriculum research review (2021a), forming one of the three 'pillars' to be incorporated into language assessment systems.

Taking these factors into consideration, there seems to be ample call within my school context and beyond, to make speaking skills, with a focus on flourishing and fluency, a worthwhile field of investigation. The next section explores the literature surrounding flourishing (Part 1) and speaking fluency (Part 2).

2. Literature Review

Part 1: Flourishing

2.1. Why Flourishing and what does it mean?

Following a consultation process involving all Foundation schools, nurseries, business and administrative areas, my school has recently published a set of core values. The four Foundation Stones were launched with *Flourishing* as the overarching value for *Courage*, *Contribution* and *Love*. This comes in an effort to bring a sense of common purpose and uniformity within all Foundation schools and nurseries, amongst children, young adults and staff alike, in light of the recent expansion of the Foundation. These values now sit at the forefront of the school culture and students' education, with the focus "to think big, aim high and set challenging standards" (School X, 2022, p.2).

The Chambers Dictionary (Schwarz, 1994) definition of *flourish* is "To bloom; to grow luxuriantly; to thrive; to be in full vigour; to be prosperous" (p.643). School policy defines *flourishing* as "much more than just to do well academically or to excel in one or more areas of school life. It is about really thriving; being healthy in mind, body and spirit, reaching one's full potential" (School X, 2022, p.2). This is echoed by Public Health England (2021), who state that a healthy mind is widely recognised to influence cognitive development and learning. Ofsted's *Education Framework (2019)* and *School Inspection Handout (2022)* also emphasise the importance of mental health. Relevantly, Ofsted's *Guidance: Positive environments where children can flourish (2021b)* references environment and culture as being vital for enabling good practice, defining good practice as a balance between care (keeping a child safe) and facilitating their need to explore and learn.

School policy requires that the school communities be encouraged to reflect how these values make a practical difference as well as the way students and staff think about themselves and others. In recent INSETs, teaching staff have been reminded of the school's policy to refer to the Foundation Stones during each and every lesson, of the aim that "every member of our community will flourish, living a full and fulfilled life" (School X, 2022, p.6), and to use the behaviour management system to reward each value.

Research literature surrounding this field indicates a wide range of reasons for promoting an ethos of flourishing within education. The following sections delve into this research. It is important to note, however, that although *flourishing* is the term used within my school context, it is not always a term used in research. Self-efficacy, mindset, well-being and belonging are also used, terms with varying nuances but which arguably fall under the same umbrella.

2.2. How to promote a sense of flourishing

A paper by Kahu and Nelson (2018) titled *Student engagement in the educational interface: understanding the mechanisms of student success* formed the starting point of my research into *flourishing*. The study looks at four psychological constructs: self-efficacy, emotions, belonging and well-being, "critical mechanisms for mediating the interactions between student and institutional characteristics and student engagement and success" (p. 58). These constructs struck me as the essence of my school's vision with the Foundation Stones and lie at the heart of its definition of *flourishing*. I decided to look further into the research surrounding these four constructs, to understand more clearly how the best conditions can be achieved for my students to flourish. Literature indicated a positive correlation between *self-efficacy* and *attainment* (e.g., Ofsted 2019), and *self-efficacy* and *fluency* (e.g., Elliott, 1995; Graham, 2007; Schumann, 1986).

Associated studies reported impactful interventions. For this reason, self-efficacy became a focus. To implement the value of flourishing, I explore the question: how does one create flourishing L2 speakers?

2.2.1. Self-efficacy

2.2.1.1. What is self-efficacy?

Self-efficacy relates to the expectancy of success; how likely you think you are to succeed (Bandura, 1997). If a student *feels* they have succeeded in a task, their self-efficacy and expectation for future success is raised. In other words, "success breeds success" (Smith & Conti, 2016, p. 259). Bandura proposes four sources of self-efficacy beliefs: mastery experiences (having success, e.g., via completing a task), vicarious experiences (seeing similar people to ourselves succeed), verbal persuasion (being convinced by someone of our capabilities), and physiological and affective states (e.g., stress or tiredness).

2.2.1.2. Self-efficacy in the MFL classroom

Self-efficacy is thought to be an indicator of progress in language learning and for this reason, teachers should invest in their students' self-efficacy development from a young age (Graham, 2007). Ofsted's curriculum research review (2021a) states that "pupils' self-efficacy consistently results in academic achievement more than other motivational factors. It also improves their language proficiency" (p. 7). The review acknowledges the following as likely to improve levels of self-efficacy: "language-learning experiences that pupils perceive as successful; knowing how to sound out words in a foreign language; ensuring that the building blocks of language are in place so that pupils can exercise greater autonomy; seeing non-native peers communicating effectively" (p. 7). Ten commandments for motivating language learners by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) recommends a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom to nurture a sense of

success. Smith and Conti (2016) suggest mnemonics, colour coding, spaced practice, saying aloud as basic memory strategies to boost students' self-efficacy.

Literature suggests that once self-efficacy is prioritised, a wealth of other learner benefits will be seen (Bandura, 1997), such as a boosted attitude to learning (Bulut, 2017). This sits in line with my professional judgement and that of my colleagues. At my school, attitude to learning is generally thought of as equal to, or even valued higher, than aptitude. As such, it merits its own category of achievement in the behaviour reward system. Results from a study by Elliott (1995) involving university students flagged up attitude as the most important contributor towards developing L2 pronunciation. This is echoed by Schumann (1986), who adds that a positive attitude towards language *and culture* is important for accurate pronunciation.

2.2.1.3. Self-efficacy outside the classroom

Unfortunately for teachers wanting a quick fix to students' qualms and quandaries, research indicates that socioeconomic and sociocultural factors, less controllable within the classroom, are also closely linked to self-efficacy. Middle-class students generally have higher academic self-efficacy than working-class students who tend to be more anxious about their academic abilities (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Furthermore, the influence of family (cultural capital, encouragement, and role models) also strongly impacts self-efficacy (Schunk & Mullen, 2012).

In sum, self-efficacy and a sense of flourishing are interdependent, playing a crucial role in the learning processes, including that of fluency. Subsections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 look at further ways in which to boost this sense of flourishing in L2 speakers, with (due to said interdependence) a continuous thread of self-efficacy.

2.2.2. The desire to learn

2.2.2.1. Progress, engagement and success

Boosting students' desire to learn is pivotal for progress (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). It is referred to by Dennett (1987) as the principle of intentionality. The somewhat frequent question "Is today going to be a *fun* lesson?" asked by students when stepping into a classroom, jumps to mind. Although tongue-in-cheek, the element of *fun*, is powerful. Enjoyment and engagement seem a priority for progress. Kahu and Nelson (2018) discuss student engagement theory: "students who are engaged with their studies are more likely to be successful" (p. 3). This is supported by Krause and Coates (2008) who state that student engagement is key to student achievement and retention, and by Tinto (2014) who states that "engagement matters" (p. 20). As far as I am aware, there is a gap in UK-based primary school research relating to L2 fluency and the impacts of desire to learn and engagement. One study from Suter (1976), however, of adult L2 learners of English (N=61) at California State Polytechnic University looks at predictors of pronunciation accuracy in L2 acquisition. It reports student *concern* for accurate pronunciation was one of the variables strongly correlated with pronunciation accuracy. Research resoundingly indicates encouraging students to show desire, care and concern towards their studies carries a host of positive implications. Although Suter's study comes from a higher educational setting abroad, it is possible that its implications will be applicable to teaching 7-13 year olds within my teaching context. This premise is reinforced by the above literature, my experiences within the classroom, and knowledge that my colleagues also perceive *concern and care* for learning as a valuable quality in a student.

2.2.2.2. Mindset theory

Desire to learn is also discussed in the well-researched mindset theory. Pioneered by Dweck (1999), mindset theory was born out of attribution theory and achievement goal theory (Weiner & Kukla, 1970). Attribution theory proposes that humans give explanations for an event that happens to them; these will vary depending on the individual's mindset (Dweck & Yeager, 2019). Achievement goal theory is defined by Hulleman et al. (2010) as "a future-focused cognitive representation that guides behavior to a competence-related end state that the individual is committed to either approach or avoid" (p. 432).

Mindset theory aims to answer why students of equal ability have varying "helpless attributions or performance goals" (Yeager & Dweck, 2020, p. 1271) and predicts mindsets are associated with achievement. A huge number of research studies confirm this (e.g., Blackwell et al., 2007; Brandisauskiene, 2021). Growth mindset assumes human traits are not fixed or predetermined, rather development and improvement are viable under the right conditions (Capozzi, 2017; Dweck, 2006; Kroeper et al. 2022). Someone with a *growth* mindset is likely to see failure as a temporary setback, and believe that effort and practice lead to mastery; they are more likely to *flourish* in challenging situations (Yeager & Dweck, 2020). Contrastingly, someone with a *fixed* mindset, who assumes intelligence is innate, will likely avoid challenges to prevent failure (Smith, 2020).

Policymakers and educators have shown particular interest in mindset theory over recent years (e.g., Ofsted, 2019) due to highly positive results from studies that have "yielded effective, scalable interventions" (Yeager & Dweck, 2020, p.1270). The term *growth mindset* is certainly familiar at my school. It is commonplace to hear a student add the word 'yet' on to a peer's 'I can't do this' comment. A study from Fox and Barrera (2020) of

private school students aged 10-14 ($N=46$) in Indiana looked at "the influence of grit and implicit theories of intelligence and personality on academic performance" (p. 25).

Although grit was not shown to affect academic achievement, this study confirms the beneficial effect of a growth mindset of intelligence and personality on academic performance, particularly in more verbal areas, such as reading and language. Whilst this study comes from outside the UK, the age range and type of school is highly transferable to my context. As nearly all research in the field investigates secondary age groups and older, this is a rare case study that is able to inform my research study.

Another unusually large-scale nationwide study of all 10th graders in Chile (Claro et al., 2016) reports a strong, positive correlation between growth mindset and achievement across all Chilean socioeconomic strata. A wealth of mindset studies echo these two studies, but one with a variation in conclusion caught my eye. Dixon (2020) investigated the effect of growth mindset, school belonging, and hope against several academic variables including behavioural engagement, academic self-efficacy and curiosity in an American high school ($N=447$). The study concludes that interventions focusing on *hope* might be more beneficial than growth mindset and school belonging interventions. This is certainly food for thought.

In sum, desire to learn plays an important role in learning and the validity of mindset theory is strongly supported by research.

2.2.3. Anxiety

2.2.3.1. Learner anxieties

Smith and Conti (2021) explain that experiencing anxiety when learning an L2 is common, particularly in speaking and listening tasks "stress and anxiety significantly increase cognitive load and the pressure on working memory" (p. 32). Since the 1970s,

there has been significant research centred around learner anxiety (Kim, 2021). An article by Horwitz et al. (1986) describes anxiety as "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (p. 125). The study puts these anxieties into three performance-related categories: communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation. It discusses how practitioners frequently come across L2 learners who become forgetful or distracted, experience sweating or palpitations, or display avoidance behaviours such as missing class or deadlines. My colleagues and I agree that there is a general feeling of apprehension around speaking tasks within our MFL Department; students displaying anxieties mentioned by Horwitz are not uncommon. Historically, our students have reported this is because the adult-student interview style setting is stressful and unfamiliar, and they are not in direct control of the speaking questions.

These student experiences are so particular to language learning, that Horwitz et al (1986) drew up the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (FLCAS), to set this anxiety apart from general anxiety. One study of Korean college students ($N=123$) by Thompson and Lee (2013) examines anxiety levels of English learners using the FLCAS. It concludes that students display: class performance anxiety, lack of self-confidence, and fear of ambiguity. Anxiety can negatively impede progress across various skills, not just speaking. Another study on L2 English reading by Kim (2021) involving students ($N=256$) at one university in Seoul, South Korea, shows that anxiety negatively impacts reading performance. Although these studies investigate *English* L2 speakers, I would argue, from my professional experience and that of my colleagues, that research in this field is consistent with our observations and highly transferable to my French and Spanish classroom.

2.2.3.2. Reducing anxiety in the MFL classroom

Literature suggests several ways to reduce anxiety. Firstly, use a shared L1 (first language) in the L2 classroom, sparingly and judiciously, and particularly in instances where cognitive overload is reduced as a result, such as when explaining complex terminology, concepts and grammatical structures (Bruen & Kelly, 2017). Secondly, reassure language students that communication, regardless of accuracy and fluency, is important (Conti & Smith, 2016). Smith and Conti explain that error correction should be undertaken with caution and recommend 'recasting' (rephrasing responses correctly) as a sensitive tactic. Currently, examination boards acknowledge the value of communication. In the AQA (2019) speaking examination, for example, 35 marks (out of 60) are awarded for communication, i.e., conveying messages without ambiguity regardless of the quality of language. The 'just have a go' approach seems to be endorsed by research and UK policy.

There is a general feeling from students that language learning requires the leaping of a monumental hurdle of anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986) and this certainly needs to be addressed by language teachers. For some students with a self-conscious disposition, however, speaking in an L2 can be liberating and anxiety-reducing, as it is as if someone else is speaking (Horwitz et al., 1986). A study on L2 anxiety by Kim (2021) concludes with the following sage advice: teachers should focus on emotions such as enjoyment, satisfaction, or confidence, rather than struggling to reduce their students' anxiety.

Part 2: Speaking Fluency

2.3. What is fluency?

The question '*what is fluency?*' *does not have* a straightforward answer. Segalowitz (2016) notes the numerous interpretations of the term fluency. It seems that these definitions can be split into two loose categories. Firstly, there is the view that fluency is the *speed* and *ease* of language execution (e.g, Hedge, 2000; Vafaei, 2016). Fluent speakers rarely pause mid-sentence and spontaneity is key. This matches the definition of 'fluent' in the Chambers Dictionary (Schwarz, 1994): "able to speak and write a particular language competently and with ease" (p. 644). Secondly, there is the view of Hedge (1993) who states that fluency is all about sounding *near-native*. Here the focus is on the end goal of using language as people do in everyday life (Grauberg, 1997). This view seems a little outdated within UK language teaching models and examination syllabuses, where communication is the priority (AQA, 2019).

It is also worth noting that fluency is not just a term used to refer to fluidity of speech; it can refer to a person's overall competence or proficiency. Contrastingly, it can refer to writing, speaking, listening, and reading as isolated skills. Not only is the term *fluency* problematic in the English language, Segalowitz (2016) points out the cross-cultural differences when translated as well: "In French *aisance à l'oral* 'ease of speaking' focuses on the speaker's experience whereas the Spanish *fluidez* 'fluidity' focuses on the quality of the action" (pp. 79-80). These diverse interpretations of the term make comparing and contrasting literature difficult, particularly when it comes to theorising the acquisition of L2 fluency. A clear definition and explanation of the term plays a crucial role in the design stages of any study on this theme. This research study uses the definition of *speed* and *ease* of language execution with a focus on *spontaneity*, as per

the AQA GCSE criteria (see Appendix A), a mark scheme that forms part of my school's MFL curriculum.

