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# Targeted speaking intervention and pupils' performance in the new MFL GCSE

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The Association for Language Learning Oxfordshire Branch Conference

Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026

# Speaking in the MFL Classroom



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Speaking is a critical skill in language learning

- Effective communication is “**ultimate aim**” of ML teaching.
- Ofsted: “Teachers **create opportunities** for pupils to practise using the target language, helping them to remember long term the language structures they need to communicate in an **unscripted way.**”

# Speaking in the MFL Classroom



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However, the teaching of speaking has been identified as been identified as an area of concern

- Ofsted: “a **weakness** in too many lessons”.
- “**Routine** work in the target language and opportunities to use it spontaneously were **too few**”.
- Speaking is “a **daunting task**” for pupils.
- **Lack of confidence and anxiety** are key barriers.

Forbes, K. & Fisher, L. (2018). The impact of expanding advanced level secondary school students’ awareness and use of metacognitive learning strategies on confidence and proficiency in foreign language speaking skills.

Ofsted. (2008). The changing landscape of languages.

Gallagher-Brett, A. (2007). What do learners’ beliefs about speaking reveal about their awareness of learning strategies?.

# Teaching Speaking



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Group and pair talk

Teaching strategies

‘Chunking’

Task design to  
maximise speaking  
practice

Spaced or distributed practice (over  
'massed' practice

Routine practice

Supporting independence  
following rehearsal

The role of the teacher  
and modelling

# Teaching Speaking



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## Strategy intervention:

- **Guesses and predictions** when processing what others are saying.
- **Key structures** to support.
- Making the most out of the language students know.

## Effective tasks to maximise speaking:

- **Graham (2014):** considerable amount of language, taking ownership, personalising language and open-ended questions.

Gallagher-Brett, A. (2007). What do learners' beliefs about speaking reveal about their awareness of learning strategies?

Thompson, N. P. & Mutton, T. (2022). 'I worry about getting it wrong and looking like a silly billy': does explicit classroom-based strategy intervention change pupils' attitudes towards speaking in the modern foreign languages classroom?

Graham, S. (2014). Developing speaking skills in a foreign language.

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## Group talk:

- Benefits of small groups or pairs.
- Graham: Pupils are more likely to speak for longer in a pair compared to a larger group.
- Field: pupils can **“be a resource for one another”**.
- Collaborative talk within the ZPD: **“the level of potential development as determined through problem solving [...] in collaboration with more able peers”** (p. 86).

Field, K. (1999). Developing productive language skills – listening and reading.

Graham, S. (2014). Developing speaking skills in a foreign language.

Christie, C. (2013). Speaking spontaneously in the modern foreign languages classroom: Tools for supporting successful target language conversation.

Vygotsky, L. S., & Cole, M. (1978). Mind in society: the development of higher psychological processes.

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## Potential limitations of group talk:

- Gallagher-Brett's (2007) study: Year 9 German pupils and negative comparison.
- Williams & Burden: External attributions for success and failure.

## The role of the teacher:

- Teachers prompt pupils to extend answers, encouraging them to include a verb.

Gallagher-Brett, A. (2007). What do learners' beliefs about speaking reveal about their awareness of learning strategies?

Williams, M. & Burden, R. (1999). Students' developing conceptions of themselves as language learners.

Yang, C. C. R. (2010). Teacher questions in second language classrooms: An investigation of three case studies.

Macaro, E., & Mutton, T. (2002). Developing language teachers through a co-researcher model.

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## Routine practice:

- “Regularly revisiting and reusing core language will [...] help learners to develop confidence, greater fluency and a degree of automaticity, that is, being able to use the language with minimal hesitation”. (Graham, 2014, p. 102)

## ‘Chunking’:

- Pupils able to use sequences of language even when individual linguistic or structural components had not yet been learnt.
- Scarcella & Krashen: formulaic language provide gaps which can be filled with additional language.

Graham, S. (2014). Developing speaking skills in a foreign language.

Krashen, S. & Scarcella, R. (1978). On routines and patterns in language acquisition and performance.

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## Supporting independent practice following routine rehearsal

- Written prompts are valued by learners (Gallagher-Brett, 2007)
- Planning: metacognitive strategy (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990)
- Giving pupils the space to practice: Graham (2014) suggests a **“five-minute open-ended ‘chat’ session at the start of each lesson”** (p. 102).

## ‘Spaced’ over ‘massed’ practice

- Supports retention over time.

Graham, S. (2014). Developing speaking skills in a foreign language.

Gallagher-Brett, A. (2007). What do learners' beliefs about speaking reveal about their awareness of learning strategies?

O'Malley, M. J. & Chamot, A. U. (1990). Learning strategies in second language acquisition.

Rohrer, D. & Taylor, K. (2006). The effects of overlearning and distributed practise on the retention of mathematics knowledge.

Ofsted. (2021). Research review series: languages.

# New MFL GCSE



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## Candidate's Photo Card

- During your preparation time, look at the two photos. You may make as many notes as you wish on an Additional Answer Sheet and use these notes during the test.
- Your teacher will ask you to talk about the content of these photos. The recommended time is approximately **one minute**. You must say at least one thing about each photo.
- After you have spoken about the content of the photos, your teacher will then ask you questions related to **any** of the topics within the theme of **Popular culture**.

Photo 1



Photo 2



## Candidate's Card

When your teacher asks you, read aloud the following text in **German**.

Ich war immer ein guter Schüler.

Mein Lehrer sagt, dass ich immer mein Bestes gebe.

Meine Mutter hat mir nach den Prüfungen einen neuen Computer gekauft.

Ich glaube, es ist wichtig, sich zu entspannen, um Stress von der Schule zu vermeiden.

In der Zukunft möchte ich eine Karriere im Ausland haben.

You will then be asked four questions in **German** that relate to the topic of **Education and work**.

