

The Enquiring Teacher

ECPP7001

**How does the use of talk partners
improve pupil participation in a lower
Key Stage 2 classroom?**

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Group 3

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Abstract

This research study was designed to ascertain whether the use of talk partners in a classroom can improve pupil participation. The school in this research study follows visible learning, and it was thought that talk partners could benefit this approach. Literature related to visible learning, such as Hattie (2012), Fisher *et al* (2017) and Clarke (2014), has been acknowledged throughout the assignment. The research aimed to discover whether by using talk partners, the children felt that they could participate more in the lessons. To undertake this research, Dudley's lesson study (2015) and Leuven's Scale for Involvement (2005) were used, and this included participants partaking in an observed lesson, a questionnaire and a focus group interview. Following the research, conclusions have been made from the data found, and subsequently, recommendations for the school have been made, such as how to utilise talk partners in the future.

Aim, Focus & Purpose of the Research

After researching Hattie's work on visible learning (2012) in university, it interested me to see his theories being put into practice in my placement school. For the purpose of this assignment, the school will be referred to as School A. After speaking to teachers in School A during placement, I discovered that School A were introducing Shirley Clarke's work on talk partners (2014) to coincide with a visible learning programme that they were following. My research partner was also in the same placement school, and after discussion, we found that Clarke's work interested us both. In my class, I had seen talk partners being used, albeit inconsistently, as had my research partner, and we both agreed that the way that talk partners were being used could be improved upon. The aim of this research study is to discover the benefit of talk partners in relation to pupil participation and to use the data collected to find ways to improve the use of talk partners in School A.

Research Context

Both lesson studies took place in the same school, School A, situated in a suburban area of Cardiff. Lesson Study 1 took place in a Year 4 classroom consisting of thirty children of mixed ability. Lesson Study 2 took place in the same school in a Year 3 classroom also consisting of thirty children of mixed ability. School A follows John Hattie's visible learning, and has recently introduced a whole school programme from Visible Learning Plus in association with Hattie and Osiris Educational. The programme aims to improve attainment in the classroom (Visible Learning Plus, 2018). My research partner and I discussed the inclusion of visible learning and whether there were any strategies that could be implemented to enhance visible learning in the school. Together we suggested the research question; *how does the use of talk partners improve pupil participation in a lower Key Stage 2 classroom?*

Both classrooms already use talk partners; they are picked through lollypop sticks and are changed on a weekly basis, however, the use of talk partners is not consistent in every lesson. For example, in lessons such as maths, the children move away from their talk partner to become seated by ability. Through our research, we aim to discover how well talk partners work, and uncover the children's opinions on talk partners, so this strategy can be utilised to the best of its ability.

Literature Review

Nottingham (2013) discusses talk in the classroom and how it relates to thinking skills. He writes about extroverted thinking and how children who are extroverted thinkers need to discuss a topic to think deeply about it (Nottingham, 2013:112). It cannot be assumed that all children are extroverted thinkers as every child learns in their own individual ways, as we know from Gardner's work (1993) that every learner has different intelligences, and therefore learn in different ways. However, from this research, it can be assumed that verbally discussing a topic can benefit a child's learning in the classroom.

Hattie states that 'the 'visible' aspect [in visible learning] refers to making student learning visible to teachers" (Hattie, 2012:1), and by encouraging children to talk in the classroom, it is clear that their learning will become visible to their teachers. However, it could be assumed that some children would not feel confident to voice their opinions for

the fear of being told they are wrong. Hattie (2012) and his work on visible learning encourages teachers to create “classroom environments in which error is welcomed as a learning opportunity” (Hattie, 2012:22). If this were the norm in a classroom, where the children could speak without a fear of their ideas being rejected, it could encourage more children to participate on a regular basis.

Fisher *et al* (2017) discuss talk in the classroom in depth, noting five different types of talk, including consultative, casual and formal (Fisher *et al*, 2017:76). Formal talk is defined as “delivering a presentation to the class, where interruption is not expected or elicited” (Fisher *et al*, 2017:76). This could be seen as the style of talk used when using whole class teaching, with the teacher doing most of the talking as opposed to the children. They go on to define consultative talk as “the academic discourse of the classroom, where information is exchanged, and background information is provided” (Fisher *et al*, 2017:76). Consultative talk is the manner of talking that could be productive in the classroom as opposed to the aforementioned style as it not only improves the children’s oracy skills, but encourages educational discussions.

Fisher *et al* (2017) further discuss the importance of child to child communication. They consider the idea that children are more likely to understand something from another child (Fisher *et al*, 2017:104). To test this idea, it would be beneficial for a class teacher to try to reduce the amount of talking they do, and allow more time for the children to use their oracy skills. This is not to say that the teacher is not to be involved in the lesson, they still have an important role to play; facilitator. In this scenario, the teacher needs to guide the children to ensure that they are staying on task, and to encourage the children to lead the dialogues (Fisher *et al*, 2017:104).

With the introduction of the upcoming new curriculum, it is also important to consider Donaldson’s recommendations (2015). Donaldson’s report aims to create “enterprising, creative contributors, developing their creativity in a range of forms of expression; providing rich contexts and challenges within which they can work collaboratively” (Donaldson, 2015:44). To achieve this, children need to work collaboratively. By increasing the amount of time where the children get to talk in the classroom in partners, the children will be in situations where they have the opportunity to work collaboratively.

