

Supported Experiments in MFL

What did we choose for our supported experiment and why?

We chose to focus on feedback, as we felt that students often don't take enough notice of written comments on homework assignments, and as a result tend to repeat mistakes in subsequent tasks. We wanted students to take on responsibility for their own learning and be able to understand how to improve.

Research has shown (Hattie) that feedback had more impact on learning quality than any other single factor.

Sadler (1989) analysed feedback to show that for learning to take place the learner needs to know:

- The goal: what they are aiming for
- The medal: where they are in relation to their goal
- The mission: how they can close the gap

What brief did we set ourselves?

Our aim was to improve the writing skills of AS students, both in terms of content and grammatical accuracy. This is in line with the requirements of the examination board. We wanted students to assess their own work and, with their teacher, set targets for the next assignment.

How did we carry out the supported experiment and what was our experience?

We conducted our experiment in two AS classes only, one French and one German. With each written assignment (about one a fortnight) an assessment proforma was given out. Before handing in their work, students were asked to fill in the 'self-assess tick' box in order to self-assess their own writing. After marking the work the teacher then added comments on the proforma before returning it to the student. Improvements and targets were then discussed by the student and teacher, and comments added.

Before embarking on this experiment the teacher first explained the criteria on the proforma. These criteria are in line with the examination requirements.

We found that students took their work much more seriously and seemed to make progress in certain areas. The process itself is a little time-consuming, especially the final part (agreeing on improvements and targets).

Our evaluation of the supported experiment. How successful was it and in what ways? How do we know?

We think that our small-scale experiment was quite successful. Students did focus more on their learning and were able to improve in certain areas. But the process is quite time consuming. Students will be asked to give opinions on the end-of-year evaluations. More time is needed to assess the result.

What conclusions do we draw from the experience and where do we want to go next? What tasks do we want to set ourselves for the future?

We would like to continue the experiment next year and use the assessment proformas on a much more regular basis. We would like to extend the experiment to all classes, AS and A2, and cover all languages. We could also extend the feedback to other skills, i.e. listening, speaking and reading.

How successful was this as a process? As a model for staff development and for developing teaching and learning. What could have made it better?

Because preparation time was on Wednesday afternoons, half the department were not available. In addition we did not have the same visitors from other Colleges at each session, so there was a lack of continuity.

Appendix A: Assessment Proforma (French)

Criteria	Self-assess tick	Teacher Assessment
Did you keep to the word count?		
Did you refer to each point in enough detail?		
Did you follow the correct format (letter/report)?		
Did you choose the correct form of address (tu/vous)?		
Did you include at least 5 'higher-level' vocabulary items?		
Did you check adjective endings (e.g. not elle est content)?		
Did you check your verb endings, e.g. not je jouer?		
Did you check your spelling (including accents)?		
Did you use a variety of structures (e.g. passive, future, participle)?		
Improvements needed for this essay		
Targets for the next essay		

Appendix B: Assessment Proforma (German)

Criteria	Self-assess tick	Teacher Assessment
Did you keep to the word count?		
Did you refer to each point in enough detail?		
Did you follow the correct format (letter/report)?		
Did you choose the correct form of address (du/Sie)?		
Did you include at least 5 'higher-level' vocabulary items?		
Did you check word order?		
Did you check your verb? endings, e.g. not ich spielen?		
Did you check your spelling (including nouns – capital letters)?		
Did you use a variety of structures (e.g. passive, future, um...zu)?		
Improvements needed for this essay		
Targets for the next essay		