

Different approaches to narrative: using characterisation to maintain engagement and motivation with a low ability Year 9 Latin set in a selective, independent boarding school studying Stages 13 and 14 of the Cambridge Latin Course Book II.

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SECTION 1C ASSIGNMENT

Different approaches to narrative: using characterisation to maintain engagement and motivation with a low ability Year 9 Latin set in a selective, independent boarding school studying Stages 13 and 14 of the Cambridge Latin Course Book II.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The research question

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Reasons for research

In my second teaching placement of my PGCE, I took over a low-ability (within the context of the type of school) Latin class, of 19 pupils. They were approaching the end of Cambridge Latin Course Book I (CLC Book I) and were seemingly fascinated by the Pompeian context. I was looking forward to taking them to the end of the book – the eruption of Vesuvius, its aftermath and the last days of Pompeii. However, I anticipated a problem. They were moving on to Cambridge Latin Course Book II (CLC Book II) – known amongst Classics teachers as a notoriously difficult book to approach after the exciting climax of Book I. Even by the admission of Will Griffiths - the director of the course itself - the move from the setting of Pompeii in Book I to that of Roman Britain in Book II can potentially cause a problem. With the study of Pompeii and Vesuvius being relatively easy to teach in an inspiring way given the fascination of a 'natural disaster' and the suspense before it, I realised that I would have to be more inventive in my approach if I were to keep the class on board and, importantly, enjoying their Latin.

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Knowing that the class of 15 boys and only 4 girls was potentially a boisterous one, I decided to focus mainly on the narrative and characterisation in the stories in order to keep them interested and their motivation high. The majority of this group will not opt to study Latin to GCSE level and therefore the issue of motivation was crucial. In their eyes, they only had to do this subject for another 5 months and sometimes they had the tendency to be rather laissez-faire in their approach. The power of the narrative would be crucial for the age group that I was working with. Sharwood Smith says,

“Narrative is the manner in which societies in an early stage of cultural development organise their beliefs, rules and knowledge of the past...; it is also the form in which adolescents at an early stage of mental development find knowledge most easy to assimilate.” (Sharwood Smith, 1977, p. 14)

Initially I intended to carry out a case study of the differences in opinion and reaction of all the pupils to the new setting of CLC Book II. However, I decided that it would be more appropriate to take up an action research project, and to see if, in varying the methods used to approach the narrative in Book II, I could maintain engagement and motivation within the class. My pupils had been most keen to find out what was going to happen in the stories in Book I Stage 12. Their interest in the characters and the narrative had motivated them to translate and understand the Latin in the textbook. With the move to Book II, it was going to be interesting to see whether this intrinsic motivation would need ‘boosting’ with more unnatural and less positive extrinsic motivation.

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I had 3 weeks to focus on my research with the class so I decided to focus on Stages 13 and 14 – the first two stages of Book II. My intention was to teach Stage 13 in the way the Cambridge Schools Classics Project (CSCP) would advocate the teaching of the CLC – by using the storylines and characters as motivating factors for my class as opposed to a more traditional, grammatical approach. Having completed Stage 13, I would act upon my successes or failings and if necessary approach Stage 14 in a different manner. I could then teach in either exactly the same way as I had with Stage 13 (if this had been a success) or I could alter my approach if this was not working by tackling the stage in a new way. I could also have reverted to the way in which this class is normally taught – with a more grammatical approach. I wanted to discover how much the use of the course as a 'Reader' would motivate the pupils and what approach they preferred. I will look at the textbook in detail later.

Context of research

My classroom-based research was conducted in a co-educational selective, independent boarding school of around 1150 pupils. Upon entrance at Year 7, the year group is streamed for all their subjects but they are grouped by ability separately for Maths. Latin is compulsory in Years 7-9 and since the year group is increased significantly by the intake in to Year 9 after the Common Entrance Exam. From this point, the children remain streamed for their subjects but are now setted by ability for Latin as well. The class for which I had responsibility consisted of children

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from a mix of the lower-ability classes in Year 9 with the exception of some children who are of higher ability but for whom Latin is a new subject. It is deemed that they do not have enough grounding in the subject for them to fit in to another, 'higher-ability' set. Effectively, then, this set is mixed-ability. However, it is by no means low-ability in comparison with other children in their age group across the country studying Latin. There lies another problem in that having entered the school from as many as 12 different Preparatory schools, the pupils within the group have learned Latin from a variety of textbooks before and a couple of them had even begun CLC Book II at a different school and subsequently revealed elements of the plot line to the other pupils.

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CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

From reading relevant research and literature concerned with the topics of approaches to narrative and engagement and motivation, there arose a few key issues that I would consider to try to improve my teaching.