2.4. How to measure speaking fluency

There are many ways in which to measure fluency depending on your elected definition of the term. A mix of different and often synonymous jargon can be found in fluency research studies. For example, Hedge (1993) discusses frequency of *pauses*, *repetitions* and *self-corrections* as ways to measure fluency. Similarly, Suzuki (2021) uses *speed*, *breakdown* and *repair fluency*. Segalowitz (2016) expands on this to use a detailed, three-frame structure: *utterance*, *cognitive* and *perceived fluency*. *Utterance fluency* describes those features which are temporal, such as syllable rate, duration and rate of hesitations, silent pauses and repair fluency. *Cognitive fluency* describes the speed and efficiency of the cognitive processes responsible for performing L2 speech acts including semantic retrieval and working memory. *Perceived fluency* refers to subjective judgements of the L2 speakers' oral fluency. Not without its similarities, Rasinski's Multidimensional Fluency Rubric (Rasinski, 2016), although directed towards reading fluency, has the following four categories rated on a 1-4 scale: *expression and volume*; *phrasing*; *smoothness*; *pace*. The methods of measuring fluency in this research study are significantly influenced by the two most observable elements of Segalowitz's three-frame structure: utterance fluency (duration, word and syllable rate) and perceived fluency.

When measuring fluency, it is important to consider the individual traits of the speaker. Impacted responses include pauses when forming more complex sentences or (as discussed in Part 1) when feeling nervous, anxious or stressed. Results from one study (N=38) of young adult Spanish learners (L1 English) from Castillejo (2019) show that anxiety levels are a strong predictor of temporal features of fluency in speaking

examinations. L1 proficiency may also impact fluency rates as L1 rates of utterance fluency might be just as slow as L2. Segalowitz suggests that L1 performance will provide a good baseline for L2 performance (see De Jong et al., 2013).

Similarly, in a study by Larsen (2016) Rasinski's rubric was used to measure fluency of readers in Spanish and English. The study investigates 6th Grade students (N=35) at a bilingual school in California where lessons are taught to this age group in English and Spanish with a 50/50 split. Across an 8-week period, students carried out repeated readings daily. Reading fluency (words correct per minute) was monitored with pre- and post-intervention assessments. The findings show that repeated readings in L2 have a positive outcome on students' oral reading fluency in *both* L2 and L1, indicating that fluency skills do transfer from one language to another. In sum, a fully comprehensive L2 fluency study would consider L1 fluency. Larson's study is able to closely inform my intervention programme; due to the age group of investigation and intervention programme structure, it is highly transferable to my context.

2.5. How to promote speaking fluency in the MFL classroom

To address targeted areas of improvement in my school's MFL department, it would be beneficial to identify whether research surrounding fluency calls for changes in curriculum design, lesson sequencing, or teaching routines. How does one foster spontaneous L2 speakers who speak at speed and with ease? How does one create optimal conditions for language learners to reach a fluent level in an efficient and timely manner?

2.5.1. Pedagogic fluency interventions

A study by Tavakoli et al. (2016) closely addresses the above questions. The paper investigates the effects of a short-term pedagogic intervention on development of L2

fluency in English learners ($N=37$) at a UK university over a four-week period. Although the study is aimed at adults, the pedagogic interventions are transferable to my classroom environment: boosting awareness of different aspects of fluency (e.g., speed, pausing and repair strategies); strategies for improving fluency (e.g., lexical fillers and avoiding repetitions and hesitations where possible); opportunities for practising fluency (e.g., retelling a picture story and recording the performance to self-assess fluency issues). The experimental group produced more fluent language than the control group, with a "faster speech and articulation rate, longer runs and higher phonation time ratios" (p. 447). Tavakoli et al. measure articulation rate as the "mean number of syllables per minute divided by amount of phonation time, excluding pauses"; speech rate as "mean number of syllables per minutes divided by total time, including pauses"; and phonation time ratio as the "time taken to perform the task, excluding the pauses" (p. 456). Tavakoli et al. conclude that the intervention had a positive impact on the development of fluency.

Another pedagogic fluency intervention uses the popular 4/3/2 test, whereby students perform speeches in four, three and two minutes respectively; again, this is transferable to my classroom environment. Nation (1989), further reinforced by Arevart & Nation (1991), reports of boosted speech rate (words per minute), fewer false starts, repeated words, or hesitations in light of the 4/3/2 test. Nation extrapolates that students usually decrease duration by omitting irrelevant details or altering structures, often creating more complex phrases with a higher than normal fluency in their third delivery. A study by De Jong et al. (2011) used the 4/3/2 test to carry out fluency training with L2 English students ($N=24$), this time looking at the impacts of fluency development and proceduralization. Some students spoke on the same topic three times, whilst other students spoke on three different topics. Findings show that "fluency improved for both groups during training but was maintained on posttests only by the students who repeated their speeches" (p. 533). The study argues that proceduralization of linguistic

knowledge is important for the cognitive changes that lead to long-term improvements in fluency.

An alternative fluency intervention programme from Freed et al. (2004) looks at setting. Research was conducted comparing standard classroom study, study abroad, and intensive domestic immersion programmes of English speakers learning French. The standard classroom group made no significant gains in terms of fluency whereas the study abroad group made statistically significant gains in terms of speech fluidity. Surprisingly, the study abroad students reported using more L1 than L2 and it was the immersion group who made the greatest all round fluency gains (total number of words spoken, length of longest turn, speech rate, speech fluidity). The immersion group also reported they spoke and wrote French for significantly longer than the other two groups. The study links hours of writing outside class time to enhanced speaking fluency. This is reiterated by Dekeyser (2007) who states that study abroad students make notable improvements in speaking, but perhaps not as much as thought due to limited opportunity for produralization and automatisation. I am not in the position to run an intensive immersion programme in my school, but this is certainly a possible area of further study.

2.5.2. Improving memory

2.5.2.1. Memory and the brain

Another way to increase fluency is to improve memory. Memory is hugely complex and at the forefront of neuroscience research (Tsukiura & Umeda, 2017; Watson et al., 2010). The following literature highlights that a basic understanding of memory-related brain functions is beneficial to language teachers.

Smith and Conti (2021, p.19) use the metaphor of a bottle to represent the human memory: only a small amount of liquid (information) can be poured in slowly at any one time. Once in the storage area, some liquid may evaporate over time. The question for educators is how best to select information for it to pass through the neck, reach the body and be retained.

For the L2 student, forming memories is an information-receiving process that begins with sight and sound. Cognitive psychology tells us that memory involves three processes: *encoding*, *storage* and *retrieval* (Melton, 1963). Information travels along neurons via a pulse of electrical energy. *Long-term potentiation*, a process whereby two neurons repeatedly communicate with each other, plays a key role in this memory storage process. Research indicates that the brain is more likely to memorise those experiences that utilise all our senses. In the classroom, memory can be further assisted if teachers link new content with students' prior knowledge (Shing & Brod, 2016).

Neuroscientist Michael Ullman's declarative/procedural (DP) model proposes that learning, storage, and use of language are reliant on two learning systems in the brain: declarative memory and procedural memory (Ullman 2004; Ullman & Lovelett, 2016). The declarative memory, involving the hippocampus, is responsible for learning facts and events and relies on recall and retrieval. It can be divided into the following memory subcategories: episodic, semantic, spatial and autobiographical (Ullman & Pullman, 2015). Of relevance for language teachers, declarative memory is responsible for the memorisation of lexis. Procedural memory is founded on experiences that enable us to remember skills. It can be divided into the following learning subcategories: perceptual, category, emotional, and procedural. Once learnt, these skills are subconscious and automatic, for example driving a car or reading. Again, of note for language teachers, procedural memory is responsible for the memorisation of grammar. Declarative and

procedural memory are affected by age. The DP model suggests grammar becomes more difficult to learn than lexical knowledge after the onset of puberty. The procedural system becomes decreasingly available due to increased levels of oestrogen which, contrastingly, likely boost the declarative system (Ullman, 2004). Ullman reassures us that practice should increase performance, so those who learn languages later in life *can* become highly proficient with experience.

2.5.2.2. The importance of the working memory

Research highlights the importance of working memory in the memorisation process. Some research argues that working memory is predetermined by genetics (e.g., Field, 2008) whilst other research states it can be improved with training (e.g., Nation & Newton, 2009). It is thought that the more advanced the working memory, the better the ability to achieve a proficient L2 speaking fluency (Prebianca et al., 2014). Research into linguistics and psychology has gained momentum in the last twenty years (Ellis 2001; Randall 2007; Wen 2016; Wen et al. 2014) and birthed a wealth of cognitive skills tests. Testing and measuring working memory to help students reach their potential, however, is nothing new. In 1887, psychologist John Jacobs developed the digit span test to assess the abilities of his students: the more numbers in a spoken sequence one can remember, the stronger the digit span and working memory (Richardson, 2007). This might be a useful assessment to conduct with my students.

There are numerous ways teachers can respond to knowledge of their students' working memory. To support a slower working memory, it is recommended that working memory load is reduced: by keeping new material to be memorised to a minimum; breaking tasks down into small chunks; keeping instructions brief and pairing them with a visual cue or timeline; and developing routines. Other impactful strategies include: the use of memory aids (e.g., graphics or key word posters); the development of metacognition and the

students' own strategies to support their memory (e.g., encouraging requests for help, rehearsal and note-taking); and repetition of key information, by either the teacher or other students (Gathercole & Alloway, 2008).

2.5.2.3. Cognitive overload and fatigue

The literature discussed in this subsection suggests that cognitive overload and fatigue negatively impact memory. It is therefore important for teachers to manage this wherever possible, pitching lessons to an appropriate level of challenge. From time to time I notice frustration among my tutees when motivation and self-efficacy have been impeded by incorrectly pitched classwork or homework; a precarious balance that is tricky to get right, especially in the language classroom.

Cognitive load theory (Sweller, 1988) offers a framework for managing levels of cognitive overload. Sweller refers to three forms of cognitive load: intrinsic, extraneous or germane. In L2 acquisition, Smith and Conti (2021) explain that *fluency* is associated with *light* cognitive load on the working memory. In contrast, pauses, hesitations, errors, back-tracking and self-repairs are associated with *lack of fluency* and caused by cognitive *overload*. The latter is reduced by having lots of language in the long-term memory. In simple terms, reducing cognitive load is achieved by moving lexis from the storage area to long-term memory, a role played by the hippocampus in our limbic system.

Benjamin (2011) explores 'desirable difficulty', namely getting the level of cognitive load just right. In L2 acquisition research, Krashen (1982) refers to this as 'i+1'. According to Benjamin and Krashen, teachers must supply language that is at, or only just above, the students' level, and unknown words should be elicited from context. Rosenshine's *Principles of Instruction* (2012) provides a guide for managing cognitive load and

achieving 'desirable difficulty'. Other ways to manage cognitive fatigue in the classroom are alternating: long and short focus, sitting down and moving around, easier and harder tasks, skill sets, and 'quieter' listening activities in the afternoon (Conti & Smith, 2021).

2.5.2.4. Retention

Ullman and Lovelett (2016) report five ways to improve learning or retention of specific items or skills: spaced repetition, retrieval practice, deep encoding, gesture-based learning, and mnemonic strategies. The literature reviewed displayed highly impactful results from spaced repetition and retrieval practice, meriting further exploration. The studies reviewed in this subsection, again, report on university students, further underlining gaps in research and the call for research within the UK primary setting.

There are many strategies for memorisation but *the* strategy that stands out from a wide range of literature is *spaced repetition*. Research studies unequivocally agree that spaced repetition is effective, with positive impacts on retention for word learning, even years later (Ullman and Lovelett, 2016). Bygates (2001) discovered task repetition has performance benefits for speaking fluency even when speeches are rehearsed as far as ten weeks apart. A study by Suzuki (2021) investigates L2 fluency development fostered by spaced repetition in 50 English learners at a Japanese university. English L2 learners on the intervention blocked pathway (Day 1: A-B-C, Day 2: A-B-C, Day 3: A-B-C) displayed improved oral fluency over those on the control pathway (Day 1: A-A-A, Day 2: B-B-B, Day 3: C-C-C).

A study from Karatas et al. (2021) investigates retrieval practice. This is the process of extracting information from the brain, such as by completing quizzes or drilling through flashcards; it is the act of *using* what one has learnt, rather than simply re-studying via simple repetition. Retrieval practice helps consolidate learning and transfers knowledge

into the long-term memory. Karatas et al. trained Turkish university students ($N=48$) learning English on 64 English words over 17 days. Participants were assigned to the typical pathway of initial study followed by revision on the final day, or the intervention pathway of retrieval practice with feedback, spaced throughout the period with expanding gaps. Results show that students on the intervention pathway improved significantly more than those on the typical pathway.

In light of this research, it is advisable for language teachers to rethink curriculum design, encouraging topic work to be spread out and revisited over terms, years or even longer (Ullman and Lovelett, 2016). The positive impacts of retrieval practice and spaced repetition demonstrated by studies researched excite reconsideration of my current lesson sequencing. I have been reminded that a basic knowledge of the limbic system merits language teachers' full attention. This includes the vital cog in the memory wheel: working memory. It should be pointed out, however, that student memory is also affected by factors outside teachers' control, as all students bring with them emotional and physical baggage. This includes sleep, aerobic exercise, diet, and mindfulness (Ullman & Lovelett, 2016). Although these factors are not addressed in detail in this literature review, it is an important field of potential further reading to inform my classroom practice. Attempts to address this side of pastoral care have been a focus in the last five years in my school, with the introduction of small, intimate tutor groups of five or six students.

2.5.3. Phonological awareness

2.5.3.1. What is phonological awareness?

Another strategy for improving fluency is the promotion of phonological awareness (PA) in the classroom. "Phonological awareness refers to the set of skills which enables us to analyse the sounds in words we say and hear" (Layton & Deeney, 2002, p. vii). These

skills include "recognising phonological patterns such as rhyme and alliteration, awareness of syllables and phonemes within words, and hearing multiple phonemes within words" (Victoria State Government, 2020). An example of teacher talk, also from (Layton & Deeney, 2002, p. vii) shows this awareness-raising in practice:

If you leave your clothes tidy it will be so much easier to get dressed again, so put them the wight ray wound. Listen children! Did you hear me get my words mixed up? "The wight ray wound." Can you say that, what did I mean to say?

In other words, PA is a decoding skill (Campbell, 2020) which focuses on *sounds* rather than *meaning*. Part of really *knowing* a word is being aware of how it sounds. This speeds up the recall process, freeing up cognitive space in the working memory (Conti & Smith, 2016; 2019).

L2 phonology cannot be approached in the same manner as L1 due to key differences in the L1 and L2 acquisition process. During the process of acquiring a second phonological system, the brain links and adapts unfamiliar L2 phonemes to that of the L1 (Erler, 2003). This helps explain the predictable, often anglicised, pronunciation barriers my students face year on year, and frequent repetitions in teacher feedback as a result. Koda (2007) notes that automatic triggering is prevalent in languages which share the same alphabet, and exaggerated further when the L1 and L2 share orthographic patterns such as the suffix '-tion' in English and French (Woore, 2022). It also highlights the value of teachers familiarising themselves with *all* their students' L1 sound systems, even if this is diverse and effortful, as this will assist in planning and feedback. In a similar strand, Saiegh-Haddad (2019) highlights that the phonological distance between L1 and L2 is an important factor to consider. Thinking of English native speakers, the following will cause interference: "all French vowels, 'r' sounds in all languages, German fricatives (*ch*), *v* and *w* sounds, and diphthongs, Spanish bilabial, sibilant (*s*) and fricative (*j*) sounds" (Conti & Smith, 2019, p. 35).