In order to score the highest marks, you must try to **answer all four questions as fully as you can**.

|                                |                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Answered clearly</b>        | The intended message is clear. There may be minor errors, for example of gender or adjectival agreement, but they have no effect on communication.       |
| <b>Answered understandably</b> | Something is understood from the response, but there is a lack of clarity caused by a grammatical error or mispronunciation which affects communication. |

# Focus of the project



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## Research Questions:

1. To what extent can a targeted speaking intervention support **pupils' confidence** when completing GCSE-style speaking tasks?
2. To what extent can a targeted speaking intervention support **pupils' performance** in GCSE-style speaking tasks?

# Context of the project



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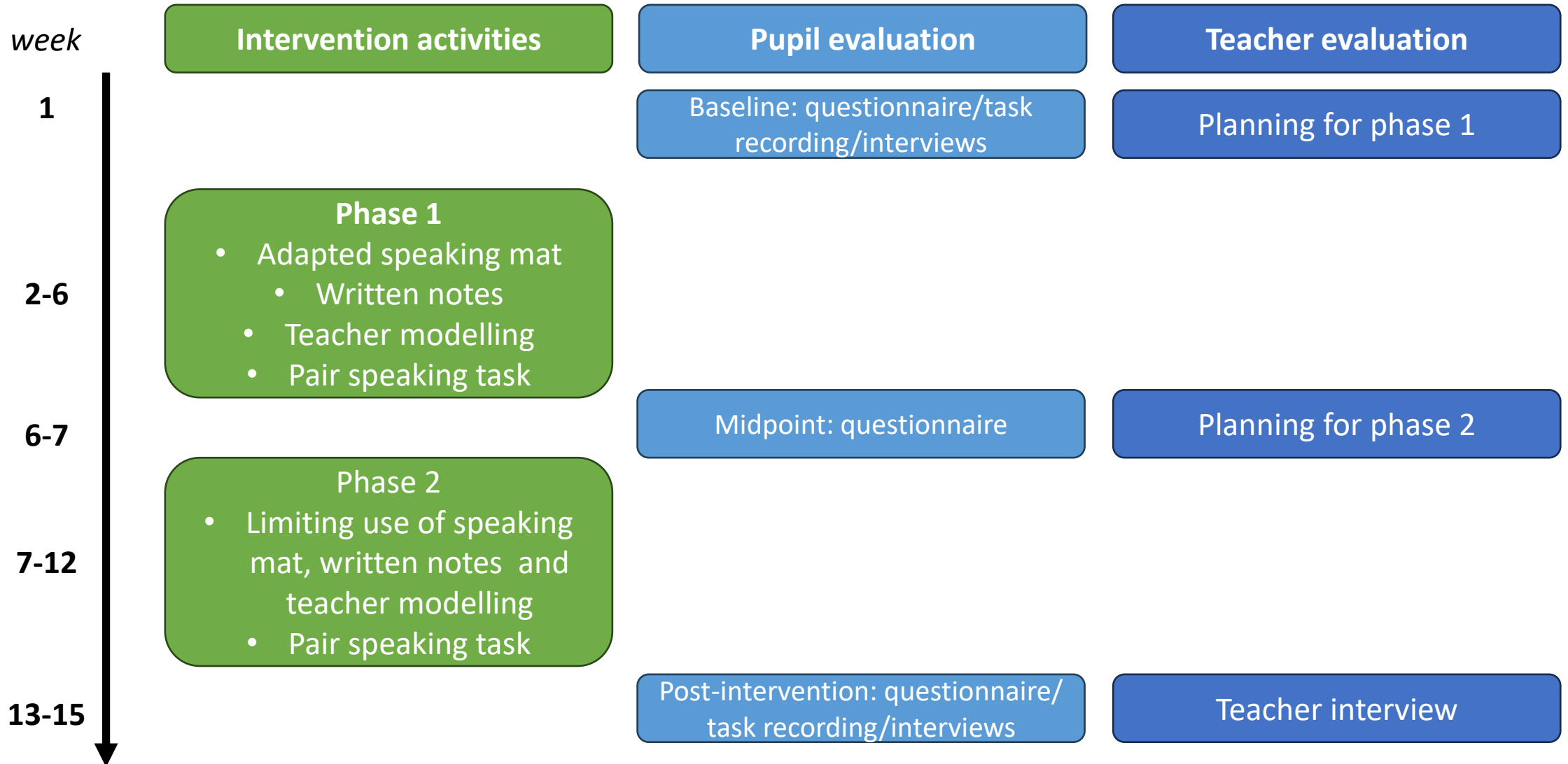


- State, non-selective school in Berkshire.
- 2 mixed-ability Year 10 German classes, 2 lessons per week.
- 41 pupil participants, 1 teacher participant.
  
- Existing approach to speaking practice: largely teacher-led, structured, written notes to support.
- Historically students had struggled with the photo task and unplanned speaking in the general conversation.

# Intervention



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# Intervention



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- Routine 5-minute speaking sessions at the start of each lesson.
- Focus on the photo task and following conversation.
- Pupils spoke in pairs with a selected speaking partner.
- Gradual independence to produce unplanned speech with support.

# Baseline task



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- Photo task and following discussion task.
- Teacher modelling of both tasks.
- 5-minute preparation time: speaking mat resource, notes from modelling, encouragement to plan responses.
- 5-minute speaking time with speaking partner.
- Peer-assessment using adapted mark scheme.

Let's look at an example together...



**Was gibt es auf dem Foto?**

**Auf dem Foto gibt es...**

**Bullet points to address**

**Your description must cover:**

- people
- location
- activity.

# Further questions

1. **Was gibt es auf dem Foto? Describe the photo.**
2. **Wie findest du Schuluniformen?**
3. **Was lernst du gern in der Schule?**
4. **Was lernst du nicht gern in der Schule?**
5. **Was machst du gern in der Pause?**

Over to you...



Was gibt es auf dem Foto?

Auf dem Foto gibt es...

Your description must cover:

- people
- location
- activity.

