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School of Education**



***“Using the Flipped Classroom Model to foster intrinsic student motivation in the Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Language classroom”***

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## **List of Acronyms**

FCM	Flipped Classroom Model
JC	Junior Cycle
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
PME	Professional Master of Education

## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Learning a language was once considered nothing more than a pastime, but as the world continues to become increasingly more globalised, there is a much greater emphasis on foreign language competencies to such an extent that the European Union (EU) recommends that all EU citizens acquire proficiency in at least two foreign languages (Council Recommendation on the Comprehensive Approach to the Teaching and Learning of Languages, 2019). While Ireland is a member of the EU, its competency levels in foreign languages remain low, with only eighteen percent of Irish people able to speak at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue (Eurobarometer Survey, 2015). Ireland's standards of competence in foreign languages should be significantly higher given that its uptake of foreign languages is strong, with approximately seventy percent of school leavers obtaining a Leaving Certificate qualification in a foreign language (DES, 2017, p.7). While the Department of Education and Skills (DES) has developed 'Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026' to help combat this issue, the author asserts that the problem will not improve until the root cause of the issue is resolved, which according to the author is the prominence of low intrinsic student motivation towards foreign language learning in Irish secondary schools.

Motivation has an essential role in learning, yet “...the lack of it is arguably the greatest challenge facing foreign language teachers in the UK” (Pachler & Redondo, 2014, p.16). Similarly in the Irish context, despite the Junior Cycle (JC) Modern Foreign Language (MFL) curriculum aiming “to help children become motivated, autonomous learners of language”, many JC MFL students have low levels of motivation, specifically intrinsic motivation (DES, 2013, p.13). According to the DES (2017), this due to the global dominance of the English language and its status as lingua franca. The presence of low intrinsic student motivation in JC MFL classrooms is a significant issue, given that motivation is a decisive factor in the acquisition of a second language (Ellis, 1985).

Students’ low intrinsic motivation towards foreign language learning and thus substandard language achievement levels are likely to discourage students from continuing their studies in MFLs in adulthood. Therefore, the author believes that low intrinsic student motivation in JC MFL is fuelling Ireland’s low competency levels in foreign languages. This belief has motivated the author to find a possible solution or a way to help the problem of low intrinsic student motivation in JC MFL classrooms. While there are several possible ways to combat this issue, this paper investigates the potential of the flipped classroom model (FCM) to foster intrinsic student motivation in JC MFL, as well as examining how and why does this. The FCM also aligns with the current educational reform trends, given that it is an active learning methodology that places the students at the centre of learning. It can also help achieve the ‘Digital Strategy of Schools 2015-2020’ aim “to embed technology in primary and post-primary schools” as its implementation relies heavily on technology (p.4).

This paper adopts the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) formulated by Ryan and Deci (1985) as a lens to examine motivation in language learning. Therefore, this paper examines if the FCM can create a learning environment that fulfils the students' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness because the SDT contends that the satisfaction of those needs are essential for leading an extrinsically motivated or utterly unmotivated person towards more intrinsically motivated behaviour. Furthermore, this paper is largely based on 'practitioner research', whereby the author has examined the existing literature around the FCM and intrinsic student motivation. Subsequently, this paper reviews the author's practice through the lens of the academic literature to identify areas that contradict or resonate with the literature. This allows for policy recommendations in the final chapter and identifies areas in the author's practice that should be altered to improve their teaching.

## **1.2 Methodology**

The methodology employed in this paper is qualitative research that takes the form of a case study. A case study is a very suitable type of research for education as it is an in-depth analysis of the researcher's own practice. In this case study, the data set is the author's post-lesson reflections from their teaching practice during the two years of the Professional Master of Education (PME). The limitation of this study is that a case study is a type of research that is not generalisable. However, a case study can provide a 'fuzzy generalisation' and therefore it can help make assertions about what works in certain contexts (Bassey, 2001).