2.5.3.2. The benefits of phonological awareness

PA carries a host of positive implications for a diverse range of language skills. The principal benefit stated by research is in L1 reading fluency. Early PA in children is a powerful predictor of reading fluency in later years (Blachman 2000; Bryant et al. 1990; Stanovich, 1986). There is nothing wrong with learning the odd complex word by heart, but learning to read and spell all words in a language by rote is an unviable (and unenviable) task. Decoding and encoding by linking graphemes with their phoneme, therefore, is essential for reading fluency. Being able to take words apart, rebuild them and even adapt them into new words, is a rudimentary language skill (Talbot, 2020).

Many PA studies taking place since 1990 link phonological learning differences with issues in L1 reading fluency and spelling (Campbell, 2020; Saiegh-Haddad, 2019). However, research into the implications of PA in L2 acquisition in recent years has gained momentum, with several recent studies exploring impacts of the explicit teaching of phonics (Li & Woore, 2021; Macarico & Woore, 2022; Woore et al. 2018; Woore, 2022). One such UK-based study from Woore et al. (2018), thought to be the largest evaluation of L2 phonics instruction to date (N=900), gave three Year 7 working groups the same challenging eight texts containing unknown words. Group 1 was given explicit French phonics instruction, Group 2 explicit reading strategies, and Group 3 no explicit intervention. Results show that those students who received French phonics instruction made greater progress in phonological decoding and made the greatest gains in vocabulary knowledge. Similarly, in a study of Chinese EFL university students (Li & Woore, 2021), the phonics intervention group (n=71) also significantly outperformed comparison groups (n=61).

It is not just reading fluency, however, that reaps the benefits. PA is important for pronunciation. The accurate production of phonological units at the outset is crucial to

ensure correct pronunciation (Conti & Smith, 2019). Conti and Smith (2016) also note that those who master L2 phonology have a higher breadth of L2 vocabulary and knowledge of grammar. They explain that a clear, phonological, mental image aids early L2 vocabulary acquisition in younger learners. This agrees with results from Woore et al. (2018). Literature also suggests a link between PA and boosted confidence and motivation (Muter & Diethelm, 2001; Woore 2022).

2.5.3.3. Phonological awareness in the MFL classroom

We have seen that literature recognises the importance of PA. It therefore seems advantageous to consider what raising PA might look like in practice. Firstly, a focus on phonics is believed to be effective. Conti & Smith (2019) recommend the following: teaching the main articulators of the vocal tract, arming language learners with basic phonetics terminology such as “plosive, voicing, fricative, bilabial, uvula, dental, alveolar and palatal” (p. 35); introducing the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA); using physical responses such as gestures to link sounds and spellings with younger learners; sociolinguistic discussions for raising awareness of sound, such as talking about various L1 accents and comparing and contrasting L1 and L2 sounds.

Similarly, a study by Inceoglu (2021) of Australian university students (N=30) looks into the impacts of explicit instruction, learners' pronunciation awareness, and the development of enchainements and liaisons (i.e. measures of connected speech) in L2 French. The 12-week pronunciation and phonetics course examined closely differences in speech sounds between English and French, and terminology to describe pronunciation (e.g., nasal consonants and vowels, mid-vowels, schwa, liquids). It also included extensive oral practice, sound discrimination exercises, and IPA transcriptions. Data were collected via five bi-weekly oral recordings of reading passages. The findings show that explicit pronunciation instruction has a positive effect on L2 pronunciation.

Research also recommends oral drills and auditory discrimination tasks (Saiegh-Haddad, 2019). Plentiful oral practice sounding out a word aloud is important and boosts memorability, helping the brain move the word down the 'bottle neck' towards the 'bottle body'. A study of 7-10 year olds ($N=41$) in Brisbane, Australia by Pritchard et al. (2020) looks into this *production effect*. "The production effect refers to the enhanced memory for items that are produced (vocalized) during encoding over those that are merely seen and read silently" (p 901). Results show that recognition and memory for those words read aloud was better than those words read silently. In other words, students were more successful at retrieving words from memory if they had pronounced them first. This outcome was confirmed by further similar investigation using invented nonwords (Pritchard et al., 2020).

Lastly, phonological priming (e.g, Mani & Plunkett, 2011) is a technique worth considering. It is based on the idea that word recognition is not just about what is heard, but also related words. Mani and Plunkett further explain this is when one word, for example "*cup*, primes *cat* or *plate*" (p.196) due to prior exposure to phonologically or semantically related words. In other words, it is a "subconscious process of words affecting following ones" (Smith & Conti 2021, p. 127). Conti and Smith suggest activities such as Rhyming Pairs to develop phonological priming.

In sum, although research in this area tends to focus on benefits of L1 reading fluency (Campbell, 2020; Saiegh-Haddad, 2019; Stanovich, 1986; Woore 2022), I have been informed by a host of relevant studies (UK based and investigating younger learners) that there is huge value in raising PA and teaching sounds, particularly when seeking improvements in speaking fluency. PA also aids word retention, vocabulary breadth, and knowledge of grammar. My students will benefit from as much exposure as possible to

sounds, opportunities to say *all* words aloud, instruction in phonetics, sociolinguistic discussions and more. Again, repetition seems key, as, without a purposeful effort to sustain it, phonological storage lasts only a few seconds (Jones et al., 2004). A striking comment from Woore (2022) notes that, without explicit PA instruction, L2 learners of French do not seem to achieve mastery of symbol-sound correspondences. As this is a current focus in the National Curriculum with phonics as one of Ofsted's three 'pillars' (Ofsted, 2021a), it does indeed seem a worthy area of study, and one which will assist my students' speaking fluency.

2.5.4. Chunking and lexicogrammar

2.5.4.1. A link with working memory and fluency

"The larger the chunks working memory can process at any one time, the more fluent processing is likely to be" (Conti & Smith, 2019, p.62). Chunking seems to play an important part in training the working memory and can be linked closely to the *speed* element of fluency, a fundamental aspect to many definitions of fluency (e.g., Hedge, 2000; Vafaei, 2016). Pleasingly, literature offers some answers to the two questions I posed: how does one foster L2 speakers who speak at speed and with ease; how does one create optimal conditions for language learners to reach a fluent level in an efficient and timely manner?

2.5.4.2. Chunking in the MFL classroom

Firstly, to speed up the working memory, and crucially reduce cognitive overload, Nation (2013) states that it is more efficient to use formulaic expressions and memorise lengthy chunks of texts than learn to assemble individual words. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) agree, suggesting that language students would benefit from learning a range of idiomatic expressions (e.g., 'on the other hand') that do not require grammatical assembly. Such expressions are stored in the 'pre-assembled' section of the brain, so

can be recalled at speed, and consequently improving fluency. In other words, these chunks emanate from procedural knowledge.

Secondly, another way of chunking is the use of sentence builders. It is an efficient method of presenting new vocabulary when time is limited; it reduces pressure on the working memory, which can only hold around seven items in a random sequence (Smith & Conti, 2021). Benefits to chunking as an approach to introduce vocabulary include: presentation of words and lexical patterns in context; modelling chunks and patterns through listening and reading; reducing adjectival agreement and word order error; recycling old material and planting the seed of new linguistic items; and scaffolding enjoyable and non-threatening interactive oral games such as sentence puzzles, guess what comes next, faulty echo, and delayed dictation (Conti & Smith, 2019).

Thirdly, a lexicogrammar approach can improve fluency levels. Lexicogrammar is the term used for the interaction and interdependence of lexis and grammar (Green, 2019). It is arguably more meaningful to present language learners “*I played tennis + noun phrases (e.g., my brother)*” (Conti & Smith, 2019, p. 100), rather than present *to play* as an isolated verb conjugation. These verb-based chunks allow students to produce large quantities of language with ease, another element of fluency.

Chunking and lexicogrammar allow for the presentation of new language with lower levels of cognitive strain than a more laborious, inductive, grammar-based approach. It has positive implications for fluency levels and is time efficient. This is significant for students in UK schools, where timetable allocation for MFLs does not align with the high exposure required for mastery. The *Common European Framework of Reference* (Council of Europe, 2001) elementary A1 level alone requires 100-150 hours of study. Lesson time and homework combined, Year 7 and 8 at my school receive a maximum of

45 hours of French study each academic year. The time spent in UK schools learning MFLs is at least one hour a week less than the EU average (Ofsted, 2021a).

2.5.5. Automatisatation

Section 3 has highlighted several key factors which can help promote L2 fluency. Yet to be discussed in this review, although closely linked to and arguably a result of *chunking*, is the 'weaning' process and the Holy Grail of the language world: how to encourage independent and spontaneous L2 speakers who can produce original utterances without using written prompts (Conti & Smith, 2016).

2.5.5.1. What is automatisatation?

Automatisatation is another problematic term to define. One definition which is widely echoed elsewhere (e.g., Cohen et al., 1992) is from Pawlak (2011) who describes automatisatation as "speeding up the performance of a skill, reducing the error rate and interference from other tasks" (p. 13). It seems closely allied to skill acquisition theory, a form of learning where "skilled behaviors can become routinized and even automatic under some conditions" (Kirsner & Speelman, 2005, p. 26). DeKeyser (2007) refers to skill acquisition as the transition from attentive to automatic mode. Taie (2014) discusses the roles of explicit and implicit L2 learning within skill acquisition theory. Declarative knowledge, involving a conscious awareness of concepts and ideas, is linked to explicit learning or processes. Implicit, procedural knowledge is linked to *automatisatation*, the unconscious knowledge of how something works that Taie states becomes second nature, or *automatised*. Hulstijn (2002) adds to this thread that fluency is the outcome of implicit learning and that automatisatation is simply an incidental feature.

2.5.5.2. A link with fluency

Thornbury (1999) points to a strong link between fluency and automatisisation: when language proficiency is sufficiently high for the speaker to produce language without a conscious effort, pace increases whilst hesitation and pauses decrease. Similarly, Smith and Conti (2021) explain that automatic processing is linked with spontaneous and fluent language use and is associated with more proficient users. Inversely, for beginners relying on controlled processing, practising a new grammatical structure or item of vocabulary is much more strenuous.

2.5.5.3. Automatisisation and its preceding stages

Reaching an automatised level of L2 proficiency is evidently highly intricate. The decades of research and questioning from language teachers on the matter speaks volumes (and produces many volumes!). One clear breakdown of the stages leading to automatisisation comes from Conti and Smith (2016) who split them into three key stages: *controlled (pre-communicative) practice* stage using prompts and support with oral tasks of increased level of challenge; *free practice (production) stage* focused on practice, risk taking and vocabulary expansion; *autonomous (spontaneous) stage* without support or scaffolding and where accuracy and error correction is not a concern.

Conti and Smith (2019) incorporated these stages into their MARS-EARS pedagogical cycle, which includes the following eight stages: modelling, awareness-raising, receptive processing, structured production, expansion, autonomy, routinisation, spontaneity. Importantly for my teaching practice, Conti and Smith (2019) recommend the following classroom activities for the final stage of spontaneity: playing 'Just a Minute', pair work guessing games, scaffolded situational dialogues, 'one word at a time', teaching the use of hesitation language, composition writing, and interactional writing tasks within time limits.

In sum, spontaneity and automatisisation is seen as the end goal for language learners. Reaching this stage in the L2 learning process undoubtedly requires significant hard work, time, and exposure. From personal experience, and in agreement with findings from Freed et al. (2004), the most effective and timely way of reaching this stage is a fully immersive approach. However, for those in the classroom, Conti and Smith's key stages of automatisisation provide a comprehensive approach to trial in the time-poor MFL classroom.

2.6. Summary

In conclusion, this literature review provides insight into theories, policy and studies related to learners' sense of flourishing and L2 speaking fluency, identifying associated tasks or interventions applicable to the MFL classroom. The review has informed my teaching practice such as to address and bridge a learning gap in speaking skills in my school's MFL provision throughout the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature surrounding the field of our school value *flourishing* is diverse. Professional, policy and research literature (local, national and international) concur that a strong focus on increasing a sense of *flourishing* from a young age will reap benefits, particularly regarding progress, making it a worthy area of investment for schools. This is reinforced by my experiences within the classroom. To channel a sense of flourishing, it is advisable to boost students' desire to learn; boosting engagement and enjoyment, encouraging a growth mindset, and reducing cognitive load and anxiety levels are all effective approaches. I have also learnt many definitions of fluency and ways it can be measured. Studying simple memory functions and processes of the brain can empower teachers to improve student memory and reduce the impact of cognitive overload.

Literature extrapolated task repetition, chunking (e.g., via sentence builders), lexicogrammar, and PA for the improvement of fluency.

This literature review has critiqued large- and small-scale research in diverse educational settings across the globe. In many ways, this boosts reliability; however, it must be noted that there is a distinct lack of L2 research within UK primary schools. Except for research into PA, most studies reviewed here have been carried out in North America, South America, or Asia at secondary schools or universities. As a teacher of French and Spanish to 7-13 year olds in the UK, I must take this into consideration in the ensuing stages of my study.

2.7. Research questions and hypotheses

As a result of this literature reviewing process, the following research questions (RQ) will be investigated in a school-based practitioner intervention study aimed at increasing students' sense of flourishing and fluency in relation to speaking:

3. *What, if any, is the effect of the focused intervention on the learners' sense of flourishing?*
4. *What, if any, learner gains can be identified as a result of the focused intervention on speaking fluency?*

My colleagues and I hypothesise that the intervention programme will have the following impacts:

- increased sense of flourishing:
 - increased learner self-efficacy, enjoyment and confidence towards speaking tasks
- increased speaking fluency:
 - increased phonological awareness (PA)

- increased use of ambitious language
- increased spontaneity

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The research took place in a co-educational independent preparatory boarding school in South West England. I chose Year 8 French students ($N=69$) as the cohort of investigation for the intervention programme as this is the age group at my school who sit summer examinations. The need to address the identified learning gap in speaking skills was therefore prioritised in preparation. Mid-way through procedures, this selection proved judicious as my school announced the return of face-to-face Year 8 speaking examinations in May. French was chosen as the language of investigation as this is the principal foreign language, studied by all year groups, at my school.

Year 8 consists of four mixed-ability MFL classes. I teach two Year 8 classes, with 17 students in each class; these are the classes participating in this investigation. The other MFL teacher, who is the Head of Department (HoD), also teaches two classes, with 17 or 18 students in each. We have worked at the school for five and four years respectively. Out of a total of 76 Year 8 students, 65 are dual linguists, studying French and Spanish. Single linguists spend the additional three lessons a fortnight studying English as an Additional Language, or receiving tuition in the Learning Support Department. There are three 50-minute MFL lessons each week, alternating on a two-week timetable: French Week A, Spanish Week B. Many students have been studying French for several years, some beginning as early as Year 2.

