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Action Research into the Pedagogy for the Transfer of Written Literacy Skills of e-FSM Learners Across the Curriculum

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requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (MA) Education (Teach First)*

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Abstract

It is universally acknowledged that literacy is one of the key skills to being a successful lifelong learner, however, those who come from more disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds often have poorer literacy skills compared to their more affluent peers. This phenomenon is not just limited to Wales, or indeed the UK. It has been observed internationally and has been acknowledged by the professional and academic communities. This action research examines the role of shared pedagogy in the transfer and development of written literacy skills across the curriculum. For years, governments and external agencies have looked into how national literacy strategies can be used to develop literacy skills across the curriculum and this has now taken centre stage once again in Wales with the Literacy and Numeracy Framework, and the development of the Curriculum for Wales 2022. This action research aims to look at how, already established pedagogies and resources in English teaching can be used across the curriculum to help transfer and develop the written literacy skills of those who come from more disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. At the end of this report, recommendations will be made to School X, suggesting how improvements and interventions can be put in place to successfully develop written literacy skills across the curriculum.

Key words: action research, literacy, curriculum for Wales, writing, Wales, LNF, KS3, English, pedagogy

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Declarations and Statements

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed:  (candidate)

Date: 01/04/2020.....

STATEMENT 1

This School Improvement Report is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA(Ed) Education Teach First

Signed:  (candidate)

Date: 01/04/2020.....

STATEMENT 2

This School Improvement Report is the result of my own independent work / investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A reference list is appended.

Signed:  (candidate)

Date: 01/04/2020.....

STATEMENT 3

I hereby give consent for my School Improvement Report, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed:  (candidate)

Date: 01/04/2020.....

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Table of Acronyms

Acronym/Phrase	Definition
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
EAL	English as an Additional Language Defined by the Welsh Government in the following stages: -Stage A – New to English -Stage B – Early Acquisition -Stage C – Developing Competence -Stage D – Competent -Stage E – Fluent
Estyn	Estyn – The Welsh Schools Inspectorate
LNF	Literacy and Numeracy Framework
e-FSM	Eligible for Free School Meals
n-FSM	Not Eligible for Free School Meals
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education – The English Schools Inspectorate
SIP	School Improvement Plan
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government

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0. Introduction

0.1 Purpose of the Research

Literacy is a critical skill to the development of learners in their education. Whether this be in traditional English lessons or across the wider curriculum, literacy is the essential skill to the communication of knowledge and the demonstration of higher level skills. This action research was undertaken to explore the role of developing and utilising written literacy skills in the wider context of the curriculum.

It is widely established in research that, on average, literacy skills of learners from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are often poorer and less well developed (Wales Centre for Equity in Education: 2014). The Wales Centre for Equity in Education (2014) states in their research that fundamental skills, such as literacy and numeracy, are often underdeveloped compared to their more affluent peers. The British Education Research Association (BERA: 2010) conducted research into this field which supported this view. BERA concluded, from their research, that children from the poorest and most disadvantaged homes are more likely to achieve the poorest academic outcomes. Although this research has looked at the role of disadvantage and written literacy skills from the Welsh perspective, this phenomenon is not isolated to Wales, or indeed the United Kingdom; this is an international problem.

One traditional approach by schools to tackle the underdevelopment of literacy skills in learners who come from more socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds is to utilise interventions to support the progress of key literacy skills. Anecdotal evidence supports the view that this has widely become the orthodox approach, however, in their research in 2010, BERA outlined a criticism of this approach. Specifically, outside of lessons interventions have overloaded schools with multiple intervention programmes (BERA:2010).

From an examination of the academic and anecdotal evidence available to the researcher, the rationale for this action research became clear: examine how pedagogy in lessons can be used specifically to enhance and transfer embedded written literacy skills of e-FSM learners outside of explicit English lessons. This action research set out to explore the following aims and objectives:

Aims

To explore and develop strategies for the transfer of written literacy skills across the curriculum and measure the success of these strategies on socio-economically disadvantaged learners progress.

Research Objectives

1. To develop a range of effective pedagogical strategies to transfer learner's written skills of literacy across to other areas of learning to aim to close the gap in the written literacy skills of socio-economically disadvantaged learners.
2. Compare the effectiveness of pedagogy on the transfer of written literacy skills from English lessons to other areas of learning.

Research Questions

1. How can English pedagogical strategies be transferred to other areas of learning?
2. How does the explicit focus on written literacy skills in lessons improve attainment of learners (from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds) in other areas of learning?
3. What impact can a shared pedagogy have on the effective transfer of written literacy skills across the curriculum?

0.2 School X Context

School X is a comprehensive school based in Newport in south Wales; It is under the direction of Newport Local Education Authority. The school has admission from 11-18 and is a community school with 969 learners on roll. Following on from the last Estyn monitoring inspection, the school is no longer deemed as requiring urgent improvement. As of 2018, School X has been seen as making huge step forwards in the quality of teaching and learning to the extent that in June of 2018, School X was included in a thematic study carried out by Estyn into excellence in teaching and learning. Internal data also supports this with 90% of lesson observations in the academic year 2016/17 being rated as good or excellent.

The school's demographic is representative of the suburbs of south-east Newport where the School X is located. 30.4 per cent of learners are eligible for free school meals – which is almost double the national average 16 per cent. Since the last Estyn inspection, the cohort has been through a change. The level of learners who are entitled to FSM has increased by almost 10 per cent and the school has seen an increase of learners who have English as an Additional Language (22.9 per cent), including a significant minority of Roma learners who have never attended mainstream education before.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Literacy across the curriculum

Literacy is a vital skill for learners to access the curriculum. From science to geography, learners need to be able to understand content and communicate their answers and thoughts through written and spoken English. Ofsted (2013) state in their thematic report on *Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools*, that 'literacy' is the mechanics of reading, writing, and speaking and listening. Lewis and Wray (2000), write in their work on literacy in the secondary school that there has always been a great deal of interest from the teaching profession, the general public, government agencies, the world of work and media, in issues concerning literacy. One of these key areas has been the teaching of literacy in secondary schools, particularly in Key Stage 3.

There have often been periods when government, the teaching profession and external agencies have taken a renewed interest in the role of skills and specifically, literacy. In 1975, The Department for Education and Science (1975) published the Bullock Report, or as it was more formally known, *A Language for Life*. In 1997, the UK government announced *The National Strategies*; a series of strategies to improve many areas of education, including the quality and delivery of these skills. However, Lewis and Wray (2000) state that these strategies always present the same issues for schools and those based in the classroom: the challenge of drawing up, implementing and monitoring the literacy action plans. The success of these different strategies has been difficult to compare. There are often problems concerning what is being compared, whether compatible measurements are being applied and whether comparable groups are being compared. However, academics and those who have designed and implemented these strategies continue to make comparisons as to their success. Lewis and Wray (2000) accepts that comparing statistical evidence of declining literacy standards over time can be a 'red herring'.

1.2 The underperformance of e-FSM learners

The need for improving literacy is not just that of a political policy strategy. Ofsted (2013), when making the case for literacy improvements, stated that ‘promoting literacy across the curriculum is urgent and essential’. They went on to state that ‘too many pupils still emerge from our schools without the confident and secure literacy skills they need to thrive as adults’ (Ofsted: 2013, 6). This is especially important for learners from more disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. The Wales Centre for Equity in Education (2014) highlight the fact that those who come from these disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, often have poorer literacy skills compared to the more affluent peers. This raises the potential question: do these poorer levels of literacy skills hinder these children, not just in school, but for the rest of their adult lives?

It is well documented that levels of achievement are often associated with levels of deprivation (Ofsted: 2013, 6). In a 2009 study by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, 33% of pupils who were known to be eligible for free school meals achieved a C or higher in GCSE English compared to 62% of non-FSM learners. This is a trend that is not just unique to England but is replicated across the United Kingdom. The study went on to identify a 32% gap between those in areas of greatest deprivation who achieved Level 5 at the end of Key Stage 3 and those in areas of least deprivation (DCSF: 2009a). Another report commissioned by DCSF went on to recognise that professionals working with school leavers who were not in education, employment or training (NEETs) acknowledged that these learners often had experiences of school that were not positive. The report went on to highlight that for some, this was because they disliked school, for others, it was related to their inability to engage with education or having poor basic literacy skills or learning difficulties (DCSF: 2009b). These reports highlight the lifelong implications of poor literacy skills and, from the academic literature available, it is widely agreed that poor literacy skills disproportionately affect those who come from more disadvantage socio-economic backgrounds.

1.4 Developing and transferring skills in a cross curricular approach

The Welsh Assembly Government, in 2013, introduced *The Literacy and Numeracy Framework* as their latest strategy to tackling issues with literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum (WAG: 2013). The LNF was introduced for pupils between the ages of 5 to 13 as there were concerns that some children were falling behind their peers (BBC: 2015). In 2015, the Welsh school's inspectorate, Estyn, judged the provision to build literacy skills in learners as 'adequate' across the majority of schools in Wales (BBC: 2015). Two years after the introduction of the LNF, a report by Estyn stated that there had been insufficient progress in the provision of literacy skills across the curriculum in school; they stated more needed to be done (Estyn: 2015). Standards for skills in schools were only being judged as excellent in 1 in 9 schools across Wales. Estyn noted that:

- a. A majority of schools do not have a clear understanding of progression in standards of pupils' literacy
- b. There was insufficient access to training for staff
- c. The short lead in period for the roll out of the LNF did not give schools long to prepare well enough

Although the LNF was introduced by the WAG to develop the role of literacy across the curriculum. This was not their first foray into this field. In 2012, a report published on the *National Literacy Programme* stated that the aim of the programme was to create a 'step-change in standards of literacy' across Wales (WAG: 2012). This was the foundation programme that set about creating the LNF. However, 3 years later, Estyn went on to say Wales was not on track to achieve the aims outlined. The report did highlight some of the common themes that arise whenever the provision and quality of literacy skill is discussed in developing strategies, or reports by inspection bodies: there was too much variation in practice; schools implemented strategies in different ways; and there was not enough time dedicated to the professional development of staff in schools that was focussed on literacy.

With the broad, sweeping changes that are currently taking place in Wales with regard to the curriculum, skills have taken front and centre stage. The new Curriculum for Wales 2022, along with creating new Areas of Learning and Experiences, had put the LNF and the Digital Competence Framework at the centre of all subject areas. This means the key skills of Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Competence should be interwoven across every AoLE. These new changes, and the criticism that Estyn and many academics have made about the role out of new strategies and intervention, has led to the aims of this research: how can the already developed written literacy skills that have been taught to learners in English and literacy lesson be utilised and exploited in other lessons. In practise, how can skills that are taught in English allow learners to fully access the curriculum in other subjects like history?

2. Methodology

2.1 Action Research

A great deal of research that is undertaken in the educational field is often conducted by those who are still practicing members of the teaching profession. One such method that has become popular, due to its ability to be trialled in the classroom and reviewed in an academic way, is action research. Action research has many different definitions but for the purpose of this research, the definition used will be that of Ebbutt (1985: 156). Ebbutt states that action research is a systematic study that combines action and reflection with the intention of improving practice. Although this definition was published in 1985, it is a very clear and concise definition that explains the purpose of this methodology: action and reflection. The timeframe and scope of this research is small scale and action research allows for the small scale changes and interventions to be trialled in the classroom and reflected on in cycles; assessing the nature of the changes made by the practitioner. In the teaching profession, action research is widely used to evaluate teaching methods and there is a wealth of academic research on its positive impact on pedagogy. Holly and Whitehead (1986) have stated that within teaching, action research allows for the evaluation of teaching methods, by replacing a traditional method by a discovery method. Although Holly and Whitehead published this evaluation of action research some 35 years ago, the core principles of action research still remain the same today. The purpose of this research will be replacing a pedagogical strategy with something else used in another area of learning to evaluate the success in the transfer of written literacy skills of learners in non-English lessons.

Action research allows for the implementation and evaluation of a new 'discovery method' through cycles of research. The stages of each cycle are plan, act, observe, reflect. This all occurs in a systematic and rigorous way.