PART I – THE TEXTBOOK AND ITS APPROACHES TO NARRATIVE

The textbook

When the CLC was first published, it outlined its objectives:

The first [objective] is to teach comprehension of the Latin language for reading purposes. The second is to develop from the outset an understanding of content, style and values of Roman civilisation, with particular reference to the first century AD. The course presents the language not as an end in itself, nor as an instrument of general mental training, but rather as a means of gaining access to a literature and the culture from which it springs. (CSCP, 1999, p. 1)

From teaching Book I to my pupils, it was apparent that aspects of culture and society were just as important to as the language in helping them engage with the textbook. They had responded well to the paralinguistic material we had covered in

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Book I and this suggested to me that covering a variety of aspects of the textbook was important in order that I as teacher could encourage motivation.

The CLC has its own firm opinions of motivation and sets out the means to provide intrinsic motivation for pupils studying Latin:

The course seeks to present material that will arouse and maintain their interest. Motivated students are more likely to make the effort to master the language and gain more knowledge and understanding of Roman culture and literature. (CSCP, 1999, p. 8)

As stated previously, I had used material from the course and succeeded at maintaining engagement and motivation. Owing to the reputation of Book II and its potential difficulties in arousing interest amongst the pupils, perhaps my class would need more help to remain motivated. What I will try to establish is whether the material is 'strong enough' to arouse interest and maintain engagement in the class in which have been working. I predicted that my pupils might become lazy and uninterested in their Latin lessons if the material we covered was not stimulating enough for them.

PART 2 – ENGAGEMENT AND MOTIVATION

First and foremost, there is a definitive difference in the ways in which an individual feels motivated or is made to feel motivation.

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Motivation is widely considered to be particularly important when learning a second language and research has shown it to be “one of the main determinants of second/foreign language (L2) learning achievement.” (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 273). Not much has been written on the acquisition of ancient languages but the concept of motivation must be relevant:

The emotions we feel, as well as our attitude towards, and opinions about, reading all influence the way we read. For instance, someone who is very interested in a particular text will often manage to comprehend it very well. Conversely, lack of self-confidence can completely paralyse someone’s ability to read for understanding. (van Houdt, 2008, p. 58)

This ties in with what I had seen in my lessons based on Pompeii and Vesuvius – the pupils were very interested in the text and by extension their textbook and so they were confident in their approach to the language and their lessons in general. If there was a lack of interest at the beginning of Book II, it would mean that the pupils might lack confidence in contributing to the lessons as a whole and the pupils might lose the thread of the storyline.

There are two different types of motivation relevant here – intrinsic and extrinsic. Dörnyei says that:

One of the most general and well-known distinctions in motivation theories is that between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic motivation*. Extrinsically motivated behaviours are the ones that the individual performs to receive some extrinsic reward (e.g., good grades) or to avoid punishment. With intrinsically

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motivated behaviours, the rewards are internal (e.g., the joy of doing a particular activity or satisfying one's curiosity). (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 275)

My group was essentially 'forced' to study Latin until the end of the year. This extrinsic motivation placed on them 'having to be there' might potentially ruin the chances of them having as much or even any intrinsic motivation at all for the remaining five months for which they were to study Latin. This is something Dörnyei picks up on:

Extrinsic motivation has traditionally been seen as something that can undermine intrinsic motivation; several studies have confirmed that students will lose their natural intrinsic interest in an activity if they have to do it to meet some extrinsic requirement (as is often the case with compulsory readings at school). (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 276)

The class had been firmly told by their normal teacher that by no means were they to give up on their Latin yet and that they were to give it their all and do their best until the end of the year. It struck me that the role of the course itself and me as teacher was to be crucial in motivating the class.

Dörnyei says:

Recent research on intrinsic/extrinsic motivation has shown that under certain circumstances – if they are sufficiently *self-determined* and *internalised* – extrinsic rewards can be combined with, or even lead to, intrinsic motivation. (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 276)

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He states that there are three sets of motivational components (motives and motivational conditions) – all of which are relevant to my research:

1) *Course-specific motivational components*

Concerning the syllabus, teaching materials, the teaching method and the learning task

2) *Teacher-specific motivational components*

Concerning the teacher's personality, teaching style, feedback and relationship with the pupils.

3) *Group-specific motivational components*

Concerning the dynamics of the learning group.

(Dörnyei, 1994, p. 277)

The course-specific motivational components in this case would be CLC Book II and the teaching methods that were to be used with the class. The teacher-specific motivational components were to be how I interacted with the pupils and my teaching style with them. After all, the textbook can only do so much of the work, I, as teacher would need to ensure that I could provide the necessary extrinsic motivation to encourage my pupils' engagement. Seranis says that this teacher-specific motivation is vital to ensure that pupils become engaged:

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“Unless young people engage and become involved in what they are doing, they won’t benefit, won’t learn, won’t succeed: and and why should they, if they don’t see the point? Educators have to make them see the point – which we can only do if we see it (feel it in our bones) first...” (Seranis, 2003, p. 3)

The group-specific motivational components were to be how the group interacted with one another and whether the attitudes of individuals or several were to have an impact on the other pupils in the group – for better or for worse.