Clarke (2014) herself has linked her research on talk partners to Hattie's (2009) work on visible learning (Clarke, 2014). She notes how conversations in the classroom are mentioned on Hattie's list of influences on learning (Clarke, 2014), thus connecting Hattie with her own work on talk partners. Clarke defines talk partners as a strategy where "children are provided with an opportunity to think about a question/task before they discuss it with a partner and then results of the discussion probably shared in either groups or whole class situations" (Clarke, 2018). By offering the children time talk with their partners, this strategy not only benefits the children, but the teacher too. While the children are conversing, it gives the teacher time to listen to the children, without the children feeling pressured to share to an adult in front of the class. This time is beneficial to the teacher as it allows to them to address issues they may have overheard, and can form the following discussion with the class.

Clarke recommends changing talk partners on a weekly basis, picking children in a random fashion, such as using lollypop sticks (Clarke, 2014). There are both advantages and disadvantages to this idea. By picking partners randomly, it eliminates the chances that the children will always pick their friends as their talk partners. If children were partnered with their friends, there may be a strong chance that not all talk will be productive throughout the week. It also allows the children to build on friendships in the classroom with different children. This is echoed in an opinion expressed in Clarke's (2014) work, "I introduced random talk partners changing weekly, and one girl said that she really enjoyed talking to her talk partner because she hadn't spoken to him before" (Clarke, 2014:59). However, by choosing talk partners randomly, there is also the chance that some children may end up with the same talk partners on several occasions, which may not be as productive as if they had changed partners. Clarke states that talk partners are most beneficial when children are matched with a "higher achiever" (Clarke, 2014:58), as they have more opportunities to learn as opposed to if they were matched with someone with similar attainment.

However, there are also possible disadvantages to talk partners, for example, if a higher attainment child is paired with a lower attainment child, they may not feel that they are gaining as much from the partnership as their partner. As a teacher, it can be seen that by using oracy to discuss a topic only reinforces the learning, therefore a higher attainment child will still be learning, even if they do not realise it.

Nevertheless, Clarke (2018) lists many advantages of using talk partners in the classroom, such as creating an improved ethos where the children learn to respect other people's opinions, and supporting those children who may not wish to voice their opinions by themselves (Clarke, 2018). By giving those children a partner, it can bring out a confidence in children that they may not find alone. Clarke's studies have also shown positive results; "the amount of speaking and listening has increased dramatically and has enabled me to do more ongoing assessment of the pupils' learning" (Clarke, 2014:68). This assignment will use the literature aforementioned in correlation to the data findings from the lesson study research.

Methodology

There are several options to choose from when deciding on a research method.

Quantitative research focuses on statistics (University of South Carolina, 2018), whereas qualitative research concentrates on the quality of the data as opposed to measuring quantity (University of South Carolina, 2018). It was decided to use a qualitative research method for the purpose of this study, as the opinions of the children given during a focus group interview, are imperative in relation to the study as opposed to quantitative data.

According to Flick (2014) "qualitative methods take the researcher's communication with the field and its members as an explicit part of knowledge" (Flick, 2014:17). This notion has been utilised through the use of focus group interviews with the children, and using their opinions as data for this assignment. An advantage of using a qualitative method is that they are flexible, although they are planned in advance, the structure of the research may change due to what happens in the classroom. (Flick, 2009). However, as qualitative research is very open, it could be possible to lose the focus of the research, therefore although qualitative research may seem more relaxed in its process as it does not involve hard data, it is vital that the research be planned effectively prior to the research taking place.

The qualitative methodology used for this research study was Peter Dudley's lesson study approach. It is a method that originated from Japan over a century ago, and has become used across the world since the twenty-first century (Dudley, 2015). Dudley (2015)

calls the lesson study approach “the world’s fastest growing approach to teacher learning and to developing teaching that in turn improves pupil learning” (Dudley, 2015:4), which is one of the reasons why this particular approach was used for this research study. The lesson study process involves a cycle of planning, teaching, observing and reflecting (Dudley, 2015). It begins with an preliminary meeting of the researchers to discuss the research topic and how to improve it. Through this discussion, a first lesson is then planned and taught with the focus of the research topic in mind. Following the lesson, a focus group interview takes place with three children from the lesson. The researchers then meet again, to plan the second lesson, with the same focus in mind, and repeat the process. Finally, the researchers collate their observations, field notes and interview responses, and use the results from these to present their research (Dudley, 2015).

During this particular research study, the children were also given a short questionnaire on talk partners to complete once the lesson was over (see Appendix A). The questionnaire consisted of a combination of both open and closed questions. Using open questions is beneficial as it gives the participants opportunity to offer their opinions in a safe place (Denscombe, 2014). However, as a disadvantage, there is the possibility that by giving the participants the freedom to answer in their own words, that the answers could be lengthy, meaning that reading through the data could be quite time consuming for the researcher (Denscombe, 2014). Although it may be thought that by using dichotomous questions may be disadvantageous as there is not as much chance to gain a vast amount of data, when planned thoroughly, using closed questions could be valuable. It allows the researcher to measure the quantity of the answers in a time-effective manner. Bell (2005:115) declares that some qualitative research methods may also include quantitative, and vice versa. This is evident in this research study through the use of this questionnaire, and the variety of style of questions. The questionnaire was tailored to both the children answering it and the researchers using the data. By using a combination of both open and closed questions, it was time effective whilst allowing the participants to express their opinions.