### Questions for Picture 1

*(a) Wie findest du Schuluniformen?*

*(b) Was lernst du gern in der Schule?*

## Peer-assessment- PICTURE TASK

| <b>Response to picture / 4</b> |                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4                              | Two or more bullet points addressed. Developed answer, relevant to picture. Understandable.          |
| 3                              | Two or more bullet points addressed. Some development of ideas. Mostly understandable.               |
| 2                              | One or more bullet points addressed. Occasional development of ideas. Messages sometimes break down. |
| 1                              | One or more bullet points addressed. Little or no development of ideas. Messages often break down.   |
| 0                              | No rewardable material.                                                                              |

**TOTAL: /12**

## Linguistic Knowledge and Accuracy / 4

|   |                                                                                                                                                |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | Some variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Generally accurate use of language; some errors.                                        |
| 3 | Occasional variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Some accurate language; errors occur, some of them major.                         |
| 2 | Limited variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Limited accuracy in the language; frequent errors both major and minor.              |
| 1 | Minimal variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures; likely to use individual words and/or phrases in isolation. Major errors throughout. |
| 0 | No rewardable material.                                                                                                                        |

## 2 questions (2 marks per question) / 4

|   |                                                  |
|---|--------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | Response fully communicated.                     |
| 1 | Response partially communicated, some ambiguity. |
| 0 | No rewardable communication.                     |

# Peer-assessment- CONVERSATION

| <b>Response to spoken language / 12</b> |                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10-12                                   | Some relevant responses, develops ideas, generally clear.                                        |
| 7-9                                     | Occasional relevant responses, develops ideas sometimes, sometimes clear.                        |
| 4-6                                     | Limited relevant responses, sometimes can't answer questions. Not very clear.                    |
| 1-3                                     | Minimal relevant responses, often can't respond to questions, very brief and frequently unclear. |
| 0                                       | No rewardable material.                                                                          |

## Linguistic knowledge and accuracy / 4

|   |                                                                                                                                               |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | Some variety of vocabulary and grammar, some complex language used. Successful past, present and future tenses. Some errors.                  |
| 3 | Occasional variety of vocabulary and straightforward grammar. Some successful references to the past, present and future tenses. Some errors. |
| 2 | Limited variety of vocabulary and straightforward grammatical structures. Limited success with tenses. Many errors.                           |
| 1 | Minimal variety of vocabulary: individual words and/ or phrases in isolation. Minimal success with tense and errors throughout.               |
| 0 | No rewardable material.                                                                                                                       |

**TOTAL: /16**

**GRAND TOTAL: /28**

# Baseline data



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- Pupil questionnaire (completed by 39 pupils).
- Pupil semi-structured interviews: 2 interviews with groups of 3 pupils (representative sample).
- Pupil audio-recorded task completion (with the same sample of 6 pupils).

# Baseline data

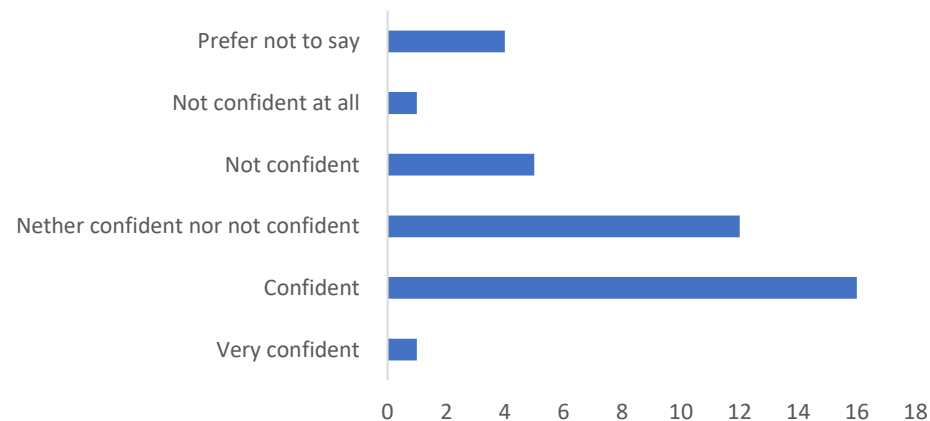


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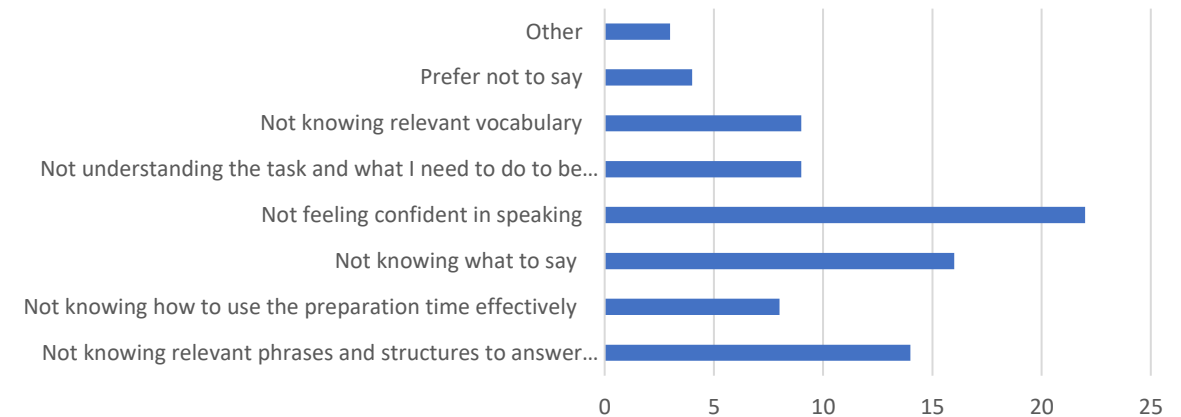


- A small majority of pupils self-reported confidence, yet also named it as the biggest barrier when completing the speaking task.

How confident did you feel when completing the task?



What did you find difficult when completing the task?



