



THE STERLING HALL SCHOOL

Where boys belong.

THE IMPACT OF VALUING PARTICIPATION ON RISK-TAKING IN GRADE 8 BOYS IN A FRENCH-AS-A-SECOND-LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Further Information
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Introduction

Our goal was to discover whether boys actually take risks to speak in new situations when they feel validated for their efforts. Risk-taking allows boys to adapt to new and unfamiliar contexts and situations. As language teachers, we believe that **“practicing communication in a foreign language necessitates taking a series of risks”** (Samimy, K. K., 1994, p. 30) in order to maximize their oral language practice time and to develop their implicit competence of the language.

In another study on the correlation of risk-taking and the oral production of English by Wang, Y., & Lin, Y. (2015), they noted that “risk-taking provides students with power and courage to express themselves in another language instead of their mother tongue. Students who **embrace risk-taking** spirit tend to seize every chance to communicate” (p. 113).

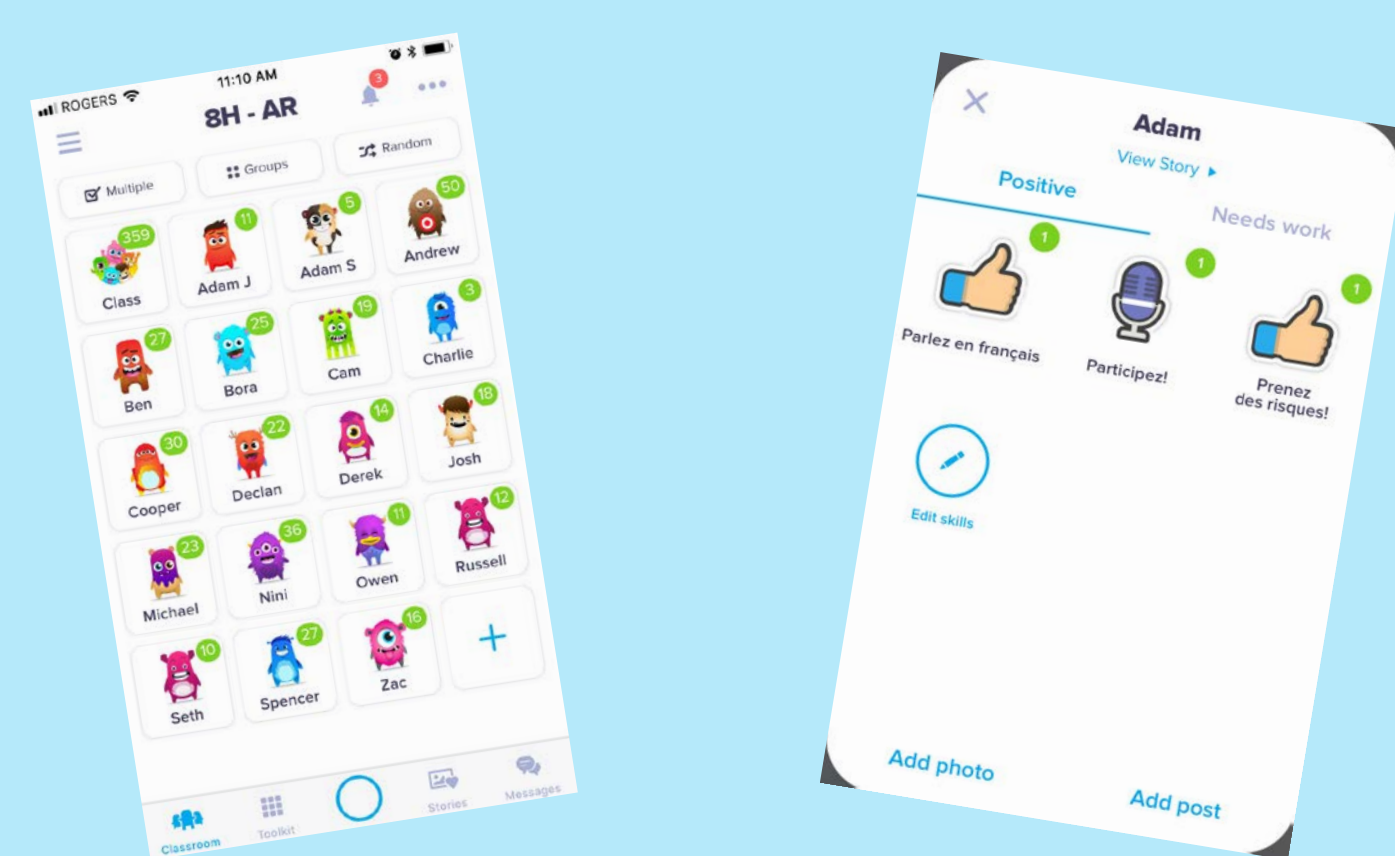
The Research Question

How does **valuing participation** affect **risk-taking** in Grade 8 boys in a French-as-a-second-language classroom?

Research Context and Participants

The Sterling Hall School is an independent day school located in Toronto, Canada for boys from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8. We believe in developing strong relationships with our students, giving them the confidence to excel in our rigorous academic programs. We encourage collaboration across our classrooms and broader school community and we focus on delivering the best education to boys during their foundational years. We included 18 boys from one Grade 8 class in our data collection and analysis. These boys were aged 13-14.

Valuing Participation with ClassDojo



Our Process

Brainstorming

Pre Project Survey

Communication Activities

Self & Peer Assessment

Post Project Survey

Key Findings and Discussion

- We discovered that a large number of boys' responses indicated the significant impact peers play on one another's willingness to participate in class, and in turn, take risks. "Classmates negativity," "boys laughing at me," "fooling around and socializing," and "boys calling out," were all factors that prevented boys from taking risks.
- The most noted factors on increasing risk-taking were public acknowledgement from the teacher, potential for higher marks, and if "everyone spoke more French," they would also speak more French, further emphasizing the important role played by their peers.
- Risk-taking and participation were increased during specific routine activities, where boys would offer responses to prompts without fear of failure. One boy noted that, "if I think I'm going to [say something] wrong, I won't participate."

"You want to know that you're in an environment that accepts, even if it's wrong, you can still learn from it."



"French is one of the official languages of Canada and I think it's important to be part of the Canadian culture. Risk-taking happens in all of life, not just French class."

Conclusions

- We learned that **the role of the teacher in a second-language classroom for Grade 8 boys was not as significant as the role of peers**. In order for risk-taking to occur, the valuing of participation needed to not only come from the boy's teacher, but that **each member of the classroom environment also needed to show appreciation or acknowledgement of one another's participation**.
- We will work to create a classroom culture wherein boys feel comfortable with and supported by each other to fully **embrace the uncertainty of challenges** in a second-language.
- We will continue to enforce expectations of respect and kindness to **promote further risk-taking**.
- We will continue to develop a second-language program that assesses the use of strategies to communicate despite grammar or pronunciation errors.
- We will continue to praise and encourage boys to **take risks and be able to adapt** to many different second-language contexts.

"If you don't take risks, you'll never learn from your mistakes."



Key Readings

Reichert, M., & Hawley, R. (2010). *Reaching boys, teaching boys*. San Francisco, Calif.; Jossey-Bass.

Samimy, K.K. (1994). Teaching Japanese; Consideration of learners affective variables. *Theory into Practice*, 33(1), 29-33. doi:10.1080/00405849409543612.

Wang, Y., & Lin, Y. (2015). A Study on Correlation of Risk-Taking in the Oral Production of English Majors in China. *English Language Teaching*, 8(10), 113-122. doi:10.5539/elt.v8n10p113



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