For the purpose of this assignment, the lesson study process was used twice, as there were only two researchers taking part, however, the standard lesson study design works on three research lessons. Being able to adapt the lesson study design to suit ourselves, or others, is a great advantage of this method as it allows more teachers to be

able to use it in their own research. However, the flexibility of lesson study could also be seen as a disadvantage too. "It [lesson study] is easily adapted and corrupted by a teaching profession that too often has been encouraged simply to innovate for innovation's sake" (Dudley, 2015:5). So although the fact that the lesson study design is adaptable has been advantageous for the purpose of this research, it could be said that the flexibility of the design could be taken advantage of by other members of the teaching occupation.

On the other hand, another advantage of the chosen methodology is that the lesson study design gives ample opportunities to gain evidence to support the research. Due to the multiple step structure of lesson study, the researcher can gain data from observations of two lessons (or more if there are more researchers taking part), as well as opinions and responses from six different children. The opportunities to collect data is vast, strengthening the research, and is yet another reason to use the lesson study approach.

Nevertheless, there are also disadvantages to lesson study to be considered. One of which is during the observation process. Although both researchers are present in the classroom during the lesson, one researcher is teaching, leaving the majority of the observing to one sole researcher. With a class of thirty children, it can be difficult to distinguish whether the best pieces of data have been collected. This is due to the fact that while the researcher is observing one table of children discussing matters relating to the research study, there is the possibility that there is another group of children also discussing a relatable topic, which could be a superior piece of evidence for the research. In a research process such as this, no matter how strong the evidence, there is always a chance that stronger evidence could have been discovered. This disadvantage is reiterated in the focus group interview section of the lesson study. Dudley recommends interviewing three children (Dudley, 2015), and although the researcher can plan with three particular children in focus, the children chosen can mould the data collected. For if a different three children were chosen, the answers to the interview could be entirely different, possibly changing the research discovered and presented. It is also important to note that as Laws (2003 in Bell, 2005) mentions "accounts collected from different perspectives may not match tidily at all" (Laws, 2003:281 in Bell, 2005:116). Therefore, although there are opinions to be expected, due to the variety of participants, the expectations may be occur.

The research in this lesson study was undertaken in a structured manner, where a specific aspect was already chosen to observe, in this case, the use of talk partners in the

classroom. As recommended by Dudley (2015), the methods of data collection included a non-participant observation and a focus group interview consisting of a small group of three children. The observational notes were recorded using an observation chart based on Leuven's Scale for Involvement (2005). Laevers (2005) defines involvement as "a child who is completely absorbed by the activity" (Laevers, 2005:10), and uses the Scale for Involvement to rate the children's involvement between one and five. An example of the Scale for Involvement used during the Lesson Study lessons can be found in the checklists used in the lessons (Appendix F and I) . We decided to rate each child using the Involvement Scale approximately every five minutes throughout both lessons. This decision was made so to ensure that the observer could also observe the whole class as well as solely three children. Leuven's Scale for Involvement was chosen as Laevers (2005) states "when children are involved, we know that they address their capabilities and that they are developing: they learn at a deeper level, they become more competent" (Laevers, 2005:11).

It is vital for teachers, new or otherwise, to be reflective in their teaching and to be keen to partake in research (Grigg, 2015). Not only does partaking in research keep a teacher updated in new ideas, but it also gives an opportunity to share ideas and improve the quality of their teaching (Grigg, 2015:426). By partaking in research such as this study, where the research is conducted by more than one person, it gives a teacher the prospect to listen to other professional's opinions and to widen one's own knowledge and opinions.

Ethical Considerations

There are ethical concerns when undertaking research in a classroom that need to be considered. For this research, an ethics form was completed and signed by both the head teacher of the school and a representative from the university (see Appendix B for an extract of the ethics form). The research activity received approval from my university supervisor, Dr. Ceri Lewis. Prior to the research taking place, ethical guidance documents such as British Ethical Research Association (2011), the Education Workforce Council Code of Practice (2017) and University of Wales Trinity St David Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice (2017) were referred to. A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check was obtained and a copy of said certificate was made by the school for their records.

The ethics form considered aspects such as possible risks to the participants. To ensure that there is no risk to the participants, consent was gained prior to the lesson study taking place. As the participants are children, a consent letter was sent home to their parents for them to consent on their behalf (see Appendix C for an example of this). Alongside this, considering Article 12 of the United Nations Convention Rights of a Child “States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child” (UNICEF, 2018), assent was given by the children themselves during the lesson. This was completed by asking the children if they are happy to participate in the research prior to the lesson (see Appendix D for an example of this), and ensuring that their well-being was checked continually throughout the lesson. Risks to the investigator were also strongly considered. To ensure minimal risk to the myself, there was no point during the research in which I was left alone with the children in a closed environment, and the focus group interviews took place in an open space with my research partner. It was also stated on the ethical consent form that all participants, including the school and the children, will remain anonymous to ensure that no participant will be identifiable from the research, ensuring total anonymity of all participants.

Lesson Study & Analysis

As evident in the lesson plan in Appendix E, both lesson study lessons consisted of an egg drop experiment. This lesson was chosen as it involved the children working in partners and also required using oracy skills. Whilst I taught the first lesson, my partner was a non-participant observer, meaning that they were not to be involved in the lesson at any given point, and was to solely observe (Flick, 2009). Although both lessons took place in the same school, we decided that to teach each lesson on separate, consecutive days, giving us time to reflect on the first lesson, and make any necessary alterations if needed.

We decided that the learning objective for this lesson was to work collaboratively, as it offered a good opportunity for the children to work with their talk partners. During the introduction of the lesson, I demonstrated to the children the task they had to complete and asked for suggestions on how to do so. Rather than simply asking the class for answers, I gave the children time to discuss with their talk partners on what they thought the best

way to complete the task would be. During this point, it was observed on the observation schedule (Appendix G) that all children were on task and engaged in the task. They worked well together, discussing the aim of the lesson and how they could achieve it together as a team.