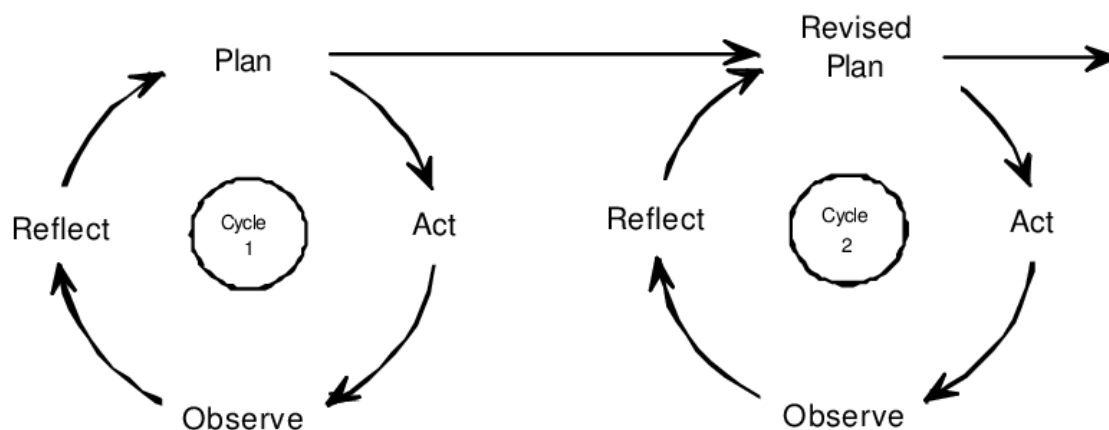
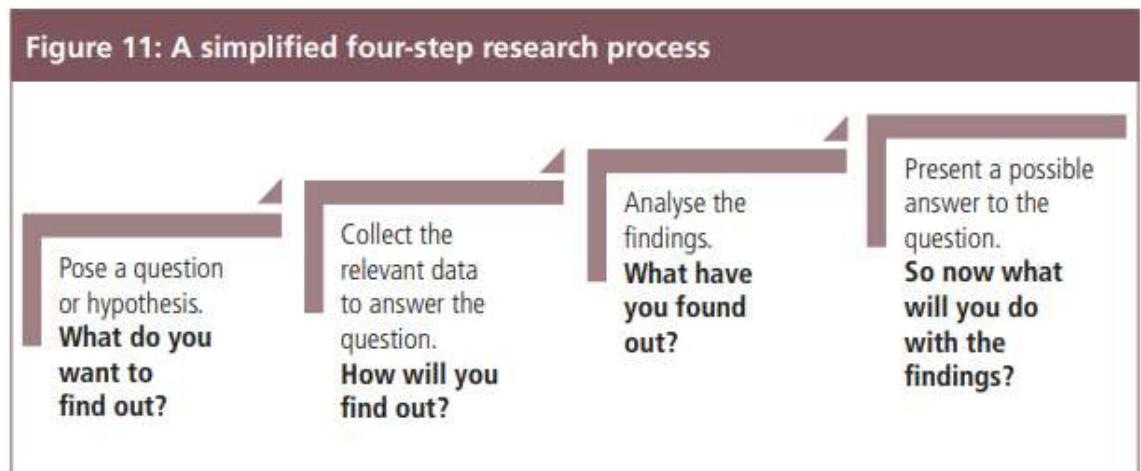


Figure 1 Action research cycles

Action research allows for practitioners to adapt and refine through each cycle. The reflection stage of each cycle is vital to the refining of the research before the next cycle begins. In figure 1, you can see how these processes occur. The benefit of this methodology is how it bridges the gap between research and practice. The planning stage of each cycle brings the academic research into the field. Somekh (1995: 340) states that this bridging of the gap between research and practice –used in action research – strives to overcome the perceived failure of research to improve practice. This perceived bridging of the gap between academic research and improvement in practice has seen action research become the method promoted by the Welsh Government. In a report disseminated to education professionals in 2015, the Welsh Government stated ‘action research puts the practitioner in the role of researcher and focuses on improving their practice by exploring the particular setting, how they teach and how well learners learn (WAG: 2015).’

Within education, there are many organisations dedicated to the use of action research to improve practice in the classroom; Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) and Expansive Education Network (eednET) are just two examples. However, although action research is a methodology that has become recommended in the field of education since the 1940s, it is not without its disadvantages. If constructed badly, action research can become all action and no research. This is where it becomes vitally important to understand the very definition of action research: bridging the gap between practice and research. Practitioners must link their action to research; hence, the planning stage of each cycle. Each planning stage should focus on reviewing both professional and academic research into the topic of the research

project. To overcome this problem, those bodies which propagate the use of action research have stressed the importance of linking academic research to the design of action research.



Source: Grigg (Wales Centre for Equity in Education, 2016)

Figure 2 Taken from WAG report *Effective use of data and research evidence*

Above, you can see the recommendation from the Welsh Government on how to structure a piece of educational research. Designing a methodology is step 2. This is the stage when, if using action research, practitioners should begin to link research to practice. This should overcome the criticism of action research being all action, no research.

This is not the only criticism of action research as a methodology. Action research, although producing results that are effective and useful for the context of the group being studied, can struggle to become generalizable. The external validity of action research can often be low as the methodology does not allow for the research finding to always be generalised outside of the context of the specific group. However, this could be argued as a disadvantage of most practitioner based research methodologies. The study of people in 'the field' – especially children and classroom – is context specific; what works for one, does not work for another. Although this statement comes from the anecdotal experience of teacher-researchers, attempting to take a 'scientific' approach to research can aim to help with this issue. The multifaceted nature of the environments that action research occurs in does present this problem. Kemmis (1997) alludes to this in the suggestion that there are many schools of action research, specifically because of this.

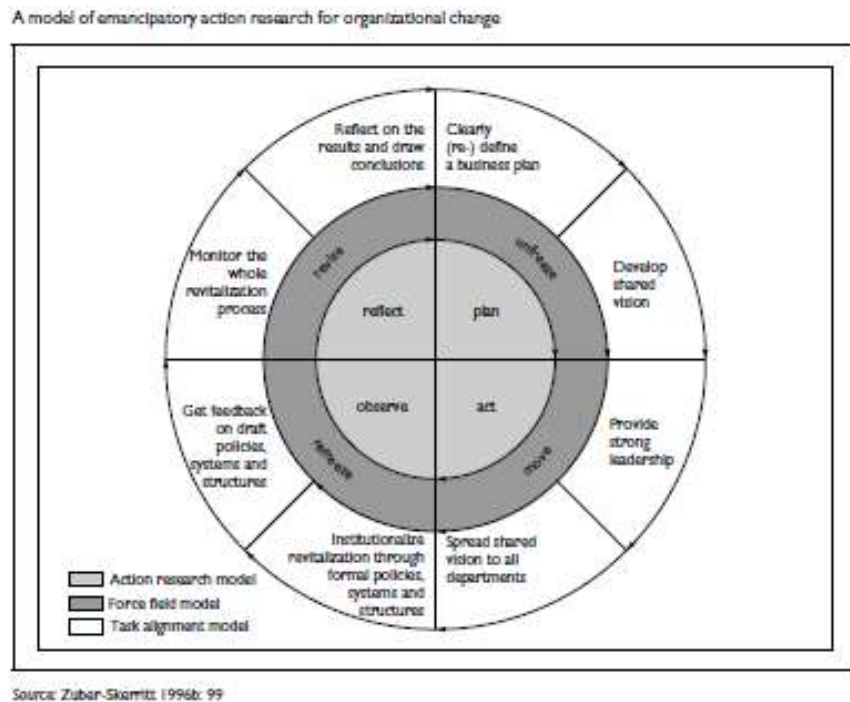
If the view of action research was taken from a more philosophical point of view, rather than that of a scientific point of view, Habermas' work could be called upon. Carr and Kemmis (1986: 162) have done just this; they state that action research is more of a 'self-reflective enquiry' by a participant who undertakes action to improve their practice. This very approach address what are perceived to be the downfalls of action research as a methodology: low generalisability and context specific action. This is supported with what Kemmis and McTaggart (1992: 22-25) state are two of the very elements of action research. Firstly, action research is participatory – it involves the improvement of one's practice and secondly, it develops the self-reflective spiral of the practitioner-researcher.

Taking this view that action research is participatory, Weiskopf and Lake (1996: 132-133) states that not every participant in the research needs to be doing the same thing. The practitioner – as the researcher or facilitator – raises the issues to be investigated. They, although involved in the research, are the raiser of issues and look for change, which links action research to the sociological theories of change. Action research does not just involve power to the practitioner raising a research question; it is a democratic process. Viewing action research through the lens of critical theory, action research is democratic process in terms of power relationships as power is given to the participants as action research can be viewed as an empowering activity (Giroux 1989). This viewpoint can go some way to addressing the disadvantage of action research being the tension and power relationship between researcher and participants; however, this can only exist if research is designed well.

2.2 Methodology

Action research has been chosen for this project as the methodology allows for the change and improvements at a local level (Cohen *et al.*: 2010, 297). The methodology allows for research to be conducted *in situ*. The research project will be replacing a traditional pedagogical practice with a discovery one to measure the effectiveness of the pedagogy on the transfer of written literacy skills to other areas of learning. To do this, more than one cycle will be uses as refinements to the discovery method will be made after each cycle. It is anticipated that the timescale of this research project will allow for 2 cycles to take place. This methodology had

been guided and informed by the Zuber-Skerritt (1996) model of emancipatory action research for organisational change. This model will be adapted for classroom practice.



As outlined in the ethics form submitted to the ethic committee, each cycle of this action research will have 4 main stages that have been outlined by Lewis (1946; 1948): planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

During the planning stage of cycle 1, the research will begin by identifying an issue from previous work and assessments to be researched. In the case of this piece of research, it is the poor and inconsistent use of literacy skills across subjects, specifically in this case, between English and history lessons. The planning cycle will then involve the reviewing of the current practice used in English and history to see what is being done differently and ask the self-reflective question: what can be changed in terms of pedagogy? To ensure that this action research does not fall into the trap of being all action and no research, a review of the current literature surrounding effective pedagogy techniques that have an impact on the transfer of written literacy skills in learners who are from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds has been carried out.

Below, you can see the time scales used for each cycle in this action research

Cycle 1 – Stage	Actions	Date
1. Planning	• Conduct a review of literature regarding the transfer of written literacy skills across the curriculum amongst e-FSM learners • Review the current practice in English, literacy and history lesson to assess the difference in pedagogy used to exploit written literacy skills. Observe pedagogy. • Gain consent for learners and staff by issuing staff and learner letters. • Carry out staff questionnaires to see gain views on the confidence of none specialist in using literacy in their subjects • Carry out learner questionnaires to see how learners currently feel their written literacy skills are used in areas of learning. • Compile a series of lessons (using the strategies linked to the literature review) leading to an assessment focus on the use of written literacy skills.	Late April/ Early May 2019
2. Acting	• Deliver the series of lessons to the selected year 8 history class • Learners will complete the assessment at the end of the series of lessons	Mid May 2019
3. Observing	• Review selected sample of e-FSM learners work against previous assessment in history and against the ability of their written literacy in	Mid May 2019

	English lessons. This will be the collection of data through content analysis.	
4. Reflecting	- Note any improvements in written literacy in history work. - Use the question: does this level of written literacy match their ability in English/literacy lessons?	End of May 2019

Cycle 2 – Stage	Actions	Date
1. Planning	- Review the outcomes of cycle 1 practice and assess the difference in pedagogy used to exploit written literacy skills. Observe pedagogy. - Conduct a refined review of literature regarding the transfer of written literacy skills across the curriculum amongst e-FSM learners with the questioned raised in cycle one as the guiding force. - Compile a series of refined lessons (using the strategies linked to the new literature review) leading to an assessment focus on the use of written literacy skills.	Early June 2019
2. Acting	- Deliver the refined series of lessons to the selected year 8 history class - Learners will complete the assessment at the end of the series of lessons	Mid-June 2019

3. Observing	Review selected sample of e-FSM learners work against previous assessment in history and against the ability of their written literacy in English lessons. Review work against the previous cycle to compare any changes. This collection of data will be in the form of content analysis.	Mid-June 2019
4. Reflecting	- Note any improvements in written literacy in history work. - Use the question: does this level of written literacy match their ability in English/literacy lessons?	End of June/ Early July 2019

2.3 Research Participants

The main research participants in this study are a history class of 24 year 8 learners. This class has been chosen through convenience sampling as it is a class that the researcher teaches for history. Within the class are 4 learners who are e-FSM. These 4 learners will be the participants for this study. All learners in the class will be taught using the new discovery method and take part in the questionnaire; however, the data analysis will focus solely on these learners who are e-FSM as this research is focused on improving the transfer of written literacy skills amongst learners who are from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Consent will be gained for all in the class.

2.4 Data Collection

Data collection will occur in two stages in the cycle. The first stage, the planning stage, will see the use of questionnaires amongst staff and learners to collect data on current levels and use of literacy across the curriculum. This will be used to inform and direct the review of pedagogy and literature in the planning stage. Questionnaires have been chosen for this data collection as they provide structured quantitative data, and can be administered without the researcher present. The results of these questionnaires are often straightforward to analyse (Wilson and McLean:

1994). The questionnaires that have been designed for this research are in the form of questions with responses given from 1 to 10 on a confidence scale. This has been chosen as it provides a degree of differentiation in responses but maintains the collection of data that can be coded for analysis.

Once collected, the data from the questionnaires will be used to generate a framework and lens through which a literature review can be carried out. The observations of the researcher (that written literacy skills are not being transferred across areas of learning) may, at this stage, be confirmed across many areas of learning or indeed, just isolated to some. This will allow for a more refined approach to the review of literature.

The second questionnaire to be administered will be the staff questionnaire. This has been compiled in the same format as that of the learner questionnaire. However, the aim of this questionnaire will be to assess the confidence of non-specialist teachers in the teaching and assessing of written literacy skills.