# Baseline data



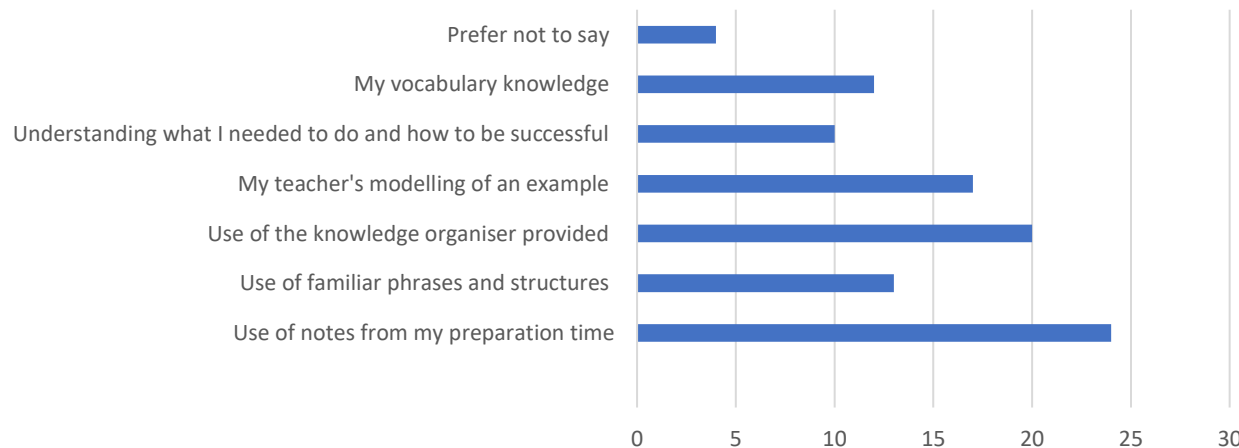
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## Support

- Evidence of planning: **written notes were a key support.**
- Indication of use of **familiar structures.**
- **Role of the teacher:** modelling was “very helpful”.

What supported you when completing the task?



### Pupil interview:

**TR:** Why did you feel confident?

**HAP 1:** Because we'd done the words before, so [...] I'm getting used to how they sound.

[...]

**MAP 1:** [...] because we already know how to say them.

# Baseline data

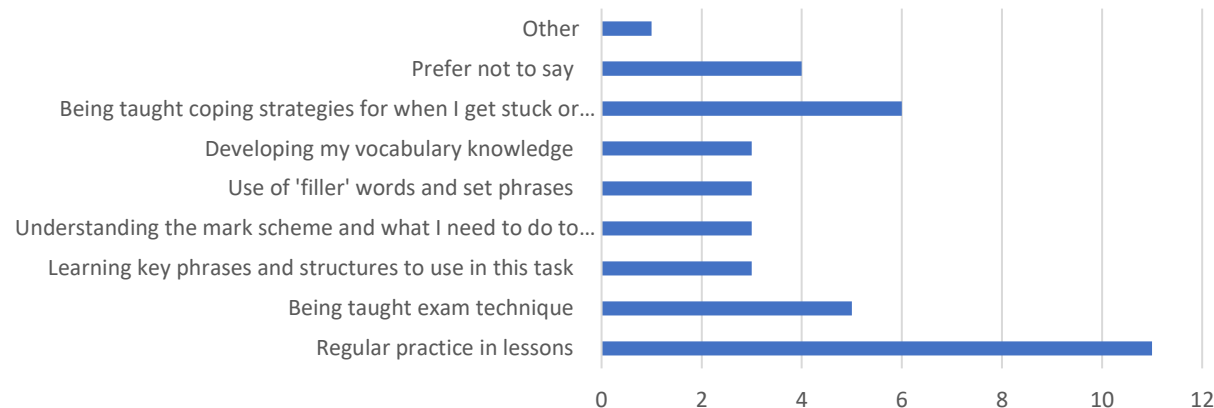


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- Routine practice in lessons was reported as supporting confidence.

What would support you the most in feeling confident when completing the task in the future?



Pupil interview:  
“Keeping practising” and  
“[repeating] and [practising]  
more”

# Baseline data



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| <b>Pupil</b> | <b>Mark out of 28</b> |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| <b>LAP 1</b> | 10                    |
| <b>LAP 2</b> | 16                    |
| <b>MAP 1</b> | 22                    |
| <b>MAP 2</b> | 18                    |
| <b>HAP 1</b> | 21                    |
| <b>HAP 2</b> | 17                    |

Pupil performance data suggests a mixed picture: all pupils were able to attempt the task, describing the picture to some extent and providing brief, simple answers to the follow-up questions.

It was noted that all pupils used written notes extensively when speaking, resorted to the use of English at points during TL speech and were unable to answer some questions.

# Phase 1 speaking tasks



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- Photo task and following discussion task.
- Teacher modelling of both tasks (approach and language).
- 5-minute preparation time: speaking mat resource (with 'filler' phrases), notes from modelling, encouragement to plan responses.
- 5-minute speaking time with speaking partner.
- No peer-assessment.

