

Abstract

“Assessment for learning involves using assessment in the classroom to raise pupils’ achievement. It is based on the idea that pupils will improve most if they understand the aim of their learning, where they are in relation to this aim and how they can achieve the aim (or close the gap in their knowledge)”.

(Qualifications, Curriculum and Development Agency, 2009)

This research project involves investigating the use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) in order to raise student attainment in controlled conditions written work in Modern Foreign Languages at GCSE level.

September 2008 saw the implementation of the new Key Stage 3 Framework within the secondary curriculum. This had led to an increased focus in both my current and previous school on Key Stage 3 schemes of work and teaching and learning strategies. Assessment for Learning was on the agenda in my school across all key stages, but the primary focus had been on Key Stage 3.

When initially considering this project, I decided to use my Year 10 Spanish class, who were in their first year of a 2-year GCSE course, because I was particularly interested in seeing how Assessment for Learning strategies could work at Key Stage 4 to improve written work. My class was the top set of four, and all of the students were co-operative, but there was a range of abilities within the group. Some of them were less confident than others and some more motivated than others. As a result we started the change activity with varying levels of engagement in the learning process.

The initial step was to look at the proposed departmental scheme of work and identify AfL activities which could be added to support the learning in my class. All of the Y10 Spanish classes in school were following the same scheme of work, and I did not wish to change the topics studied by my group, merely some of the activities within the topics.

The Qualifications, Curriculum and Development Agency (QCDA) (2007) states that Assessment for Learning should be recognised as central to classroom practice: *'The process of learning has to be in the minds of both learner and teacher when assessment is planned and when the evidence is interpreted. Learners should become as aware of the 'how' of their learning as they are of the 'what'.* My aim was to include activities to encourage my students to think about how and why they were learning as well as develop linguistic confidence.

The academic year at my school is divided into six modules, each corresponding to one halfterm. Prior to embarking on the change activity, the class completed one essay in module four before Easter. The essay marks were given back and the students were asked to fill out a questionnaire, reflecting on their knowledge of the GCSE requirements, their preparation for the essay and their achievement in the essay. Then they went away for two weeks on Work Experience followed by the Easter break. When they returned, the change activity took place in the following two modules, five and six. After writing another essay at the end of the change activity, students were asked to fill out another questionnaire, identical to the first.

The essay results from the two essays were then compared and I looked at the student responses in the questionnaires. I was hoping to see an improvement in the

essay marks as well as evidence that the students had a better understanding of the exam requirements.