The second stage of data collection will occur in the acting and observing stages. Data will be collected in the form of a summative assessment at the end of this series of lessons that were taught using the discovery technique researched and formulated from the literature review. This work will be reviewed against previous writing assessments in history and English. A content analysis of the level of technically accurate and varied sentence skills will be carried out on the three different sets of assessments:

Participant identifying number:	English writing assessment	Pre-research history writing assessment	Cycle 1 history writing assessment	Cycle 2 history writing assessment
Accurate simple sentences				
Inaccurate simple sentences				
Accurate compound sentences				
Inaccurate compound sentences				
Accurate complex sentences				
Inaccurate complex sentences				
Correct use of parenthesis () -- "				
Incorrect use of parenthesis () -- "				
Use of paragraphs				
Basic punctuation mistakes (Cap let. Full stops)				
Correct use of advanced punctuation : ; " " !				
Incorrect use of advanced punctuation : ; " " !				

Data collection will be in the form of content analysis. From the coding table above, you can see that for each piece of work analysed in this study, there will be 12 coding categories. This will not only assess the use of key written literacy skills; it will also provide quantitative data on the levels of accuracy used. This coding frame has taken the approach indicated by Anderson and Arsenault (1998: 102) who suggest the quantitative nature of this data collection method is 'at its simplest level, [it] involves counting concepts words or occurrences'. This method of analysis will provide numerical evidence for improvements in the use of written literacy skills.

Summary of data collection methods for research questions

1. How can English pedagogical strategies be transferred to other areas of learning?
 - a. *Staff questionnaire – Staff confidence in use of literacy pedagogy*
2. How does the explicit focus on written literacy skills in lessons improve attainment of learners (from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds) in other areas of learning?
 - a. *Staff questionnaire – staff confidence in use of pedagogy*
 - b. *Learner questionnaire – self-reflection on use of literacy across the curriculum*
3. What impact can a shared pedagogy have on the effective transfer of written literacy skills across the curriculum?
 - a. *Content analysis of use of written literacy skills – has a change in pedagogy had an impact on technical accuracy and use of written literacy skills?*

3. Data Collection

Participants Profiles

Below is a brief outline of the educational profiles of the participants in this action research. These have been included to give some context to the data discussed in this section of the report.

Participant 6

Participant 6 is an e-FSM learner. In terms of their national curriculum level in English, this learner is a 5b. They have shown good written literacy skills in English but this has not been shown in other subjects. This learner has no additional learning needs. The attendance of this learner is 90 per cent so this may become a problem during this action research. This learner has been at School X since year 7.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is an e-FSM learner. In terms of their national curriculum level in English, this learner is a 5c. They have shown a good range of sentences structures in their English work but often have inaccuracies in their sentence construction. This learner has an additional learning need in the form of moderate general learning difficulties. This learner has an attendance of 97 per cent. They are sometimes supported by a learning support assistant. This learner has been at School since year 7.

Participant 7

Participant 7 is an e-FSM learner. Participant 7 has the lowest written literacy skills amongst the 4 participants in the sample. This is evident from their baseline scores. In terms of their national curriculum level in English, this learner is a 4b. This learner has an attendance of 96 per cent. Participant 7 has been at School X since year 7. They have no additional learning needs.

Participant 2

Participant 2 is an e-FSM learner. In terms of their national curriculum level in English, this learner is a 5c. They have shown good literacy skills in both reading and writing. This learner has English as an additional language. This learner has an attendance of 94 per cent. Their home language is Romanian. This learner was initially supported by a bilingual teaching assistant in Key Stage 2, however, they have now reached a level of competency that does not require this

support. Participant 2 joined School X at the beginning of year 8 after transferring from another high school outside of the local authority.

3.1 Baseline

This action research aims to look at how the written literacy skills of learners can be transferred to other subjects and areas of learning outside of English. To do this, at the start of this action research, baseline scores were determined to evaluate the levels of written literacy of the test participants and to provide quantitative data of the gap in literacy between English and non-English subjects. To gather this data, a recent written assessment was taken from each of the participants in English and history, and a content analysis of basic written literacy skills were carried out. The research was looking for the following areas: simple, compound and complex sentences constructed accurately; simple, compound and complex sentences constructed inaccurately; use of parenthesis; use of advanced punctuation¹; use of paragraphs; and basic punctuation mistakes². The reason for choosing previous assessments was the time constraints of carrying out this action research over 2 cycles. Below, you can find a bar graph of the accuracy of sentence types in the baseline assessments for the participants of this research.

¹ Defined as those required to move into the level 5, 6 strand of the national curriculum () ;:!"

² Errors in the use of capital letters and full stops.

Baseline Scores for Incorrect Sentence Construction

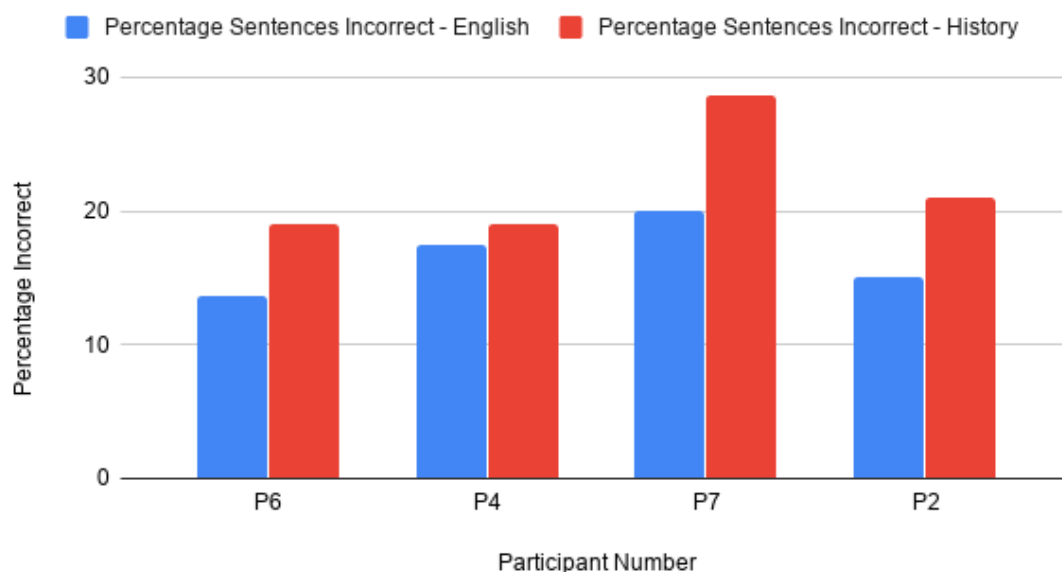


Figure 3 Bar Graph showing the percentage of sentences incorrectly constructed in the baseline assessments

The graph shows a clear trend that had been noticed anecdotally by the researcher. From the graph, you can see that across all four participants in the study, the percentage of their sentences constructed inaccurately is higher in their baseline history assessment than in their English baseline assessment. For some participants, like participant 4, this is only a small variation; however, for participant 7, this variation is almost 10 per cent. This highlighted the issues concerning the transfer of basic written literacy skills. Learners were using the same written literacy skills in their work but they were not using them to the same accuracy as when explicitly taught in English lessons. The graph also demonstrates that participants who were likely to have a higher percentage of inaccurate sentences in their English assessment, would also have this in their history assessment; for example, participant 7 has the highest percentage of inaccurate sentence constructions and the largest increase in percentage errors when completing the history assessment. One thing this could show is for those who already have weaker literacy skills in English, the gulf in their application of this skills outside of English gets wider and hence, puts them in a weaker position to transfer these skills without explicit instruction.

Accurate simple sentences, accurate compound sentences and accurate complex sentences from baseline English and history assessments.

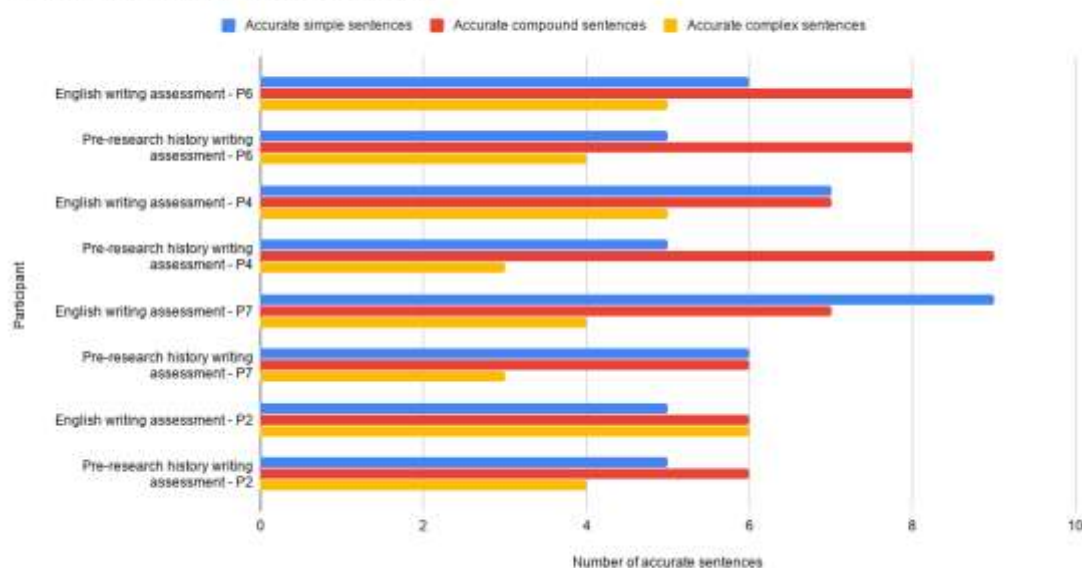


Figure 4 Comparative bar graph showing the number of accurate sentence types used in the baseline assessments

The graph above highlights another interesting point that arose from the content analysis of the baseline assessments: participants are less likely to use the more complex sentence types in their assessments outside of English. The graph above shows a trend in learners being less likely to use complex sentences accurately in in their history assessment compared to their English assessment. Two conclusions could be drawn from this: 1. Learners are not actively thinking about their sentences types when they are focussed on just the content of their work; and 2. Learners are not actively transferring their written literacy skills that they have demonstrated in their English assessments. This data could demonstrate that learners are less likely to use their more complex literacy skills outside of English.

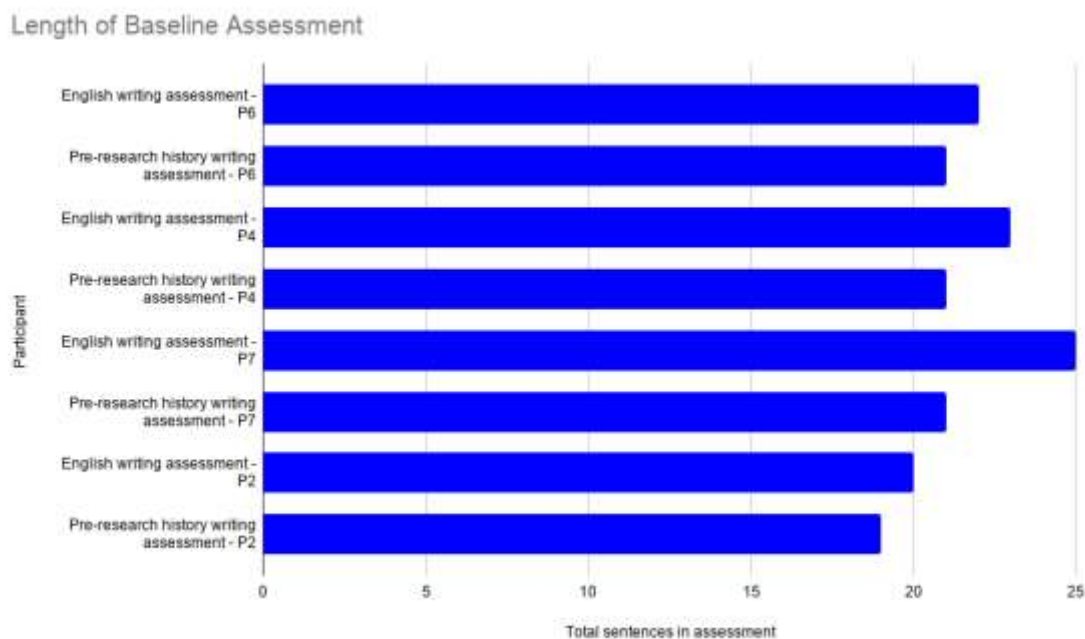


Figure 5 Length of baseline assessment

The two baseline assessments also raised one final trend between the two assessments: learners were more likely to produce a shorter piece of work in the same time frame in history than in English. From the graph above, you can see that every learner produced a piece of work that was shorter for their history assessment compared to their English assessment. One reason for this could be the lack of transferring of planning skills in subjects outside of English. Again, one key thing that the data keeps highlighting is that the gap in literacy skills in the baseline English and history assessments is widest in the learners with the poorest starting point in terms of literacy skills.