# Picture Task: Describe the picture

## P A L

- **People**
- **Activity**
- **Location**

|                                   |                                       |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Auf dem Foto gibt es ...          | <i>On the photo there is ...</i>      |
| Ich sehe ...                      | <i>I see ...</i>                      |
| Es gibt ...                       | <i>There is ...</i>                   |
| Im Vordergrund gibt es ...        | <i>In the foreground there is ...</i> |
| Im Hintergrund gibt es ...        | <i>In the background there is ...</i> |
| Auf der linken Seite gibt es ...  | <i>On the left side there is ...</i>  |
| Auf der rechten Seite gibt es ... | <i>On the right side there is ...</i> |

**(Und) die Personen?**  
**Was machen sie?**  
**Wo ist das?**  
**Noch etwas?**

## Activity

|                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Sie sind         | They are            |
| Er/ sie ist      | He/ she is          |
| Sie spielen      | They are playing    |
| Er/ sie spielt   | He/ she is playing  |
| Sie sprechen     | They are speaking   |
| Er/ sie spricht  | He/ she is speaking |
| Sie schreiben    | They are writing    |
| Er/ sie schreibt | He/ she is writing  |
| Sie machen       | They are doing      |
| Er/ sie macht    | He/ she is doing    |

## People

|                   |                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Er trägt ...      | <i>He is wearing ...</i>   |
| Sie trägt ...     | <i>She is wearing ...</i>  |
| Sie tragen ...    | <i>They are wearing...</i> |
| ... einen Rock    | ... a skirt                |
| ... einen Anzug   | ... a suit                 |
| ... eine Jacke    | ... a jacket               |
| ... eine Hose     | ... trousers               |
| ... eine Bluse    | ... a blouse               |
| ... eine Krawatte | ... a tie                  |
| ... ein T-Shirt   | ... a t-shirt              |
| ... ein Kleid     | ... a dress                |
| ... ein Hemd      | ... a shirt                |
| ... Schuhe        | ... shoes                  |
| ... Sportschuhe   | ... trainers               |

|              |                     |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Er ist ...   | <i>He is ...</i>    |
| Sie ist ...  | <i>She is ...</i>   |
| Sie sind ... | <i>They are ...</i> |
| ... dick     | ... fat             |
| ... schlank  | ... thin            |
| ... groß     | ... tall            |
| ... klein    | ... small           |

|                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Er hat ...           | <i>He has ...</i>    |
| Sie hat ...          | <i>She has ...</i>   |
| Sie haben ...        | <i>They have ...</i> |
| ... blonde Haare     | ... blonde hair      |
| ... schwarze Haare   | ... black hair       |
| ... braune Haare     | ... brown hair       |
| ... lockige Haare    | ... curly hair       |
| ... lange Haare      | ... long hair        |
| ... kurze Haare      | ... short hair       |
| ... eine Tätowierung | ... a tattoo         |

|                      |                              |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Er trägt eine Brille | <i>He is wearing glasses</i> |
|----------------------|------------------------------|

|                              |                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| ... einen (alten) Mann       | ... a (old) man        |
| ... einen Jungen             | ... a boy              |
| ... eine (alte) Frau         | ... a (old) woman      |
| ... eine Familie             | ... a family           |
| ... eine Gruppe von Freunden | ... a group of friends |
| ... ein Mädchen              | ... a girl             |
| ... ein Baby                 | ... a baby             |
| ... ein Kind                 | ... a child            |
| ... ein Paar                 | ... a couple           |
| ... zwei Männer              | ... two men            |
| ... drei Jungen              | ... three boys         |
| ... vier Frauen              | ... four women         |
| ... fünf Mädchen             | ... five girls         |
| ... zwei Babys               | ... two babies         |
| ... drei Kinder              | ... three children     |
| ... zwei Studenten           | ... two students       |
| ... viele Leute              | ... lots of people     |

## Location

|                     |                           |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Es findet ... statt | <i>It's ...</i>           |
| auf dem Lande       | <i>in the countryside</i> |
| am Meer             | <i>by the sea</i>         |
| in einer Stadt      | <i>in a town</i>          |

|                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Das Wetter ist ... | <i>The weather is ...</i> |
| ... schön          | ... nice                  |
| ... schlecht       | ... bad                   |
| Es ist sonnig      | <i>It is sunny</i>        |
| Es regnet          | <i>It is raining</i>      |
| Es schneit         | <i>It is snowing</i>      |

|                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Er/sie sieht...aus | <i>She looks ...</i> |
| Sie sehen ... aus  | <i>They look ...</i> |
| glücklich          | <i>happy</i>         |
| ärgerlich          | <i>angry</i>         |
| traurig            | <i>sad</i>           |
| intelligent        | <i>intelligent</i>   |

### Opinion phrases:

- Ich finde (*I find*)
- Ich mag... (nicht) (*I like/ don't like*)
- Ich liebe/ hasse (*I love/ hate*)
- Ich lerne gern / nicht gern... (*I like learning.../ don't like learning...*)
- Meiner Meinung nach ist.. (*In my opinion...*)
- Ich denke, dass.. (*I think that...*)

### Qualifiers/ intensifiers:

- besonders (especially)
- äußerst (extremely)
- total / echt / wirklich (totally/ really)
- sehr (very)
- ziemlich (quite)
- gar nicht (absolutely not)

### Fillers:

- Ach, das ist eine schwere Frage. (*Oh, that is a difficult question*)
- Ach, das ist eine gute Frage. (*Oh, that is a good question*)
- Ich bin mir nicht ganz sicher, aber ich finde... (*I'm not entirely sure, but I find...*)
- Ich weiß nicht total, aber... (*I don't know, but...*)
- Ich würde sagen, dass... (*I would say that...*)
- Doch! (*I don't agree! On the contrary/ however*)
- Kannst du das bitte nochmal sagen? (*Can you repeat that please?*)

### Key adjectives:

- gut, positiv - schlecht, negativ (good, positive - bad, negative)
- interessant - langweilig (interesting - boring)
- nützlich - nutzlos (useful - useless)
- einfach, leicht - schwierig, schwer (easy - difficult)
- schön - nervig (lovely - annoying)
- intelligent - doof (intelligent - stupid)
- sportlich - faul (sporty - lazy)

# Midpoint data



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- Pupil online questionnaire data only.
- 37 pupil responses.
- Midpoint data used to inform changes for Phase 2.