During the main body of the lesson, the children continued to work well together. There was a point where one partnership came to a disagreement, however, the observer noted how well they came to a solution. It was noted that they first began to argue, demonstrating how the talk partners strategy may not have been beneficial to them, however, they quickly moved on from the disagreement and used the game 'rock, paper, scissors' to solve their problem. This is a great example of good, collaborative work that Donaldson (2015) aims to achieve from children in the classroom. Also, as noted on the checklist (Appendix F), there was a partnership where there was a lower attainer child with a higher attainer child. It was interesting to note that here, the higher attainer took control of their task, and there seemed to be less sharing of ideas, and more of one child telling the other. However, this did not seem to faze her partner, who seemed happy with the situation. Finally, during the plenary, when the children were asked to come up with their partners to discuss their process, it was noted that there were some partnerships where both children did the talking, and some where only one partner spoke on behalf of them both.

As evident in Appendix F, it was recorded that all three of the observed children in the lesson reached Level 5 on the Leuven Scale of Involvement, meaning that the children were working at a level of sustained intense activity. Level 5 is summarised as the child being alert, motivated, focused and not being distracted, clearly enjoying the task (Laevers, 2005:14). This demonstrates that the children were learning at a deeper level, providing evidence that the use of talk partners was beneficial in this particular lesson.

The focus group interview that took place after the lesson gave us some interesting opinions on talk partners. As evident from the transcript of the focus group interview (Appendix H), there was a divide in opinions on whether the children liked having a talk partner. This was not expected, as my research partner and I predicted that all the children would enjoy having a talk partner. Yet, one child said that they prefer working on their own as she prefers to work independently. This child was a higher attainer, so although the opinion was not expected, it could be assumed that as the child understands the tasks given to

her for the majority of the time, she may seem having a talk partner a waste of time. All of the children interviewed seemed to understand what made a good talk partner, and seemed that whether they enjoyed using talk partners depended on who their talk partner was.

After completing the first Lesson Study, my partner and I used Kolb's Learning Cycle (1984) to reflect on the lesson, focus group interview and the results on our observation schedules to prepare for the second Lesson Study lesson. After discussion, we decided to add more time for the children to converse with their talk partners in the second lesson, as on reflection, we thought we could have utilised the time to encourage more discussion. We decided to do this through asking more questions on the carpet in the introduction part of the lesson, prior to the children working independently with their partners. We also changed aspects of the lesson itself, even though it would not directly affect the use talk partners. For example, we noticed on reflection, allowing the children free unlimited use of Sellotape meant that opening the bags up after the drop was extremely time consuming as it took longer to unwrap the eggs to see if they had cracked. We decided for the next lesson that we would limit the amount of Sellotape to two pieces in order to save time, as I went over on timings in my lesson.

The following day, my research partner taught her lesson, and I became a non-participant observer. The lesson structure was the same with the slight alterations as previously mentioned. We also made the decision to move the three children who were being observed to the same table for this lesson, as we found it inconvenient to observe all three in the first lesson as they were sat in different places.

Similarly to the first lesson, all children were engaged during the introduction of the lesson. They were excitable and keen to begin the task. As we added more questions during this part of the lesson, there were more opportunities for the children to talk with their talk partners, we also allowed them more time to discuss. By adding more time to talk, there was a small risk that the children may go off task and talk about irrelevant topics. However, on observation, all children were thoroughly engaged throughout and on task. Although, the children in this lesson needed to be reminded of how to work with their talk partners, such as looking at their partner, which was not required in the previous lesson.

During the main task, the lesson was comparably similar to the previous day's lesson. However, in this class, the noise level was a little louder due to the excitement in the class. This could be due to the younger age of the children, as for the majority of the lesson, most of the children were on task. However, as noted in Appendix I, one observed child during this lesson seemed very distracted and allowed her partner to complete most of the work. She spent a lot of time away from her partner, wandering around and letting him complete the worksheet. This therefore limited her learning in this lesson. When it came to the plenary, she went to the front of the class with her partner, however she did not speak about their egg, her partner was the spokesperson. This child was the only child over the course of both lessons who marked a level 1 on the Leuven Scale for Involvement. Level 1 is classed as extremely low, where the child is not fully involved in the activity and has restricted motivation (Laevens, 2005:14). This means that this child did not get the most that she could have from the lesson. Nevertheless, she did later reach level 4 on the chart, but this was during the times where the whole class were sitting on the carpet, not when she should have been working independently.

However, the other two observed children achieved a steady level 4, with one child attaining level 5 also. They also seemed to be extremely confident when speaking in front of the rest of the class during the plenary of the lesson. Overall, the children in the second lesson achieved lower levels on the Leuven Scale for Involvement. As previously mentioned, this could be due to the younger age of the class, albeit a one year difference. The second lesson was similar to the previous in the fact that in both lessons, the lower attainer allowed their partners to take over the task, and did so willingly.

During the second focus group interview, one child stated that their partners were no longer picked in a random fashion, and most of the children seemed to have negative opinions on talk partners. However, as noted in Appendix K, it seemed that the reason that the children did not like talk partners was due to who their partner was, so this data may not be reliable as it is subjective. As predicted by myself and my research partner, the children voiced the opinion that by having a talk partner, they feel more confident in answering questions when on the carpet with the whole class.

