



# STORYTELLING GAMES AND GROWTH MINDSET: A WINNING COMBINATION IN A GRADE 9 AFRIKAANS FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE CLASS

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**Further Information**  
This poster and further information is available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>

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## Introduction

There are many **obstacles** to overcome when **learning and acquiring an additional language**: including vocabulary learning, pronunciation, listening comprehension, grammar, and writing. In a study conducted by Wu and Chan (2004) on the foreign language anxiety of elementary school students in Taiwan, situations which provoked the most anxiety were tests, speaking in front of others, spelling, incomprehensible input, and speaking to native speakers. These struggles can inhibit students when learning a second language.

I planned my research action in the hope of creating an environment where learning, having fun, and stretching oneself is celebrated and to help the boys **understand the value of having a growth mindset in class and to provide opportunities for them to apply a growth mindset when thinking about their learning.**



## The Research Question

*How might the introduction of storytelling games in an additional language class encourage a growth mindset in Grade 9 boys?*

## Research Context and Participants

St Alban's College is an independent Anglican School, located in Lynnwood Glen, Pretoria, South Africa. My participants were 17 boys from my Grade 9 Afrikaans class. The boys were all approximately 15 years of age. I chose this cohort as they are energetic, adventurous, and open to explore new ways of learning.

## The Research Action

- I introduced the concept of growth mindset.
- Boys completed a questionnaire to determine which mindset they apply when thinking about their learning of Afrikaans. Identified the areas in their learning where they need to improve.
- I challenged the boys to stretch themselves through four storytelling games which are highlighted below. All of these games were played in Afrikaans.
- After each game boys reflected on their learning.

### Game 1: Collaborative Storytelling



### Game 3: Two Truths and a Lie



### Game 2: Build a Story



### Game 4: Sculpting a Story



## Data Collection and Analysis

The following methods were used to collect data:

- questionnaires
- researcher field notes
- observations
- photos and videos
- exit slips

Data were transcribed, coded, and analysed. The following themes emerged :