3.2 Cycle 1

From the analysis of the data collected from the baseline assessments in English and history, 3 key areas became apparent to explore in the first cycle of the action research: 1. Accuracy of sentence types; 2. Use of more complex sentence types; 3. Length of writing. As part of the first cycle of this action research, the participants were exposed to direct teaching of sentence construction as part of their lessons in history in

preparation for a written assessment on the Battle of Hastings. The aim of this process was to tackle the first issues of improving the percentage accuracy of sentence construction and sentence variation, with the addition of more advanced sentence types.

When planning their essays, learners were exposed to the same pedagogies used in their English lessons. As part of the classroom activities in preparation for the essay, learners used the same resources and materials they use when writing in English lessons. This exposure to the same pedagogy was aimed at transferring the skills taught and practiced in English lessons to their work in history; taking the same approach pedagogically was aimed to tap into the teaching of literacy skills. One aim of this was to counter what the WAG report stated was a lack of understanding of literacy skills of teachers across the curriculum. If this pedagogy could be tapped into by non-literacy specialist the provision and quality of literacy across the curriculum could potentially improve.

Learners used some of the following resources that that had been developed and utilised by the English team at School X and had proven successful in improving written literacy.

A sentence should have a subject/verb combination

The subject is the noun or pronoun (thing) the sentence is about

The verb is the being or doing word

KS3 Level 3
or GCSE
Grade F skill



Football is played during the winter.

John was upset.

The problem is not going away.

The pattern is that the subject usually starts the sentence and the verb usually follows it.

*Tip - If there is more than one subject/verb combination in a sentence, there needs to be a connective/conjunction or full stop separating them – **NEVER** a comma*



I am angry. The money has been stolen. (correct)

I am angry because the money has been stolen. (correct)

I am angry, the money has been stolen. (wrong)

Figure 6 Simple sentence construction literacy resource

The resource above focuses on teaching and explaining the subject verb combination in simple sentences. This resource was developed by the English team at School X and is one of the main approaches in the teaching of basic literacy skills through the use of a common and shared language towards written literacy skills.

Coordinating conjunctions for compound sentences						
F	A	N	B	O	Y	S
for	and	nor	but	or	yet	so

Sentence + **FANBOYS** + sentence = compound sentence

I believe mobile phones are useful but they can be a distraction.

KS3 Level 3
or GCSE
Grade F skill

*Tip – Only use one **FANBOYS** conjunction per sentence and try to avoid starting sentences with them*

*Tip – You don't need a comma before a **FANBOYS** conjunction*

Figure 7 Compound sentence construction literacy resource

Similar to figure 6, this resources are part of the same series of literacy lessons developed by the English team at School X. This resources focuses on the teaching of accurately constructed compound sentences using the shared language of coordinating conjunctions to teach the accuracy of joining main clauses together.

<u>Subordinating conjunctions for complex sentences</u>				
Because	Since	Although	If	Though
When	Unless	Whenever	As	Before

(there are lots more!)

Main clause + Subordinate clause = complex sentence

Since he was injured, Jim walked with a limp.

Jim walked with a limp because he was injured.

Jim, after he was injured, walked with a limp.



Tip – Use a comma to separate the clauses unless the subordinate clause is at the end

Figure 8 Complex sentence construction literacy resource

The resource above also focuses on using the approach of shared language to teach the rules behind complex sentences and using the subordinating conjunction. This resource focuses on teaching the correct use of the subordinate clause and punctuation that accompanies it.

Following the explicit teaching and recapping of these sentence types in the planning lesson leading up to the assessment, learners were encouraged to use these resources during their writing. The written assessment they produced – an essay on the Battle of Hastings – was in the same format of that of the baseline to allow for a more controlled comparison of skill. Below, you can see a comparative bar graph to reflect the outcome of the 4 participants in cycle 1 compared to their baseline history scores.

Percentages of inaccurate sentence construction - Cycle 1

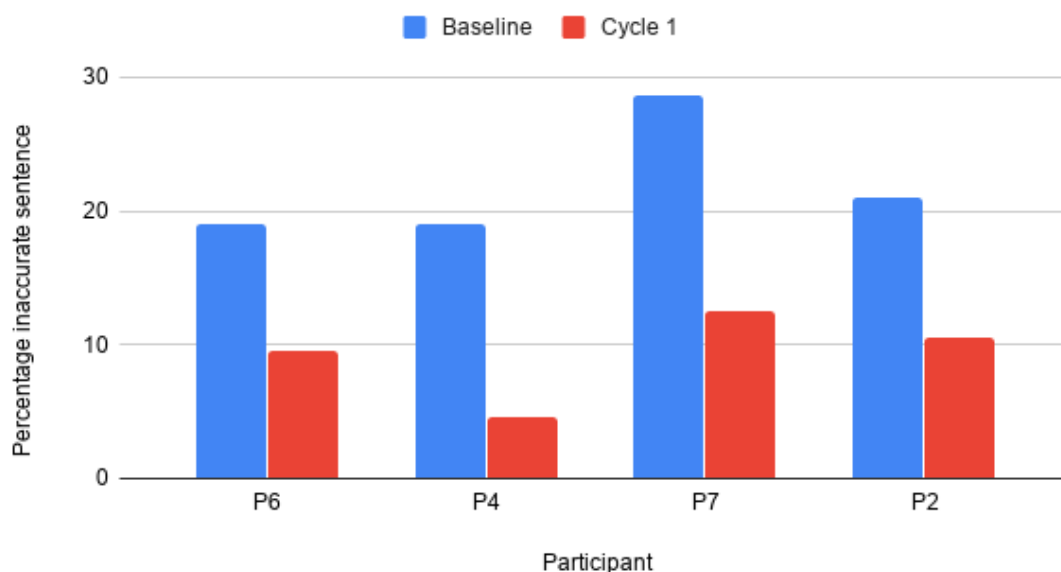


Figure 9 Bar graph to show the percentage of inaccurate sentence construction in history baseline and cycle 1

There is a clear decrease in the percentage of inaccurate sentences constructed in the assessment following the explicit teaching of written literacy and the use of English specific pedagogy in the preparation of the history assessment. Participant 6 and participant 2 saw a decrease in the inaccuracy of their sentence construction by almost 50 per cent, while participant 4 and participant 7 saw a greater than 50 per cent decrease in the inaccuracy of their sentence constructions.

One of the observations that can be drawn from this comparison on sentence construction after cycle 1 is that participant 7 (a learner who had the highest percentage of inaccuracies in their sentence construction in both of the baseline assessments) has been the learner from this sample who has benefited the most from the explicit use of English pedagogy and resources in their preparation for a history assessment. The decrease in inaccuracies has been greatest for this learner. This comes in comparison to the differences for participant 7 between the English and history baselines which saw this learner being the most affected by not transferring their written literacy skills across to other areas of learning in the curriculum.

Comparison of sentence types from baseline and cycle 1

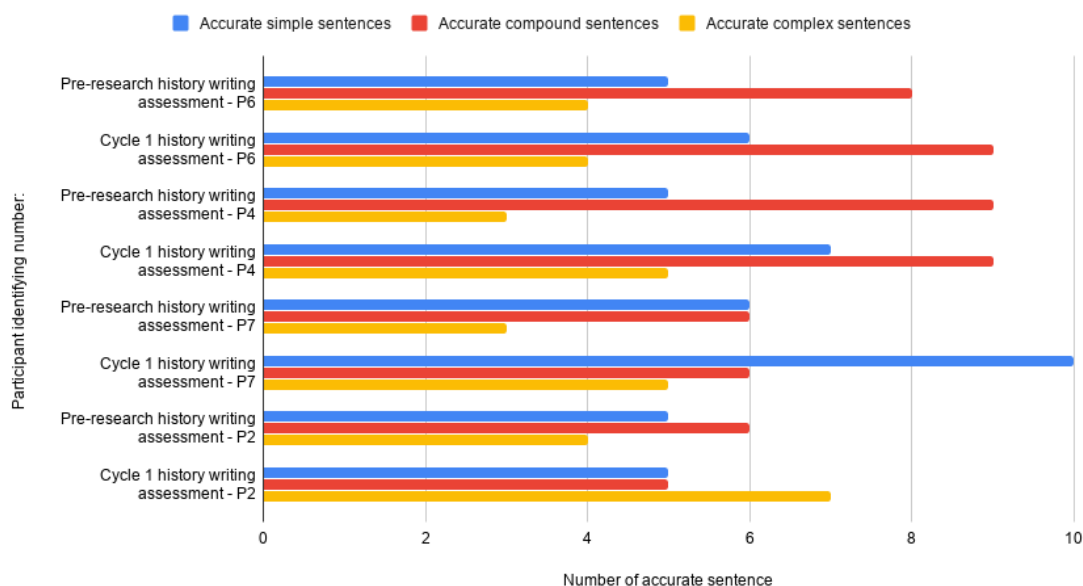


Figure 10 Range of accurate sentence in baseline and cycle 1

The data above shows a clear trend in the increase of accurate sentence construction of the more advanced sentence types. The graph demonstrates that amongst the 4 learners in the sample, all of them used more advanced sentence types in their written work during cycle 1. The data shows that the use of accurate complex sentences by participants in cycle 1 was greater than that of learners work in the baseline. This is important as the use of accurate complex sentences to communicate meaning is one of the key criteria for learner to reach beyond a Level 5 in the National Curriculum. As mentioned in the Ofsted report published in 2013, learners from more socio-economical disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to achieve the standard of a Level 5 in English by the end of Key Stage 3 compared to their more affluent peers (Ofsted: 2013). The use of more advanced sentence types from the specific instruction using English pedagogy did not have an impact on the length of the work that learner produced.

Length of writing in baseline and cycle 1

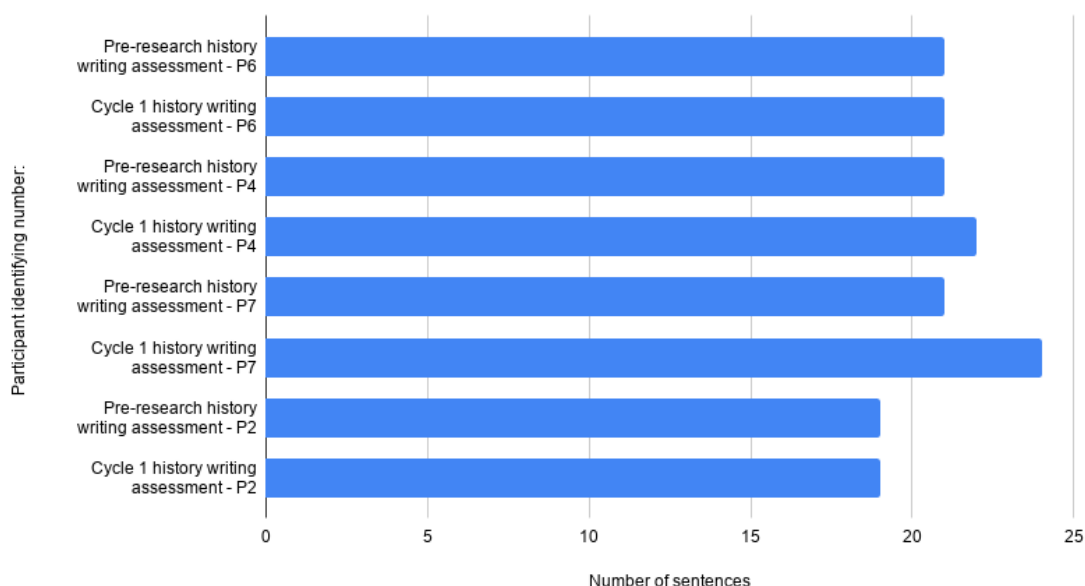


Figure 11 Length of writing in baseline and cycle 1

The graph above shows that there were only marginal growths in the length of the assessments in both participant 4 and participant 7. However, it is worth noting that there were no decreases in the length of work produced by the participants in the sample. Cycle 1 has shown an increase in the accuracy and nature of sentences constructed but not at the detriment of quantity of work.

The success of the intervention put in place during cycle 1 can be measured from this data in 2 different ways: quantitatively, using the content analysis of accurate sentence construction and sentence types; and through a learner voice survey to measure the confidence of learners in using their written literacy skills across the curriculum. It is apparent from the quantitative data that learners have clearly improved in their accuracy, range of sentence types and use of more advanced sentence construction.