# Midpoint data

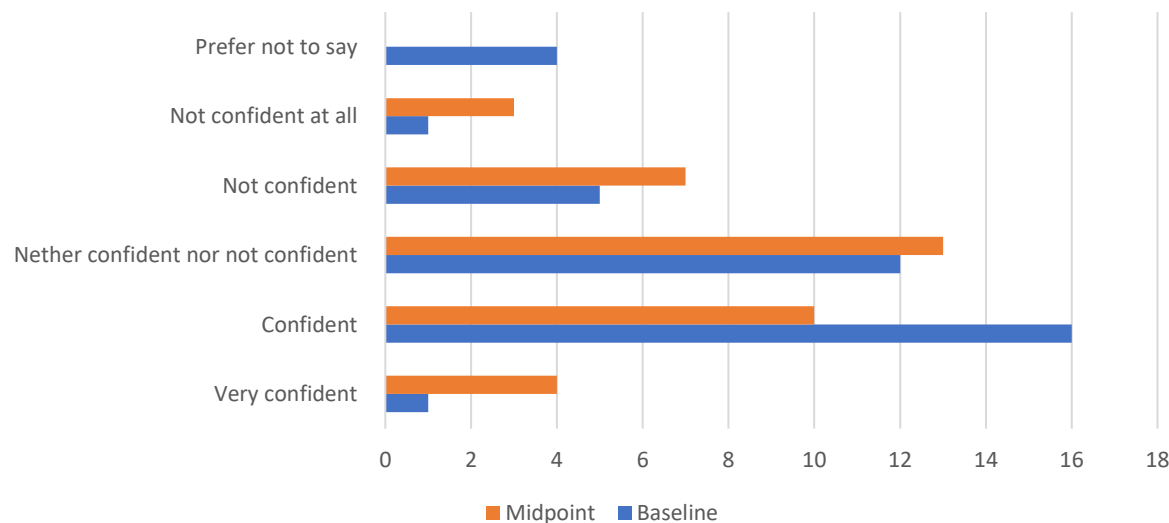


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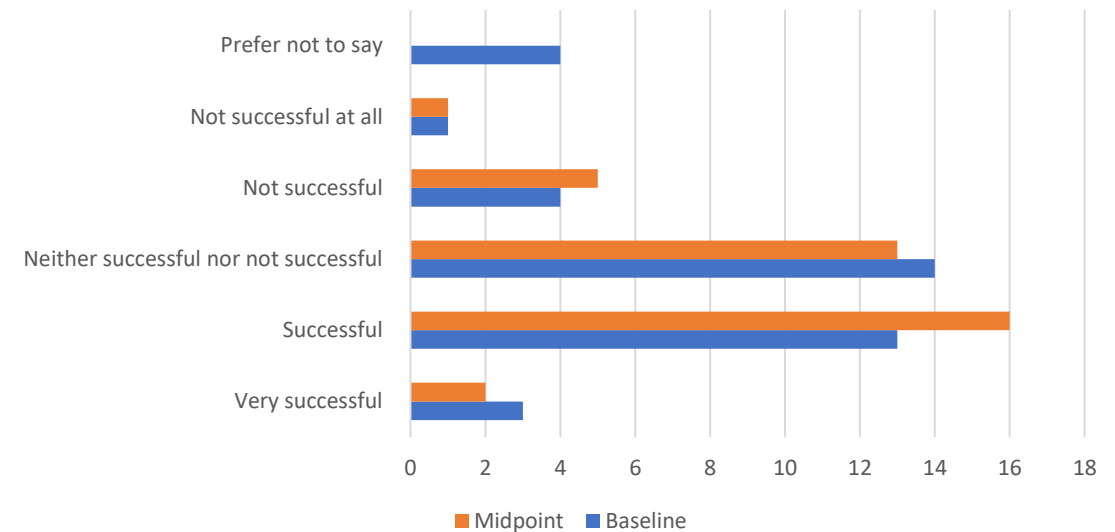


- Mixed view of confidence: increase in 'very confident' but a decrease in confidence overall.
- Slight increase in pupils' perceptions of success.

Pupils' self-reported confidence when completing the speaking task



Pupils' self reported perceptions of success



# Midpoint data



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- Slight decrease in the number of pupils who self-reported using written notes (despite this still being the most frequent response).
- Use of modelling decreased slightly and speaking mat.
- Increased use of familiar language.

What supported you when completing the task?



# Phase 2 speaking tasks



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- Continued 5-minute speaking sessions.
- Preparation time gradually reduced (down to 1 minute).
- Encouragement to limit notes to words and key phrases.
- Limited teacher modelling and use of speaking mat.
- Increasing complexity of questions (eg. perfect tense and opinions).

Picture 1



411407767 - © Rafa Fernandez Torres/Getty Images

Picture 2



MAPWI123380 - © kali9/Getty Images

#### Picture description

Start by asking the candidate which picture they have chosen to describe. Once their response is clear, continue with the instruction: Describe the picture.

To encourage the candidate to address all the prompts and to develop their description, teachers may prompt by asking the following questions:

- (Und) die Personen?
- (Und) wo ist das?
- (Und) was machen sie?
- Noch etwas?

These prompts must not be rephrased. Each prompt can be used a maximum of three times.

#### Compulsory questions related to pictures

When the candidate has finished their description, ask the **two** questions below that relate to the candidate's chosen picture.

##### Questions for Picture 1

- (a) Was lernst du gern in der Schule?
- (b) Wie findest du Lernen in einer Gruppe?

##### Questions for Picture 2

- (a) Wie findest du Hausaufgaben?
- (b) Was meinst du zum Lernen mit einem Computer?

The questions must not be rephrased. If the candidate does not respond the question may be repeated twice. Where a candidate answers incorrectly, do not repeat the question.

Please turn over for instructions for the conversation.

1. Was ist dein Lieblingsfach und warum?
2. Wie findest du die Lehrer in deiner Schule?
3. Was machst du normalerweise in der Pause?
4. Was hast du gestern in der Schule gemacht?

# Post-intervention data



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- Only 26 responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Semi-structured pupil interviews (6-pupil sample).
- Audio-recorded task (6-pupil sample).
- Semi-structured teacher interview.