## **1.3 Structure of dissertation**

Chapter 2 of this paper will examine the available literature around the SDT and the FCM, exploring publications by Ryan and Deci, Carreira, Sun et al., Abeyssekera and Dawson, Sergis et al., and Zainuddin and Perera, among other journal articles. This chapter also examines policy documents produced by the DES. Chapter 2 will examine through the literature the potential of the FCM to foster intrinsic student motivation through fulfilling students' self-determination needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Chapter 3 applies the lens of the academic literature discussed in Chapter two to the author's experience as a teacher. This chapter draws on several reflections accumulated during the past two years of the author's PME. In this chapter, the theory and findings outlined in the literature will be compared to the author's own findings throughout their two years of teaching practice. The similarities and differences will be reviewed in order to investigate if the FCM can enhance intrinsic student motivation in JC MFL. Finally, Chapter 4 outlines the author's thoughts and opinions on practitioner research. Following this, Chapter 4 will summarise the findings of the investigation and come to a conclusion over the question posed at the beginning of this paper, before making policy recommendations and outlining the impact which this investigation will have on schools and the author's future practice.

## **Chapter Two – Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

It is widely accepted that motivation is a relevant factor in any teaching and learning process. As Dörnyei (2005) highlights, “without sufficient motivation, even students with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals ...” (p.65). Specifically, in educational contexts, intrinsic motivation is regarded as more important than extrinsic motivation because it can lead to increased learning (Ryan & Deci, 2009). JC MFL students tend to lack motivation especially intrinsic motivation, which often leads to a lack of effort and, ultimately, a lack of success (Abdurashitovna, 2020). However, according to the SDT formulated by Ryan and Deci (1985), students are more likely to internalise their motivation to learn and become autonomously engaged if their psychological needs for autonomy,



competence, and relatedness are satisfied in the classroom. Therefore, the review of the following literature aims to investigate if the active learning methodology of the FCM can foster intrinsic student motivation in JC MFL through the fulfilment of the three aforementioned self-determination needs.

## **2.2 Defining motivation and the Self Determination Theory**

Motivation has an essential role in learning, yet “one of the most prominent academic problems plaguing today’s teenage youth is a lack of motivation” (Legault et al., 2006, p.567). It is crucial to understand motivations theoretical evolution in the field of education to contemplate its relevance in the teaching and learning of a foreign language. Past theories of motivation concentrated on biological instincts, arousal, and drives. Contrastingly, current theories like self-determination, expectancy, value, and achievement goal theories mostly investigate cognitive and social processes that influence motivation. Yet, many studies highlight the challenge of deciding what aspects or variables are implicated in the definition. However, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) are said to have created the most comprehensive definition. They define motivation as “the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritised, operationalised and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out” (p.65). The authors maintain that this is an all-inclusive definition since it refers to all the relevant procedures and factors at play in motivating students.

While there are various theories on motivation, this study will use the SDT, formulated by Ryan and Deci (1985), as a lens to look at motivation in language learning

because Ryan and Deci (2016/2017) claim that the psychological needs of the SDT are “...inherent and universal features of the psyche” (p.88). Therefore, when the needs are satisfied, they will provide positive outcomes for all cultures, which is essential for JC MFL classrooms, given that they are becoming increasingly diverse. Furthermore, the SDT focuses on types of motivation rather than the quantitative amount, which is important as the study aims to examine the effects of active learning methodologies on intrinsic student motivation. Finally, the underlying philosophy of the SDT that people by nature are active and engaged and orientated towards growth and development aligns with the Junior Cycle course as its assessment and curriculum arrangements allow learners “to use and analyse information in new and creative ways, to investigate issues, to explore, to think for themselves, to be creative in solving problems and to apply their learning to new challenges and situations” (A Framework for Junior Cycle, 2015b, p.7).