3.2. Collaborators

Sharing the cohort of investigation with my HoD helped encourage purposeful collaboration at all stages. I requested time in regular departmental meetings to provide

progress updates and discuss next steps. My HoD was given the option of joining the intervention programme, but opted out. Collaboration with my HoD included:

- writing questions to guide interviews and student questionnaires
- planning the intervention programme lessons
- analysing findings
- updating schemes of works and adjusting lesson resources to incorporate those intervention tasks thought to have a positive impact

Other areas of collaboration included:

- hosting a training day for all MFL teachers within my school's Foundation, including an explanation of intervention programme tasks and presentation of results

3.3. Overview of the research project and the intervention

3.3.1. Step 1. Pre-intervention: December 2021

After securing ethical approval from my university and my Headteacher's consent, I began my study by explaining the nature of the investigation to Year 8 during lesson time, reading aloud the details from a script (Appendix B). All students were given an opt-out form (see Appendix C) and were informed that they could refuse participation at any time in the process without any negative consequence. Several students chose to opt out of the intervention programme data collection process. Six students opted out of the questionnaire, nine students opted out of the speaking assessments, and eight students opted out of the interviews. All students were still required to complete assessments and reflection tasks as these are mandatory and established areas of the curriculum. However, their data were removed from all databases used in the study.

A pilot electronic questionnaire was carried out with my HoD's Year 8 classes (n=35). I also conducted a pilot interview with Year 8 students from my classes (n=4). The aim of these pilots was to gain feedback on clarity, amend any ambiguities, eliminate any bias in the wording, and ensure student-friendly terminology throughout (Cohen et al., 2011). This process also ironed out technical issues. My HoD and I then planned the intervention programme lessons, considering: advice from the literature review; the department vision to boost fluency via the 'Conti Approach', utilising sentence builders; the reduced number of lessons due to rescheduled extracurricular events (COVID-19 postponements).

The following baseline data were collected in the final week of Term 1:

- a recorded speaking assessment homework on the topic of *Holidays* to gauge current fluency levels (RQ2) recorded and submitted via Google Classroom
- four recorded interviews (two per intervention class), conducted during lesson time in groups of four, gauging learners' perceptions of their sense of flourishing (RQ1) and speaking fluency (RQ2)

3.3.2. Step 2. Intervention: January - March 2022

See Appendix D for example intervention tasks.

During Term 2, I ran the same 10-lesson intervention programme with both my Year 8 French classes (see Table 1). The intervention programme was structured using a three-stage framework: controlled stage; free practice stage; and autonomous stage (Smith & Conti, 2016, Chapter 6). Intervention tasks were informed by: the *MARS-EARS pedagogical cycle* (Conti & Smith, 2019 p. 173); *Teaching Sounds* (Conti & Smith, Chapter 5, 2019); a pronunciation and phonetics course (Inceoglu, 2021); oral drills and auditory discrimination tasks (Saiegh-Haddad, 2019); the production effect (Pritchard et

al., 2020); and sentence builders from Viñales (2019). Homework tasks were taken from the workbook *French Sentence Builders* (Conti et al., 2021).

Table 1: Overview of the research study

Stage	Lesson	Framework	Example Tasks	Homework (see Conti et al., 2021)
Pre-Intervention	N/A	- investigation introduction and opt-out form - pre-intervention student interviews	N/A	pre-intervention recorded speaking assessment
1. Controlled Stage focus on phonics	lessons 1-3	- imitative - highly scaffolded - prompts and support - intensive and extensive practice - oral activities increasing in challenge and breadth, eliciting more varied and complex answers	- introduction of vocal tract, articulators and places of articulation - sentence builder grid games: spot the error, intruder, translation, trapdoor, mind-reading - spot the silent endings or letters - listen and rearrange - rhyming pairs - paired reading - faulty echo - spot the missing word - write it as you hear it	vocabulary building: pages 111; extension page 116
2. Free Practice Stage focus on chunking and lexicogrammar	lessons 4-7	- consolidation and expansion - reducing scaffolding - reinforcement aimed at retention - extensive practice	- sentence stealer - paired or delayed dictation - say the next word or sound	reading: page 112; extension page 116
3. Autonomous Stage focus on spontaneity	lessons 8-10	- communication without scaffolding - accuracy not a concern unless it impedes communication - errors are not corrected to any great extent, rather whole class feedback at end of lesson - teacher as a monitor, facilitator,	- discuss coinage, paraphrasing and approximation to encourage risk taking - numbered heads together 'Just a Minute' - one word at a time - describe a picture for partner to draw - roleplays	translation: page 113; extension page 117

		and provider of feedback		
Post-Intervention	N/A	• post-intervention student questionnaires • post-intervention student interviews	N/A	post-intervention recorded speaking assessment

3.3.3. Step 3. Post-intervention: April - June 2022

The following data were collected in the final week of Term 2:

- a recorded speaking assessment homework to gauge post-intervention fluency levels (RQ2) recorded and submitted via Google Classroom
- a student questionnaire via Google Forms, conducted during lesson time gauging learners' perceptions of their sense of flourishing (RQ1) and speaking fluency (RQ2)
- four recorded interviews (two per intervention class), conducted during lesson time in groups of four, gauging changes in learners' perceptions of their sense of flourishing (RQ1) and speaking fluency (RQ2)

The final step to the investigation involved the following:

- inter-rater reliability analysis carried out by my HoD to moderate speaking assessment fluency in effort to demonstrate scoring is not biased or subjective (Osbourne, 2008)
- data analysis with HoD to seek answers to RQ1 and RQ2
- cross-Foundation meeting with MFL HoDs to present and discuss findings, and share intervention resources
- collaborative refinement with my HoD of intervention tasks deemed a success for inclusion in Term 3 lessons and beyond (both French and Spanish)

3.4. Research instruments

Cohen et al. (2011) suggest using a quantitative approach when measurement is sought and a word-based qualitative approach when personal data are sought. To answer the two RQs, measurement (e.g., pace and pause rates) *and* personal data (e.g., learners' perceptions of their sense of flourishing) were deemed appropriate. A mixed method of data collection was therefore implemented. Feldman et al. (2018) state that allowing for triangulation "gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation. The contradictions that are often hidden in situations become visible, enabling a more profound interpretation" (p. 171). Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-intervention recorded speaking assessments, a post-intervention student questionnaire, and a pre- and post-intervention interviews.

3.4.1. Speaking assessments

In an effort to gauge the level of any changes in fluency (RQ2), the intervention classes recorded pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments for homework using their Chromebooks (n=25). To help improve fluency, Smith & Conti (2016) recommend giving students the opportunity to record using a device. Conti suggests giving students around six questions, including a couple with challenging vocabulary to assess coping strategies employed by students to offset any lack of fluency. Conti also recommends occasionally going off topic as a wild card question will test communicative limits and help develop spontaneous speech. With this in mind, the pre-intervention assessment listed seven questions on the topic of *Holidays*. The post-intervention assessment listed the exact same questions, plus one wild card question from a topic (*Daily Routine*) not previously studied (see Appendix E). This allowed my HoD and me to assess any learner gains as a result of the intervention, including whether any spontaneous 'survival' strategies were used (such as coinage, repair strategies and filler words). Six students' assessments, selected by attainment level, were analysed in depth to gauge any learner gains. The

MFL database was used to choose one student at random from each of my two classes with an emerging, developing, and secure average grade.

3.4.2. Questionnaires

Post-intervention student questionnaires were completed (n=28) on students' own school Chromebooks using Google Forms (see Appendix F). This is a discreet way for students to inform the teacher, especially useful for those students reluctant to disclose information verbally in front of their peers. This questionnaire was not anonymous, a decision made to allow for comparisons, on an individual level, of pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments and interview data. This style of questionnaire allowed for formative feedback, which has motivational and wellbeing benefits. Giving students a voice helps establish a sense of community and gives students ownership of their learning (Public Health England, 2021). Students were asked the following questions: 1. if they felt they had got better or worse this term in their sense of flourishing (RQ1) and five areas of learner skill (RQ2); 2. if there was anything else they would like to tell their teacher about lessons this term.

The five areas of learner skill were:

- I can speak whole sentences in French
- I can make myself understood when speaking in French
- I can speak with correct pronunciation in French
- I can speak with correct intonation in French
- I can speak using more complex linguistic structures in French

Students are familiar with the terms 'pronunciation', 'intonation', and 'complex linguistic structures'. These are frequently referred to and discussed in lessons as they feature in our AQA mark scheme (2019).

The dichotomy of question 1 allowed for unequivocal quantitative data analysis as respondents were compelled to 'come off the fence' (Cohen et al., 2011). Oppenheim (1992) states that "highly structured, closed questions are useful in that they can generate frequencies of response amenable to statistical treatment and analysis. They also enable comparisons to be made across groups in the sample" (p. 115). Question 1 provided a contrast to the open-ended question 2 and interview discussions, in effort to triangulate data and accomplish the balance described by Feldman et al. (2018).

3.4.3. Interviews

See Appendix G for interview groupings.

Four pre-intervention interviews (Groups 1a, 2a, 3a, and 4a; two per class) and four post-intervention interviews (Groups 1b, 2b, 3b, and 4b; two per class) were conducted. Four students participated in each interview as this can be less intimidating for children than individual interviews (Greig and Taylor, 1999). An adjacent classroom was used for the interviews as a familiar and comfortable setting is important (Maguire, 2005). A teaching assistant sat with the rest of the class who worked independently whilst the interviews took place. I chose the interview groups based on the seating plans at the time of the interviews, selecting students who sat at the four tables nearest the door. This ensured students were in familiar groups, similar to those used in class tasks, to reduce any worry; it also minimised disruption. Student interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. A semi-structured group interview style was chosen for flexibility and flow in discussions. It allowed for the students to discuss and bounce ideas off each other using their own language, something Cohen et al. (2011) point out may not happen in one-to-one, adult-child interviews.

Pre- and post-intervention interviews each began with a simple icebreaker question 'I would like you to give examples of French speaking tasks that you have completed this term'. The reasoning behind this was twofold: to establish a clear distinction between French and Spanish lessons, as all students at my school have one teacher for both languages; and to settle any nerves, helping students to feel confident and make it an enjoyable and non-threatening process (Cohen et al. 2011). Immediately after the icebreaker, I showed the students images of the French speaking tasks carried out this term, to ensure we were all on the same page, before seeking answers to my research questions.

I prepared a list of open-ended questions to gently guide the conversation (see Appendix H). Open-ended questions were chosen due to their respondent-driven and respondent-focused nature (Wright and Powell, 2006). After the interviews, I transcribed the audio files for data analysis.

3.5. Limitations of the methods

This study is not without its limitations; its sample size of two Year 8 classes is small. The research was undertaken at an independent boarding preparatory school and therefore trends from this data set may not be representative of Year 8 cohorts in other schools. Furthermore, although an effort was made to triangulate data, the study relies on just three methods of data collection. The limitations of these are discussed in the following subsections.

3.5.1. Speaking assessments

Speaking assessments were recorded at home. A lot can be gauged from these recordings and most of my students find this style preferable to a face-to-face task with the teacher. Student I in the Group 3 interview pointed out "I remember before COVID,

we had 1-1 conversation and I found that really intimidating. But when we do it by ourselves at home or in the boarding house it feels a lot less stressful". *However*, there was nothing to stop students from writing a script and reciting their answers. This undermines the reliability of any assessment of spontaneity. A further limitation of the speaking assessments is the small sample size. Only six pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments were assessed due to the time-intensive task of evaluating temporal features of speaking fluency.

3.5.2. Questionnaires

One major limitation of questionnaires is that they are easy to complete dishonestly. It is difficult to prevent but, in this instance, I consider any such cases should have negligible impacts. This is due to an adequate number of questionnaire participants (n=27) and steps taken such as avoiding leading and complex questions (Cohen et al., 2011).

Another limitation is that questionnaires are often impersonal and response categories can be rather restrictive (Cohen et al., 2011). On completing the questionnaire, several students reported that the highly structured, dichotomous nature was a little frustrating. They were grateful for the opportunity to explain their choices and give additional feedback in the final question.

3.5.3. Interviews

Cohen et al (2011) point out various limitations with interviews as a data collection method. Firstly, one pitfall is the influence of dominant characters. An attempt was made to reduce this limitation by using standard classroom groupings based on the current seating plan. These groupings aim to include a mix of personalities who get on well. However, this did not entirely resolve the issue; in the Group 2b interview, Students E

and F made a combined total of 17 contributions to discussions, and Students G and H only five.

Secondly, there is the issue of interviewees not saying exactly what is on their minds. This can be for numerous reasons: saying what they think the interviewer wants to hear; saying 'don't know' when they are uninterested, genuinely do not know, do not understand the question or are unwilling to disclose the information either in front of their peers or the interviewer. A considerable effort was made to help students feel at ease (e.g., familiar groupings and environment), however, this issue is frustratingly insurmountable.

Thirdly, working from interview transcripts, as I did, does not tell the full picture. Working directly from the original audio recording would add details of tone, speed of talk, hesitation, indecipherable and simultaneous speech. A video would further add facial expressions and body language, which are very telling. This approach was considered but deemed too time-intensive to be applied to this research study.

3.6. Ethical issues

Ethical issues were addressed throughout this study, adhering to the British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines (BERA, 2018). This study was approved by the University of Oxford's Central University Research Ethics Committee (Reference number: CIA-22-021) and follows stringent university and school guidelines. In line with national teaching regulations, schools already carry responsibility to promote students' welfare (Public Health England, 2021). All participants and collaborators were given the option to opt out of the study at any time during the process. A pre-intervention questionnaire was discussed in initial planning stages but abandoned due to concern that, when faced with numerous forms, students might become disengaged. The school,

participants and collaborators remain anonymous. Students are referred to by an allocated letter of the alphabet, rather than forename. All data are stored on my school Google Drive and a school laptop used, in accordance with school policy. Interview recordings were uploaded immediately onto Google Drive and the voice recorder erased. All data will be deleted once they are no longer needed for the purpose of this study.

This study does not broach topics of a sensitive nature. The recording of speaking assessments as homework forms part of the regular MFL Department assessment cycles already in place. Reflecting on the learning journey via questionnaires and discussions is part of the normal lesson routine schoolwide. Weekly department meeting time was used for all elements of collaboration, and lesson time and the allocated MFL homework slot used for data collection. This minimised additional strains on the busy school day and ensured both colleagues and collaborators were not working beyond expectation. As such, this study falls under the remit of normal teaching routines and parental consent was not required. Formal permission was, however, granted by the Headmaster for the school's participation in the study.

The complex issues surrounding power relations were considered, including between collaborators (e.g., professional hierarchy) and between students and their teacher. "The notion of power is significant" (Cohen et al. 2011, p.205) and power likely lies with the researcher, as it is the participants who are under scrutiny (Scheurich, 1995). This is of pertinence to this study with the added child-adult power relationship. An effort was made to make the students feel at ease by following familiar routines (e.g., Google Forms and Google Classroom) in a familiar environment to reduce feelings of helplessness and vulnerability (Limerick et al., 1996). Students were reassured before interviews and questionnaires that it was a safe space to comment on lesson content and procedures, with no hard feelings from me as their teacher.