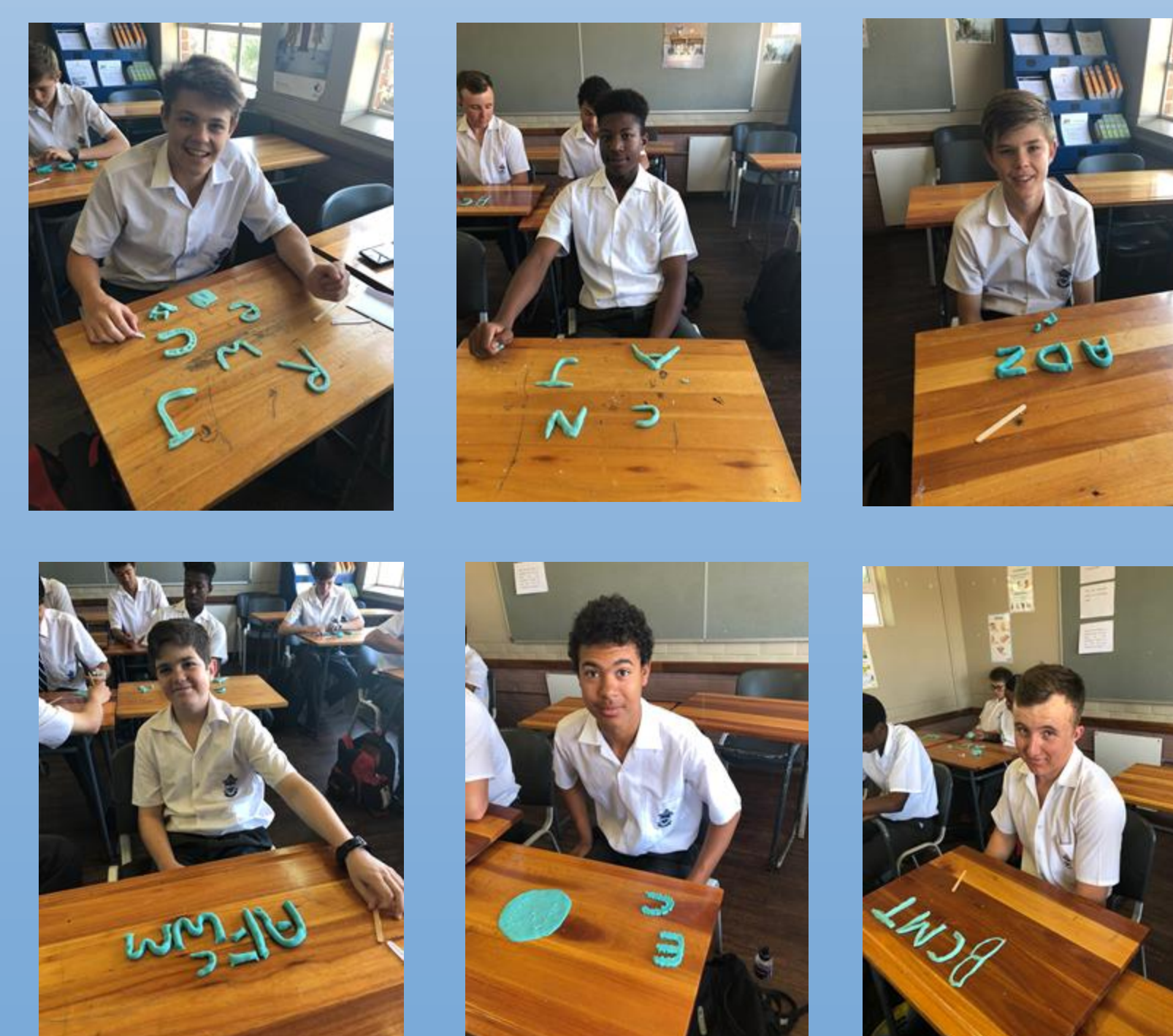
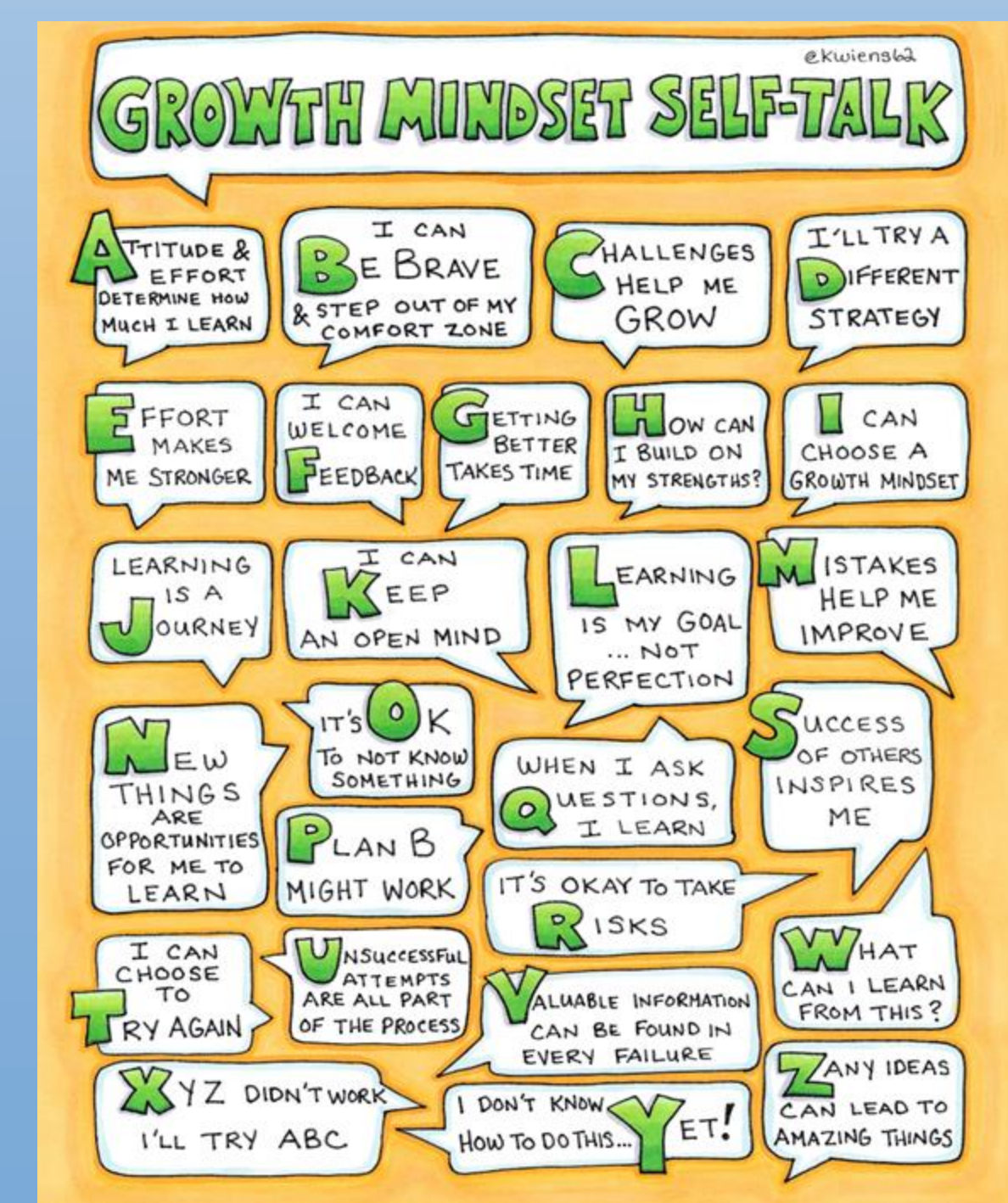
1. Games led to increased confidence
2. Collaboration required by games fostered growth mindset
3. The engagement and creativity inspired by games led to perseverance