On reflection of the final lesson, we decided that if we were to repeat this study again in the future, it would be valuable to reiterate the rules of talk partners at the

beginning of the lesson. This would allow us to gain the most from observing talk partners in action.

Discussion of Research Findings

The previously mentioned literature, including Hattie (2012), Fisher *et al* (2017) and Clarke (2014) correlated with the findings of this lesson study. All aforementioned pieces of literature discussed the significance of utilising talk in the classroom, and it was evident during the two lessons that talk in the classroom did not hinder the children's learning, but furthered it. Hattie (2012) discussed how a teacher can see learning take place in visible learning lessons, and this was clear during the lesson study. Due the nature of the lesson, each child had an opportunity to talk about their task, which the majority did well. As Hattie (2012) mentioned, this gave me the opportunity as their teacher to assess their attainment from the lesson. The children who spoke more gave me more of an insight to their learning as opposed to those who did not speak.

Fisher *et al* (2017) discussed the idea that children are more likely to learn from each other. This notion was evident in this lesson study, in particular, the first lesson. One child said that she could not have completed the task without her partner, echoing the opinion of Fisher *et al* (2017). It was also clear from observations that the children were learning from one another, as seen in Appendix G and J, where it was noted that the children worked together on the task, helping one another throughout.

Donaldson's recommendations (2015) stated that by offering children tasks where they can work collaboratively can create creative individuals. This was noted through both lessons, as all of the children worked collaboratively as teams, yet all seemed to choose different, individual combinations of the resources to protect their eggs. This echoes Donaldson's (2015) idea of offering the children different, challenging tasks can encourage creativity and individualism.

Clarke's (2014) research and opinions on talk partners were mirrored through this research study. Clarke (2014) mentioned the benefits of changing talk partners each week, and her suggestions evidently work, as the children claimed that they preferred to change their talk partners each week as opposed to keeping the same partners (see Appendix H and K). Further statements by Clarke (2018) were reiterated through this lesson study. Clarke (2018) mentioned that an advantage of talk partners was that all children were involved

(Clarke, 2018), and this was evident throughout both lessons undertaken for this research study. All children seemed involved throughout the lessons and seemed to enjoy the tasks. Clarke (2018) also mentions that talk partners “allow children to learn from each other” (Clarke, 2018), which reiterates previously mentioned literature by Fisher *et al* (2017), and as mentioned, was evident in this research study.

Conclusion

The aim of this research study was to explore the use of talk partners and how the use of them could improve pupil participation in a lower Key Stage 2 classroom. As mentioned, talk partners were already in place in School A, but through the research, we aimed to compile recommendations in which to improve the use of talk partners. Research was undertaken on Clarke’s work on talk partners (2014) prior to the lesson study taking place, giving my research partner and myself a further insight to the way that Clarke (2014) recommends using talk partners.

The research study itself was undertaken through Dudley’s (2015) lesson study design. This research method proved advantageous for the purpose of this assignment. Dudley’s (2015) research method allowed us to undertake research in a familiar environment, with participants who are comfortable in our presence. Also, by working in a partnership on this research study, it gave us opportunities to share ideas and further our learning from each other. The research also gave us as researchers several opportunities to collect data, as we undertook questionnaires, field notes and focus group interviews. However, there were also boundaries on this research study. For example, the research took place in one school, limiting the data possible. It would be beneficial to be able to undertake this lesson study again in a different school, as we cannot predict that the data found in School A would be the same in a different school. Also, as both my research partner and myself had not been in the position of an observer previously, we found it difficult to use the observation schedule and checklist, and found that we discovered more valuable data from the focus group interviews instead. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, due to the limitation of only interviewing three children from each lesson, it could be more beneficial to interview more children in the future.

As discussed in the literature review, Clarke (2014) suggested alternating talk partners on a weekly basis, which School A aim to do, albeit not each week. Research from

this study has shown that the children in the study agreed with Clarke's (2014) suggestion and preferred the idea of changing partners as opposed to keeping the same partner (see Appendix H). Clarke (2014) also discussed what can happen when a higher attainer is partnered with a lower attainer; that the lower attainer is challenged. However, from the research discovered in this study, it seemed that the lower attainers were not challenged, but happy to simply allow their partner to take over. This could be due to the fact that the children may not have been clear on how talk partners should work, or even that they were simply happy with this process. Clarke (2014) furthermore mentioned that changing partners imperative, especially as boys and girls seem to wish to avoid being together. Clarke's (2014) views was mirrored in the second lesson's focus group interview (see Appendix K), where a child stated that she would not like to be partnered with a boy.

To conclude, the findings from this research were mixed, with some children preferring to work independently rather than with a talk partner, and with observations noting that the majority of children worked well and on task in their talk partners. Therefore from this one research study, although overall it seems that the use of talk partners does in fact improve pupil participation, there are factors from the study that oppose this opinion. Although some individual children may feel that they do not benefit from talk partners, it can be assumed that as a whole class, talk partners do benefit children in a lower Key Stage 2 classroom. However, for this conclusion to be established, it would be beneficial to repeat this process again in different circumstances.

Recommendations

Unfortunately, due to time constraints, and the number of researchers in this study, the results from this study are solely not enough. It would be recommended to make this study more credible, to repeat the lesson study process again under different circumstances. For example, it would be beneficial to the research to observe the use of talk partners in other subject areas, such as literacy and numeracy. It would also be constructive to complete the research in other year groups and other schools, as this research study only gave scope to observe in two lower Key Stage 2 year groups in the same school.