3.7. Methods of data analysis

3.7.1. Speaking assessments

Fluency was measured using several methods to boost reliability of results (Feldman et al., 2018), informed by the literature reviewed (Hedge, 1993; Segalowitz, 2016; Suzuki, 2021). The following analysis methods were used:

- temporal features: recording duration; pace of words per 15 seconds; syllable rate per 15 seconds
- the AQA (2019) mark scheme (30 marks): communication (10 marks); range and accuracy of language (10 marks); pronunciation and intonation (10 marks); spontaneity and fluency (5 marks)
- perceived fluency: subjective teacher judgement

My HoD carried out an inter-rater reliability test during a departmental meeting, to moderate marks and perceived fluency ratings. Although no discrepancies arose in perceived fluency ratings, an average AQA score for each category was awarded where marks differed. Quantitative assessment data were entered into Microsoft Excel and improvement rates were calculated across pre- and post-intervention assessments.

3.7.2. Questionnaires

Questionnaire data were also entered into a Microsoft Excel database. Data from all participants who opted out of the study from the database were removed. Data were coded to show percentage better and worse for each questionnaire response category. This allowed for closed question data to be represented in succinct tables. The final open-ended question was answered by 17 students, further informing findings. Comments were coded in order to identify main themes arising (e.g., specific task requests, topics to revise, and intervention programme feedback).

3.7.3. Interviews

Interview transcription statements were ordered by discussion point to allow for comparisons across all 16 participants, question by question. Audio recordings were transcribed by hand. This process required listening to each full interview multiple times and, although laborious, importantly ensured I became highly familiar with this lengthy data set (Cohen et al., 2011; Scheurich, 1995).

4. Findings

Findings are presented by research question and data collection method:

Research Question 1:

- Questionnaire
 - Post-intervention
- Interviews
 - Pre-intervention
 - Post-intervention

Research Question 2:

- Speaking assessment
 - Pre-intervention and post-intervention (combined)
- Questionnaire
 - Post-intervention
- Interviews
 - Pre-intervention
 - Post-intervention

Table 2: Data collection method and participant numbers

Data Collection Method	Number of Participants
Pre- and Post-Intervention Speaking Assessments	Total: 25 Sampled: 6 (Students N, J, L, N, Q, R)
Post-Intervention Questionnaires	Total: 28
Pre-Intervention Interviews	Total: 16 (4 groups of 4, two per class)
Post-Intervention Interviews	16 (4 groups of 4, two per class)

4.1. Research Question 1: What, if any, is the effect of the focused intervention on the learners' sense of flourishing?

As literature highlights complexities in defining *flourishing*, during interviews I asked my students for their understanding. Students defined flourishing as:

- showing your true colours (Student D)
- being the best you can be (Student F)
- experiencing a sense of progress (Student H)
- doing well (Student P)
- thriving (Student X)

This provided valuable insights into students' perceptions. I also reminded students of the school definition: "to thrive, be healthy in mind and spirit and to reach one's potential" (School X, 2022, p. 2). This reduced any miscommunication and ambiguity in discussions, and thus increased the reliability of results.

4.1.1. Questionnaires

Table 3: Student questionnaire results showing percentage of students who selected 'better' for statements 1-6 post intervention

	Students Better	Students Worse	% Better
1. I can feel a sense of flourishing when speaking in French	20	7	74%
2. I can speak whole sentences in French	23	4	85%
3. I can make myself understood when speaking in French	24	3	89%
4. I can speak with correct pronunciation in French	23	4	85%
5. I can speak with correct intonation in French	20	7	74%
6. I can speak using more complex linguistic structures in French	20	7	74%

The questionnaire asked students to select 'better' or 'worse' in response to the statement: *I can feel a sense of flourishing when speaking in French*. 74% of students (N=27) selected 'better' (see Table 3). This suggests that for many students, the intervention programme boosted my students' sense of flourishing. This is pleasing as it fulfils the demands of both school and national policy (Ofsted, 2019 & 2021b; Public Health England, 2021; School X, 2022).

The questionnaire included the open-ended question *Is there anything else you would like to tell me about lessons this term?*. The main theme of these comments was enjoyment (mentioned in 9 of the 16 comments):

I have enjoyed French this term and am starting to be able to use a wider range of vocab and I think I am progressing well. (Student C)

I have really enjoyed French this term. (Student E)

I've enjoyed learning French this term, and I think that I have improved my understanding a lot more. (Student F)

I really enjoyed the lessons where we spoke a lot of French and maybe more of those lessons would really help everyone practise their French speaking and becoming more confident about it. (Student J)

I have enjoyed French this year as I have really gotten a grip on it. (Student T)

Literature suggests these positive comments regarding enjoyment are arguably the most powerful findings of this study (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Kahu and Nelson, 2018; Suter, 1976). Research informs that enjoyment is closely linked to self-efficacy, a crucial and pivotal element to L2 acquisition that kick-starts a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006; Dweck & Yeager, 2019) and a sense of flourishing (Yeager & Dweck, 2020), ultimately leading to academic achievement (Ofsted, 2021a)

4.1.2. Interviews

See Appendix I for complete transcripts.

4.1.2.1. Pre-intervention interviews

Pre-intervention interviews with students (n=16) painted a baseline picture of my students' sense of flourishing, unpicking the range of emotions, positive and negative, experienced when speaking French before beginning the intervention programme. Some students noted feeling a sense of pride and reward. For example, Student B made the rather endearing comment "So if somebody asks me 'do you speak any other languages?' and I say 'Oh, I know some French'. And I speak French. And they say 'that's really cool'". Another salient comment from Student D reads "I feel lucky. I am born in England and I still speak Spanish and French, all these other languages. Quite proud." Positive emotions were also associated with visually seeing progress on performance tracker sheets (n=1), mood (n=1), and completing a task (n=2). Student E experienced a sense of confidence they owed to experiences on holiday abroad. This echoes research which establishes positive links between L2 fluency and study abroad (Dekeyser, 2007; Freed et al., 2004). Negative emotions mentioned include feeling nervous (n=3), under pressure (n=1), doubt (n=1), and fear of making a mistake (n=3). For example, Student V states "Well if it's a test then I'm trembling. And just overall nervous. If it's just speaking normally I feel like I can make a mistake and it's fine". These negative emotions must be addressed, of course, as research shows that nerves, worry and anxiety negatively impact fluency (e.g., Castillejo, 2019; Kim, 2021).

Half of the students (n=8) associated a sense of flourishing with high marks, new achievements, or progress since previous assessment cycles:

If I pronounce something I never can usually pronounce, then I feel like I have done well. (Student B)

I did better than last time in my speaking test, so that's progress. I did more revision and practised pronunciation. (Student F)

I did French at my old school but it was all Linguacope and we didn't learn much. I have a huge sense of progress since moving schools. (Student H)

If it's a speaking test I try to show off all the words I've been learning so I get a better mark and better score to make me flourish. (Student V)

Student E, despite discussing a certain confidence from their experiences speaking French abroad, reported never having felt a sense of flourishing during classroom speaking tasks, confirming that setting is important (Freed et al., 2004). One explanation, amongst many suggested by literature for this emotion, is that desirable difficulty of lesson content is not optimum and cognitive load must be adjusted accordingly (Benjamin, 2011; Krashen, 1982).

4.1.2.2. Post-intervention interviews

Post-intervention interviews also unpicked a range of emotions, experienced throughout the intervention programme when speaking French. My students discussed a wide range of negative emotions:

- worry and nerves (Students A, C and K)
- pressure to get things right (Student C)
- feeling scared of saying the wrong thing (Student A)
- stress (Students G and M)
- frustration (Students L and K)
- jealousy towards other students' marks (Student P)
- anger (Student P)

Conversely, my students also discussed a wide range of positive emotions. Students L, M, O and P referred to their experiences as 'happy' during the intervention programme. Student M, however, put this down to length of time studying the language, rather than the intervention programme itself: "I am happy, because last year I was new to French and I didn't do very well in it and now I am starting to flourish in it and progress". The

concepts proposed by mindset theory (Dweck, 1999) suggest this is encouraging and consequently should trigger a wealth of fluency benefits.

The next most common emotions experienced amongst my students were a sense of reward or achievement on completion of a speaking task (n=2), all important ingredients for progress and harnessing desires to learn (Dennett, 1987). Although also noted by students prior to the intervention programme, these emotions were often intensified and more prominent post intervention:

At the start of this, well, term even, I don't think I could barely say anything in French. I think last time I said I'd achieved something, but then this time I actually feel like I've achieved something and I feel a lot more French, which is good! (Student E)

It feels good to be able to complete your sentence and have it fairly complex and say it to your partner and then engage in quite lengthy conversation with your partner. It is rewarding [...] A challenge. But when you manage to get going it feels satisfying as you have managed to achieve what is on the board. (Student F)

Other positive experiences were also noted on an individual level. Student E enjoyed the competitive experience of beating their previous marks: "Sort of excited as I think 'this is where I can improve on and get better'. So excited for it." Another striking comment came from Student B, who experienced a sense of relief during speaking tasks "as it's kind of a break from all the writing". The importance of setting for my students and consequent reduction in anxiety was further emphasised by Student L who felt they had flourished due to fact speaking assessments took place on a device, rather than via a live format:

Student L: *I much prefer talking to a computer. I know that sounds pretty weird. When I would go out and sit on that chair and the teacher would ask me questions I would get SO nervous and stutter a lot. When it's a computer I don't think the computer is going to mind what I say.*

Student J: *It's not going to laugh at you.*

Student L: *So I'm a lot more confident.*

It is apparent that emotions post intervention continue to be mixed:

Yes, we have been doing more speaking this term than we did last term. So yes, I'd say my sense of flourishing has increased [...] My emotions are kind of the same, it's worry. But then it's got less worry this term! (Student A)

My emotion is the same but a bit stronger as the writing tasks have got harder. So in comparison speaking is even more of a break from writing! (Student B)

I'd say before I got really really nervous and it was something I dreaded, but now, although I am still really nervous, I am a lot less nervous than I was before and more confident. (Student N)

However, it is important to look at the bigger picture. Yes, my students *do* seem to still feel worry, stress and frustration during speaking tasks, but most students reported that the levels have decreased and many students noted that their sense of flourishing has indeed increased as a result of the intervention programme.

4.2. Research Question 2: What, if any, learner gains can be identified as a result of a focused intervention on speaking fluency?

4.2.1. Speaking assessments

Table 4: Response duration, syllable and word pace, mark breakdown and total mark for sample pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments

	Pre E	Post E	Pre J	Post J	Pre L	Post L	Pre N	Post N	Pre Q	Post Q	Pre R	Post R
Response duration of questions 1-7	0:58	1:17	0:44	01:22	0:38	1:01	1:17	1:05	0:35	0:40	0:56	1:24
Pace (words per 15 seconds)	19	20	26	35	23	39	18	26	30	32	23	30
Syllable rate (per 15 seconds)	23	29	37	52	39	46	33	46	41	42	32	43
Communication /10	6	8	8	10	6	9	7	9	6	8	7	9
Range and accuracy of language /10	5	7	8	10	6	9	6	9	6	9	6	8
Pronunciation and intonation /5	3	4	2	5	2	4	2	4	3	4	3	5

Spontaneity and fluency /5	3	4	3	5	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	5
Total /30	17	23	21	30	17	26	18	26	18	25	19	27

Data from pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments indicate that learner gains in speaking fluency can be identified as a result of a focused intervention programme.

Table 4 shows that *all* six students whose recordings were sampled improved their mark in the post-intervention speaking assessment. *All* of these students also improved by at least one mark, and sometimes as many as three, in all mark scheme categories (for AQA GCSE Foundation General Conversation mark scheme see Appendix A).

Table 5: Percentage improvement rates between pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments

	Student E	Student J	Student L	Student N	Student Q	Student R	Average Change
Response duration of questions 1-7	33%	86%	61%	-16%	14%	50%	38%
Pace (words per 15 seconds)	5%	35%	70%	44%	7%	30%	32%
Syllable rate (per 15 seconds)	26%	41%	18%	39%	2%	34%	27%
AQA GCSE Foundation Mark /30	35%	43%	53%	44%	39%	42%	43%

Table 5 shows a general trend that post-intervention marks have increased by around one third. Of particular note is the impressive 43% average gain in students' overall mark in the post-intervention assessment. Student L made the most gains in overall mark (53%), also displaying the highest improvements in pace (70%). One anomaly that stands out from Table 5 is that response duration and overall mark are not always positively correlated. Student N's total duration of questions decreased (-16%), but pace and overall mark increased by 44%. This suggests that speaking fluency has indeed

increased for this student, and the decrease in response duration did not negatively impact marks for communication. Research indicates that for Student N, proceduralization of linguistic knowledge has taken place, allowing for cognitive changes that lead to long-term improvements in fluency (De Jong et al., 2011).

Sampled recordings were also rated for 'perceived fluency' (Segalowitz, 2016). For each of the six students I used professional judgement to decide whether the pre-intervention or post-intervention speaking assessment was more fluent. I perceived all six students to have higher fluency rates for post-intervention assessments. During a departmental meeting, my HoD carried out an inter-rater reliability analysis and we moderated assessment scores. My HoD agreed that all six students had improved in their perceived fluency. To add further confidence to findings, literature suggests there are strong associations between utterance fluency and perceived fluency (De Jong et al., 2013).

Table 6: A summary of wild card responses in post-intervention speaking assessments for the six sampled students

	Student E	Student J	Student L	Student N	Student Q	Student R
Response duration of question 8	0:23	0:08	0:07	0:14	0:15	N/A
Number of hesitations	3	0	1	0	0	N/A
Minor pronunciation errors	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Unintelligible segment(s)	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	N/A
Coinage	Yes	No	No	No	No	N/A
Perceived spontaneous speech	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	N/A

Five out of the six sampled students (see Table 6) recorded an answer of up to 23 seconds duration in response to the wild card question *Décris ta routine quotidienne* (Describe your daily routine). I perceived all five students' pronunciation to be fairly accurate. Although responses from Students E, L and Q contained short unintelligible segments, any pronunciation errors were minor. Smith & Conti (2016) suggest these

unintelligible segments form an important part of the development of spontaneous speech, and learning to cope with breakdowns is an important step towards fluency. Students remembered pronunciation rules regarding silent letters, a success it seems of the controlled stage of the intervention programme. Student J recycled topic vocabulary from a Year 7 topic to give a highly accurate, confident, but very short answer. Student E made one coinage attempt (with the English word 'supper', which is not far from the French word, 'souper'). Students N and Q self-taught new vocabulary to 'survive'. It is highly likely these students looked ahead in the textbook for support and possibly read from a script.

Answers from the wild card question were far from the quality of those given to questions on the studied topic of *Holidays*. However, all students *were* able to communicate answers and 'survive', suggesting my students have made steps towards spontaneous speech and improved fluency. It should be noted that this style of pre-recorded assessment undermines the reliability of any assessment of spontaneity. Thus, these results merely give an indication of spontaneity. My assessment that at least some of these students prepared a script also explains the lack of repair strategies and filler words in their responses.

4.2.2. Questionnaires

Questionnaire responses suggest most learners perceive improvements in their speaking fluency (see Table 3), supporting speaking assessment evidence. I studied the distribution of category improvers across questions 1-6:

1. I can feel a sense of flourishing when speaking in French
2. I can speak whole sentences in French
3. I can make myself understood when speaking in French

4. I can speak with correct pronunciation in French
5. I can speak with correct intonation in French
6. I can speak using more complex linguistic structures in French

This brought to attention some encouraging findings: half of all students saw an improvement across all categories; almost all students saw an improvement in at least half of the categories; one single student (Student Y) saw an improvement in only one category. Of note, Student Y's L1 is not English so understanding wording in the questionnaire might have presented challenges. In answer to the question *Is there anything else you would like to tell me about lessons this term?* Student Y wrote "I found some words hard because I get mixed up with the words each week".