The SDT begins by distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to motivation driven by the inherent satisfaction of learning. In educational contexts, intrinsic motivation can lead to increased learning as it is said to be the “natural well-spring of learning” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.55). In contrast, extrinsic motivation is engaging in a task for the rewards outside the task, such as “... grades or praise that are not inherently associated with the learning itself ...” (Ng & Ng, 2015, p.98). Extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The SDT contends that it is possible to lead an extrinsically motivated person or completely unmotivated person to more intrinsically motivated behaviour by meeting their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Therefore, the SDT argues that teachers can foster intrinsic

student motivation by supporting their students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

### **2.3 The role of the three self-determination needs in fostering intrinsic motivation**

Autonomy is understood as volition and self-endorsement in the person's behaviour. Competence refers to the desire to feel effective in the activities that the person is carrying out. Relatedness refers to feeling socially connected to others and shared purpose in an individual's efforts. Students are said to become intrinsically motivated learners when these needs are satisfied. Consequently, this is said to lead to higher levels of performance, engagement, and learning. Researchers have recognised the relationship between the three self-determination needs and academic motivation, specifically intrinsic motivation. For example, Carreira (2012) found that in a Japanese elementary school "English classes designed to promote students' perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are necessary if we wish to enhance students' intrinsic motivation" (p.200).

Carreira's findings were replicated in China by Sun et al. (2019), who studied how the fulfilment of the three self-determination needs are essential facilitators of students' intrinsic motivation, hence of their engagement in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC). The research model was tested using data collected from 374 students of Chinese University MOOC. The results showed that the fulfilment of the self-determination needs had significant positive effects on intrinsic motivation in a MOOC. Despite limited national literature that focusses on the JC MFL context, the international literature provides clear evidence that the fulfilment of the three self-determination needs fosters intrinsic student motivation. However, it's worth noting that Ryan and Deci (2000) contend that the needs for autonomy and

competence are more related to intrinsic motivation rather than relatedness, given that people are regularly motivated for individual activities. On the other hand, Vallerand et al. (1992) claim that the importance of different motivational needs may alter, depending on the context.

## **2.4 Defining active learning and the flipped classroom model**

Active learning methodologies have recently received considerable attention, especially in MFL. For example, in the Irish context, two aims of the JC MFL course are:

to **actively** engage in language activities and tasks, developing the capacity to understand written and spoken language and to be reflective and autonomous in their language learning, and become **actively** involved in monitoring and assessing their progress (Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages Specification, 2015a, p.3).

Active learning is defined as any instructional method that engages students in the learning process (Prince, 2004). The learner's role is to be involved in activities to develop higher order thinking skills such as synthesis, evaluation and analysis. One such learning environment that enables students to participate in active learning is the flipped classroom.

The FCM was first developed by American educators Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams (2012). They describe a flipped classroom as a setting where that “which traditionally done in class is now done at home, and that which is traditionally done as homework is now completed in class” (p.13). There are diverse definitions of the FCM. However, one of the most common is “recording in-class activities to convey a course: students watch the video before the class and use the class time to solve complex concepts, answer questions, and

students are encouraged to learn actively as well as create bonds with daily lives” (Hwang et al., 2015, p. 150). There are also several articles that explore inclusion through the FCM. For instance, Altemueller and Lindquist (2017) highlight the potential of the FCM to enhance learning in students presenting learning difficulties and special needs. Their argument was confirmed by an investigation conducted by Andujar and Nadif (2020), as students with learning difficulties emphasised factors such as the option of watching the pre-class videos several times and at their own pace, an improved understanding of the language and contents, a higher degree of concentration and accessibility anywhere and anytime. In addition, the FCM reflects constructivism as students take responsibility for their learning and class time is free from didactic lecturing, allowing for various activities, discussions, and group work. Therefore, the FCM’s approach to learning aligns with current Irish educational reform trends as JC classrooms are becoming more constructivist and student-led. Therefore, given the active nature of MFL classes, the implementation of the FCM into JC MFL classes should be relatively straightforward.

## **2.5 The role of the FCM in fostering intrinsic student motivation through the fulfilment of the three self-determination needs**

The application of the SDT to the FCM places emphasis on students’ level of motivation as an outcome of their learning environment, which can either hinder or promote the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2008). Abeysekera and Dawson (2014/2015) postulate that learning environments created by the FCM “are likely to satisfy students’ needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness and, thus, entice greater levels of intrinsic motivation” (p.5). The authors’ reasoning is based upon their belief that the FCM is designed to utilise class time to encourage students to be active participants; hence, a likeliness to

facilitate student autonomy and competence. Furthermore, by being active participants, students are more likely to experience relatedness between them and the instructor and between themselves. As a result of Abeseyekera and Dawson (2014/ 2015) stressing the FCM's potential to foster intrinsic student motivation, Sergis et al. (2018) was propelled to conduct a study. The study investigated the impact of the FCM not only on students' cognitive learning outcomes but, more importantly, on their self-determination needs from three separate implementations of the FCM across three different K-12 subject domains (i.e., Maths, ICT and Humanities). Sergis et al. (2018) found that students, especially weaker students exposed to the FCM, reported significantly higher fulfilment of their self-determination needs and, therefore enhanced intrinsic motivation levels.