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CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH APPROACH

PART I – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As we approached February half-term, we completed the final chapter of Book I – Stage 12. This had created a lot of excitement for the class who naturally wanted to know who had survived the eruption of Vesuvius and what was going to happen next. So much so, that one boy in the class said to me on the last day of term, “I am going to read on in to Book II over the holidays to find out what happened to Clemens!” With this level of excitement shown, I was determined to make their experience of Book II as fun as possible. This one statement had proved to me that this child had definitely engaged with the characters in their textbook and this would bode well for the new book. However, Book II has new characters. I decided that my first point of research would be to give a questionnaire the whole group in order to research their opinions of the characters in Book I – both to see how much they could recall and also on what level they had connected with them (see Appendix 1).

PART II – RESEARCH METHODS

Teaching method

For the purpose of my research with the group, I would have 3-4 weeks of teaching time with them. I had taught them for a fortnight preceding the half-term in which they had completed CLC Book I. When we returned to school, I had 11 lessons of 45 minutes in which to carry out my research. The nature of their timetable is such

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that they have three lessons of Latin per week: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. This means that whilst it is very easy to get into the flow of the lessons, by Wednesday there is a 5 day gap until I next see them. In addition to this, they have three pieces of homework per week: Monday (15 minutes), Tuesday (15 minutes) and Wednesday (30 minutes). I will pick out a few of the ways in which I tried to motivate the pupils but my scheme of work can be seen in Appendix 2.

I decided to incorporate a variety of ways of approaching the narrative of Stages 13 and 14. For the main part, I would neglect the civilisation (paralinguistic) material in the stages, as it is not closely related to the narrative of the stages. I would make sure that we were not merely translating each story but employing different methods to do so. I hoped that by adding a variety of approaches to the narrative that I would keep the class motivated. My aim was to concentrate on regular analysis of character type and with a focus on any particularly interesting behaviour on the part of the characters in the stories. I hoped this would add to the pupils' own intrinsic interest and motivation and the general success of the lessons.

Having discovered by a straw-poll that my class had loved Book I, I decided to focus firmly on the characterisation in Stage 13 whilst trying to ensure that the location would not go ignored. The first lesson would be mainly an oral one in order to engage the pupils with the characters and storyline as soon as possible. I hoped that this would affirm their interest and intrinsic motivation that had flourished with Book I. I will summarise a few of the different ways I tried to approach

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characterisation and narrative but my scheme of work can be seen in Appendix 2. In Lesson 1, we did a 'judge by appearance' exercise on the model sentences at the beginning of the stage so that the pupils could work out the possible role, status and personality traits of the characters by their appearance and dress. This was quite fun but there seemed to be too many characters and rather a lot of slaves to the point where it got a little tedious. Nevertheless, the curiosity of the pupils carried them through this lesson. We followed this up in Lesson 2 with a recapping game similar to charades in which the pupils came to the front of the classroom and behaved like the characters we had just met so that the others might guess who they were. This worked well and led nicely in to the use of adjectives that we were to focus on later. Lesson 5 was mainly a grammatical one led by me as opposed to the textbook but I tried not to let go of the idea of characterisation by using the textbook for examples and practice related to the stories. At the end of this lesson, I got the pupils to come up and add adjectives under the headings of 'Salvius' and 'Bregans' in order to gauge their response to and interaction with the two main characters so far. This proved interesting (see Appendix 3) and showed that the pupils had picked up quite a lot of knowledge so far and were able to form often quite strong opinions of the new characters. The following lesson, I asked them for homework to create an A4 poster of either Salvius' or Bregans' 'story'. On the whole, this was done very well (see Appendix 4) and again suggested that the pupils were interested in and engaged with both the characters and the narrative. In Lesson 6, we also focused on working out what we knew about Roman Britain and the way of life for its inhabitants under Roman rule. In the same way as we had read Pliny's letters

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alongside Stage 12, I thought it would be fitting to read some of Tacitus' *Agricola* to consider the perception of the location and people of Britain. The pupils enjoyed this and we even 'Googled' where *Salvius* lived!

We moved in to Stage 14 in Lessons 7-9 with a stronger focus on the grammar as we were looking at adjectives. Lesson 8 saw the beginnings of work on *Salvius* and *Rufilla*'s relationship and how as husband and wife this may have been realistic. The introduction of more slaves (*Domitilla* and *Marcia*) caused problems for the class as they felt it was an overload of people now involved in the storyline. The stories were becoming longer and more difficult to manage in order to keep everyone involved and the boys were becoming less interested by the female characters. I tried to cultivate an element of suspense by allowing the class time to speculate as to whom the slave-girls might be preparing the bedroom for (i.e. – for *Quintus* – the character that would link us with Book I). I decided that the best way to approach the stories involving *Salvius* and *Rufilla* having great arguments was to divide the class up and perform dramatic readings of the text both in English and in Latin. This worked well and the pupils were responsive – although with a group including so few girls it was often necessary to call upon one of the boys to be *Rufilla* but this tended to go down well. Certainly the reading and performing of the stories in both English and Latin helped to ease the struggle of this stage until our familiar character arrived to provide some motivation. What was always a difficulty was breaking down the 'huge' translations. This is why, when I saw that morale was dropping that I chose to focus

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less on translating every single sentence of every single story in Stage 14 and more on the motivations of each of the characters.