## Key Findings and Discussion

- Prior to the project intervention, baseline surveys indicated that the boys approached learning Afrikaans with a fixed mindset.
- Boys' responses also showed that they tried to **hide their deficiencies**, and lack of vocabulary and confidence instead of trying to overcome them.
- Almost half of the boys stated that they attempted to **prove themselves to others in order to impress them**, rather than improve their process of learning.
- The games set the stage for **shifting attitudes towards learning** the language in order for boys to build the confidence to not shy away from challenges.
- In learning to cultivate a growth mindset, it is important to **acknowledge and embrace your weaknesses**. The boys identified the areas in their learning where they need to improve, and for most of them it was to enhance and improve their vocabulary and to practice speaking and listening skills.
- It was clear that the boys **embraced their challenges and tried again** if they didn't succeed the first time.
- The themes that emerged from this research - **increased confidence, collaboration and perseverance** are inextricably linked to growth mindset where learning is a process of developing and growing skills.
- I introduced them to the concept of **instead of ... I can ...** which gave them a different approach to a task.
- Thinking about how you learn and **implementing new strategies** to learn directly links to a growth mindset.

## Conclusions

- The introduction of storytelling games in a second language classroom **helped in the development a growth mindset in the boys**.
- Storytelling games can be used as a tool to engage boys in a **fun and collaborative** way in an additional Language classroom. Boys realised that **learning, not perfection, was the goal**, and that there were **different strategies and methods** to learn.
- Boys had time to **reflect** on their learning and used the **growth mindset self-talk** poster in their reflection and exit slips.



## Key Readings

Dweck, C. (2017). *Mindset: Changing the way you think to fulfil your potential*. UK: Robinson Publishing.

Hatchette Juliani, A. J. (2017). *The hidden importance of teaching with stories*. Retrieved from <http://ajjuliani.com/hidden-importance-teaching-stories/>.

Reichert M. & Hawley, R. (2010) *Reaching boys, teaching boys: Strategies that work - and why* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Wu, G., & Chan, D. Y. (2004). A study of foreign language anxiety of EFL elementary school students in Taipei County. *Journal of National Taipei Teachers College*, 17(2), 287-320.

What did the boys say?

"It not only forced us to use new Afrikaans words but also forced us to be creative."



"[I] enjoyed this game as we shared a lot of laughter and it stretched my brain to think creatively in Afrikaans".



"Although this was difficult, I felt enthusiastic to play and learn some new Afrikaans words today."



"It made me think in a different way."



"I was always too shy to speak Afrikaans but these games gave me an opportunity to speak and make mistakes and not to feel judged by my peers."



"The games helped me to feel comfortable making mistakes and that I could learn from it."



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**Boys and Stories: Pathways to Learning**