The findings of Sergis et al. (2018) were replicated in Australia by Muir (2020). Muir (2020) studied enactments of the FCM in senior secondary mathematics context and its implications for practice in terms of identifying the factors that influence students' motivations for engaging in mathematics classes. The study revealed that the FCM offers several affordances that students viewed as beneficial in catering to their self-determination needs. However, Lo and Hew (2017) conducted a study in a senior secondary context that discovered mixed attitudes towards the FCM. Some students were unreceptive with its structure, and some also had a negative feeling regarding the amount of out-of-class preparation time. Such attitudes could prevent the fulfilment of the students' self-determination needs, and therefore result in no improvement in their intrinsic motivation levels.

## **2.6 The role of the FCM in fostering intrinsic student motivation in a JC MFL classroom**

Whilst most of the research above demonstrates that the FCM fosters intrinsic student motivation by fulfilling their three self-determination needs, none of the studies were conducted in a MFL context. Hung (2015) claims early adopters of flip teaching focused on STEM subjects because, traditionally, these subjects rely heavily on lecturing, thus a greater need to enhance their lecture delivery. However, it is surprising that very little research has been done on the FCM in foreign language learning, especially as “motivation is a powerful factor in second language acquisition” (Ellis, 1985, p.119). Although, Horn (2013) claims that the FCM is applicable to any subject and at any level. Likewise, Muir (2020) argues that while his study is based upon senior secondary mathematics, the findings are transferable to other subject areas and grades. Despite these claims, Zainuddin and Perera (2017) conducted a study designed to investigate students’ self-determined motivation in their learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), using the FCM in an Indonesian University.

The study carried out by Zainuddin and Perera (2017) comprised of 61 undergraduate students selected from two different EFL classes, 31 students from a flipped classroom and 30 from a non-flipped classroom. Data was gathered using post-tests, questionnaire surveys, and focus-group interviews. Results showed that the flipped classroom environment increased students’ intrinsic motivation more than a traditional classroom environment as it had successfully established the three self-determination needs. Therefore, based upon this research and the research outlined above, it seems reasonable to suggest that the FCM can foster intrinsic student motivation in a JC MFL classroom by fulfilling students’ three self-determination needs. However, a note of caution is due here as the research was

conducted in Australia and Indonesia; therefore, different results may be observed in an Irish setting. Furthermore, despite Zainuddin and Perera (2017) conducting their study in a language learning context, their findings are based upon a different age demographic than those in JC MFL. Therefore, their conclusions could differ with a younger age demographic like JC students who might be less IT literate or are perhaps more reluctant to accept the change from traditional teaching methodologies due to exam pressure.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the literature review demonstrates that the active learning methodology of the FCM has the potential to foster intrinsic student motivation in JC MFL through the fulfilment of the three self-determination needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. However, some limitations should be noted. Firstly, the study includes limited national research, and secondly, most of the research included in the study was carried out in STEM subject settings. Consequently, different results may be observed in an Irish setting and language learning contexts. Further research needs to be carried out in JC MFL classes in the Irish setting to provide more extensive and cohesive results. Therefore, the next chapter using the author's post-lesson reflections from PME one and two investigates the impact which the FCM has on intrinsic student motivation in JC MFL classes.



