Classroom Action Research Project Report:

What happens in my classroom when I intentionally create space for student choice and interests in my workstations?

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

Name: Tom Gibson

School: North Geelong Secondary College

Grade/Year Level: Year 8

Date: Term 2/2025

3. Research Question

What happens in my classroom when I intentionally create space for student choice and interests in my workstations?

4. Context and Rationale

This question is relevant because my students often come to foreign language classes with low intrinsic motivation. To address this, I have developed a structured, output-oriented workstation model that sets clear goals and ensures accountability.

At the same time, I observe that this model leaves little room for creativity, personal interests, and self-regulation. Since I already have

extensive information about my students' interests, I would like to investigate whether a targeted integration of choices and personal interests into the workstations leads to higher motivation, stronger engagement, and better learning outcomes.

5. Approach

At the beginning of the year, I had my students complete an exercise where they wrote a profile about themselves so that I could get to know them. In this profile, they noted their hobbies and interests. I then entered these interests and hobbies into a GPT model that was developed for creating the Grade 8 curriculum.

After that, I asked the GPT model to design a workstation activity focused on a recurring student interest. The students were supposed to learn about the Nürburgring Nordschleife racetrack, draw a rough map of it in their notebooks, and label the most important corners.

6. Data Collection

I collected qualitative data in the form of field notes. I also recorded how many students participated in a subsequent lunchtime activity, where I gave them the opportunity to experience the Nürburgring firsthand using a racing simulator. Finally, I noted the students' performance on two cultural assessment questions related to the Nürburgring.

7. Findings/Results

I found that the students engaged well with the tasks in class, but they worked on them more out of a sense of duty than genuine interest. This became clear because, when I asked them what they were doing while completing the task, they always talked about labeling the corners rather than imagining themselves on the track. This was true even for students who had expressed an interest in racing simulations. The task still seemed to be viewed as schoolwork, separate from their personal interests.

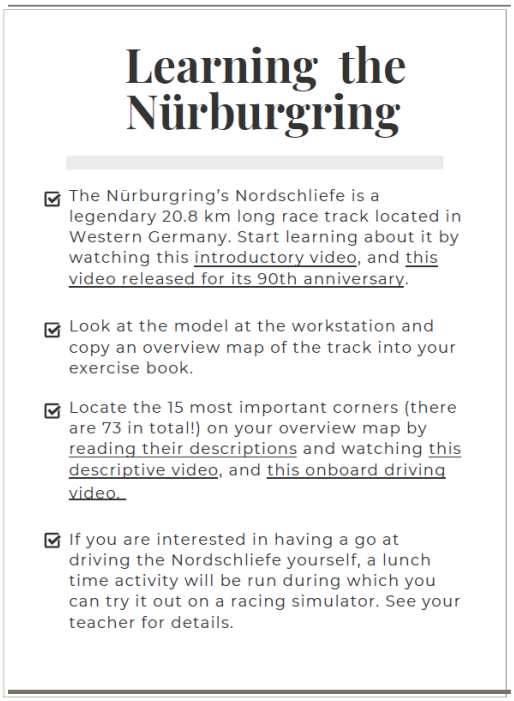
The same roughly five students also participated in the lunchtime activity and even brought some of their friends along. They drove enthusiastically on the racetrack, but their conversation did not revolve around the culturally significant points we had covered in class. They seemed to see the event more as an entertaining distraction during lunch than as an extension of the lesson. Nevertheless, the

Nürburgring questions on the next assessment were generally answered well.

8. Reflection

These results are not conclusive. Given the minimal effort required in the age of generative AI to plan an activity based on students' personal interests, I will continue to use this approach to motivate my students by finding points for genuine cultural exchange.

9. Attachments



Learning the Nürburgring

- ☑ The Nürburgring's Nordschliefe is a legendary 20.8 km long race track located in Western Germany. Start learning about it by watching this introductory video, and this video released for its 90th anniversary.
- ☑ Look at the model at the workstation and copy an overview map of the track into your exercise book.
- ☑ Locate the 15 most important corners (there are 73 in total!) on your overview map by reading their descriptions and watching this descriptive video, and this onboard driving video.
- ☑ If you are interested in having a go at driving the Nordschliefe yourself, a lunch time activity will be run during which you can try it out on a racing simulator. See your teacher for details.

THE 15 MOST SIGNIFICANT CORNERS OF THE NÜRBURGRING NORDSCHLEIFE

- **Brünnchen** – A well-known spectator spot where many crashes happen due to overconfidence on entry.
- **Döttinger Höhe** – A long, flat-out straight where top speed is reached before the lap ends.
- **Flugplatz** – A fast section with a crest where cars sometimes lift off the ground—momentum and bravery are key.
- **Pflanzgarten** – A bumpy, jump-inducing section that demands precise control at high speed.
- **Hatzenbach** – A winding, technical series of bends early in the lap that sets the tone for the entire track.
- **Schwalbenschwanz** – A flowing section leading towards the final stretches of the lap, requiring rhythm.
- **Bergwerk** – A crucial medium-speed right-hand bend leading onto a long straight—good exit speed is essential.
- **Aremberg** – A tight right-hander immediately after Schwedenkreuz, requiring heavy braking to avoid going wide.
- **Wippermann** – A quick left-right sequence that unsettles the car if approached incorrectly.
- **Hohe Acht** – The highest point of the circuit, a slow and technical right-hand turn.
- **Schwedenkreuz** – One of the fastest corners on the track, a sweeping left-hand bend that requires commitment.
- **Stefan-Bellof-S** – A fast series of left-right bends named after the record-holding driver.
- **Karussell** – The iconic banked concrete corner where drivers drop into the inside groove for maximum grip.
- **Fuchsröhre** – "Foxhole" – A steep downhill plunge leading into a compression, followed by a fast uphill section.
- **Adenauer Forst** – A tricky, slow chicane where many drivers misjudge their braking points.