As School A had already incorporated the use of talk partners prior to this research study, recommendations have been made in which to enhance the use of them to benefit the children. From the results found from this small scale study, it would be recommended

that the teachers in School A promote the use of talk partners on a more regular basis. As the children mentioned in the second focus group interview (Appendix K), the rules of how to use talk partners can sometimes be forgotten, and regular reinforcement of how to utilise your talk partner would be beneficial to the children. This could be done by making a checklist collaboratively with the class on what makes a good talk partner, and using the checklist to refresh the children's memories on how to use a talk partner efficiently.

Another recommendation to increase the effective use of talk partners would be for the teacher to nominate a 'talk partner of the week' once a week. This would be awarded to a child who has not only been a great contributor to their talk partner discussions, but a good listener too. A certificate could be given out every Friday to reward the chosen child. These recommendations are just small steps in which to encourage the use of partners, but these, alongside further research in this area can hopefully improve pupil participation in the classroom.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Example of Completed Questionnaire

Name: Partner:

Was your partner a good learning partner?

1. Were they a good listener?



2. Did they share ideas?



3. How can they be a better learning partner next time?

She could have said a bit more.
Otherwise she was perfect.

Were you a good learning partner?

4. Were you a good listener?



5. Did you share your ideas?



6. Did you take it in turns to speak?



7. Did you enjoy working with your learning partner? Why?

*Yes, because we shared our ideas,
collaborated and had fun, luckily our egg
survived.*

Appendix B – Extract from Ethics Form



PG2 / E1 FORM

SECTION K: Declaration

The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.

In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's [Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice](#)

Signature of applicant:	Tara Watson	Date:	28/02/2018
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For students:

Teacher / Senior Mentor:	Amanda Nicholson / Kay Haskell
Signature:	<i>[Signature]</i> (Headteacher - Geraldine Foley)
Date:	28/02/18

Supervisor:	Dr. C. J. Lewis
Signature:	<i>[Signature]</i>
Date:	28.2.18

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (and have NOT completed Section H of this form) (where appropriate)
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Head of School.

RESEARCH STUDENTS AND STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name. You will be informed of the outcome of your claim by email; therefore it is important that you check your University and personal email accounts regularly.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

Appendix C – Example of Signed Consent Letter



Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child's school is a partner with Yr Athrofa at University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Carmarthen and Swansea. This school offers placements to students who are learning to be teachers.

The student-teacher in your child's class has been given the task of planning, teaching and evaluating one lesson so that he/she can develop specific strategies to improve their own teaching. As part of this, student-teachers will be observing the children's responses and asking some pupils their views on parts of the lesson. This is designed to inform students' own practice and support children's learning.

Any information collected would remain confidential, and both the school and the children would remain anonymous in work produced. The work undertaken would be in line with the University's ethical guidelines. If, at any time, your child does not want to share ideas, they would not be required to do so.

If you are happy for your child to contribute to the project, please complete the parental consent form below and return directly to the school as soon as possible. If you are interested in the outcome of this project or if you have any questions, please contact the University Partnership Office - partnership@uwtsd.ac.uk.

Yours faithfully,

Catherine Morgan
Module lead – The Enquiring Teacher

As Parent/Guardian of [redacted] (pupil name) I do / do not give consent (please delete) for my child to take part in this project.

Signed [redacted] (Parent/Guardian).

Date 27/2/18

Appendix D – Example of Children's Assent

Colour in the thumb to show if you are happy to participate
in our research study or not.
Thank you!

 

Colour in the thumb to show if you are happy to participate
in our research study or not.
Thank you!

 

Appendix E – Lesson Plan

 Canolfan Addysg Athrawon De-Orllewin Cymru			 The South West Wales Centre of Teacher Education			1B
Session Plan – Key Stage 2						
Name of trainee: Tara Watson				Session ref: 27/03/2018 Science		
Personal target(s) in relation to QTS:						
Year group: 4M		No. of learners: 30		ALN: Children to work with their learning partners		
Additional Adults: Mrs Nicholson						
Learning objective(s): to work collaboratively				Success criteria (to decide with the children): The egg must survive the fall The egg & its protection must fit in the bag You must not use more than your budget		
Links to previous learning: children have used talk partners previously						
Curriculum coverage (range, skills)						
Range To be given opportunity to study forces, e.g. gravity				Skills To outline the choice of success criteria To make predictions To make comparisons and identify trends or patterns To decide whether the method was successful To suggest how the method could have been improved		
Literacy(LNF) Explain information and ideas using supportive resources Contribute to group discussion and help everyone take part Help a group to reach agreement				Numeracy (LNF) Identify the appropriate steps and information needed to complete the task or reach a solution Manage money, compare costs from different retailers and determine what can be bought within a given budget		
DCF	Thinking Determine the process/method and strategy Generate and develop ideas Entrepreneurial thinking		ESDGC	YCC		
Key vocabulary(English/Welsh): Predict, budget, materials, discuss						
Time	Session activities, organisation and management					Key questions & Assessment for Learning opportunities
10 mins	Introduction To to stand with an egg in a sandwich bag and hold it above my head. Ask the children what will happen to the egg if I drop it. <i>Elicit – it will break</i> Drop the egg from above my head. <i>Egg will break.</i> Ask the children if they think there is a way to drop an egg again from above your head without it breaking. Talk with Talk Partners here. Ask children for their ideas (children to list ways and materials) Show them the materials available and ask them if they think they can do it now. Tell children they have a budget for this experiment of 40p. Show the price list of the materials. Tell children they can't go over on their budget.					How did you spend your budget? Why did you choose these materials? What do you think will happen to your egg? How can we make it a fair test?
40 mins	Main activities Children to go to their tables with their Talk Partners and discuss what material they want to buy with their money. They have a worksheet to complete to show what materials they used, how much money they have spent out of their budget, what their egg bag will look and their predictions. Children can draw a face on their eggs and name them. Children to buy materials within their budget and fill their bag with their eggs and materials and seal them when ready. Once all children have filled their egg bags, the children will come together on the carpet. Each pair are to stand up and to tell the class how they spent their budget, what materials they used in their egg bag and explain why they chose those materials. Teacher to stand up and drop the bag from the same height, and whole class to see whether their egg survived.					How do you think you could improve your chance of your egg surviving next time?
5 mins	Plenary Using lollypop sticks, ask children questions regarding the experiment; Why do you think some materials worked better at protecting the egg than others? If you did this again, would you use the same materials again? Why? If you did this again without a budget, do you think you could make your egg survive?					