Learner voice survey confidence levels - post cycle 1

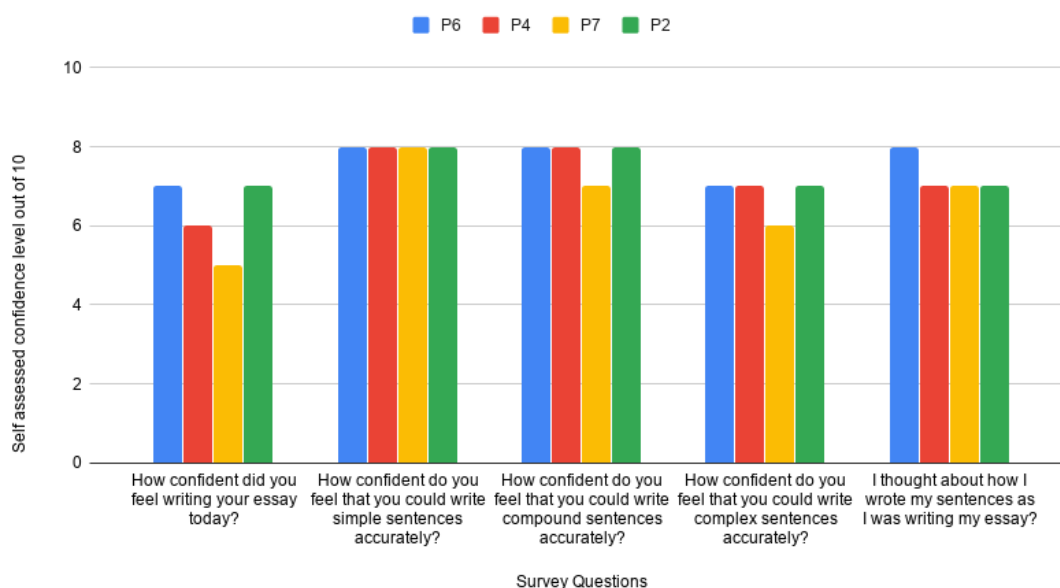


Figure 12 Confidence levels of learners post cycle 1

The confidence of learners in using their written literacy skills across the curriculum was measured through a questionnaire administered after cycle 1 was completed. Learners were asked on a scale of 1 to 10 how confident they felt on certain aspects of their written literacy skills during their history assessment during cycle 1. As data was collected through previous assessments for the baseline, this research did not have access to pre-action research questionnaire data to compare confidence levels to before the intervention. However, this data can be used to match the levels of confidence learners believe they had in their literacy skills compared to the accuracy of their writing. If the data for participant 7 is examined, it is apparent that this learner recognises, through their confidence levels, that they are still not producing wholly accurate compound or complex sentences. This is reflective in their work carried out in cycle 1 where they had 14.3% of their compound sentences inaccurately constructed and 33.4% of their complex sentences inaccurately constructed. Although this learner is still making mistakes in their sentence constructions, from the explicit instructions taught through the pedagogy leading up to the cycle 1 assessment, participant 7 is beginning to recognise areas of their own learning that they need to develop. This pattern is also reflected in participant 2. Participant 2, although creating a piece of work of the same length as the baseline assessment, has more sentences constructed accurately. This shows that sentence construction was more secure in the piece of work this participant produced for cycle 1. In their response to the

questionnaire, they rated themselves as an 8 out of 10 when asked the questions 'did you think about your sentence construction during this piece of work? Again, using these confidence levels shows that the participant is starting to recognise their own ability and how they are using key literacy skills to secure their sentence constructions.

Cycle 1 has highlighted some key areas of success and some areas that can still be explored and refined in the next cycle. Successes from this cycle were the improvements related to participants transferring their written literacy skills and securing their sentence constructions. Learners also began to secure and increase in quantity the level of more advanced sentence types. Two things that were not noted in this cycle were improvements in the use of more advanced punctuation and the length of extended pieces of writing. Writing length is now one of the areas of exploration in the interventions and pedagogy in cycle 2.

3.3 Cycle 2

Following on from cycle 1, a refinement of the interventions took place. The data from cycle 1 showed successes in the transference of sentence construction skills and sentence ranges, however, the interventions did not address the issues of the variations in length between the baseline English assessment and the baseline history assessment. The data showed a small variation of length in two participants work but this was not consistent in all participants works, like the data showed for sentence construction and variation. A new round of interventions would now be put in place to address this specific issue related to variations in the length of participants work in the English baseline, the history baseline and cycle 1 assessments.

To address the issues of length of writing, cycle 2 would build on the success of the interventions in cycle 1. The interventions used in cycle 1 would be used again in cycle 2 but a new, further addition to these interventions would be added to address how to enable learners to transfer the written literacy skills they had already demonstrated in the English assessment to the history assessment in cycle 2. This would be based on the same principle of the interventions used in cycle 1: shared pedagogy and language related to written literacy skills. One observation made concerning the planning of written work in both the baseline history assessment and the cycle 1 assessment was that learners were not planning their work as comprehensively as they did in their English assessment. The participants did plan their work in a way which allowed for them

to successfully use paragraphs to structure their work, but they were not planning their work well enough to ensure they were covering the content that they had demonstrated they had an understanding of in assessment for learning exercises in the class. To address this issue, the planning method that had been taught in English lessons was to be added to the programme of pedagogy employed before the next written assessment for English

The planning method that was to be used would be the following:

Extended Writing Plan / Title _____

Purpose: why am I writing this? _____

Audience: who am I writing for? _____ Formal / Informal

Format: what am I writing? _____ Do I need subheadings? Yes / No



Paragraph	Plan (add discourse markers and adverbial phrases if it helps)
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Key vocabulary – use and spell each word correctly	Discourse Markers or Adverbial Phrases Firstly, / Secondly, / Thirdly, / In addition, / Furthermore, / Moreover, / In conclusion, / To conclude,
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The planning proforma above was devised as a method for learning to organise their ideas and develop a systematic way to planning any extended piece of writing. This proforma is used in the English team at School X for any extended piece of writing that requires more than 2

paragraphs. Again, this planning method takes the same approach as the pedagogy around the idea of sentence construction: the role of shared language to enable learners to transfer their written literacy skills from teacher to teacher, and as such, from subject to subject. The above planning method can be broken down into three key parts: the PAF, ideas, and sequencing and content.

The PAF section gets learners to break down what they are being asked to do in their extended writing question. The P stands for purpose. The learners will need to identify why they are being asked to write this. For example, are they being asked to write informatively, in an argumentative way, to persuade or to advise. This will enable the learner to understand the how to write. Secondly, the learner must identify the audience; who are they writing to. This will enable the learner to identify the tone and register of their writing: should they be writing in a formal or informal tone. Finally, learners need to identify the format of their writing. This will make the learners identify what they are writing. For example, an essay, letter, diary entry or leaflet.

The second section of this proforma requires learners to mind map all their ideas related to the topic they are writing about. The concept behind this section of the planning method is to get learners to begin to think about the different aspects of the question or extended piece of writing they have been asked to complete. This is the section where they will collate prior learning. They will then move on to the third section which is related to their ideas mind map. In this section, learners will need to sequence their ideas in a plan and draw on the content for their paragraphs. Learners will need to draw on their prior learning and knowledge to bring out the content required for each section of their writing. The aim of this section is to get learners to group content and ideas by the paragraph rule TiP-ToP (time, person, topic, place). This planning method is, once again, based on the principles of shared language.

With the planning method now included in cycle 2, cycle 2 consisted of a series of English based pedagogical interventions that aimed to transfer the written literacy skills of learners in the sentence construction and variation, and planning for length. This would all be based on the principle of a shared common language and pedagogy based on the proven effectiveness in the English baseline assessment. These interventions would now include the explicit recapping and

teaching of sentence construction and variation, and a planning method developed by the English team.

Accurate sentence types in English baseline and history cycle 1 and 2

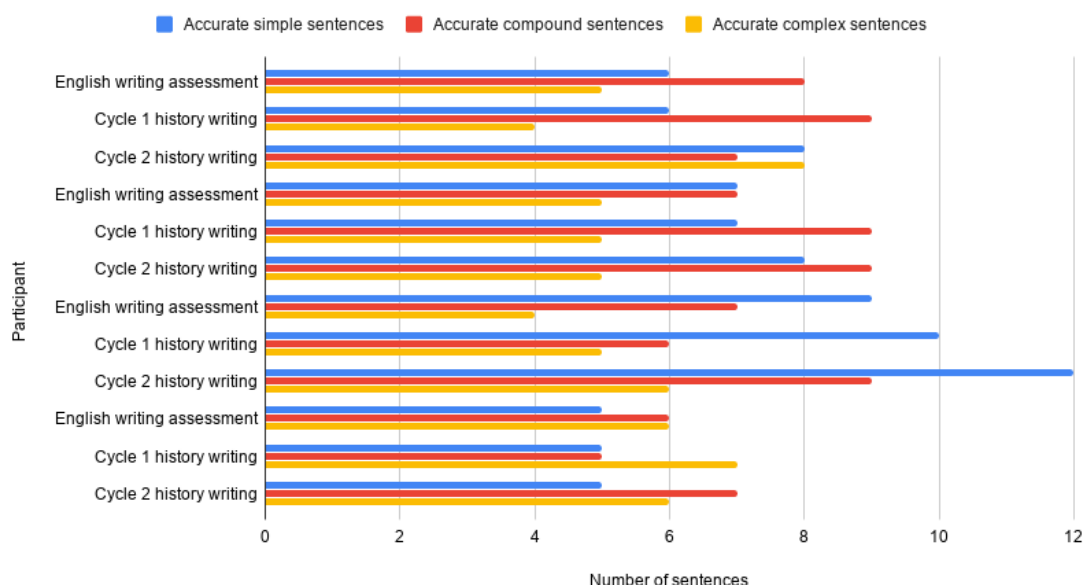


Figure 13 Accurate sentence types in English baseline and cycle 1 and 2

The bar graph above shows a clear trend in learners use of accurate and more advanced sentence types. The trend shows that's amongst all the 4 participants in this sample, all learners increased the amount of accurate complex sentences. What has become apparent from this data is that through every cycle, the amount of these more advanced sentence types has been increasing. One observation worth noting is the progress that participant 7 has been making throughout the cycles in this action research. Although the data shows that participant 7 tends to have an overreliance on the use of simple sentence (this is always the highest in terms of quantity for sentence types), their use of compound and complex sentences have been increasing. In comparison to the original English baseline assessment, participant 7 has used a greater number of compound and complex sentences in their cycle 2 assessment, outperforming their work in their English assessment.

In terms of the transference of written literacy skills of the participants of this action research, the data has shown an improvement on the accuracy of sentence construction and variation

with each cycle. When comparing each learner with their original baseline English scores, commentary can be made on how successful each learners was in bringing their skills across from their English lessons. What has become apparent for each learner is their ability to use skills that have been embedded through explicit teaching.

Participant 6 has shown, in their work in cycle 2, a greater number of complex sentences constructed accurately than their original English assessment; however, they have also shown a much greater balance in sentence types in their work, including in their original assessment. This could show that this participant is showing a greater understanding of variation of sentence types alongside the transferring of skills from English to other areas of learning.

Participant 4's data shows an interesting pattern in their use of complex sentences. In all of this participant's work, they have produced the same quality of accurate complex sentences. Although the quantity of sentences in their work has increased – and as such the number of accurate sentences produced – these have been limited to only simple and compound sentences. This may just be a coincidence in the data or it could show this learner has an overreliance on these sentence types. However, what is interesting to note is that participant 4 has increased the level of complex sentences from their history baseline to match their English baseline. This goes to show there has been progress in the transfer of sentence variation skills in work outside of English.

The use of more advanced sentence types in participant 7's work has greatly improved. The data shows that participant 7 has a much greater number of compound and complex sentences in their work, outperforming their original English baseline scores. However, this learner still has a much larger number of simple sentence in their work, suggesting a reliance on the more simplistic sentence types to communicate their ideas and understanding. In comparison to their original English baseline scores, this pattern is consistent with the participant's level of written literacy skills. The data from the work produced by this participant in their cycle 2 assessment has shown that they are bringing their level of written literacy skills to the extended pieces of work they are producing in subjects other than English. The data has consistently shown that participant 7, the participant with the lowest base in written literacy, has constantly benefited the most from explicit recapping and teaching of literacy before any extended work.

The final participant in this study, participant 2, shows a slightly different trend in terms of their use of more advanced sentence types. Their use of accurate sentence construction is not outside of the trend seen by all the participants in this sample; however, their use of complex sentences dipped in cycle 2. This participant's number of complex sentence has indeed risen to match the number of accurate complex sentences seen in their original English assessment. Looking at their data on accurate sentence construction and sentence types, it is clear that this learner has also successfully transferred their knowledge and skills of sentence types to their extended writing in subjects outside of English.