As a result of these lessons and previous observations it became apparent with the group I was teaching was that they were used to being intrinsically motivated but that boredom was pervading through the group, it was up to me as teacher to provide the necessary extrinsic motivation to keep them engaged and enjoying their Latin whilst it was still compulsory for them.

Data collection

My intentions were to use a combination of methods to collect data so that I could record:

- a) pupils' motivation in lessons – both intrinsic and extrinsic
- b) pupils' enjoyment of the lessons
- c) how much they seemed to have learned
- d) what their learning styles as a group were and what activities worked for them

The pupils' output of work and the effort that they had put into it would be ascertained by reviewing samples of their work. The pupils' own opinions on the lessons, the textbook itself and the activities and their own motivation would be recorded at both the beginning and the end of the research with a questionnaire. I would also interview a selection of pupils at the end of the research for group interviews.

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My first questionnaire taken by the whole class, in class (not anonymously), was based on a series of questions asking the pupils about the characters of Book I. I gave them this at the start of the research in order that I might be able to select from the responses who I might want to interview at a later stage. I asked the pupils about their favourite and least favourite characters, asked them to label pictures of the characters and also to try and name characters other than those in Caecilius' household. I did this in order to see if it were the major and not the minor characters of the course that counted (for this questionnaire, see Appendix 4).

My second questionnaire was also taken by the whole class, in class but anonymously. It consisted of questions regarding Stages 13 and 14 of Book II and was taken at the end of my teaching and research with the class. I asked the pupils what they knew about all of the characters they had met and asked them how interesting and how difficult they had found Book II. I also asked them for anything new they felt they had learnt and for their impression of Roman Britain – something I had not, for the most part, focused upon in the lessons (for this questionnaire, see Appendix 5).

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CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Results

From the interviews with the pupils (see Appendices 7 and 8), several key issues with CLC Book II became apparent. The structure and layout of the book were immediately criticised. The pupils found the familiar format of the model sentences to be very “babyish” and it encouraged them to feel as if they were going back to the beginning of CLC Book I again. They could accept that it was a good way to introduce the new characters but reiterated it was as if they were starting the whole course again from scratch. Girl B said, ‘This book is for beginners, we aren’t beginners. It’s the same as the red book, easy.’ and Boy A said, “The stories show emotion, but these [model sentences] are babyish.” Comments made in class proved that they perceived the repetitive nature of the textbooks to be off-putting and boring as opposed to a layout that could have made them feel comfortable. Boy D said, “Repetitive, don’t learn anything.” The CLC believes that for pupils studying Latin, “a sense of progress and achievement is the single most motivating factor for them.” (CLC, 1999, p. 19). Clearly some of my pupils were feeling so disheartened with their Latin lessons because the format of the textbook is so repetitive that they felt that they were back to square one, as it were. If they felt no real sense of progress it was no wonder they could not motivate themselves. In addition to this, the lack of progress meant that the pupils were more susceptible to switching off and even misbehaving in class.

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The CLC comprises of start pages to each stage providing some short 'model sentences' accompanying characters from the stage. Even when I took pains to explain to my pupils how far they had come since the very brief, easy model sentences and short translations of CLC Book I Stage I, they were adamant that they felt patronised. They felt they had built up to comprehending longer Latin sentences and blocks of text so to go back to two lines was "boring" – as Boy A said "Boring sentences". In class, they compared it to their MFL experiences in which they had not done sentences like 'My name is...', 'I am...' or 'This is what I do' since they had been a beginner of that language. It struck me that this was not great – the motivation on their part at the beginning of new book should have been high due to the novelty value and the fact they had come straight from the excitement of Vesuvius. The curiosity itself should have been enough to motivate the pupils intrinsically if the CLC doctrine is to be believed.

Another issue that emerged was the jump in location that occurs in the transition to Book II from Book I. The pupils that I interviewed (and indeed the general consensus in class was similar) could not understand why they were no longer in Italy but in Britain. They argued that they were studying Latin, not English and to have such a big change in setting from Pompeii – not even to, say, Rome – was a disappointment to them: "If you do Latin you learn about Italy, it doesn't feel right in England." (Girl B) They also said that they had 'done' Roman Britain at primary school so why did they have to do it again: "I am more interested in somewhere abroad. We did Roman Britain in Year 3!" (Boy C). Just when it had become interesting, we had come to Britain where, according to the book, it rains and they do

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not have wine. This all showed a lack of maturity on their part to understand why they were studying what they were studying. Therefore it could be said that intrinsic motivation seems to depend on relatively high conceptual thinking since my pupils were simply not able to understand why they were doing what they were doing. In order to keep them engaged and their motivation high it is the teacher's responsibility to deal with these issues. The miserable attitudes of the characters in Stage 13 of Book II seemed to wear off on the pupils as there seemed to be a positive correlation between the despondency of the characters in the book and the pupils in my class. Negative attitudes that pervaded the class could perhaps be at least partly put down to the fact there was very little happiness or excitement or accessible humour in the stories. A few pupils seemed to be displaying aspects of Bregans' (a lazy, tired and bored slave) traits. I found the level of discipline within the group difficult to manage at times – it seemed to decrease just when I needed to 'ham up' the stories by focusing on the characterisation and narrative. I found myself having to tell off the group more frequently and some of the class with whom I had had no problems with before were suddenly becoming easily distracted – seemingly due to lack of engagement with the subject matter. It was frustrating to have to be so negative with the group when a very positive approach was required if I was to have any success at all at motivating them extrinsically in order for them to intrinsically motivate themselves. I had to work very hard at times to maximise the opportunity for my pupils to remain interested.