Appendix F – Lesson Study 1 Checklist Observer

Checklist Observer

Observer: *Nia Town*
 Date: *27.03.18*
 Time Scale: *1 hour*

Context: How does the use of talk partners improve pupil participation in a lower KS2 classroom?

	O (middle)	C (lower)	I (higher)
	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3
Level 1 – Low activity			
Level 2 – A frequently interrupted activity			
Level 3 – Mainly continuous activity			
Level 4 – Continuous activity with intense moments			
Level 5 – Sustained intense activity			
Leuven Scale			
Involvement scale level			
Well-being scale level			

Notes

O	C	I
Child 1	Child 2	Child 3
Very excited talking with talk partner about what they are going to choose. arguing with partner what name. Rock / Paper / Scissors to get jobs. - working well together.	letting her partner do most of the decisions. listening to her partner. letting partner do writing & talking. working well together.	Telling her talk partner. taking on role of leader. Sharing her ideas. Asking teacher questions. She chose the name. chose items. Bossing her partner & taking control. working well together. listening. Did the talking.

Appendix G – Lesson Study 1 Observation Schedule

Observation Schedule
Observer: Nia John Date of observation: 27.03.18 Lesson/Subject: Science - egg drop challenge. Time: 1pm.
Introduction: Children all talking with their talk partners & answering questions. Very excited. Whispering about what they are going to cheer. All engaged and on task. They chose materials then went up to pick. ~~decided~~ decided with talk partners what they are going to cheer.
Main Activity: 1 partner came up to spend money - all very sensibly. Putting together their eggs well - working well and engaged - taking in turns and listening - helping each other. Working sensibly. Some children doing writing, some doing writing together.
Plenary: Came up with their partners and explained their eggs before dropping. Some children taking on role of spokesperson. All class listening well & enjoying watching egg drop.
Other notes: Lesson over ran a little - should make timings less next time.

Appendix H – Transcript from Focus Group Interview (Lesson Study 1)

What are talk partners?

I: Friends, classmates who you sit next to for a week. You talk to them, and if we're stuck we ask them

What do you think about talk partners?

C: I think they're really handy because if you get stuck on something you can ask them for help

I: I think they also can be sometimes bad because sometimes talk partners can just tell you the answer. I don't think that's good because they're supposed to help you figure out the answer and get there and not tell you.

O: I think talk partners are there to help you when you're stuck on your work and they're not to tell you the answers, they're to tell you how to do it. With your writing maybe, they could read through it and say you could improve on this, but you're very good at this.

G: I think they're meant to help you with your work, not give you the answers but give you little hints to the method, that sort of thing. I think that they can be helpful sometimes, but sometimes not that helpful.

Did you like working with your talk partners?

G: If they're a good talk partner, yes.

O: Sometimes, they can nag you to help them or tell you the answer, I'll tell them how to work it out but they'll just ask for the answer instead.

I: Not always, sometimes you want to work on your own. Sometimes it's hard to explain to your talk partner what it is, and you just want to get on with your own work sometimes.

Do you think you could have done the task today without a talk partner?

C: I couldn't have done without my partner as she had really good ideas and without her my egg probably would have smashed.

I: I probably could have done it by myself.

What makes a good talk partner?

G: Helping them, being cooperative, helpful, patient and don't tell you the answers, friendly and calm.

I: Working together, collaborating, not telling each other the answers but helping them get there. Maybe they're climbing the mountain, showing them the path to get to the top, but not getting them up there.

O: Sometimes people are shy, and good talk partners can give them a bit of encouragement, ask them what do you think about this? Do you like this?

Do you think having a talk partner helps you understand things?

G: Depends on how good your talk partner is at the different things you're doing

Do you think having a talk partner helps you complete the learning objective?

I: Not always, sometimes you just want a bit of peace and quiet, you don't want someone saying 'I don't know what to do, help me'

Does having a talk partner make you more likely to answer questions on the carpet?

O: Depends on who they are, because if they're struggling, they might want us to help them and they can't really help us if they don't know the answer. So it depends if they're up at the top, or not really.

Do you think you would prefer to change them or have the same one every week?

C: I'd rather have a different one every week because say if you were struggling and your talk partner was struggling too, then you probably couldn't help them hard questions. So if you change, you can have a different person each week.

What are the bad things about talk partners?

O: Sometimes if they're nagging you to tell them the answers all the time it isn't the best talk partner in the world. It's better to have a good talk partner.

What are the good things about talk partners?

O: They can help you out when you're struggling.

Lessons on your own or with talk partners?