Percentage inaccuracies - History Baseline, History Cycle 1 and History Cycle 2

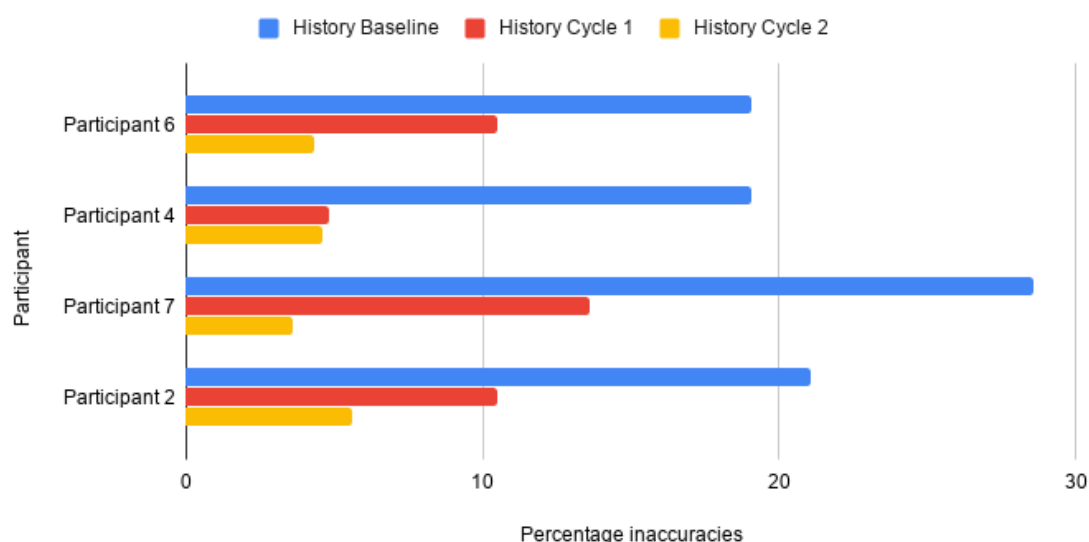


Figure 14 Percentage inaccurate sentence types in History baseline and cycle 1 and 2

Another factor to consider when examining the impact of the transfer of written literacy skills is the level of inaccuracies in sentence construction compared to the original baseline in history: have learners brought their understanding of sentence construction (part of their written literacy skills) to their work in subjects outside of English. In the bar graph above, you can see the data related to each participant's levels of inaccuracies in their work. For comparison, the data has been presented as inaccuracies as a percentage of all the sentences they constructed in their extended writing assessments. A clear trend has emerged: learner's levels of inaccuracies in their sentence constructions has decreased with every cycle. In cycle 2, learners

have all made a substantial decrease in their inaccuracies compared to their original history baseline assessment. This goes to show that the quality of their written communication and the use of their literacy skills has improved in this subject. The data shows that the average percentage point decrease in the inaccuracies of sentence construction was 17.4 percent. The percentage change between each learner can be seen below in the table:

Participant	History Baseline	History Cycle 1	History Cycle 2	Change Baseline to Cycle 2
Participant 6	19.04%	10.52%	4.34%	14.7%
Participant 4	19.04%	4.8%	4.6%	14.44%
Participant 7	28.57%	13.6%	3.6%	24.97%
Participant 2	21.05%	10.5%	5.6%	15.45%
			Group Average	17.39%

The data above shows a similar pattern identified when examining the range of sentence types used by learners. Participant 7 has made the most improvement in their work in term of accuracy of sentence types. Participant 7 has gone from being the learner who had the highest levels (28.57 percent) of inaccuracies in their writing in the history baseline, to being the learner with the lowest level (3.6 percent) of inaccuracies in the writing. This is a change of 24.97 percent. This data has shown that participant 7 has benefited the most from the pedagogical interventions put in place. This participant score is over 7 percentage points greater than the sample average. This suggests that, although this learner started from the lowest base, they have benefited the most.

It is interesting to note that the participants, barring participant 7, levels of change are within one percentage point of each other. Most participants are somewhere within the 14/15 percent change in their sentence construction accuracy. From this small sample, a conclusion can start

to be tentatively drawn. By teaching the explicit sentence construction skills within the framework of the schools existing strategy towards written literacy skills, an improvement can be seen in learners that amounts to around 14 per cent in term of accuracy. It is worth noting that the data gathered in these cycles was from a very small group of e-FSM learners, and this would need to be replicated on a larger scale to ensure its validity.

Although cycle 2 has gone some way to solidifying the conclusion that using existing English pedagogy in subjects other than English can see an increase in written literacy skills through the transfer of already embedded skills, cycle 2 did not have the intended impact on the length or quantity of extended writing that was hoped for.

Length of writing in English baseline and history cycle 1 and 2

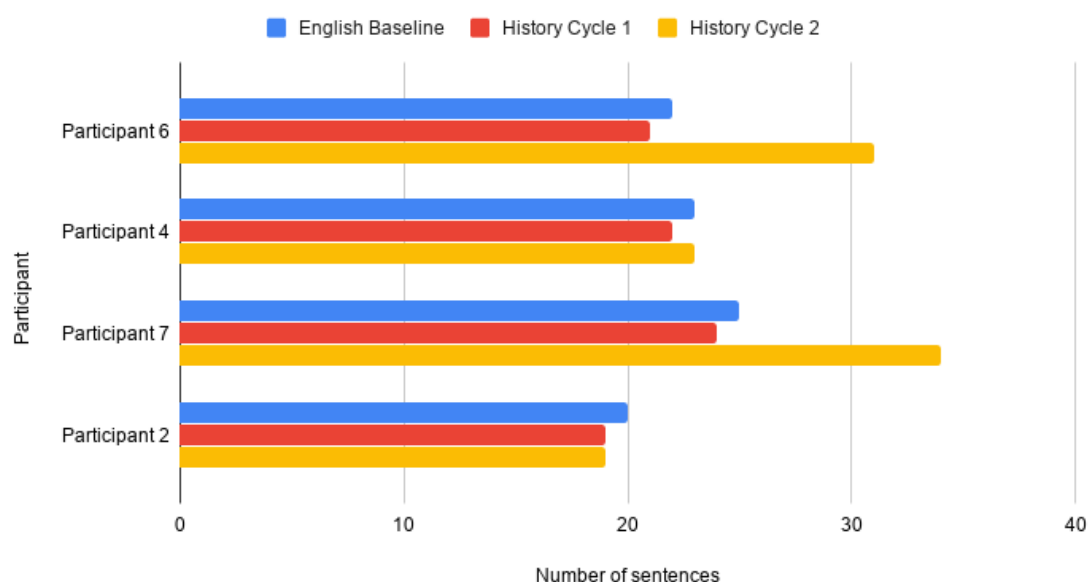


Figure 15 Bar graph showing the length of English baseline and history cycle 1 and 2

The graph above shows that in cycle 2, 3 out of the 4 participant increased the length of their extended writing to meet or exceed the length of their English baseline assessment. In 2 cases, participants 7 and 6, they made substantial improvements in the quantity of their work. It is worth noting from the data that participant 2 did not meet or exceed their quantity of work produced in their English baseline assessment. However, an interesting observation can be made in the form of the lengths of work of both cycle 2 and cycle 1. These piece of work were

the same length. Participant 2 has produced in 2 pieces of written work, after their history baseline, that are longer.

Participant 7's data is interesting to look at. Participant 7, from the baseline data regarding their use of accurate sentences showed to be having less secure literacy skills and this was evident in the history baseline where the data showed that they were more disadvantaged by the lack of explicit instruction regarding literacy in their work. However, through the course of cycle 1 and 2 of this action research, participant 7 has gone on to show that with the explicit instruction, they are transferring the literacy skills regarding sustained writing and have benefited the most from explicit instruction on these topics.

The data in the graph above has compared the length of each participant work to their baseline English assessment scores to look to an increase in the length of their extended writing. This data has shown that 2 participants did increase the length of their work to exceed the English baseline. However, to get a more accurate picture of the extent to which learners have increased the quantity of their work, this should be compared to the baseline scores for history to get a better picture of the transfer of these planning skills for writing to other subject areas outside of English. This data can be found in the graph below.

Length of writing in sentence - baseline history, cycle 1 and cycle 2

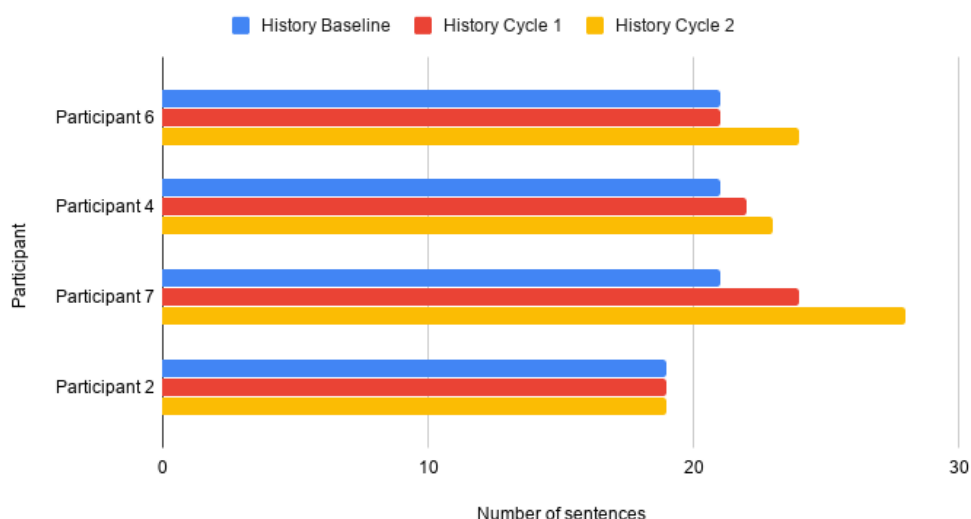


Figure 16 Length of writing: baseline history , cycle 1 and cycle 2

The graph shows that for most learners planning did see an increase in the length of their writing in cycle 2. For all but one learner, there was also an increase in length on the baseline and cycle 1 piece of writing in cycle 2. Participant 2 seems to be an anomaly to the trend observed in the others work. Something interesting to note is participant 2 seems to have the same length of work in all of their pieces of writing. This could suggest they are following a writing system that has not been taught during this invention and, as such, acting as an extraneous variable to this cycle of the action research, or it could just be a coincidence. This would need to be examined further for a better understanding.

Participants 6, 4, and 7 have all made progress in the length of their writing compared to their history baseline scores in cycle 2. To assess the impact the planning intervention had on the length of each participants writing, the data from cycle 2 needs to be compared to cycle 1. Again, participants 6, 4 and 7 made progress in this area. It should be worth noting that for participants 4 and 7, this was a continued trend. These two participants had both made progress in terms of the length of their work in cycle 1; participant 6 did not make progress in cycle 1. This raises a question: to what extent was the planning method successful. It is clear from the data that it was successful for participant 6 in cycle 2, but for both participants 4 and 7, they did see a growth in the quantity of their work and this could have been part of the trend already established by focusing on their sentence construction. To understand this further, this will need to be investigated in more depth. This is a potential avenue for further action research.

To examine the confidence of learners, the same learner voice survey was conducted following cycle 2. Below is a bar chart, comparing the data from cycle 1 and cycle 2.

Responses to learner voice in cycle 1 and 2

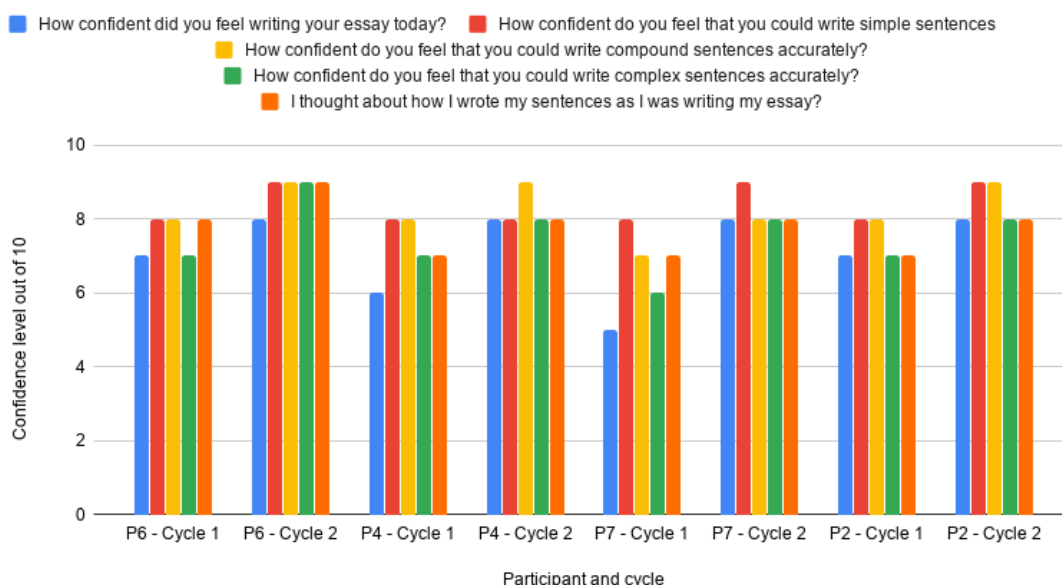


Figure 17 Comparative bar graph looking at responses to the learner voice survey in cycle 1 and cycle 2

The data above shows a clear increase in the self-assessed levels of confidence each participant had regarding their use of written literacy skills in cycle 2. This trend in the data shows that learners were more aware of their written literacy skills as they moved through the different cycles in this action research. What is clear is every learner's overall confidence in the writing of their essay increased by at least 1 point from cycle 1 to cycle 2. This trend was also reflected in the question 'I thought about how I wrote my sentences as I was writing my essay'. Participants, across the board, saw an increase in their confidence levels with regards to their sentence constructions.

If this confidence data is taken in conjunction with the data surrounding percentage inaccuracies of sentences construction, it is clear that learners are beginning to self-identify their ability in terms of written literacy skills. All participants saw a large ongoing decrease in their percentage errors in sentence constructions and this corresponded with own judgement of their confidence when it came to being aware of their sentences accuracy. This raises a possible area for investigation surrounding the metacognition of learners.