By their own admission, the eruption of Vesuvius and the destruction of Pompeii at the end of Book I was 'very big' and a change of setting for the course was

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necessary. One pupil conceded that it was necessary to go back to “small beginnings” again after the huge climax of Vesuvius. “Vesuvius was quite big. It’s good to go back to something small again.” (Boy A). I thought that this was quite a mature viewpoint to have and certainly not one that seemed to be shared by the rest of this boy’s class. The magic of Latin seemed to be in that they were learning about a foreign country – however much I tried to convey in their lessons that we were learning about the Romans within the context of their empire

Another issue that arose was the lack of an apparent link between the end of Book I and the beginning of Book II. Without the continued engagement with characters they had become familiar with in Book I, the class found the storylines difficult as they had changed so dramatically. Boy D said, “We should have followed Quintus straight to Britain.” Quintus (the son of Caecilius, the dead protagonist of the books) and Clemens (the faithful slave of Caecilius who stayed by the side of his dying master in Stage 12) do not appear immediately and this is definitely a problem of the course. The appearance of these key figures is clearly something that the CLC delay intentionally for the purpose of narrative complexity. Quintus does not appear until the end of Stage 14 whereas the hint of Clemens’ survival comes at the end of Stage 16 and his reappearance at the beginning of Stage 17. The idea of mystery should be an incentive to read on but the pupils feel that they have outgrown Book I and its characters so therein lies a difficulty to which both the new characters and storyline of Book II must provide a solution. Since the pupils see no apparent link between the books they struggle to accept the change of location, storyline, and characters. The CLC views itself as a reading course and yet it is a struggle to get

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pupils motivated at the beginning of Book II with its narrative. The challenge is for teachers to engage pupils in a different way. Book II could start with Quintus' story – though this would not provide the sophisticated story-telling structure on which the basis of the CLC is formed. The CLC argues that “continuity is provided by Quintus, son of Caecilius, who finds his way to Britain and there tells the story of his travels since his escape from the eruption of Vesuvius.” (CLC, 2000, p. 5). Yes, it is true that he does provide continuity but for the majority of pupils I spoke to, it was a little late.

Engagement with the characters is vitally important for the successful intrinsic motivation of a class studying the CLC. However, it is fair to say that it is the narrative that hooks pupils – proven by one of my pupils wanting to read on ahead over the holidays. Boy B had said to me at the end of their last lesson studying Book I that he was going to “read on into the new book to find out what happens to Clemens!”. This same pupil – after three weeks of studying Book II stated in the interview that: “when we did the red book [Book I] I would pick it up off my study shelf and read more in Prep. time. I don't anymore, can't be bothered.” His first comment may have been exaggerated since the entire group was rather excited by the climax of Book I, but his later comment reflected on not only how he felt about the development of the course but did seem to sum up the overriding sentiments of the group towards the new textbook.

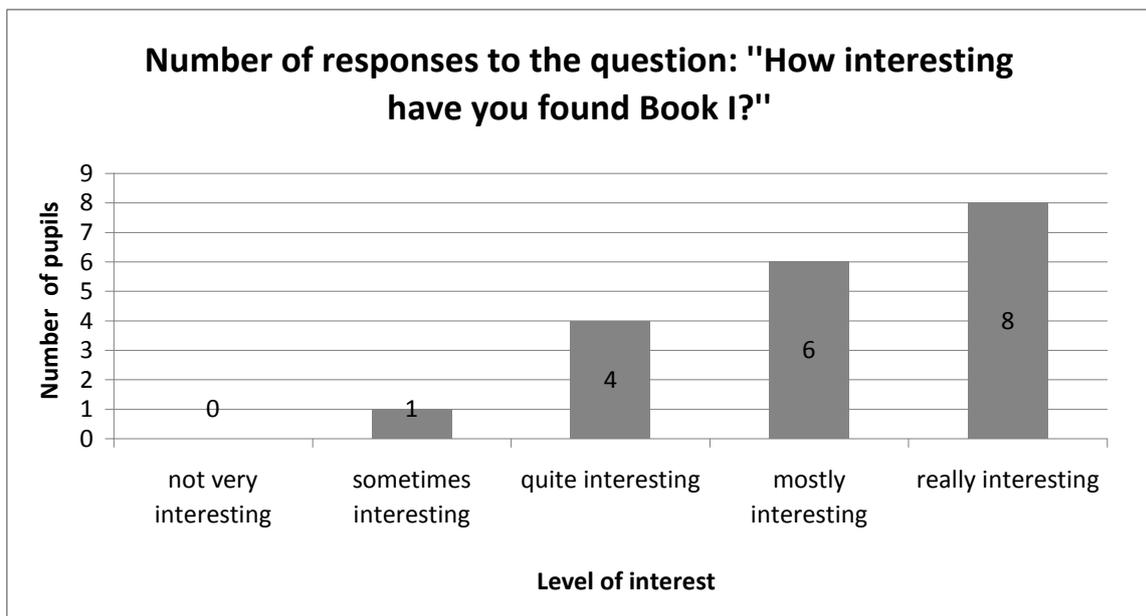
The continuity in the narrative that they liked throughout Book I suddenly disappears and this is destabilising for a class progressing to Book II. There was some light at the end of the tunnel – as Boy D said, “Bregans and Clemens would be friends.” and

