

Introduction

The project looked to comics to introduce young learners to storytelling in a foreign language. I felt that using this medium as a teaching tool would provide a greater level of challenge and interest compared with a more traditional approach. Through the images, I hoped learners could more easily follow the story, providing them more scope to spend time exploring the deeper meaning hidden in the book.

The Research Question

How can Year 9 boys' analysis of graphic novels affect engagement in a World Language class?

Research Context and Participants

The research was undertaken at Harrow School, an independent all-boys boarding school on the outskirts of London that welcomes boys from Year 9 to Year 13. The 20 Year 9 participants were new to the school that term and came with varying levels of exposure to French. Generally, boys at the school are academically strong and enjoy being challenged in the classroom.

The Research Action

I designed the intervention around the graphic novel, *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan. Over a 5-week period, the intervention engaged boys in a variety of different activities promoting independence of thought and exploration of the graphic novel. Activities were structured to allow boys to express themselves in French, even when trying to formulate complex ideas.



« It helped me enjoy French a lot more. »

« When you enjoy what you're learning, you perform better. »

« It's taught me to be more adventurous and creative. »

« The comic gave me a chance to try to think and write in other people's perspective which was more challenging and fun. »

« It gave us an opportunity to be more independent and creative. »

Data Collection and Analysis

The following techniques were used to generate data for the project:

- Pre- and post-intervention questionnaires
- Teachers' log
- Video interviews
- Student assessment

I compared the pre- and post-project questionnaires to perceive how the boys' attitudes had shifted. I also interpreted the boys' written and oral comments and categorised them according to the common themes.

Key Findings and Discussion

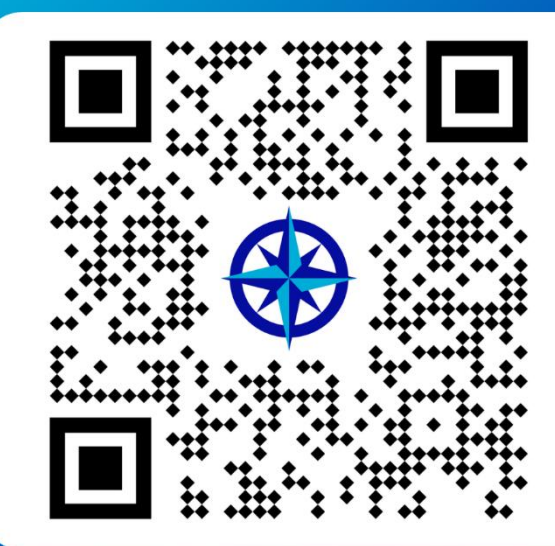
- Graphic Novels engage learners
The boys' comments show they enjoyed the project and felt more motivation in class.
- Graphic Novels spark creativity and independence
The boys were more adventurous with their choice of descriptive language.
- Graphic Novels promote dialogue
The boys wanted to share their views on the graphic novel, even in French.

Conclusions

Building a scheme of work around a graphic novel achieved my key goals to make the course content more relevant and interesting, while increasing the boys' engagement in French lessons. There were numerous by-products of the increased emotional, behavioural, and cognitive engagement, such as the perceived rise in creativity. Moving forward, I will continue to explore different comics to find commonalities on how to create effective schemes of work. I hope to then provide models and a framework to help colleagues create their own projects using comics.

Key Readings

- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59–109.
- Krusemark, R. (2017). Comic books in the American college classroom: a study of student critical thinking. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, 8(1), 59-78.
- Parsons, S. A., Nuland, L. R., & Parsons, A. W. (2014). The ABCs of student engagement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 95(8), 23–27.



Scan this QR code to watch a video taster of my research project.