O: It depends on the talk partner. Sometimes I like a bit of peace and quiet.

G: Yes and no

I: Lessons on my own because I like a bit of quiet

C: Yes

Do you have any suggestions to make talk partner work better?

O: You could have like a table helper, so you've not got talk partners, but a table helper, they'll be there to help the ones who aren't there yet. You could nominate who could be the group helper. So having a group rather than partner. Then if you want a bit of peace and quiet you can then, and the other person can still get help.

I: My idea was to still have partners, but for people who sometimes struggle a bit, they could work with people who don't need as much as help. So you wouldn't have lots of people who could just get on with it and lots of people who need a bit of help. I think you should have a mixture of different people so like someone who finds it easier and someone who needs more help as partners. You shouldn't always be sitting by your friends. Also, I don't think its best if you're all boys and boys or all girls and girls all the time, sometimes it's nice to be with your friends, you should have a mixture. If I'm with my friends, I would probably just talk about stuff instead of the work. But I don't think you should always be with other people too because sometimes when you're just classmates not friends, you might not want to talk to each other as much, so you might not help each other much.

O: Maybe on a Friday you could have a break and sit by your friend, not like your bestest friend because you'll just talk about random stuff.

Appendix I – Lesson Study 2 Checklist Observer

Checklist Observer

Observer: Tara
 Date: 28/3/18
 Time Scale: 10:45pm

Context: How does the use of talk partners improve pupil participation in a lower KS2 classroom?

	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3
Level 1 – Low activity			
Level 2 – A frequently interrupted activity			
Level 3 – Mainly continuous activity			
Level 4 – Continuous activity with intense moments			
Level 5 – Sustained intense activity			
Leuven Scale			
Involvement scale level			
Well-being scale level			

Notes

Child 1	Child 2	Child 3
engaged very interested explained her egg to the class with confidence	telling her partner do all the waiting let her TP do all the talking in front of the class	very engaged completed a lot of the waiting after talking with his TP explained to the class with confidence

Appendix J – Lesson Study 2 Observation Schedule

Observation Schedule
Observer: Tara Date of observation: 28/03/18 Lesson/Subject: Science - egg drop challenge Time: 1 00pm
Introduction: All children engaged and talking with their talk partners. Very excited to start planning. Children discussing answers with talk partners before answering with lots of hands up. Keen to start the task.
Main Activity: All children very involved in activity. Talking with TPs about what they are going to do. Working well together but a bit more noisy and exuberant than yesterday. All interested in experiment.
Plenary: Children sat around carpet. All contributing to questions (eg. how can we make it a fair test?). Came up to front to explain what they did. Some children very noisy and disruptive.
Other notes:

Appendix K – Transcript from Focus Group Interview (Lesson Study 2)

Did you like working with your talk partners?

E: yes because we both had brilliant ideas for making it

A: no they were boring, and I didn't want to do what they did

T: no because she is annoying.

What are talk partners?

A: people who you work with and if you are stuck they can help you

T: they can help you if you're stuck

E: if you're doing your work and you get really stuck they will help you and you don't work with them when you're not stuck you only work with them when you're stuck

T: you don't ask the talk partners for any answers, only for helping you

What do you think about talk partners?

A: not that good because we have to be with a boy, she does it separately boy girl

E: don't do it randomly anymore

E: I think their good because if you didn't have a talk partner you would be stuck all the time

T: bad, because she's annoying (he likes it when he has a different partner)

Do you think you could have done the task today without a talk partner?

All: yes

Why?

T: I always do the hardest work so it's pretty easy

How do you think talk partners help you?

E: With hard work

A: when you're stuck and I'm a bit bossy because IE say can you help me with all the answers. Sometimes they just give me all the answers. Sometimes they help you work it out.

What makes a good talk partner?

E: if they don't always tell you the answers

T: if they don't tell you the answers, listen to you and help you when you're stuck

A: same as E. They should help you work it out. Be kind.

Do you think having a talk partner helps you understand things?

A: yes, because they help you when you're not listening and explain things

E: my talk partner always explains things to me

Does having a talk partner make you more likely to answer questions on the carpet?

E: yes

T: not really

A: yes, I go to them what is the answer.

E: I ask if they can give me a clue what the answer is

Do you like changing talk partners every week?

A: no

E: yes, because sometimes I have annoying talk partners that don't help and then next time I have a talk partner that does help

Do you think you would prefer to change them or have the same one every week?

E: change them because it would be boring sitting by the same person every day especially if it's a boy

A: if it's a girl then not change them if it's a boy change them. I like to sit by my friends

T: I want to just sit by my best friends forever

What are the bad things about talk partners?

T: when they don't help you and you really need help, sometimes when I come they don't explain what to do

A: when they don't help you, bossy

E: when you say one thing and your partner says another thing the annoying thing is when they don't agree

What are the good things about talk partners?

A: they don't annoy you, help us

T: they don't annoy you, help you, explain things when you need it

E: help you with getting the answers but don't give you the answers

Lessons on your own or with talk partners?

E: talk partners

T: on my own

A: both, it depends what it is, a mixture, if its design I'll do it on my own if its maths I like a partner

E: same as A ,because some works hard and some works not hard

T: I like doing it on my own

Do you have any suggestions to make talk partner work better?

T: listening and not annoying

A having your friends

E: helping you more

E: teacher telling rules because people keep forgetting what good talk partner work is

T: we have a poster on the wall to tell you how to work with your talk partners but not everyone looks at it

A: to sometimes work with talk partners and sometimes work by your self

T: I don't ever want to work with talk partners