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Improving Language Comprehension in the French Classroom: The Role of Active Learning Strategies

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Improving Language Comprehension in the French Classroom: The Role of Active Learning Strategies

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Research question

How do I best implement active learning strategies to aid in students' reading comprehension?

Literature Review

Games:

- "...practice proves fun, repetition is not boring, and declarative knowledge is converted into procedural knowledge, that is, into spoken language, and stored in procedural memory." (Macedonia, 2005)
- "the experiment group learners showed better performance in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency and problem solving skills. Also the experiment group learners performed lessons more voluntarily and showed great participation and production than the control group learners." (Azarmi, 2011, p. 418)

Projects:

- Projects are "highly interactive and integrated so that while students are practising and developing language skills in the five macro language learning areas (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and interaction), they are also developing interpersonal skills such as team work and organization." (Masats, 2011, p. 43)

Group/Partner Work:

- Group and partner work "provide maximum opportunities for meaningful classroom interaction in a supportive environment, thereby improving learners' achievement, motivation to learn, and overall psychosocial adjustment." (Shaaban, 2006, p. 378)
- Students told him that "(1) working in groups was more enjoyable than working alone, and (2) re-enacting the actual process of a local election was better than merely reading about it." (Rine, 2006, p. 161)

Methodology

- French 2 class - 10 females, 3 males; 8 sophomores, 4 juniors, 1 senior
- Mid-sized expanding rural town
- 1,189 students, 92.9% white

Games: Touez la Mouche, La Tortue, Jeopardy, Dry erase board activities, Loto

Projects: DRMRSVANDERTRAMP(P) verb projects, trip to Paris, names-adjectives projects

Group/Partner Work: countryside descriptions, sentence formation activity

Results and Data Analysis

Test 1: 3 projects (family tree, biography, names-adjectives), 2 review games (Jeopardy and Touez la Mouche) – avg. 75%

Test 2: 0 projects, 2 review games (Jeopardy and dry erase board activities) – avg. 59%

Test 3: 0 projects, 3 review games (Jeopardy, Touez la Mouche and dry erase board activities) – avg. 79%

***Test 4 retake:** 2 projects (trip to Paris, verb projects, countryside descriptors), 3 review games (Jeopardy, Touez la Mouche and dry erase board activities) - 87%

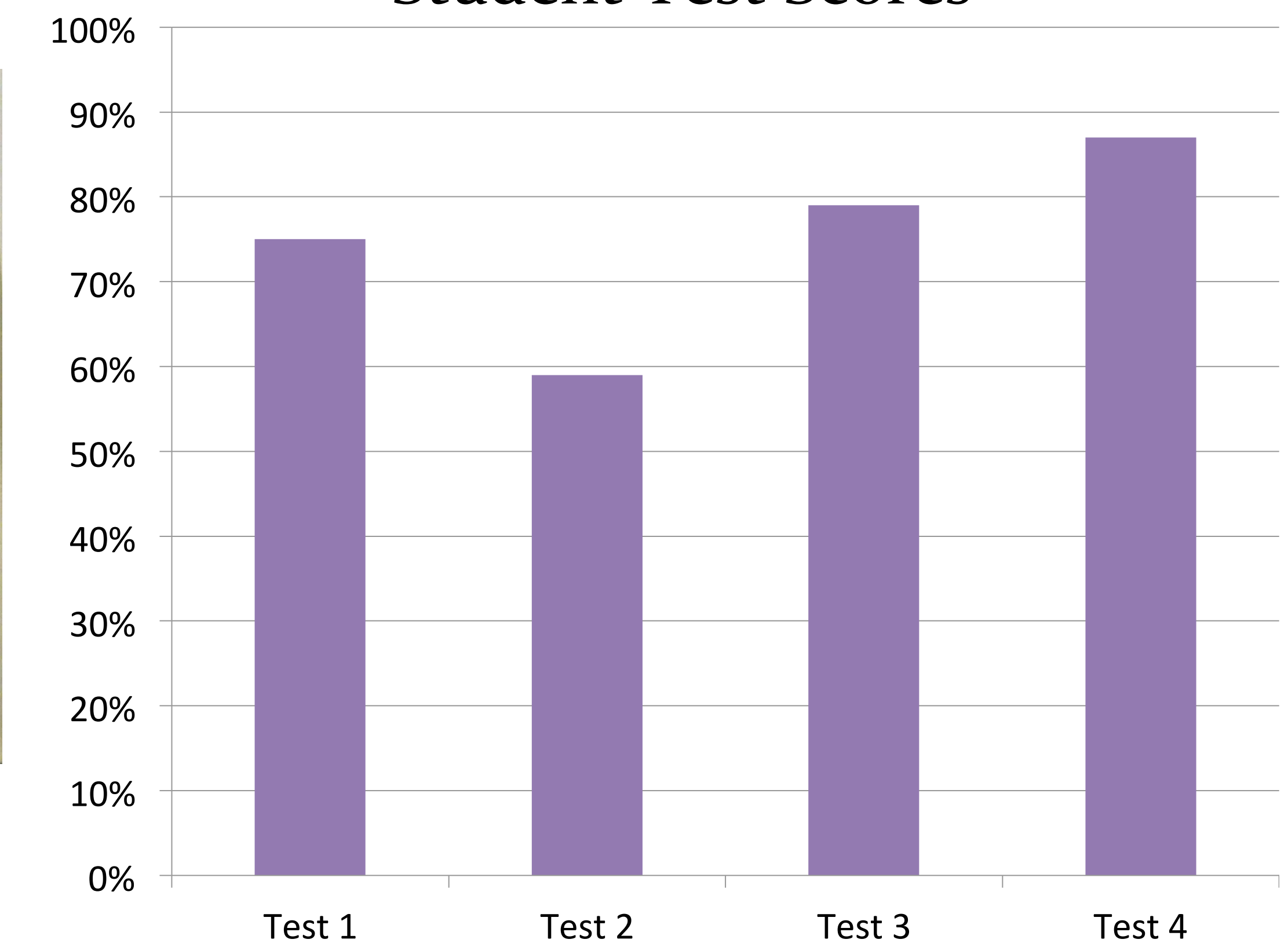
- **Games** – seemed to have a positive effect on scores
- **Projects** - appeared to negatively impact test scores
- **Group/partner work** - mostly class work that did not receive grades, with the exception of the Paris trip; however, I saw improvement in students from group/partner work

Examples of être verb projects



Students were assigned one of the DRMRSVANDERTRAMP(P) verbs and had to create a poster for it, using certain specifications.

Student Test Scores



Conclusion

- Repetitive activities seemed to work best for students' language and reading comprehension
- Study needs to be re-done with a control group
- No absolutely definitive data, but games and group/partner work did seem to help students
- Will continue this research in my own classroom – more long-term and more data