4.2.3. Interviews

See Appendix H for complete transcripts.

4.2.3.1. Pre-intervention interviews

Before beginning the intervention programme, students reported a number of aspects which ease speaking: tasks involving plenty of cognates and words recycled from previous topics; working with a partner; having the opportunity to rehearse; being given sentence starters. This indicates that many students already had at least some awareness of coping strategies; it is reinforced by my professional judgement, having known these students for up to five years. Worthy of note is that many attend one-to-one or small group Speech and Drama lessons and after-school Drama activities. Theatre skills and public speaking are prioritised in my school's curriculum. In my view, these skills are highly transferable and an asset in the MFL classroom. I have experienced seemingly more confident L2 speakers in the classroom at my current school than in

other schools I have taught at or visited, a factor to bear in mind when generalising this data.

Nevertheless, despite these advantages, prior to the intervention many students were filled with doubt around some aspects of their abilities. Discussions highlighted one striking theme, namely that nearly all students (n=14) perceived pronunciation and adopting a French accent in speaking tasks challenging. Other challenges mentioned included: confusion of French with other languages (n=2), "my whole brain gets kerfuffled" (Student E); recall due to time between lessons and homework caused by the week A and week B system (n=2); and pace (n=2).

4.2.3.2. Post-intervention interviews

Interview discussions revealed a general feeling of improved speaking fluency from my students since completing the intervention programme, further evidencing speaking assessment and questionnaire data trends. Student L summarised "I would say last term I sounded more like a robot when I was speaking and now I sound less like a robot, I guess". Changes during lessons since the intervention programme frequently mentioned by my students include: increased confidence (n=8); increased topic knowledge (n=6), more complex structures and tenses (n=6); more accurate pronunciation and intonation (n=9); decreased hesitation (n=5) and increased pace (n=9). I will explore these in more detail.

Firstly, an increase in confidence was a key recurring theme throughout all four post-intervention interviews. The literature reviewed suggests this might be due to an increased PA from my students following the intervention programme (Muter & Diethelm, 2001; Woore 2022). Seven students mentioned this increased confidence in their abilities:

I think I have got better in my intonation. I think that us doing the speaking activities has helped everyone become more confident in speaking in French. (Student M)

I feel a lot more confident now. I mean my marks in the mocks weren't too pleasing but I can definitely improve them and I feel a lot more confident and I feel that I can work to achieve better. (Student F)

I was a lot more nervous so I would always stutter so I would have to redo things and now I can say it more confidently. (Student L)

Some students gave acute reasons for these perceptions. Student D, for example, reported that they had noticed a lot more hands being raised to volunteer answers to teacher questions. Student A further noted this was due to the "more chill and relaxed" environment in their class. Two students reported they had listened back to their previous listening assessments, a confidence-boosting and enlightening process in itself. This is unsurprising as research shows that such metacognitive tasks such as this are key in boosting self-efficacy and academic progress (Pintrich, 2003). Interview discussions certainly seem to suggest not only a sense of progress in fluency, but also in flourishing:

Well I found the speaking test we did for the Trials, I thought that was very helpful and if I listened to that and the one we did before you could notice more confidence, more French sounding with pronunciation. (Student C)

When I was looking in Kerboodle the other day, I saw my Year 7 speaking and listened to it. And my pronunciation was terrible! I sounded really shy. And I could definitely see more confidence. That was the first time I'd done a speaking test on a computer. (Student J)

Secondly, students noted an increase in topic knowledge had led to them sounding more authentic. "We learn more words that add more detail to what we are saying. Now we have learnt more words, we sound more professional" (Student G). "The more topics we cover, the more French we feel" (Student C). "I think now I know a lot more about the topics so I can talk about them more confidently" (Student J). Students also reported their increased "understanding of higher quality language and using higher quality structures" (Student I), as well as their improved ability to use tenses like "the conditional

and the imperative" (Student F) and "a larger variety of descriptive language" (Student J).

Thirdly, and linked to the feeling more 'professional' and 'more French' mentioned above, several students (n=9) spoke of improvements in their pronunciation and intonation. Pre-intervention data highlighted that my students did not believe that they 'sounded French'. This is particularly seen in the following discussions from Groups 1a and 4a in the pre-intervention interviews:

Group 1a

Student S: *On a scale of 1-10, one.*

Interviewer: *Why?*

Student S: *Because of the accent and I can't quite say the words right.*

Student N: *I would say a four as I'm not really good with accents.*

Student S: *I would say actually it's a two or three.*

Student T: *Four. Because of the silent letters you can get confused.*

Student U: *Three or four as I don't always know how to pronounce the words.*

When asked *Do you have any additional comments* at the end of the interview, a Group 1a student reiterated this point, with an added call for more lesson time on speaking skills:

We need to try and do a bit more in lessons so when it comes to speaking assessments so we are a bit more confident as we do a lot on reading and writing and the speaking, obviously it's a lot harder to do, the pronunciation of words. (Student S)

Group 4a

Student V: *I don't sound that French as I really have to think about how I pronounce each word. So not that French.*

Student F: *Three or four out of ten, as the only words I can pronounce well in French are the famous words like 'café'.*

Student H: *I would say I'm a six or seven out of ten as I speak other languages at home as I have foreign parents, and sometimes I use their accent instead of the French accent. So that's a weakness. If I get a word I really can't pronounce, then I keep repeating it until I get it.*

In contrast, during post-intervention interviews Student F reported that "pronunciation and the general sounding French is a lot better than it used to be. Everyone is no longer saying words, dare I say it, in a monotone voice. They sound a lot more native". Phonics has also become a term used by students independently in lessons, in activities such as sentence builder grid games, listen and rearrange, or faulty echo. "I think I use the phonics better than I did before I even knew there were such things" (Student K). PA was also noted by Student M "we learnt about the accents and now we know how to pronounce those which is good". As the literature suggested, this boosted PA is excellent news for my students' decoding skills, vocabulary, pronunciation (Woore et al., 2018), confidence and motivation (Muter & Diethelm, 2001; Woore 2022).

Fourthly, interview data indicates varying perceptions regarding changes in hesitation rates and pace. My students generally perceive their rate of hesitation during speaking tasks to have decreased in light of the intervention programme. As discussed in reviewed literature, rate of hesitation plays an important role in speaking fluency (Tavakoli et al., 2016). This is seen in the Group 2b interview:

Student F: *Hesitation, yeah. People are definitely not pausing as much to say things, or think of things, they are just making sentences sort of flow more.*

Student E: *Yeah! I don't consider myself good at languages but I used to go je-m-apple but now I go je m'appelle, it just gets quicker and quicker and quicker.*

Student G: *It gets smoother.*

On the other hand, students' perceptions of pace during speaking tasks are mixed. Some students agreed that their pace has improved (Students K, L and N) whereas

others noted marginal improvements (Student O) or no change at all (Student M).

Literature suggests regression forms an important part of L2 acquisition so Students O and M should not necessarily give cause for concern. Ellis (1997) refers to a 'U-shaped development curve' to illustrate this concept, reassuring learners that although progress may seem to have plateaued (due to cognitive overload), progress levels will rise again. With regards to ease, students agree speaking remains a challenging element in language learning and lessons, but that "it comes a little bit more naturally I guess than it did before" (Student A). "I sometimes still struggle a bit with getting the words out and thinking about them quick enough. But it's definitely easier" (Student B).

In sum, interviews highlighted a range of key changes and learner gains, as perceived by students, since beginning the intervention programme. There is a clear appreciation for the increased lesson time given to speaking skills during the intervention programme. After all, as explained by Ullman (2004), practice should increase performance. Students have recognised the benefits in their speaking fluency due to this exposure. "I think I am a lot more fluent than I was before" (Student K). "We are a lot more fluent. I feel we do a lot more speaking now than we did at the very start of the year. Like with the grid games" (Student E). This is also reiterated by Student H:

Obviously the more you speak the more you get fluent and the more educated by the language, so you know topics and other words outside the topics, your sentence structures end up being a lot more professional as you are using words more and more.

Some students reported more gains than others, such as Student C who stated that speaking remained the hardest skill and Student M who remained unsure as to whether there had been any changes in their ability. This is reflected by the 11-26% range in each questionnaire category in which students selected 'worse'. The majority of students, however, noted that their ability in speaking tasks has improved since the intervention programme began, for example:

I think well, especially my speaking has developed quite well, in both French and Spanish, it was one of my best skills. (Student H)

Since last term, with the 'Holidays' topic, as soon as 'depuis' came along, 'since', I suddenly understood it and it just kind of extended the sentences. (Student J)

I think last term I struggled making up sentences and saying them. (Student L)

When we did 'silent letters' that really helped me because then I knew all of them. (Student N)

Nine out of 16 students put their speaking assessment progress down to the rigorous preparation stages (controlled practice and free practice stages) of the intervention programme, with Student P referring explicitly to the success of *repetition* and Student E to *preparation*. This supports the idea that repetition is indeed *the* strategy for memorisation (Bygates, 2001; Karatas et al., 2021; Suzuki, 2021; Ullman and Lovelett, 2016). These views also support those studies which champion the 4/3/2 test and favour the proceduralization of linguistic knowledge to boost fluency (e.g., De Jong et al., 2011).

Students' perceived improvements match those seen across all mark scheme categories in the sampled speaking assessments and the strong distribution of category improvers in the questionnaire responses.

5. Conclusion

"There is no simple second language acquisition recipe that can be applied to language pedagogy" (Ellis and Shintani, 2013, p. 27)

5.1. Investigation conclusions in relation to the research questions

This study has gained pertinent insights into the effect of the focused intervention on my learners' sense of flourishing and gains in speaking fluency. My students undoubtedly remain in the beginner stages of L2 French acquisition and there are certain limitations of this study that must be considered. One could link learner gains, to a degree, with time and maturity. Regardless of the intervention program, it is likely that students' marks would have increased between Term 1 and Term 2. Unfortunately, it is impossible to compare improvements in marks with previous cohorts due to the large gaps in the 2019-2021 MFL database, and the highly disrupted experience for the current Year 8s throughout the pandemic. However, the professional, policy and research literature reviewed powerfully backs the intervention programme, and this gives my HoD and I confidence in the findings. The intervention programme has seen a wide range of positive impacts, confirming its hypotheses. Indeed, results show improvements in learners' sense of flourishing (self-efficacy, enjoyment and confidence) (RQ1) *and* speaking fluency (PA, ambitious language, spontaneity) (RQ2).

In response to RQ1 (*What, if any, is the effect of the focused intervention on the learners' sense of flourishing?*), this study found that almost three quarters of students reported experiencing a sense of flourishing when speaking French post intervention. This is encouraging news for my students, as literature promotes the benefits of flourishing. Furthermore, results highlight that, although my students still have the tendency to experience emotions of worry, stress or frustration, the intensity has decreased. The intervention programme has also resulted in boosted confidence, topic knowledge, complexity of sentences, and accuracy of pronunciation and intonation.

Research suggests that impacts will, in turn, boost learners' self-efficacy, mindset, well-being and sense of belonging, factors of course which fall under the wide umbrella of flourishing.

Unexpectedly, RQ1 has flagged an incongruity in student definition of flourishing and their personal evaluations of experiencing it. Student definitions included 'showing your true colours' and 'being the best you can be', logically a paraphrasing of the Foundation's "reach one's potential" (School X, 2022, p. 2). Conflictingly, during interviews students reported that they experience a sense of 'flourishing' when they see a high grade appear on their performance tracker sheet. It seems student definition and experiences do not accurately align and this is an issue that my school could address through further work with students on the meaning of flourishing. After all, definitions from Foundation and Public Health England stress the importance of being healthy in mind as much as learning achievement.

In response to RQ2 (*What, if any, learner gains can be identified as a result of the focused intervention on speaking fluency?*), it can be concluded that students' fluency has improved post intervention. Literature suggests that this has been assisted by increased opportunity for oral practice within the intervention programme, structured in three stages which facilitated proceduralization. In fact, with the benefits of the 4/3/2 task in mind (Nation, 1989), the repetitious nature of the speaking assessments played a vital role in itself. After all, the literature discussed is strongly in favour of task repetition for L2 acquisition. Due to the increase of oral practice my students have experienced during lessons, lexical items may have travelled down that 'bottle neck' at an increased pace. In other words, the invention programme appears to have helped speed up transfer from the working memory to the long-term memory, lightening my students' cognitive load in the process (Sweller, 1988). This is a relief after the past two disrupted years of

schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which gave little opportunity for speaking practice in MFL lessons.

Evidence for advances in learner speaking fluency can be seen across all three methods of data collection. The sampled speaking assessments reveal students' marks increased by around one third in Term 2, with improvements seen across all assessment categories (communication, range and accuracy of language, pronunciation and intonation, spontaneity and fluency). This is further confirmed by perceived fluency evaluations. Both my HoD and I perceived increased fluency in all sampled speaking assessments, deeming wild card responses to be particularly encouraging.

Questionnaire responses suggest most learners perceive improvements in their speaking fluency too. Half of all students saw an improvement across all categories; almost all students saw an improvement in at least half of the categories. Interview discussions added further evidence here, as students discussed a range of improvements in fluency.

5.2. Wider implications of the investigation: department, Foundation and beyond

As findings indicate the intervention programme has been deemed a success, my HoD and I have rolled the intervention programme out across Years 6 and 7. We are also in discussion as to how to make intervention resources accessible for Years 3-5. This could be done, for example, by creating interactive versions of sentence builders with audios to reduce barriers in reading fluency. In an effort to maintain momentum in speaking fluency progress, we have also subscribed to the online platform 'The Language Gym', enabling students to access a wider range of 'Conti Approach' tasks.

The intervention programme has instigated additional changes to my classroom routines. I will offer students more guidance in realising exactly *how* and *where* they have flourished. In an effort to realign my students' definition and experiences of flourishing, I will encourage students to relisten to previous speaking assessments. My current Year 8s reported strong motivational benefits here, and delighted in hearing their progress in just 12 months. I look forward to dispelling perceptions that flourishing in languages comes solely from achieving a top grade.

Since analysing the results of this study, I have hosted the MFL Departments across our Foundation for a training day. I presented findings and explained the nature of the intervention programme and its tasks. Feedback here was overwhelmingly positive and one colleague reported they went away feeling inspired and armed with new speaking strategies to trial. Now that cross-Foundation links have been established, there is considerable scope for building this relationship and furthering the research. Rolling out this investigation on a cross-Foundation level would allow for a wider range of year groups to be investigated (Years 9-12) and large sample sizes in various locations across South West England. In light of findings and supporting research, pertinent areas of further study include: investigating methods of further reducing negative emotional experiences during speaking tasks; placing a heightened focus on task repetition, including the incorporation of the 4/3/2 test; and investigating the benefits of *hope*, as suggested by Dixson (2020).