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Boy C said “Salvius has more money than Caecilius.” Perhaps, then, some of my pupils had engaged more closely with the ‘new’ characters than it would first appear – once they had got to know them a bit, they could form links and comparisons with previous characters in the course. This was again a mature outlook to have and it would be interesting to investigate whether this was a more universal ability within the group.

Having straw-pollled the class when we completed Book I, I compiled a graph to show their responses:

Fig. 1: Bar chart showing pupils’ responses to a straw poll question in class before half term.

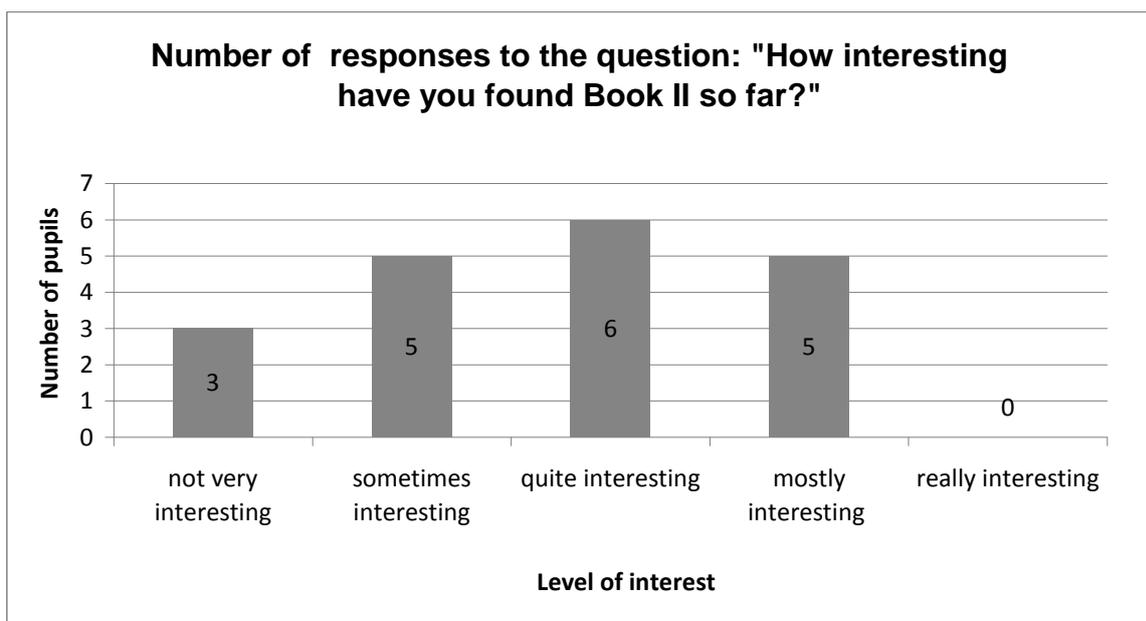


We can see that the majority of the pupils found the end of the Book I ‘really interesting’ or ‘mostly interesting’ – this suggests that they were really engaging with the characters and the narrative.

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Later, in my second questionnaire I asked the same question of the class to see how they now felt, but this time about Book II now that we were a few weeks in to it.

Fig. 2: Bar chart showing pupils' responses to question 1 of Questionnaire 2:



We can see from this bar chart that the levels of interest had certainly dipped. Not one member of the class seemed to find Book II 'really interesting' whereas previously not one member of the class had found Book I 'not very interesting'.

I confirmed what I thought would be true – that (agreeing with the common conception of most Classics teachers that I have spoken to) Book II would be difficult to teach and as a trainee teacher I would struggle to engage and motivate my class sufficiently. With this in mind, I arranged a meeting with Will Griffiths – director of the Cambridge Online Latin Project (COLP), the CSCP and a Classics teacher himself –

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in order to gauge his opinion on how teachers might tackle the potentially 'problematic' Book II.