## **Chapter Three – Reviewing my practice through the lens of the literature review**

### **3.1 Introduction**

By reflecting on my practice through the lens of the literature review, my belief that the active learning methodology of the FCM can foster intrinsic student motivation has been strengthened. This chapter will examine how my teaching practice contradicts, or, resonates with the literature discussed in Chapter 3, whilst outlining the impact the FCM has had on intrinsic student motivation and achievement in my JC MFL classes in PME one and two. The dataset used in this inductive analysis are post-lesson reflections from my second-year Spanish classes in both PME one and two. In PME one, I conducted my teaching practice in an all-boys Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) secondary school in South Dublin. On the contrary in PME two, I carried out my practice in an all-boys private secondary school in South Dublin. During this process of inductive analysis, the following themes emerged:

- The impact of traditional teaching methodologies on intrinsic student motivation
- The fulfilment of students' self-determination needs through the FCM
- The effectiveness of the FCM in enhancing intrinsic student motivation

### **3.2 The impact of traditional teaching methodologies on intrinsic student motivation**

The literature outlined in Chapter 2 revealed that active learning methodologies such as the FCM have the potential to foster intrinsic student motivation by creating learning environments that fulfil the students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The three needs which the SDT regard as necessary for developing and supporting intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, the inclusion of or the lack of active learning

methodologies has impacted my students' intrinsic motivation levels in both PME one and two.

At the beginning of PME one, I relied heavily on traditional behaviourist forms of teaching that place the teacher at the centre, transmitting information via archaic didactic methods, which according to Narendran et al. (2018), ultimately ignores the learner's need for autonomy and responsibility. While I was cognisant of active learning methodologies at the time, I was unaware of their potential to enhance student motivation. I was also reluctant to introduce them due to the lack of confidence I possessed as a PME one student. In a post-lesson reflection at the beginning of the year, I expressed the following: "I am hesitant to introduce new things into my lessons because I am afraid of doing something wrong" (10/09/19). According to Lorti (1975), in periods of indecision and uncertainty during teaching practice, there is a tendency for trainee teachers to revert to the ways they were taught due to the long period of apprenticeship of observation that they experienced in their own years of education. By reverting to traditional didactic methods of teaching and learning that I experienced during my own time in education, the issue of low intrinsic student motivation in my second-year Spanish class was intensified: "I am still struggling to motivate my students. Many of them completed the bare minimum despite being very capable of completing the task" (27/09/21). This finding resonates with the findings of Zainuddin and Perera (2017), who also found that the use of traditional methodologies rather than active learning methodologies in an EFL class significantly correlated with low intrinsic student motivation.

However, through becoming a critically reflective practitioner in PME one, I became aware of the potential of active learning methodologies to improve low intrinsic student motivation: “I engaged with two out of the four lenses that Brookfield (2017) proposes to use during the process of critical reflection: our colleagues’ experiences and theoretical literature” (04/10/19). By having informal discussions with innovative teachers and engaging with scholarly literature, I was specifically introduced to the active learning methodology of the FCM and its potential to enhance intrinsic student motivation. Despite the limited research around it in an MFL context, I decided to carry it out, given that Horn (2013) claims that it is a teaching methodology that is applicable to any subject at any level.

### **3.3 The fulfilment of students’ self-determination needs through the FCM**

The FCM can be defined as:

Recording in-class activities to convey a course: students watch the video before the class and use the class time to solve complex concepts, answer questions, and students are encouraged to learn actively as well as create bonds with daily lives (Hwang et al., 2015, p.150).

In accordance with the above definition:

I set students a YouTube video and Quizlet to engage with at home based upon the grammar point of ‘Ser versus Estar’, and when they came into class, the students practiced and explored what they had learned through worksheets, group work, and games (20/10/19).

As postulated by Abeysekera and Dawson (2014/2015), I did find that the learning environment created by the FCM supported most of the students' self-determination needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the following ways:

The students had **autonomy** over their learning as they could learn at their own pace when engaging with the material at home. Furthermore, they felt **competent** as they were prepared for the lesson ahead with the knowledge they gained at home. The class activities allowed the students to engage with each other which created a sense of peer-to-peer **relatedness**. (20/10/21).