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7. Appendices

Appendix A

The figure originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The figure was sourced at AQA, (2019). Mark Scheme: Paper 2 Speaking - June 2019.
<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/sample-papers-and-mark-schemes/2019/june/AQA-6582-W-MS-JUN19.PDF>

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Appendix B

Research Project Explanation Script

I am writing an academic research paper as part of a part-time Master's degree in Learning and Teaching at the University of Oxford. This involves carrying out research with Year 8 French classes. It is an exciting opportunity for you to contribute to improving lessons in the MFL Department here at school as well as inform French language education more widely. This data collection process may involve your speaking tasks submitted via Google Classroom this year and your survey questionnaires that you have just completed. Although you do have to complete the tasks as part of your normal classwork and homework, you have the right to refuse or withdraw participation in the study at any time during the process.

Please now click on the opt-out Google Form and answer the questions.

Appendix C

Opt-out Form

1. My speaking tasks can be used in the stay: Yes/No
2. My questionnaire can be used in the study: Yes/No
3. I wish to participate in interviews for the purpose of the study: Yes/No

Appendix D

Example Intervention Programme Tasks

1. Controlled Stage

Example Task 1: Sentence Builder Grid Games

Using the grid:

Challenge 1 > Build sentences.

Challenge 2 > Say sentences out loud to your partner.

Challenge 3 > Which words are trickier to say? Why? Comment on the manner and place of articulation for the phonemes in your sentences.

Extension: Invent and play a game with the grid.

Example Task 2: Rhyming Pairs

Note the teacher's words which rhyme with the words on the words on the board.

Extension: note the two intruders.

2. Free practice stage

Example Task 3: Paired Dictation

The student with Text A (the complete text) reads it aloud.

The student with Text B (the incomplete text) fills in the gaps.

Example Task 4: Sentence Stealer

Write four sentences of your choice on each of your four cards from those displayed on the board.

Aim: to steal as many cards as possible from other students, i.e., student X approaches student Y and reads out from the board any four sentences. If a sentence that X reads is on one of Y's cards, X can 'steal' that card.

3. Autonomous Stage

Example Task 5: One Word at a Time

In small groups, build sentences on the topic of your choice taking it in turns to say a word.

Example Task 6: 'Just a Minute'

Can you speak about a topic against the clock, without repeating yourself excessively, pausing, or going off topic?

Appendix E

Speaking Assessment Questions

Pre-Intervention

1. D'habitude, tu vas en vacances avec qui ?
2. Où vas-tu en vacances normalement ? Pourquoi ?
3. Tu préfères aller à l'hôtel ou dans un camping ? Pourquoi ?
4. Qu'est-ce que tu aimes faire en vacances ? Pourquoi ?
5. Où veux-tu aller en vacances cette année ? Pourquoi ?
6. Tu vas en vacances avec qui cette année ? Pourquoi ?
7. Quelles seraient tes vacances de rêve ? Pourquoi ?

Post-Intervention

1. D'habitude, tu vas en vacances avec qui ?
2. Où vas-tu en vacances normalement ? Pourquoi ?
3. Tu préfères aller à l'hôtel ou dans un camping ? Pourquoi ?
4. Qu'est-ce que tu aimes faire en vacances ? Pourquoi ?
5. Où veux-tu aller en vacances cette année ? Pourquoi ?
6. Tu vas en vacances avec qui cette année ? Pourquoi ?
7. Quelles seraient tes vacances de rêve ? Pourquoi ?
8. Décris ta routine quotidienne. (wild card)

Appendix F

Student Questionnaire

1. Do you feel you have got better or worse in these aspects this term:
 - 1.1. I can feel a sense of flourishing when speaking in French.
 - 1.2. I can speak whole sentences in French.
 - 1.3. I can make myself understood in French.
 - 1.4. I can speak with correct pronunciation in French.
 - 1.5. I can speak with correct intonation in French.
 - 1.6. I can speak using more complex linguistic structures in French.
2. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about lessons this term?

Appendix G

Interview Groupings

Pre-Intervention Interview Groups

Group 1a: Students S, N, T, U

Group 2a: Students I, O, P, X

Group 3a: Students B, C, D, E

Group 4a: Students F, H, V, W

Post-Intervention Interview Groups

Group 1b: Students A, B, C, D

Group 2b: Students E, F, G, H

Group 3b: Students I, J, K, L

Group 4b: Students M, N, O, P

Appendix H

Question Guide for Interviews

Pre-Intervention Interview

Icebreaker

- I would like you to give examples of French speaking tasks that you have completed this term.

Learner skill

- When we are doing speaking tasks in French lessons, what do you find easy?
- When we are doing speaking tasks in French lessons, what do you find challenging?
- How French do you think you sound when speaking? Why? Why not?
- Do you do anything to prepare yourself before speaking in French?

Learner sense of flourishing

- One of our core values is 'flourishing'. What do you understand about the term 'flourishing'?
- I wonder if you have ever experienced a sense of flourishing during French speaking tasks.
- Are there any emotions you feel when speaking French?
- Can you tell me about a time when you think you did well in a French speaking task? How did that make you feel? Why do you think that went well?

Post-Intervention Interview

Icebreaker

- I would like you to give examples of French speaking tasks that you have completed this term.

Learner skill

- What do you think has changed in class since beginning the 'Flourishing in French' intervention programme?
- We are now going to think about your speaking *fluency*. Continuing to think about changes this term when speaking in French, comment on the following.
 - Hesitation
 - Ease
 - Speed/Pace
 - Confidence
- Tell me about your level of ability in speaking tasks in lessons this term compared to last term.

Learner sense of flourishing

- I would like to know about your experience of French speaking tasks in lessons this term.
 - What sort of positive emotions have you felt?
 - What sort of negative emotions have you felt?
- I wonder if your sense of flourishing in French speaking tasks has changed this term compared to last term.

Appendix I

Interview Transcripts

Pre-Intervention Transcripts

Ice breaker not transcribed; bold font represents the interviewer

Group 1a

Learner skill

When we are doing speaking tasks in French lessons, what do you find easy?

S. Challenge 1, the easy ones

T. Translating with a partner.

N. Understanding the question.

When we are doing speaking tasks in French lessons, what do you find challenging?

S. Speaking in your head is quite hard cos you can't hear what you sound like, but you know what it sounds like as you've said it but you don't really know what you are saying out loud.

N. You might forget what you were going to say by the time you start recording or between lessons and independent study. Or you might just forget when saying it because you might get nervous and have to start all over again.

T. Pronunciation, that's a bit hard sometimes.

How French do you think you sound when speaking? Why? Why not?

S. On a scale of 1-10, one. Why? Because of the accent and I can't quite say the words right.

N. I would say a 4 as I'm not really good with accents.

S. I would say actually it's a 2 or 3.

T. 4. Because of the silent letters you can get confused.

U. 3 or 4 as I don't always know how to pronounce the words.

And what do you do if you don't know how to pronounce a word?

T. I listen to it electronically like on Kerboodle.

Do you do anything to prepare yourself before speaking in French?

N. I think about what I am going to say before.

Learner sense of flourishing

One of our core values is *flourishing*. What do you understand about the term 'flourishing'?

T. If you are struggling you try and figure it out and then you know now.

N. When you replay your audio and it is much better than you thought.

S. When you have completed the whole lesson with the extensions.

T. When you get a good mark when you have submitted your work.

I wonder if you have ever experienced a sense of flourishing during French speaking tasks.

T. I think when I've had to look a word up. Then I remembered it in the recording with correct pronunciation.

Are there any emotions you feel when speaking French?

T. I think in my head 'I have to get this right'.

S. I keep thinking before I say something 'I'm going to get it all wrong'. What if I think I'm saying one word, and I end up saying another with a completely different meaning.

Can you tell me about a time when you think you did well in a French speaking task? How did that make you feel? Why do you think that went well?

N. When we did the assessment when I was happy with my mark.

How did that make you feel?

N Better.

Why do you think that went well?

N. Because I expected to get much worse.

T. The video. It made me feel quite good because of my mark. I was expecting quite low so when I got it, I was actually quite happy.

Why do you think that went well?

T. I think what I said and what type of words I used had an effect on my mark.

Other comments:

S. We need to try and do a bit more in lessons so when it comes to speaking assessments so we are a bit more confident as we do a lot on reading and writing and the speaking, obviously it's a lot harder to do, the pronunciation of words.

T. When we do the reading, we should read it word for word as a class sometimes, so we can boost our confidence and learn the pronunciation.

Group 2a

Learner skill

When we are doing speaking tasks in French lessons, what do you find easy?

P. The cognates help me speak.

X. I find if I write it down in a Google Docs before it helps me rehearse what I say, whereas if I speak straight from my head. It is not a natural language for me. It helps me to know what I am going to say.

I do that too.

I. Yes.

When we are doing speaking tasks in French lessons, what do you find challenging?

O. Some words that we haven't learnt much about in it, text.

I. Words we are unsure how to pronounce.

X. I always speak too fast. I always have to write myself a note saying "speak slower" in giant letters.

If you don't know how to say a word, what would you do?

P. Intelligent guess.

How French do you think you sound when speaking? Why? Why not?

O. Not very French! Why?

X. Because I'm English!

P. Because if you haven't been to France before you don't know how it sounds.

I. I once said my work to a native speaker and he said I sounded like I was from the South of France.

Do you do anything to prepare yourself before speaking in French?

I. I try to look through vocab.

X. Sometimes I listen to the vocab sheet on the interactive page.

O. Remember key words and write them down.

Learner sense of flourishing:

One of our core values is *flourishing*. What do you understand about the term 'flourishing'?

X. Thriving.

P. Doing well.

I wonder if you have ever experienced a sense of flourishing during French speaking tasks.

I. Sometimes, when I am in the mood.

P. When you have finished something you feel you have done well and feel good.

I. When you look at your tracker and see your marks have improved.

Are there any emotions you feel when speaking French?

I. 'Am I saying this right'...so *doubt*.

X. When you listen back and it's your first attempt and it's OK you feel *relieved*.

P. *Proud*.

Can you tell me about a time when you think you did well in a French speaking task? How did that make you feel? Why do you think that went well?

P. Probably the assessment we just did, as there was a long run up. It made me feel happy as it went well.

Do you know why it went well?

P. Not really, we did loads of work for it. Just the repetition of the words that we learnt.

X. The first speaking assessment I felt quite proud of as I spent quite a while trying to work towards it and stuff.

And why do you feel it went well?

X. Well I'm not really sure, I just remember doing it just before I got COVID so it was well timed.

Other comments:

None

Group 3a

Learner skill

When we are doing speaking tasks in French lessons, what do you find easy?

B. Pronouncing the words and saying the words.

E. Yes, I'm probably the same. And when you tell your partner something.

D. Identifying the words we already have.

C. Yes, like J'adore, we've learnt that in many different topics so we can pronounce it quite well. But with vocabulary we've only just learnt in the current topic takes a bit more practice.

B. I think pronouncing the accents like when it's 'e' with an accent it is 'eh'. Like 'acheté'.

Why do you find that easy?

B. Well there are not that many and it's easy to think 'é' kind of sounds like 'eh' anyway.

When we are doing speaking tasks in French lessons, what do you find challenging?

C. Well I actually find the accent hard. Very hard to remember.

B. I find it hard to translate into English. In some tasks you need to speak in French. And some in English. I find it hard to do the transition (between the two languages).

E. And with Spanish too, my whole brain gets kerfuffled.

D. I think when speaking, you have to keep momentum to keep up the words and phrases together.

E. And think of the word ahead.

B. And the French speak *really* fast.

How French do you think you sound when speaking? Why? Why not?

C. Not at all French.

E. Not at all.

D. No.

B. A hint of French.

C. I think because it's a certain...because the French know, like we know in English, they know which letters to say and how to say every single letter.

So why don't you sound French?

E. Because we've been around English people our whole lives and we are used to English.

D. I think it's because we all have other accents...Yorkshire accents, Irish accents, Liverpool accents, all of those.

B. They have an accent that you couldn't get unless you lived there.

Do you do anything to prepare yourself before speaking in French?

E. I normally just look through the whole vocab sheet and go if it's an eating task, think 'let's remember all the foods I like and don't like' and remember keywords like that.

D. Try and get key words for my sentence starters, adjectives, pronouns, all of them, just so I'm ready for them.

B. I do the same but I also read them out to see if they sound right. Because when you are doing the speaking they need to be right.

C. Ideally, I like to write it down or translate it in my head once, and *then* say it.

B. I maybe write down a sentence in French and then say it.

Learner sense of flourishing:

One of our core values is *flourishing*. What do you understand about the term 'flourishing'?

D. Showing your true colours.

B. Doing really well in a subject.

I wonder if you have ever experienced a sense of flourishing during French speaking tasks.

- D. I always feel good when I pronounce something (correctly) we haven't learnt before and it's a new topic and I've done well for myself and I'm learning new stuff.
- E. I never really feel like I've flourished.
- B. If I pronounce something I never can usually pronounce, then I feel like I have done well.

Are there any emotions you feel when speaking French?

- D. I think there's a sense of proudness. And I feel lucky. I am born in England and I still speak Spanish and French, all these other languages. Quite proud.
- E. I don't think this when speaking, but beforehand I think randomly, because mum and dad get me to order to the waitress something in French (on holiday) I think about that. (confidence from previous experiences).
- C. And when I find if I can say a French sentence off the top of my head I feel a sense of well, achievement.
- B. So if somebody asks me 'do you speak any other languages?' and I say 'Oh, I know some French'. And I speak French. And they say 'that's really cool'. (Sense of reward).

Can you tell me about a time when you think you did well in a French speaking task? How did that make you feel? Why do you think that went well?

- E. At the beginning of this year, or was it last year? We were doing an 'i eat' task and I did well in that because of the preparation stages. 'Je mange'!
- B. Last year when we did that French rap. I think I pronounced it well!

Other comments:

None

Group 4a

Learner skill

When we are doing speaking tasks in French lessons, what do you find easy?

- V. When you are given the sentence starter and you have to finish it off.
- W. I find it easy just to say it while I read. But then when it's freestyle it's tricky as you don't have anything to go off. (Finds it comforting to read aloud rather than freestyle).
- H. For me, it's easier French-English, rather than English - French (not speaking related?).
- V. If you see a question and you see a few of the words you need to answer the question (recycling the words in the question).

When we are doing speaking tasks in French lessons, what do you find challenging?

- F. For the IST, I find it harder to record an audio. I'd rather say it live with a teacher.
- W. Yes! As I always have to record several times.
- H. And I have to write down what I say and recite it like 5 times.
- W. I prefer the pre-recorded.
- H. It's quite fun.
- W. Yeah, I actually quite like it.

How French do you think you sound when speaking? Why? Why not?

- V. Oh so I've got a French Mum. So I pronounce it more French than English.
- F. I don't sound that French as I really have to think about how I pronounce each word. So not that French.

H. 3 or 4 out of 10, as the only words I can pronounce well in French are the famous words like 'café'.

W. I would say I'm a 6 or 7 out of 10 as I speak other languages at home as I have foreign parents, and sometimes I use their accent instead of the French accent. So that's a weakness. If I get a word I really can't pronounce, then I keep repeating it until I get it.

Do you do anything to prepare yourself before speaking in French?