# Post-intervention data

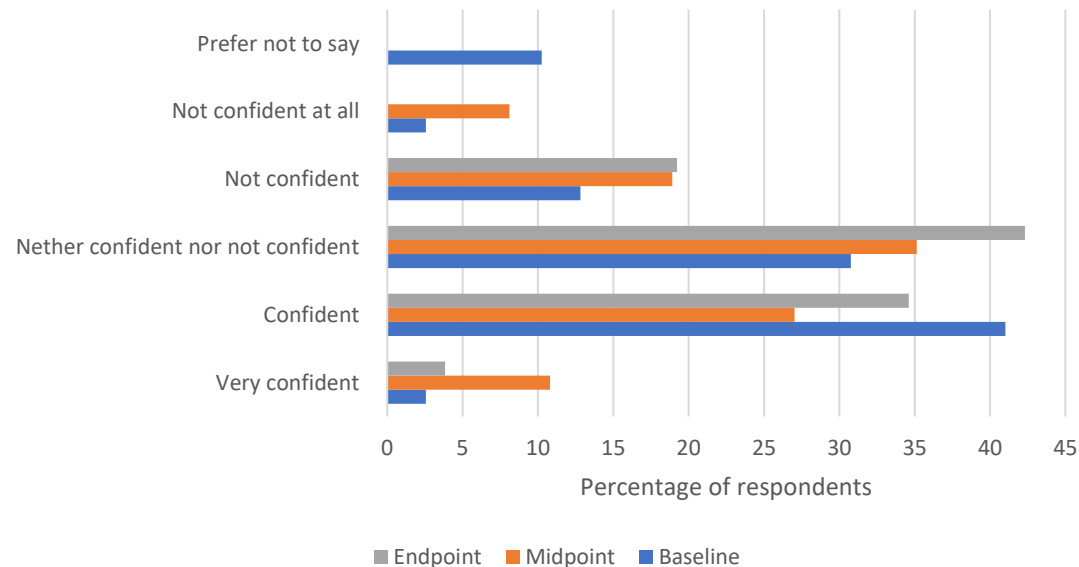


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- Mixed view of confidence: self-reported confidence levels at highest during midpoint data collection.

Pupils' self-reported perceptions of confidence when completing the speaking task



# Post-intervention data



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## Pupil interviews:

- “Before I wouldn’t do the task because I didn’t have the confidence to and now I do the tasks”
- “I feel more confident in speaking German”.
- “I think just doing it a lot makes it less scary to just speak and it doesn’t matter if you make mistakes, you just keep going and get the general idea of it.”

## Teacher interview:

- “[Pupils are] definitely more confident with speaking without a doubt, and I think that goes for all students, from the top end right through to the lower prior attainment groups”.
- “more adventurous”

# Post-intervention data

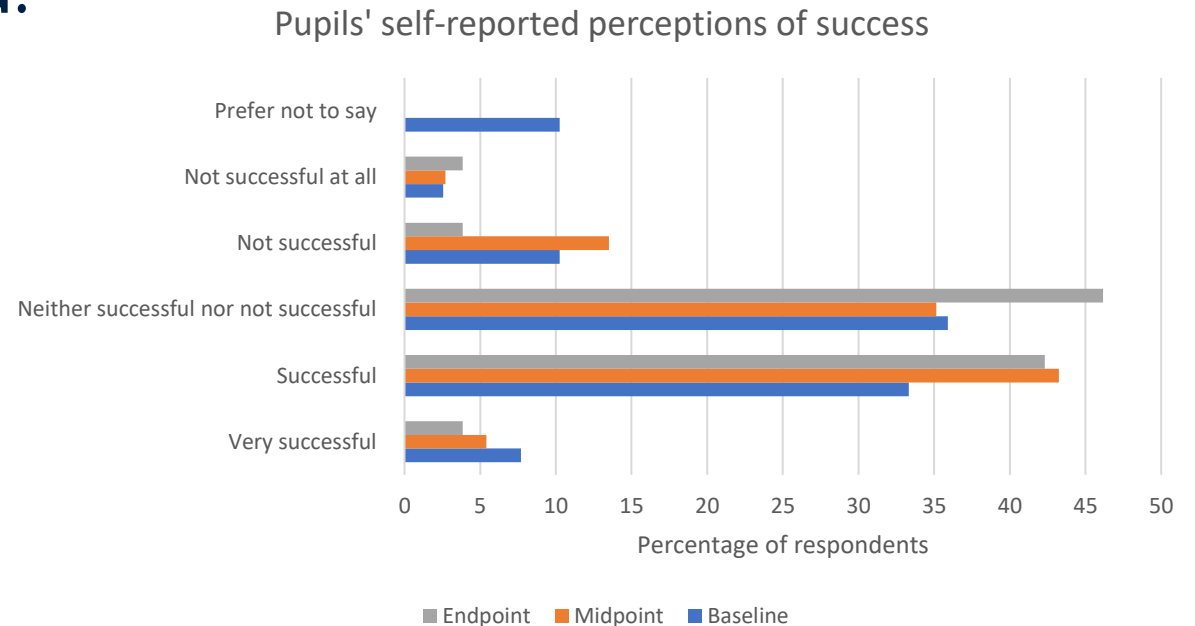


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## Success

- A mixed picture!
- Feelings of success increased overall between the baseline and endpoint, while the percentage of pupils reporting feeling unsuccessful also decreased.