Griffiths agreed with several of my sentiments. He stated that Book I benefits from its strong characters and exciting storylines whereas Book II does have weaker characters and is set in a far less exotic location. He also stated that Book II used to be divided in to Book IIA and IIB – a much clearer cut version of the subject matter – the first part set in Britain, the second in Egypt. The progression around the provinces used to be better established rather than a jump being made in the middle of the current Book II. The reason why Book I may appear to be so strong is that its Stage 12 and the eruption of Vesuvius is intended to be a very clear endpoint for those who will only study Latin thus far, e.g. a Year 7 or a Year 9 class for whom Latin is a compulsory subject and one which the pupils may opt out of after only one year of studying it.

Book II provides us with a new set of characters and Griffiths agreed that on the whole they may not be that appealing. As I found out with my class, the negative attitudes of characters like Bregans began to rub off on pupils within the class. Several characters are portrayed as weak, immoral, and certainly not good wholesome role models for the class. However, on a more mature level, it could be argued that the shifting morality of the characters is what makes them more interesting and could potentially match the intellectual development of the pupils as they grow up. The dangerous, immoral behaviour of some of these characters has the potential to provide excitement – through the arguments and plotting – but the narrative, however sometimes does not quite cut it. There remains the disparity

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between the pupils no longer wanting the “babyish” model sentences but certainly not being in favour of the new, longer chunks of text.

The CLC is of the opinion that:

The characters in the book are generally more realistic and sophisticated than the stereotypes in Book I. The increasing complexity of the language makes it easier to convey subtleties of character, motivation and atmosphere. There are many opportunities for students to go beyond the story line to examine the writer’s intentions and to evaluate the evidence provided in the cultural background material and illustrations. (CLC, 2000, p. 5)

To a certain extent I agree with this statement – the characters are more complex and we gain an insight into the relationship of the characters of Salvius and Rufilla, enabling us to gain a broader perspective into relations between women and men of these times. It seems that the CLC would encourage teachers to motivate their pupils through the narrative of Book II by focusing on the motivation of the characters themselves. In addition to this, my class responded well when asked their opinions of Roman Britain (see Appendix 9).

Griffiths also added that there is another flaw in that the paralinguistic matter is not closely pegged to the storyline within each stage – more that it is an overview of Roman Britain as whole – this was not the case in Book I. This disjuncture in Book II between the content of the Latin stories and the civilisation-based reading at the

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back of each stage means it can be harder to make each stage an all-round learning experience. When the pupils have just met new characters and the difficulty level of the Latin has increased somewhat, the link between the civilisation matter and the linguistic material is crucial to ensure that the pupils maintain a certain degree of stabilising continuity.

Griffiths argued that the way to approach the beginning of Book II is to try to develop the characters in motivational work – who they are and why they are in Britain and how both the Romans and Britons would have felt. I felt I did this in allowing the class time to work out who the characters were, what their roles and personality traits might be. I knew that they had been used to simply translating the model sentences that my approach would have to be different if I were to engage them from the offset. He argued that as teachers we must make ensure that pupils consider the Roman Empire as a whole and how fascinating it is that the Romans achieved what they did and this can tie in today with war, politics and on a more basic level, people management.

Successes with the group included lessons based on character analysis. However, my pupils also responded well to the grammatical approach I took in the lessons. This was familiar to them but would not quite coincide with the intentions of the CLC. However, this approach gave them a better sense of achievement and the goals of top marks in the class or avoiding a re-test at break time were usually motivation enough to keep them engaged. As part of Questionnaire 2 I asked the pupils to give me three new words/pieces of vocabulary they had learnt from the last couple of stages. The results of this question can be seen in Appendix 9. 76% of the class

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managed to state one or a combination of: 'possum', 'nolo', 'volo' and new adjectives we had learnt. This suggested that my more grammatical focus in Stage 14 was working in terms of what they were learning. However, the character analysis that we had done in class (e.g. Appendix 3) and the follow-up work that they had done on this for homework (e.g. Appendix 4) clearly shows that perhaps more importantly the pupils enjoyed this kind of activity.

When I asked for any other comments or suggestions in question 5 on Questionnaire 2, I received a variety of responses (see Appendix 9). Several pupils made reference to the characters e.g. "Salvius is a horrible man and I would prefer to have Caecilius back", "Bring Clemens back", "Get rid of Salvius and make it more interesting". However, these 'negative' responses to some of the characters only proved that the pupils were engaging with the material even if they did not like the characters personally. Others had things to say about the stories e.g. "The stories could be a little more exciting", "Make the stories shorter and more interesting to keep the readers interested...", "Make sure there are plenty of activities to do rather than just boring translations". This final quotation seemed to sum up my findings – the pupils *were* interested in both characterisation and narrative; they were also happy with the more grammatical approach. It was essential for me, their teacher, to provide a variety of activities to keep them engaged.

Limitations with the results

No action research project can be without limitations or drawbacks. There will be limitations to each part of the research, the methods of collecting data and the

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methods of analysing it. Therefore there will be limitations to the project as a whole. One general limitation to the project as whole is that no research will ever be able to give results that represent the views of all pupils in all schools.