3.4 Staff Survey

The final data collected for this action research was the staff survey. The purpose of this staff survey was to gain an understanding of the confidence of the teaching body at School X to use explicit instruction surrounding written literacy in their pedagogy. This survey was created in response to a report by Estyn in 2013, suggesting staff were unaware of where learners should be in terms of the standards of literacy they are expected to have at certain stages of their education. This action research was carried out by a researcher who teaches both history and English. They are a trained English specialist and have many years' experience teaching basic and complex written literacy skills. This allowed for them to be familiar with the written literacy skills and the pedagogy to be used in the interventions. However, this might not always be the case depending on the confidence and understanding of written literacy skills by individual teachers.

In the same report published by Estyn in 2013, they highlighted that not enough time is spent in initial teacher training or continued professional development surrounding literacy across the curriculum. For the interventions that were deployed by the researcher in cycle 1 and cycle 2 to be successful, teachers would need an understanding and confidence in using these skills to embed them in their pedagogy. As Estyn (2013) highlighted, this may not be the case for teacher across the curriculum, and especially in subjects outside of English. To investigate this, a staff survey was deployed.

Staff survey - results

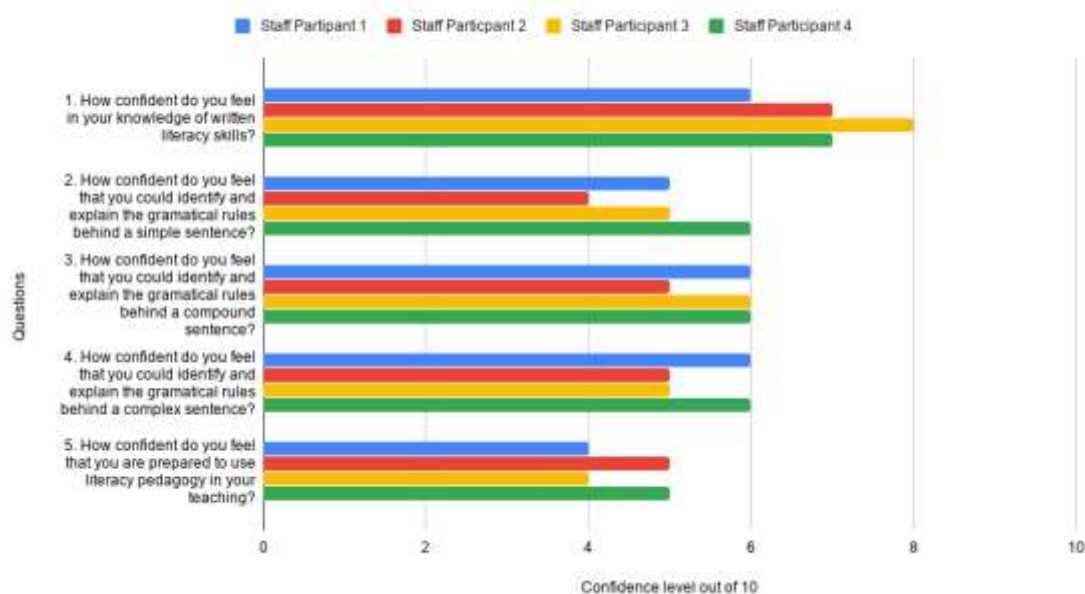


Figure 18 Results of staff survey

The staff survey was given to 5 members of staff who are trained and teach in a subject outside of English. Staff participant 1 is a trained history teacher; staff participant 2 is a trained science teacher; staff participant 3 is a trained geography teacher; and staff participant 4 is a trained religious education teacher. These subject were all chosen to form part of the staff survey as these subject all have areas of their subject which require high use of written literacy skills. The staff survey was self-assessed, with staff participants rating their answers to the 5 questions on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest confidence score and 10 being the highest.

The staff survey brought up some key observations that must be addressed in order to evaluate the effectiveness of this intervention in the classroom for all teachers, and especially teachers who are not specifically trained in the teaching of English and literacy. There is a trend in the data that shows members of staff were more confident in their own literacy skills than they were in their ability to explain the rules and embed pedagogy in their lessons to support this. This raises a key issue for the design of this intervention and the ability of this style of pedagogy to allow for learners to transfer their written literacy skills across the curriculum: if members of staff were not confident in their ability to teach and support learners with a shared language approach to the use of written literacy skills, the success from this intervention may not be mirrored on a wider scale across the curriculum.

The survey raises an important issue: do staff have a key understanding of basic literacy and hence, able to support learners in using theirs? From the viewpoint of Estyn in 2013, this was judged as adequate in a majority of schools across Wales. This would not allow for any successful shared language and pedagogy. The results of the staff survey seem to support the view taken by Estyn. The data shows that staff had an average confidence score of 54 per cent in their ability to identify and teach literacy skills in their lessons. This would go to show that, although staff feel confident in using literacy and role modelling this to the class, they do not feel confident in their ability to support learners in using their own. To overcome this issue, a focus would need to be placed on the upskilling of staff member's ability to identify and teach the basics of written literacy in line with the shared language and pedagogy used within the English team. Having this shared language and approach has been shown, through cycle 1 and cycle 2, to produce benefits

for learners in their ability to transfer their written literacy skills across the curriculum. This notion will form the basis for one of the recommendations from this report.

4. Evaluation and Impact

The data collected throughout this action research has varying levels of success in the transfer of written literacy skills. It is important to define the starting point to measure the success and impact of the interventions put in place through cycle 1 and cycle 2. At the beginning of the action research, baseline scores were taken from an English and history assessment. The purpose of carrying out a content analysis of the English assessment of the participants was to create a reference point for the written literacy skills of learners. The history baseline test is the most appropriate data to be used for the analysis of the impact of the cycles. This is ensuring that the cycles are measuring to what extent the written literacy skills of learners have been transferred outside of English. The aim of the cycles is to see learners match their written literacy skills outside of English with their baseline scores.

At the outset of the research, this action research set out the following objectives and questions:

Research Objectives

1. To develop a range of effective pedagogical strategies to transfer learner's written skills of literacy across to other areas of learning to aim to close the gap in the written literacy skills of socio-economically disadvantaged learners.
2. Compare the effectiveness of pedagogy on the transfer of written literacy skills from English lessons to other areas of learning.

Research Questions

1. How can English pedagogical strategies be transferred to other areas of learning?
2. How does the explicit focus on written literacy skills in lessons improve attainment of learners (from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds) in other areas of learning?
3. What impact can a shared pedagogy have on the effective transfer of written literacy skills across the curriculum?

Research question 1 looked at how could English pedagogical strategies be transferred to other areas of learning. The data collected shows varying degrees of success for transferring these pedagogies. As highlighted in the data collection, learners were exposed to English pedagogy and resources that had been used in lessons to prepare learners for the written assessments in cycle 1 and cycle 2. One of the key questions that the data raised whilst trying to answer this question was how confident did teachers feel in using English based pedagogy and resources in their lessons. The staff survey highlighted that only that staff participants only had an average confidence level of 54 per cent. This would raise the question of just how far English pedagogy can be transferred if teaching staff do not feel confident in the use of these resources and pedagogy. The data showed that when these resources and pedagogies are used, there is an average decrease in the inaccuracies of their sentence structures of 17 per cent. However, in order for this to be successful, members of teaching staff would need to be confident in deploying them. This action research, as already mentioned, was carried out by teacher / researcher who is trained in the teaching of written literacy skills, so as such, was capable of deploying and using these resources and pedagogies outside of English lessons. This would need to be addressed to ensure staff could use these resources to gain the percentage increase seen in this research.

Secondly, this research aimed to look at how does the explicit focus on written literacy skills in lessons improve attainment of learners (from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds) in other areas of learning? This research was carried out with one of the classes that the researcher teaches at School X. Participants, 2, 4, 7, 6 were all e-FSM learners and the data was collected on the improvements in their written literacy skills and compared to their baseline English and history assessment to see if learners were successfully transferring the written literacy skills they already had.

Percentage of inaccurate sentences in baselines and cycle 2

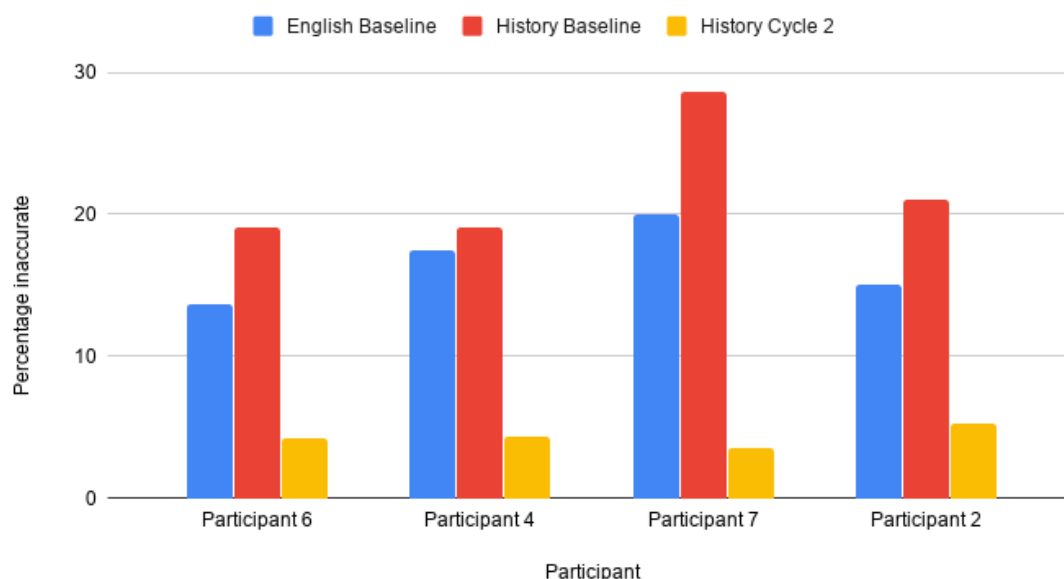


Figure 19 Percentage inaccurate sentence construction in baselines and cycle 2

The graph above shows all 4 e-FSM learners and the percentage of inaccurate sentences in the English and history baseline assessments and cycle 2. One thing that stands out from this data is the substantial improvements made by these learners in their sentence constructions. All participants have drastically improved their sentence accuracies in cycle 2 compared to that of the history baseline score. The original intention of this research was to get participants to transfer their written literacy skill across from English to other subjects. The baseline in English was the standard to which learners were expected to reach if they were to have successfully transferred their skills. As you can see from the data above, the 4 e-FSM learners not only improved their sentence accuracies to meet their standard set in the English baseline, but exceeded the percentage by a substantial amount. It has been alluded to before, but participant 7, who had the poorest starting point with almost 30 per cent inaccurate sentence structures, made the most progress with the explicit teaching of written literacy skills. The impact of this strategy has shown to be very positive for e-FSM learners to improve their written literacy skills.

The final question this action research aimed to investigate was, what impact can a shared pedagogy have on the effective transfer of written literacy skills across the curriculum? As with the research question above, the data collected has shown that a shared pedagogy and language, when dealing with written literacy skills, is effective at transferring written literacy

skills across the curriculum. As already mentioned in the evaluation of the previous research question, the shared pedagogy and language supported an average decrease of 17 per cent in the number of inaccurate sentences constructed by participants. However, this research has also raised another potential benefit of the shared language and pedagogy. Not only does the outcome of the data collected show that learners were improving their written literacy skills in terms of sentence construction in history assessments, the data shows that participants were exceeding their literacy skills in English by the end of cycle 2. This suggests that the use of a shared pedagogy and language not only allows learners to transfer the written literacy skills they already have, it allows learners to continue to benefit from the literacy teaching and improve on their skills. This could go some way in addressing the concerns of Estyn (2013) in regards to the Literacy and Numeracy Framework. In 2015, Estyn stated that provision for literacy skills in schools were adequate across the majority of Wales (BBC: 2015). Developing a shared, whole school approach to literacy has been proven, to some extent, by this action research. This had led to one of the recommendations to be made in this school improvement report. However, to full determine the impact of this notion on all subject areas outside of English, a wider ranging piece of action research would need to be undertaken.

Overall, through cycle 1 and cycle 2 of this action research, the improvements in written literacy skills have been evident through the quantitative data gathered through content analysis of work.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

As part of this school improvement report, and following on from the data collected as part of this action research, 3 recommendations are to be made to School X in regard to the provision and quality of written literacy skills for e-FSM learners. The recommendations that are being made are grounded in the results of this action research and the academic and professional literature surrounding literacy across the curriculum. These recommendations will be discussed in more detail, one by one. The recommendations being made are:

Recommendation 1

School X should invest in the professional learning of staff to improve their ability and confidence to support learners to use their literacy skills in subjects across the curriculum.

Recommendation 2

A shared language and pedagogical approach should be used to allow learners to make connections between the use of literacy in subjects and to enable provision of skill and ongoing literacy teaching. This should be initially focused on learners who have a low literacy base.

Recommendation 3

School X should review and utilise the best practice within learning teams to develop a literacy champion to support and improve the confidence of teachers in that team to use literacy pedagogy and resources in lessons.