# Post-intervention data

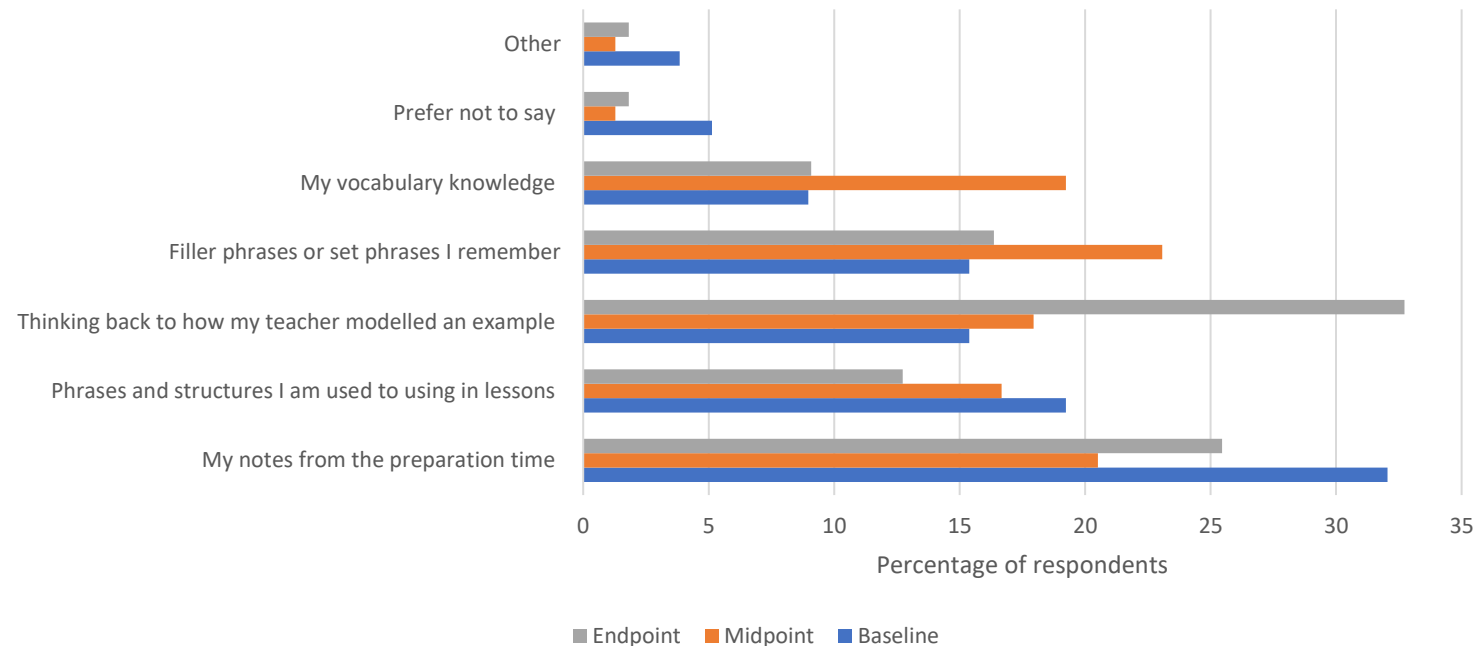


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- Students were still planning their responses.
- Decrease in written notes- but they were still used.
- Role of the teacher remains important.

When you were not sure how to answer a question, what did you use to help/  
support you?



# Post-intervention data

HoD: They weren't just re-producing big paragraphs, what they were reading were shorter sentences, which, of course, they've got a better chance of remembering over time. So, the more we can drill those shorter sentences, the more they will respond spontaneously.

(Teacher interview)



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MAP 1: I think I could have done better if maybe I prepared longer, but I think my mind has opened up a bit more to just using slightly different ideas and words, even if it's not completely right yet.

# Pupil performance



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| Pupil | Baseline speaking task score / 28 marks | Post-intervention speaking task score / 28 marks | Change in total marks |
|-------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| LAP 1 | 10                                      | 17                                               | + 7                   |
| LAP 2 | 16                                      | 17                                               | + 1                   |
| MAP 1 | 22                                      | 24                                               | + 2                   |
| MAP 2 | 18                                      | 25                                               | + 7                   |
| HAP 1 | 21                                      | 21                                               | 0                     |
| HAP 2 | 17                                      | 25                                               | + 8                   |

# Key findings

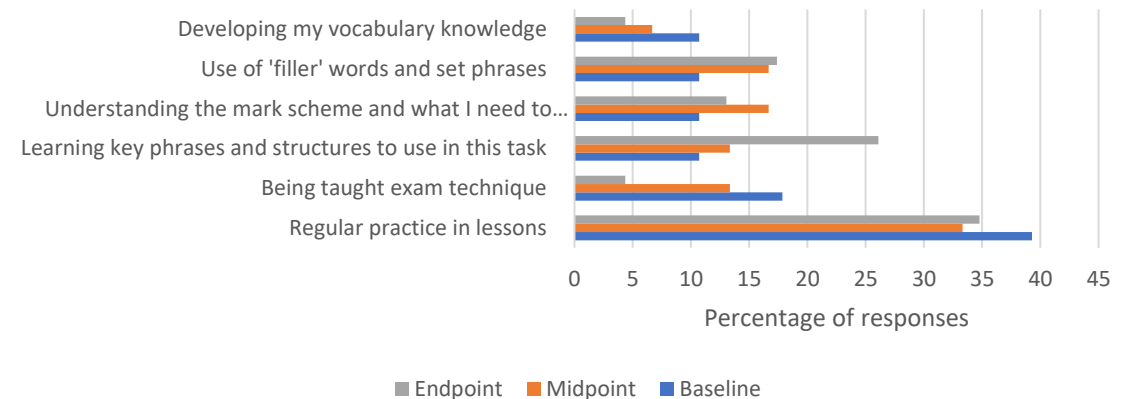


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- Group talk and collaboration valued:  
“we both had different ideas and then we start talking and then we can kind of, like, **maggie each other’s ideas** and improve”.
- **Routine, distributed speaking practice:** valued by students and teachers, both for confidence and performance.
- **Teacher modelling and written notes** – gradual removal over time.

What would support you the most in successfully completing the task in the future?



# Outlook



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- **Feedback: assessment and tracking progress over time.**
- **Expanding the focus** of the routine speaking tasks to focus on unplanned answers to questions.
- Increasing the period of intervention: **embedding as a routine** across Key Stage 4.

# Acknowledgements



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Dr Robert Woore

Colleagues on the MLT course 2023-25

**Thank you for your  
attention.**

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