Furthermore, by flipping the lesson, "I believe I have built a stronger rapport with the students as I got to know them better through the in-class group discussions" (20/10/21). Abeysekera and Dawson (2014/2015) make reference to this, stating that by being active participants during the FCM, students are more likely to experience relatedness between the instructor and themselves. In line with this, I have made a continuous effort to establish a student-centred classroom that also conforms to the 'Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages Specification' recommendation for students "to be actively engaged in activities and tasks which integrate the five language skills..." (DES, 2015a, p.4).

Overall, while I found that the FCM satisfied the students' self-determination needs in PME one and two, I observed that the students' need for autonomy was not always satisfied in PME two. For example, in a post 'flipped' lesson reflection, I expressed the following, "the students did not bother to engage with the online material. They were also very reluctant

to get involved in the group discussion” (03/12/20). However, this unfulfillment of the students’ need for autonomy occurred after introducing extrinsic rewards such as sweets and no homework when carrying out the FCM. Ryan and Deci (2000) highlight this, stating that autonomy can be diminished when extrinsic rewards are introduced because when enticing rewards are contingently offered, people can easily lose sight of important values and needs. This decrease in the students’ intrinsic motivation because their need for autonomy was not fulfilled supports the SDT’s hypothesis that autonomy is necessary for fostering intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

### **3.4 The effectiveness of the FCM in enhancing intrinsic student motivation in a JC MFL classroom**

Despite the negative impact that the introduction of extrinsic rewards had in PME two, overall, the FCM successfully enhanced the intrinsic motivation levels of most of my second-year Spanish students in both PME one and two. For example, many of my post ‘flipped’ lesson reflections included comments like “the students appeared motivated in today’s lesson as they participated in all the class activities. Many even commented that they enjoyed the lesson” (11/11/20). Furthermore, “the students’ behaviour and work rate were much better today as they did not have the desire to chat or disrupt others as they were enjoying engaging in the class activities” (09/12/19). The content of those reflections aligns with the thoughts of Sergis et al. (2018), who found that students exposed to the FCM had significantly higher fulfilment of their self-determination needs across a range of subjects and, thus, improved intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, in both PME one and two, as discovered by Sergis et al. (2018), the FCM had the most significant positive impact on the low-performing students in my second-year Spanish classes. In one post ‘flipped’ lesson reflection, I noted the following, “NH and ED who both would generally struggle with oral

work were actively participating in today's oral group activity. Their pronunciation and fluency have significantly improved since I started 'flipping' the classroom" (09/12/19).

However, just like the introduction of rewards, there were several barriers to the enhancement of the students' intrinsic motivation levels, which I had to overcome when implementing the FCM in both PME one and two. As mentioned at the outset, in PME one, I conducted my practice in a DEIS school where some of the students in my second-year Spanish class were from a low socioeconomic background. Therefore, they had no access to an electronic device or the internet at home, which meant they could not carry out the pre-class work, given that it usually involves watching a video or using the internet (Hwang et al., 2015). This was further highlighted by my post-lesson reflection which stated: "Three students arrived into class without having watched the YouTube video posted on Microsoft Teams because they said they had no access to either a device or WIFI at home" (17/10/19). As a result, these students could not fully participate in the class activities the following day, meaning that their self-determination needs could not be satisfied, resulting in no improvement in their intrinsic motivational levels. Therefore, while the FCM is a teaching methodology that is inclusive of students with additional educational needs, its inclusivity in terms of social class is questionable given its potential to disadvantage students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds due to its sheer dependence on technology (Altemueller & Lindquist, 2017). This barrier to the enhancement of students' intrinsic motivation when implementing the FCM was not mentioned in any of the literature in Chapter 3, highlighting a clear gap between theory and practice. However, I was able to overcome this barrier by not confining the students' self-learning to the use of the internet, which resonates with the argument of Van Alten et al. (2019) that the FCM is not inherently dependent on the use of

technology as activities before class, such as reading material, are also considered part of the FCM.