F. I'll write a prompt thing and try to memorise it.

H. If we have time to practise and prepare, I'd actually practise as it's always good to have correct pronunciation.

V. Flashcards. And just memorising. And repetition.

W. Usually I just repeat the word until I get it.

F. Trying to find the correct words, not so much a focus on the pronunciation.

W. To get the word right you have to learn the pronunciation and how to say it. Like it is not Jem apple. It's Je m'appelle.

V. Just try and remember what you've practised. And just try and get it out!

Learner sense of flourishing:

One of our core values is *flourishing*. What do you understand about the term 'flourishing'?

F. To be the best you can be.

V. Doing what you like doing and doing it well.

H. Experiencing a sense of progress.

I wonder if you have ever experienced a sense of flourishing during French speaking tasks.

H. I did French at my old school but it was all Linguascope and we didn't learn much. I have a huge sense of progress since moving schools.

W. Yes, probably.

F. Yes.

W. If I relisten to my speaking audios and it sounds OK I'll be proud of myself. I didn't know all these words before and now I know them!

V. If it's a speaking test I try to show off all the words I've been learning so I get a better mark and better score to make me flourish.

Are there any emotions you feel when speaking French?

W. I feel French!

V. Well if it's a test then I'm trembling. And just overall nervous. If it's just speaking normally I feel like I can make a mistake and it's fine.

W. For a test, I know what to do, but under pressure I just get scared and then forget. It happens in almost every subject.

Can you tell me about a time when you think you did well in a French speaking task? How did that make you feel? Why do you think that went well?

W. I can't exactly remember my score in my speaking, but I think it was OK. I remember feeling OK but also I have to work on this but it is better than nothing. So I started working. Now I can look back and see it has made a difference.

V. After the speaking test I always know how I've done or if I could have done better - did I use enough vocab? Stuff like that.

F. I did better than last time in my speaking test, and that's progress, so flourishing. I did more revision and practised pronunciation.

Other comments:

F. I think it's all good!

V. - I think maybe what you should do is always do marks out of like 10 in class tasks so you don't feel so nervous in assessments and get scores higher. It will help me get the nerves out.

Post-Intervention Transcripts

Group 1b

Learner skill

What do you think has changed in class since beginning the 'Flourishing in French' intervention programme?

D. More confidence in the class. Yeah, a lot more hands up

A. Before the trials it was a bit more tense, and now it is more chill and relaxed.

D. I think after the trial exam there has been more focus.

C. Yes there's a sense of 'it's getting important now'.

C. I think generally the more topics we cover, the more French we feel as we know more.

Is there anything else that has changed dramatically this term?

B. Comparing this term to the same term last year, we did not have Chromebooks, we were writing down and I feel like using Chromebooks is a lot easier and a lot better.

A. And it saves the environment.

We are now going to think about your speaking *fluency*. Continuing to think about changes this term when speaking in French, comment on the hesitation, ease, speed/pace, confidence.

C. Well I found the speaking test we did for the trials, I thought that was very helpful and if I listened to that and the one we did before you could notice more confidence, more French sounding with pronunciation.

What about the ease, getting the words out?

A. It comes a little bit more naturally I guess than it did before.

B. But I sometimes still struggle a bit with getting the words out and thinking about them quick enough. But it's definitely easier.

C. It feels much more normal than it did a year ago.

B. Because for example we were doing French for the first time.

C. Year 7 was when we *really* started.

D. We got better at learning where the silent letters are as well.

C. Yes, that has been a big improvement.

B. I still get confused between French and Spanish. I always have to turn over and check the title of the exam to make sure I am still writing in the correct language.

Tell me about your level of ability in speaking tasks in lessons this term compared to last term.

D. I think my ability is OK, but I really find it good with a partner to urge you on more and help me structure.

- C. For me speaking is also the hardest as to write words down and to build written sentences is easier than saying them.
- D. Writing for me.
- B. Writing for me too is the hardest.
- A. Writing I remember better than when I am speaking.
- B. For me it's just the complete opposite. When I am writing my mind goes completely blank.

Learner sense of flourishing:

I would like to know about your experience of French speaking tasks in lessons this term.

- D. Perseverance and wanting to find out what it means. But also there's a little thing holding you back.
- A. Yes, it's worry I'm going to say the wrong thing and all that stuff.
- B. For me whenever I see there's a speaking task next, I feel like it's a break, when I see all those writing tasks I feel like it's 10 times harder, but when it's a speaking task it's kind of a break from all the writing.

So are you saying it's a sense of relief?

- B. Yeah! I just find pronunciation a lot easier, I see the words and I just say them, but writing is much harder.
- C. Well I find that, as I like the writing more, when we do a speaking when we say it to our partners it doesn't matter as much as when you are doing a translation or something as no one apart from your partner is going to see or hear.
- A. Unless when you have to say it in front of the whole class!
- C. Well yeah, that when it gets slightly more...

What is the emotion then?

- C. A bit nervous!
- A. Very nervous!
- C. I feel 'right I need to get this right, perfect'
- B. It is the thinking of what I am going to say which would be worrying.
- A. I am not scared of speaking in front of the class, it's saying the wrong thing.

I wonder if your sense of flourishing in French speaking tasks has changed this term compared to last term.

- A. Yes, we have been doing more speaking this term than we did last term. So yes, I'd say my sense of flourishing has increased.

Can you think of an emotion that has changed this term?

- A. My emotions are kind of the same, it's worry. But then it's got *less* worry this term!

So similar emotions and similar sense of flourishing, but it's just better and improved.

- C. Yes!
- B. My emotion is the same but a bit stronger as the writing tasks have got harder. So in comparison speaking is even more of a break from writing!

Are there any other comments you'd like to make?

None.

Group 2b

Learner skill

What do you think has changed in class since beginning the 'Flourishing in French' intervention programme?

F. pronunciation and the general sounding French is a lot better than it used to be. Everyone is no longer saying words, dare I say it, in a monotone voice. They sound a lot more native.

E. We don't go Je m'apple.

G. When did we ever go Je mapple?

E. Oh, just me then!

F. We can say a lot of more complex sentences, definitely. Like using the conditional and the imperative.

H. Obviously the more you speak the more you get fluent and the more educated by the language, so you know topics and other words outside the topics, your sentence structures end up being a lot more professional as you are using words more and more.

G. More detail, we learn more words that add more detail to what we are saying. Now we have learnt more words, we sound more professional.

E. We are a lot more fluent. I feel we do a lot more speaking now than we did at the very start of the year. Like with the grid games, yeah there's just loads of ones where you listen to it. I also found listening to it quite useful for that.

So you've had more exposure and more opportunity to speak?

E. Yeah.

We are now going to think about your speaking *fluency*. Continuing to think about changes this term when speaking in French, comment on the hesitation, ease, speed/pace, confidence.

F. Hesitation, yeah. People are definitely not pausing as much to say things, or think of things, they are just making sentences sort of flow more.

E. Yeah! I don't consider myself good at languages but I used to go je-m-apple but now I go je m'appelle, it just gets quicker and quicker and quicker.

G. It gets smoother.

Tell me about your level of ability in speaking tasks in lessons this term compared to last term.

F. My mark was generally worse but partially because I was speaking into a screen. I know it sounds odd but speaking at home just doesn't feel the same.

H. I think well, especially my speaking has developed quite well, in both French and Spanish, it was one of my best skills.

So you are saying your ability has improved?

H. Yes, in speaking.

Learner sense of flourishing:

I would like to know about your experience of French speaking tasks in lessons this term.

F. It feels good to be able to complete your sentence and have it fairly complex and say it to your partner and then engage in quite lengthy conversation with your partner. It is rewarding.

E. I'd say the same. At the start of this well..., term even, I don't think I could barely say anything in French. I think last time I said I'd achieved something, but then this time I *actually* feel like I've achieved something and I feel a lot more French, which is good!

G. Sometimes stressed. As when it's on the board it's hard to understand where to start with your partner, like how to say it. But it gets easier.

F. A challenge. But when you manage to get going it feels satisfying as you have managed to achieve what is on the board.

E. Sort of excited as I think 'this is where I can improve on and get better'. So excited for it.

And how do these emotions compare to when you do a writing task?

E. Very, very different.

F. Yeah.

E. Well I thought I was OK at them, but I've realised no, I really need to get better at them. Let's just say I'm not very good at them.

H. It's the spelling and accents.

F. I get to the writing task and I have a spurt of my idea. Then I realise my idea is not enough and I sort of fade out of words to think of.

E. When I finally think of a sentence I'm like 'oh this is good' and then I forget one word and I have to answer a different question.

So is the general feeling that speaking tasks are not the most daunting?

E. I think writing is.

F. Yeah.

E. Even more than listening.

H. Reading is OK because if you are stuck you can sort of guess the word or recognise it at least.

E. Yes, because you can say if this is 'the' then this is 'man' then this must be 'the dog bit the man'.

Yes, you can work it out from the context.

I wonder if your sense of flourishing in French speaking tasks has changed this term compared to last term.

F. I feel a lot more confident now. I mean my marks in the mocks weren't too pleasing but I can definitely improve them and I feel a lot more confident and I feel that I can work to achieve better.

E. I feel that person F has said everything I was going to say.

G. It's good to have the mock exams as it gives you a chance to improve so you know what you are doing and you know what you want to learn.

E. Yes, I now know I need to get better at writing.

F. Now you know the questions you can work on the answers.

Are there any other comments you'd like to make?

G. It is easier to learn the speaking by saying it to someone or out loud as it gets it in my head a bit. Although writing it is sometimes a good way to learn, I just feel it is better.

Group 3b

Learner skill

What do you think has changed in class since beginning the 'Flourishing in French' intervention programme?

L. I would say last term I sounded more like a robot when I was speaking and now I sound less like a robot, I guess.

I. The understanding of higher quality language and using higher quality structures.

J. A larger variety of descriptive language.

K. I think I use the phonics better than I did before I even knew there were such things.

So you not only discovered phonics, but you were able to apply those rules to your speaking?

K. Yeah!

We are now going to think about your speaking fluency. Continuing to think about changes this term when speaking in French, comment on the hesitation, ease, speed/pace, confidence.

L. I was a lot more nervous so I would always stutter so I would have to redo things and now I can say it more confidently.

J. I think now I know a lot more about the topics so I can talk about them more confidently.

K. I think I am a lot more fluent than I was before as I understand the words a lot more and have gone through them a lot more since I've done French since Year 2 I think. So it is a lot easier to be fluent.

L. When we repeat the words, that helps our understanding of how we say those exact words.

And what about the pace/speed. Has that got better or worse?

K. Better!

L. Better!

J. I used to find it really hard and frustrating. Obviously other people trying to speak our language think we speak really fast, but when they speak really fast I just think 'slow down!'.

K. Yeah, that second person on the listening test spoke really fast.

Tell me about your level of ability in speaking tasks in lessons this term compared to last term.

L. I think last term I struggled making up sentences and saying them.

J. Since last term, with the 'Holidays' topic, as soon as 'depuis' came along, 'since', I suddenly understood it and it just kind of extended the sentences.

So you've added extra clauses into your sentences to get your ability level up?

J. Yes.

And what about your tenses? adjectival agreement? Have they improved?

I. Yes, a bigger variety.

L. Yes, I used to describe everything in exactly the same way. But now I sometimes describe something but use different words.

J. It took me a while but I finally got the difference between 'I go' and 'I went'.

And what stage of being able to do that without resources, with the grids, without? or a little bit of both?

J. I think I am getting there but there are some things, some sports, that I should revise more as there are the obvious ones, but also ones I need to revise more. Oh and like 'twice a week, a day'. But when I see them I remember them.

Learner sense of flourishing:

I would like to know about your experience of French speaking tasks in lessons this term.

L. Probably frustration sometimes when you don't know how to pronounce the word, but once you've finally got it over and done with, and you listen back to it, you're really happy with yourself.

K. Kind of frustration, but also nerves because if you don't get it right you are going to fail the exam.

I. Sometimes a word just leaves your head when you are about to say it.

J. When you revise something really hard and you keep on reminding yourself every day and then you know it for the exam, but you can't remember how to spell it!

I wonder if your sense of flourishing in French speaking tasks has changed this term compared to last term.

L. I'd say before I got really really nervous and it was something I dreaded, but now, although I am still really nervous, I am a lot less nervous than I was before and more confident.

I. I remember before COVID, we had 1-1 conversation and I found that really intimidating. But when we do it by ourselves at home or in the boarding house it feels a lot less stressful.

J. When I was looking in Kerboodle the other day, I saw my year 7 speaking and listened to it. And my pronunciation was terrible! I sounded really shy. And I could definitely see more confidence. That was the first time I'd done a speaking test on a computer.

L. I much prefer talking to a computer. I know that sounds pretty weird. When I would go out and sit on that chair and the teacher would ask me questions I would get SO nervous and stutter a lot. When it's a computer I don't think the computer is going to mind what I say.

J. It's not going to laugh at you.

L. So I'm a lot more confident.

Anyone got anything to add about speaking in French?

L. It is easier than speaking in Spanish. I don't know why but when I have to do the recordings at home, a French speaking and then a Spanish speaking, I find it much easier and I much prefer the French speaking.

I. I learnt Spanish before I learnt French. Spanish has less variety.

J. I wrote this in my questionnaire we just did: when we do lessons when we do speak a lot, I think everyone enjoys it, but enjoys it in a way they are actually improving. As they become more fluent in French when they are speaking so I just think we should do more of those.

Group 4b

Learner skill

What do you think has changed in class since beginning the 'Flourishing in French' intervention programme?

M: I think I have got better in my intonation. I think that us doing the speaking activities has helped everyone become more confident in speaking in French.

N: We have more vocab to use to explain the answers.

We are now going to think about your speaking *fluency*. Continuing to think about changes this term when speaking in French, comment on the hesitation, ease, speed/pace, confidence.

M: I think it has changed in a good way as I am more confident when speaking in French. We learnt about the accents and now we know how to pronounce those which is good.

Would you say you are more hesitant or less hesitant than last term?

M: Less hesitant.

And what about the pace, the speed at which you can get the words out?

M: The same.

O: Maybe a bit faster.

N: Less hesitant.

Tell me about your level of ability in speaking tasks in lessons this term compared to last term.

N: When we did 'silent letters' that really helped me because then I knew all of them.

M: Not really sure.

Learner sense of flourishing:

I would like to know about your experience of French speaking tasks in lessons this term.

M. I am happy, because last year I was new to French and I didn't do very well in it and now I am starting to flourish in it and progress.

P. I feel like it is in the middle, happy and sad, because I know I can do better, but I am still doing pretty well.

O. Happy and sad.

Can you identify the positive emotions?

P. Happy.

O. Relief.

And the negative ones?

N. Maybe that you could do better.

P. Jealous of other people's grades.

M. Stress.

P. Angry.

I wonder if your sense of flourishing in French speaking tasks has changed this term compared to last term.

P: They have improved as you have learnt more about them in lessons which makes it easier when you do it again.

M: Kind of what 'P' said, yeah.

N: At the Easter term point I am feeling more confident as I have learnt a lot more and now I know how to answer the questions so it is much easier when it comes to doing exams.

O: I think it is more stressful as we are getting nearer to the actual exams.

Is there anything else that you would like to comment on, something that you enjoyed, didn't like, would like to see more of?

N: This year, do we do the food topic, or was that just last year?

You'd like to study more about food?

MNOP: Yeah!