Classroom Action Research Project Report:

What happens to student engagement and their confidence in speaking when performance activities (e.g., poetry slam, rap and modern songs, and reader's theater) are integrated into every lesson?

1. Introduction

The Classroom Action Research Project is an initiative designed to foster evidence-based teaching practices through systematic reflection and inquiry. It enables teachers to investigate their own classroom strategies by posing a guiding research question, implementing targeted changes, and analyzing the outcomes. This process not only enhances pedagogical effectiveness but also promotes professional growth by linking theory with practice. Throughout the project, participants receive comprehensive support from the Goethe-Institut, including guidance in formulating research questions, implementing measures, evaluating results, and presenting findings.

The project is supported by the Victorian Government.

2. Teacher and School

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School: Bayswater South Primary School

Grade Level/Year: 6

Term 4/2025

3. Research Question

What happens to student engagement and their confidence in speaking when performance activities (e.g., poetry slam, rap and modern songs, and reader's theater) are integrated into every lesson?

4. Context and Rationale

I teach at a bilingual German-English primary school, and my colleagues and I are trying to find ways to increase overall student participation in spoken language use. Our students are stronger in reading and writing in German, but they are either not as confident in speaking or not as willing to engage in oral interactions.

I teach two sixth-grade classes with 28 students each. Each class spends half the day with me learning reading, writing, and math in German. I am looking for ways to motivate more students to actively participate in oral activities every day.

5. Approach

I started most lessons with an interactive activity that encouraged participation. The following activities were used:

- Warm-up games: Heads down, thumbs up; Simon says; Witch, Goblin, and Giant (a full-body game similar to "Rock, Paper, Scissors")
- YouTube videos for singing along and sparking discussion: "Wackel mit dem Po!"; Munich Supercrew videos "Hobbys," "Ich hätte gern," "ABC," and "Wochenende"
- Singing with movements: Hans Nasens Fahrrad; Eisgekühlte Coca-Cola; Wir haben Hunger
- Creating funny stories together using the following prompts: Who? What? Where? When? Why?
- Math games: Elf; Wishball; Guess my number

The activities were strategically chosen to connect to the lesson topic. Some activities were selected by the students, others by me. At the end, we made a list of our favorite language games and songs.

6. Data Collection

At the beginning of the CARP program, I surveyed both classes and asked the following questions:

- How likely are you to speak German in front of the whole class (score out of 10)?

- How likely are you to speak German in a small group (score out of 10)?

- In which activities have you spoken the most German this year?

Regular teacher observations during lessons.

Informal recording on the class list of who participated in discussions and how often (data analysis).

Teacher reflection after the lesson.

7. Findings/Results

The results of the student survey showed the following:

- The average score for speaking German in front of the whole class was 3.5/10.
- The average score for speaking German in a small group was 7/10.

The results show that German is spoken more often when working in small groups and with friends. This tells me that we need to move more quickly into the phase of interaction in small groups.

Whole-class interactions should be used for modeling oral interactions by teachers and students. In whole-group interactions, big ideas, group decisions, and information can also be shared.

Students explained that they spoke the most German during the following learning activities:

- AGTV (Association of German Teachers Victoria) Puppet Play Festival
- AGTV Poetry Competition
- Weekend exchange with a partner only in German (students can draw pictures if they lack vocabulary)
- Vocabulary Memory Challenge

8. Reflection

I have decided that all lessons need to be structured more clearly. Explicit teaching and modeling of speaking skills must form the foundation for oral interactions in small groups.

The lesson should move between different phases of oral interaction. For example:

1. Whole class: Teacher speaks first → Students read key text passages and sentences aloud → Watch videos of language interactions.

2. Small group: Students converse using key texts and sentences.

3. Whole class: Time for sharing from small groups →
   Teacher and students model interactions.

4. Small group: Continue oral interactions → Teacher supports or
   encourages students as needed.

5. Whole class: Performances of oral interactions from small
   groups.

It is important to have exciting projects or challenges that inspire students to speak German together. Students' speaking of German is clearly linked to their confidence in communicating within a group (small or large) and their engagement in the activity.

9. Next Steps

Carefully selected performance activities (e.g., poetry slam, rap and modern songs, and reader's theater) can help promote student engagement, develop communication skills, and create a supportive learning environment. Logically, this leads to increased oral interactions among students and greater confidence in speaking German and should be integrated in as many lessons as possible.