Recommendation 1

School X should invest in the professional learning of staff to improve their ability and confidence to support learners use their literacy skills in subjects across the curriculum.

Recommendation 1 has been suggested due to the results from the staff survey and issues facing the continued professional development of staff, in terms of literacy, by Estyn. The staff survey suggested that the level of confidence felt by staff in teaching and embracing a literacy based pedagogy and shared language was on average, 54 per cent. This reflects the findings of Estyn (BBC: 2015) when analysing the impact of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework in 2015. With

the development of the Curriculum for Wales 2022 and its impending rollout, literacy is taking front and centre stage. This has brought the issue of confidence in using pedagogy and resources related to literacy to the forefront of the professional development of teachers and initial teacher training. To ensure all staff are prepared for the rollout of the new curriculum and the embedding of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework across all subject areas, School X should begin to develop and upskill the ability of staff across the school to support learners in their ability to use and develop their literacy skills.

Recommendation 2

A shared language and pedagogical approach should be used to allow learners to make connections between the use of literacy in subjects and to enable provision of skill and ongoing literacy teaching. This should be initially focused on learners who have a low literacy base.

School X should develop a consistent approach across the whole school to the use of written literacy skills. This should be focused on learners making connections between the use of their written literacy skills in all subject areas across the curriculum. This will allow learners to make the connections between the explicit teaching of these skills in their English and literacy lesson and the use of these skills, with context, in areas of learning outside of English. To do this, a shared pedagogy and language should be developed, linked to recommendation 1, and whole school training should be provided to all members of staff to support them, and allow them to feel confident, using these resources and pedagogy in their own classroom. School X should use the expertise already available to them by utilising the resources and pedagogy that has been developed and refined by the English team in their school. This is vital in order for learners to make the connections between the use of literacy skills across the curriculum and in order to see any improvements in line with those seen by e-FSM learners in this action research.

This recommendation states that shared language, resources and pedagogy should be designed to initially support learners with a low written literacy starting base. The reason for this recommendation is the results the data has shown from cycle 1 and cycle 2. Participant 7 – the participant with the lowest written literacy base – with the support of explicit literacy instruction in lessons outside of English, made the most improvement in their percentage of sentences

accurately constructed. This focus should initially be made on supporting these learners to ensure that the base level of written literacy skills is brought to a minimum before more complex literacy instruction is given in areas of learning outside of English. This is to ensure that learners with a lower base level of written literacy skills do not experience cognitive overload when asked to focus on the content of their work, planning and written literacy skills. Initially starting from the more basic literacy skill level will also allow staff to build their confidence in their use of the pedagogy and resources related to the whole school approach.

Recommendation 3

School X should review and utilise the best practice within learning teams to develop a literacy champion to support and improve the confidence of teachers in that team to use literacy pedagogy and resources in lessons.

The final recommendation to be made to School X is related to the other two recommendations. As highlighted by Estyn (2013), in school across Wales, there are varying provision and quality of teaching in regards to written literacy skills. In order to overcome this, School X should carry out an internal review of best practice, in a non-judgemental forum, in terms of the teaching and provision of written literacy skills across the curriculum. This would allow the strategic planners in the school to highlight areas of excellent practice within teams and departments. Once these areas are identified, departmental champions can be appointed to support teaching staff in their different departments embed the teaching and provision of written literacy skills in their teams. This would have the added benefit of tailoring the whole school approach to the context of their subjects. These literacy champions should be given more enhance in-house training to support them in their roles, supporting their teams.

In conclusion, in order for the successes seen in this action research to be replicated on a wider scale, training is the key to success. Although this action research saw success in the transfer and improvement of written literacy skills, the deployment of these resources and pedagogy was possible because of the training of the researcher as an English specialist with years of experience using these resources. It is evident from the data that using these resources and pedagogy supports learners in transferring their skills.

This research has also flagged up a potential area of further exploration:

- Does the use of a whole school literacy approach improve the quality and accuracy of e-FSM learners?

More action research would need to be carried out to explore the role that a whole school approach to literacy could have on the development of the quality of written literacy skills. This would need to be a wide ranging and long in timescale to accomplished the number of cycles that would be needed.

The action research conducted for this school improvement report did suffer from a range on limitations, and throughout the course of this research, areas of improvement have been noted. Two limitations this research had was the number of cycles and the quantity of learners used as participants. To start with, the timeframe of this research only allowed for 2 cycles. It would have been interesting to include another cycle to see if the continued trend of improvement in sentence construction continued or if it reached a saturation point. The second limitation was the size of the sample. The sample chosen by the researcher was chosen through a convenience sample as this was the class the researcher taught. This class only had 4 e-FSM learners. This meant the sample size could only be 4. It would be interesting to investigate whether the trends observed in this research would have been replicated in a piece of action research done on a greater scale. This opens up the potential for further investigation on a wider, whole school level.

One final issue this action research encountered was the problem of comparative data for the confidence levels of learners from the learner voice surveys administered after each cycle. In the original methodological design, no pre-cycle questionnaires were carried out. This meant the researcher did not have a set of data to make comparisons to, to see if the levels of confidence of learners increased through the cycles. These questionnaires did, however, highlight the interesting point that learners were self-aware of their own written literacy skills when evaluating their own confidence in their written literacy skills.

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Appendix I – Participant Number 6 Content Analysis Table

Participant identifying number: 6	Accurate simple sentences	Inaccurate simple sentences	Accurate compound sentences	Inaccurate compound sentences	Accurate complex sentences	Inaccurate complex sentences	Correct use of parentheses ()	Incorrect use of parentheses ()	Use of paragraphs	Basic punctuation mistakes (Cap let. Full stops)	Correct use of advanced punctuation (; , :)	Incorrect use of advanced punctuation (; , :)
English writing assessment	$\frac{6}{6}$	$\frac{0}{6}$	$\frac{8}{9}$	$\frac{1}{9}$	$\frac{5}{7}$	$\frac{2}{7}$	$\frac{1}{1}$	$\frac{0}{1}$	Y	3	2	0
Pre-research history writing assessment	$\frac{5}{7}$	$\frac{1}{7}$	$\frac{8}{8}$	$\frac{0}{8}$	$\frac{4}{7}$	$\frac{3}{7}$	N/A	N/A	Y	5	1	1
Cycle 1 history writing assessment	$\frac{6}{6}$	$\frac{0}{6}$	$\frac{9}{9}$	$\frac{0}{9}$	$\frac{4}{6}$	$\frac{2}{6}$	N/A	N/A	Y	3	3	1
Cycle 2 history writing assessment	$\frac{8}{8}$	$\frac{0}{8}$	$\frac{7}{7}$	$\frac{7}{7}$	$\frac{8}{9}$	$\frac{1}{9}$	$\frac{2}{2}$	$\frac{0}{2}$	Y	1	4	0

Appendix 2 – Participant Number 4 Content Analysis Table

Participant identifying number	Accurate simple sentences	Inaccurate simple sentences	Accurate compound sentences	Inaccurate compound sentences	Accurate complex sentences	Inaccurate complex sentences	Correct use of parenthesis ()	Incorrect use of parenthesis ()	Use of semicolons	Basic punctuation mistakes (Cap let, full stop)	Correct use of advanced punctuation	Incorrect use of advanced punctuation
4	$\frac{7}{7}$	$\frac{0}{7}$	$\frac{7}{10}$	$\frac{3}{10}$	$\frac{5}{6}$	$\frac{1}{6}$	N/A	N/A	Y	3	1	0
Pre-research history writing assessment	$\frac{5}{8}$	$\frac{1}{6}$	$\frac{9}{11}$	$\frac{2}{11}$	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	N/A	N/A	Y	4	N/A	N/A
Cycle 1 history writing assessment	$\frac{7}{7}$	$\frac{0}{7}$	$\frac{9}{9}$	$\frac{0}{9}$	$\frac{5}{6}$	$\frac{1}{6}$	N/A	N/A	Y	2	N/A	N/A
Cycle 2 history writing assessment	$\frac{8}{8}$	$\frac{0}{8}$	$\frac{9}{9}$	$\frac{0}{9}$	$\frac{5}{6}$	$\frac{1}{6}$	$\frac{1}{1}$	$\frac{0}{1}$	Y	1	2	0

Appendix 3 – Participant Number 7 Content Analysis Table

Participant identifying number: 7	Accurate simple sentences	Inaccurate simple sentences	Accurate compound sentences	Inaccurate compound sentences	Accurate complex sentences	Inaccurate complex sentences	Correct use of parenthesis ()	Incorrect use of parenthesis ()	Use of paragraph	Basic punctuation mistakes (Cap let. Full stops)	Correct use of advanced punctuation	Incorrect use of advanced punctuation
English writing assessment	$\frac{9}{11}$	$\frac{2}{11}$	$\frac{7}{8}$	$\frac{1}{8}$	$\frac{4}{6}$	$\frac{2}{6}$	U/A	U/A	Y	4	2	0
Pre-research history writing assessment	$\frac{6}{9}$	$\frac{3}{9}$	$\frac{6}{8}$	$\frac{2}{8}$	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	U/A	U/A	Y	6	1	1
Cycle 1 history writing assessment	$\frac{10}{10}$	$\frac{0}{10}$	$\frac{6}{7}$	$\frac{1}{7}$	$\frac{5}{6}$	$\frac{2}{6}$	U/A	U/A	Y	4	1	0
Cycle 2 history writing assessment	$\frac{12}{12}$	$\frac{0}{12}$	$\frac{9}{10}$	$\frac{1}{10}$	$\frac{6}{6}$	$\frac{0}{6}$	$\frac{1}{1}$	0	Y	2	3	0

Appendix 4 – Participant Number 2

Content Analysis Table

Participant identifying number	2	English writing assessment	Pre-research history writing assessment	Cycle 1 history writing assessment	Cycle 2 history writing assessment
Assimilate simple sentences	$\frac{5}{5}$	$\frac{5}{5}$	$\frac{5}{5}$	$\frac{5}{5}$	$\frac{5}{5}$
Incorporate simple sentences	$\frac{0}{5}$	$\frac{1}{5}$	$\frac{0}{5}$	$\frac{0}{5}$	$\frac{0}{5}$
Assimilate compound sentences	$\frac{6}{8}$	$\frac{6}{7}$	$\frac{5}{8}$	$\frac{7}{7}$	$\frac{7}{7}$
Incorporate compound sentences	$\frac{2}{8}$	$\frac{1}{7}$	$\frac{2}{8}$	$\frac{0}{7}$	$\frac{0}{7}$
Assimilate complex sentences	$\frac{6}{7}$	$\frac{4}{6}$	$\frac{7}{7}$	$\frac{7}{7}$	$\frac{6}{7}$
Incorporate complex sentences	$\frac{1}{7}$	$\frac{2}{6}$	$\frac{0}{7}$	$\frac{1}{7}$	$\frac{1}{7}$
Correct use of parentheses ()	$\frac{1}{1}$	$\frac{2}{6}$	$\frac{0}{7}$	$\frac{0}{7}$	$\frac{2}{3}$
Incorrect use of parentheses ()	$\frac{0}{1}$	N/A	$\frac{1}{1}$	$\frac{1}{1}$	$\frac{1}{3}$
Use of paragraphs	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Basic punctuation mistakes (Cap let. Full Stop)	0	2	1	0	0
Correct use of advanced punctuation (:) only	2	N/A	N/A	1	1
Incorrect use of advanced punctuation (:) only	0	N/A	N/A	0	0

Appendix 5: Learner responses to questionnaire cycle 1

Learner Questionnaire

Participant identifying number: 2	Stage Baseline Cycle 1 Cycle 2
Question	Lowest ————— Highest
1. How confident did you feel writing your essay today?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. How confident do you feel that you could write simple sentences accurately?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. How confident do you feel that you could write compound sentences accurately?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. How confident do you feel that you could write complex sentences accurately?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. I thought about how I wrote my sentences as I was writing my essay	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Learner Questionnaire

Participant identifying number: 7	Stage Baseline Cycle 1 Cycle 2
Question	Lowest ————— Highest
1. How confident did you feel writing your essay today?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. How confident do you feel that you could write simple sentences accurately?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. How confident do you feel that you could write compound sentences accurately?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. How confident do you feel that you could write complex sentences accurately?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. I thought about how I wrote my sentences as I was writing my essay	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Learner Questionnaire

Participant identifying number: 4	Stage Baseline Cycle 1 Cycle 2
Question	Lowest _____ Highest
1. How confident did you feel writing your essay today?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. How confident do you feel that you could write simple sentences accurately?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. How confident do you feel that you could write compound sentences accurately?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. How confident do you feel that you could write complex sentences accurately?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. I thought about how I wrote my sentences as I was writing my essay	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Learner Questionnaire

Participant identifying number: 6	Stage Baseline Cycle 1 Cycle 2
Question	Lowest _____ Highest
1. How confident did you feel writing your essay today?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2. How confident do you feel that you could write simple sentences accurately?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3. How confident do you feel that you could write compound sentences accurately?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4. How confident do you feel that you could write complex sentences accurately?	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5. I thought about how I wrote my sentences as I was writing my essay	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10