In PME two, I also encountered a barrier but a vastly different barrier to the one I faced in PME one, given that I carried out my teaching placement in a private school where many of the students were from a middle or high socioeconomic background. In PME two, the obstacle which I came up against was reluctance to the FCM because of the high stakes testing policy of the private school. For example, in one reflection, I stated the following, “some students did not seem to agree with the ‘flipping’ of the classroom. One student even asked ‘Why do we have to teach ourselves?’”(16/09/20). This echoes the findings of Lo and Hew (2017), who also encountered negative attitudes towards the FCM due to its structure. The students’ opposition to the FCM impacted their intrinsic motivational levels as they did not engage with either the self-learning before class or the in-class activities. Therefore, their self-determination needs were not satisfied. However, I overcame this barrier by outlining the benefits of the FCM to the students, the benefits which I gathered while engaging with scholarly literature as a critically reflective practitioner in PME one. By overcoming these barriers in both PME one and two, the FCM successfully fostered intrinsic motivation for all my students, and thus improved their language achievement levels, as seen in their test results before and after I started ‘flipping’ the classroom (See Appendix A). Therefore, confirming that “motivation is a powerful factor in second language acquisition” (Ellis, 1985, p.191).

## **Chapter 4 – Concluding chapter**

### **4.1 Validity of practitioner research**

Practitioner research can be defined as “evaluation, research, development, or more general inquiry that is small-scale, local, grounded, and carried out by professionals who directly deliver those self-same services” (Shaw, 2005, p.1232). However, many academics dismiss practitioner research, arguing that it can only be undertaken through a small number of methods and these methods provide too narrow a focus on the subject as the interpretation is largely situational (Shaw, 2005). Despite these concerns, the Teaching Council regards practitioner research as a fundamental aspect of being a teacher in Ireland, to such an extent that they have invested large sums of money into providing teachers with bursaries to carry out practitioner research under the CROÍ framework.



In the near future, when I am a qualified teacher, I would consider applying for a bursary to carry out my own practitioner research because while it is a narrow form of research, I believe that it is beneficial given that it provides specific and applicable insights into the researcher's own practice. For example, one of the strengths of this dissertation is that it is very specific to my own context. I was able to look in-depth at a particular aspect of my practice as the research was a case study of my practice. A case study is a type of qualitative practitioner research, and one of the greatest advantages of a case study is that it's an in-depth and detailed analysis of a particular issue.

However, on the contrary, one could argue the narrow focus of my research might also be considered a limitation because I cannot make any claims that are generalisable to any other teacher. Although, Bassey (2001) points out that it is possible to formulate the outcome of practitioner research as a 'fuzzy generalisation', meaning that other teachers can use the research to help predict what might happen in their own classrooms if the same particular action is taken. Furthermore, Stake (1995) proposes the idea of 'naturalistic generalisation', which suggests a realignment of the responsibility to generalise away from the researcher towards the reader. Therefore, while my research could perhaps be regarded as weak in terms of generalisability, I would argue that teachers can read my research and make assertions about what can work for them in their given context.

## **4.2 Summary of findings**

Motivation plays an essential role in language learning, yet one of the most prominent academic problems plaguing today's teenage youth is a lack of motivation (Legault et al., 2006). In the Irish context, JC MFL students tend to possess a low level of intrinsic

motivation, due to the global dominance of the English language. This is a significant issue, given that motivation is a decisive factor in second language achievement (Ellis, 1985). I believe that this problem of low intrinsic student motivation towards foreign language learning in Irish secondary schools is one of the main reasons for Ireland's low competency levels in foreign languages. This belief motivated me to find a possible solution to the problem of low intrinsic student motivation in JC MFL. While there are several possible ways to combat this issue, this paper investigated the potential of the FCM to foster intrinsic student motivation in JC MFL.

Rolfe et al.'s (2001) reflective model is based upon three simple questions: What? So what? Now what?