On the more detailed level, there are limitations attached to any method of collecting data. For example, Macintyre in *The Art of Action Research* says that, when using a questionnaire, “anonymous’ [questionnaires] are the best ways of getting at the truth’ (Macintyre, 2000, p. 74). It was not possible to keep both questionnaires anonymous in this particular case – I had decided that I would ask the class to put their names on the first questionnaire they had to fill in because then I would be able to select a more disparate range of pupils to interview based on the content/accuracy of their responses to Book I. However, when I handed out my second questionnaire, I wanted them to be brutally honest with me in their responses to Book II and indeed their own enjoyment of Stages 13 and 14. By asking them to put their name on one questionnaire and not another meant that I could not compare the responses from individual pupils on Questionnaire 1 with those on Questionnaire 2 because I would not know who had written what. This was a limitation as I could not then chart any potential individual change in opinion over the course of my research. However, I made this is decision in order to handpick my interviewees to get the best range of responses. There was no ideal situation and I took the risk that on the anonymous questionnaire the pupils may have been more honest in their responses than on the one where they did have to give a name. These limitations could mean that some of my feedback from the questionnaires may not have been quite accurate, if for

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example, a pupil did not wish to be embarrassed by what they really thought or perhaps had copied from a neighbour. I had asked them to complete the questionnaire in silence and reassured them that this was not a test and therefore not to worry about getting a correct answer as there was no right or wrong answer – just to state what they remembered and how they felt. Even still, the temptation was for the class to look around them for inspiration, as, I suspect, they did not want to look stupid if they had not written much.

With regards to the interview process, my selection process had been based on trying to balance a mixture of high ability, low ability and both sexes. However, I had used Questionnaire 1 to help me choose whom to interview as those with the more detailed responses would be more interesting to interview. The drawback to the interviews was that I had to perform them at break-time. This meant that the pupils – keen to get out to play – rushed their responses and tended to back each other up in a bid to finish earlier as opposed to thinking for longer about how they felt on a personal level.

As a trainee teacher the demands on me were already such that I would be focusing on remaining in control of the class and ‘running the show’ alone, so I knew I would not be able to write down all of the pupils’ comments that would arise in class that would tie in with my research. This meant that I might not have managed to recall everything that was said when teaching the lessons in which I was doing my research.

Essentially I have used only a narrow sample in my interview process and this could limit what I have found out and perhaps caused me to make more generalised

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statements. If I were to do this again with a larger time-scale, I would probably interview the whole class to gain a broader perspective.

Also, much of my focus was on what my pupils found 'interesting' and there is a flaw with this question in itself. What is interesting to one person could be deemed boring by another and therefore there is a difficulty in interpreting the outcomes of these questions accurately.

I have stated that this textbook is notorious for its 'flaws' and difficult to teach in order to engage the Year 9 pupils I was teaching. If the pupils are lacking intrinsic motivation due to a weaker part of the textbook then it is up to the teacher to provide extrinsic motivation by incorporating different approaches to the stories in the book.

Conclusion

There is clearly a problem with tackling 'huge' translations. My group seemed to like both the more traditional grammatical approach as well as the CLC approach of characterisation and narrative. The grammatical work extrinsically motivated them – i.e. they did not want to fail the tests so they did listen in class and revise – whereas the work on characterisation did appear to motivate them intrinsically even if their responses were negative towards the characters. It is perhaps inevitable that with a class who can see the end in sight of their Latin learning to lose some of their intrinsic motivation if the outside factors of them HAVING to be there for and the fact that they are going to stop this subject 'for good' soon. It is important that the pupils have some sort of closure with the subject – teachers could carefully plan what they want to cover with their pupils and ensure that an end-point is reached. It was clear

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that my pupils appreciated the conclusion of Book I and must have seen this as an achievement and as we know that a sense of achievement is a great motivating factor, they must feel this with Book II also.

Year 9 is a notoriously difficult year group anyway and perhaps this why the more grammatical approach did appeal to my group – this is a class more liable to misbehave and not remain on task and so perhaps more strict extrinsic motivating factors needed to be placed on them as a group by me so that they remained engaged with the course and didn't lose track of their intrinsic motivation i.e. that which came from the characters and narrative.

As teachers we must be aware of the potential difficulties that come with teaching CLC Book II and accept these difficulties, make the most of the characterisation and do not feel obliged to translate every sentence of every story. Things do pick up – my class were thrilled to see Clemens arrive recently. It is just a case of keeping up the power of the narrative until familiar faces appear.

To research my questions further, it would be necessary to poll other classes who were studying the same stages of the CLC in order to see if they responded in the same way. It would be beneficial to research this issue further with children of different ages, say, or different abilities as I have only gained a limited sample of responses. It would also be interesting to consider whether an approach aimed more at encouraging responses to Roman Britain with *less* focus on the characterisation or narrative would prove more positive.

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As a trainee teacher carrying out this research, I have been able to reflect on my own teaching practice and consider the different ways I could approach CLC Book II. In my first teaching post I will be teaching two sets from this textbook so it has been extremely helpful to look in depth at pupils' responses to the book. This research project had enabled me to consider alternative approaches – an experience which I will be able to draw upon next year.

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