#### *4.2.1 What?*

The overarching findings of this study have shown that the FCM can foster intrinsic student motivation in a JC MFL classroom with the most significant impact on low-performing students. This can be achieved through the active learning methodology of the FCM, creating a learning environment that satisfies students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The needs which the SDT regard as essential for leading an extrinsically motivated or utterly unmotivated person to more intrinsically motivated behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Furthermore, the study also demonstrated that students' increased intrinsic motivation levels improved their language achievement levels, given that motivation is a powerful factor in language acquisition (Ellis, 1985). However, the study also revealed a number of barriers that can potentially emerge when carrying out the FCM that need to be overcome in order for the model to be entirely successful in promoting every students'

intrinsic motivation levels in a JC MFL classroom. The study highlighted that the barriers could be tackled in the following ways:

- Student resistance to the FCM can be tackled by sharing the benefits of the FCM that are outlined in scholarly literature with the students.
- The loss of autonomy due to the introduction of extrinsic rewards is easily preventable as rewards are not a necessary factor of the FCM.
- Students' lack of access to the internet or a device is very situational and therefore is not a guaranteed barrier. However, if it does arise, it can be resolved by not confining the students' pre-class work to the internet.

#### *4.2.2. So what?*

In line with McLeod's (1999) definition of practitioner research, "research carried out by practitioners for the purpose of advancing their own practice" (p.8). I believe my teaching practice will improve after carrying out this investigation, given that I have identified changes and adaptations that I can make to my practice to better myself as a teacher. For example, when I am a fully qualified Spanish teacher, I will now have the tools and the knowledge to overcome the issue of low intrinsic student motivation if it arises in my JC MFL classes. This will greatly benefit my students, given that intrinsic motivation is one of the key factors that influences success in foreign language learning (Ng & Ng, 2015).

Furthermore, through collaboration, I will be able to share this knowledge that I have acquired from this investigation with my future colleagues, which will be highly beneficial to them as MFL teachers given that "... motivation, or the lack of it, is arguably the greatest challenge facing foreign language teachers" (Pachler & Redondo, 2014, p.16). This action

will also conform to ‘The Looking at Our Schools 2016: A Quality Framework for Secondary Schools’ given that one of the statements of ‘highly effective practice’ is “teachers view collaboration as a means to improve student learning and to enhance their own professional development. They engage in constructive collaborative practice, and in collaborative review of practice” (p.20).

However, on a much grander scale, I also think that the findings of this investigation could possibly help tackle Ireland’s issue of low competency levels in foreign languages because I believe that the root cause of this issue is the prominence of low intrinsic student motivation towards foreign language learning in Irish secondary schools. Therefore, by incorporating the FCM regularly into JC MFL classes, the root cause of the issue could potentially be resolved as students’ intrinsic motivation levels may increase and, in turn, enhance their language achievement levels. The students’ improved attitudes and achievements are likely to encourage them to continue their studies in MFLs in adulthood, therefore, improving Ireland’s overall foreign language competencies.

#### *4.2.3 Now what?*

After examining the policy document ‘Ireland’s Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026’, I have a recommendation based upon the findings of my investigation. This strategy was developed in the context of the ‘Action Plan for Education 2016-2019’, which aims to make Ireland’s education system the best in Europe within the next decade. One of the objectives of the Action Plan is to enable learners to communicate effectively and

improve their standards of competence in languages. While it is welcome to see the department take such a stance on improving Ireland's issue of low foreign language competencies, I argue that the Action Plan's objective cannot be achieved until the root cause of the issue is resolved, which I believe to be low intrinsic student motivation in MFL classrooms in Irish secondary schools. As it stands, 'Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026' mentions motivation a total of two times- both of which are not in relation to increasing students' motivation. Yet, initiatives to promote Erasmus programmes and language learning in higher education are outlined. I contend that neither of those initiatives will help improve Ireland's foreign language competence standards if students are not intrinsically motivated to learn a MFL in the first place. Therefore, I recommend that the strategy be revisited to include an overarching goal that aims to improve language proficiency in secondary schools by creating learning environments that foster intrinsic student motivation. By focusing on improving intrinsic student motivation, the DES can work to tackle what is a very preventable national problem.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

**Test results before and after the introduction of the flipped classroom model in PME one**

<b>Name and Surname</b>	<b>Before the introduction of the flipped classroom model</b>	<b>After the introduction of the flipped classroom model</b>
Anonymous	50%	55%
Anonymous	67%	80%
Anonymous	89%	92%
Anonymous	64%	71%
Anonymous	90%	93%
Anonymous	77%	79%
Anonymous	39%	45%
Anonymous	66%	80%
Anonymous	75%	89%
Anonymous	33%	39%