

## **How could we improve pupil engagement with peer assessment through the technique of “feedback sandwich” in a year 3 classroom?**

### **Research Focus**

This research project focuses on the impact of a specific strategy on children's engagement with peer assessment. I am interested in the use of peer assessment as a way of supporting pupils to engage with peers and with the work. Peer assessment is a commonly used assessment for learning (AfL) technique, as outlined by Black et al. (2003). It is also a way of pupils engaging with peers and collaboratively impacting the progression of their work. In particular I was intrigued by the question, how much do children truly engage with peer assessment? The advent of the new curriculum, led by the Donaldson report (2015), outlines a much more pupil-led and child orientated focus for education in which the individual has a greater impact on shaping their own learning journey. Could peer assessment and engagement with peer assessment play a part in this new curriculum?

### **Research Context**

This research project focuses on year 3 pupils in two classrooms in two large primary schools within the Vale of Glamorgan in South Wales. My school has approximately 700 pupils and is a three-form entry school throughout. My partner's school is a two-form entry school of approximately 600 pupils.

The schools have very different approaches to the implementation of Donaldson based principles. My school focuses on whole class teaching, using a range of interactive and hands on activities. There is a strong emphasis on the use of peer support and peer coaching. In particular 'SNOT' forms a core part of most lessons. This acronym directs students to first look to 'Self' when they get stuck, then 'Neighbour' asking their learning partner for support, next 'Other' leads them to ask the other students on their table before finally asking the 'Teacher' if they still need help and support. As a result, they are used to supporting each other in solving a problem or finding an answer.

My partner's school uses a carousel teaching format throughout the whole of KS2. This allows for a smaller focus group of approx. 15 children to be working on a teacher supported task whilst the other children work on a variety of independently led challenges. This then rotates over the course of the week. As part of this system the children are used to working collaboratively and in groups.

Our research question is 'how could we improve pupil engagement with peer assessment through the technique of "feedback sandwich" in a year 3 classroom?' This looks to examine how well pupils engage with a specific peer assessment technique and to see whether it can be used, within these specific contexts, to improve pupil engagement with peer assessment. A 'feedback sandwich' is a feedback framework which frames constructive feedback with two pieces of positive feedback. For example: Positive > Constructive > Positive. The name is derived from how the constructive feedback is 'sandwiched' between two positive points. I predict that the feedback sandwich will be an effective way to improve engagement with peer assessment as it provides a framework to help direct pupils with a neat three step system.

## **Literature review**

Looking into the literature, reference to the 'Feedback sandwich' can be found in a wide range of sources from books and journal articles (Robson 2014) to newspaper references (Tugend, 2013). It is a feedback technique that is widely used by a range of audiences from academic professionals (University of Leicester, n.d.) to businesses (Tugend, 2013). The 'Praise Sandwich' (Tugend, 2013) as it is also known has been heavily critiqued within a range of settings to highlight its positive and negative points (Tugend, 2013; Robson 2014). Some of these critiques are heavily focused on the specific way the feedback was used which can be an impediment to translating this across to its uses in education. I have endeavoured to take this into consideration where relevant. Robson (2014) outlines how the strategy is used by Open University tutors to give feedback to their students. They consider the strategy useful and outline how it can balance advice for improvement with praise of positive achievement; thus, providing feedback in an atmosphere that is uplifting and more beneficial to the mental wellbeing and self-esteem of the students.

From a more critical standpoint, Robson (2014) warns that the mere application of the 'sandwich model' is not a guarantee of quality feedback. The context of the sandwich also needs to be considered and each section needs to be "sincere, meaningful and useable" (Robson 2014). The next thing to consider is, how can this advice be translated into a Welsh KS2 classroom? Certainly, the key benefit of this strategy, as Robson (2014) outlines them, is the nurture of self-esteem. This is something that is easily seen as an advantage within KS2 classrooms for the same reasoning that it is within a university setting.

Isaacs et al (2013) consider the merits and limitations of peer and self-assessment from a more general standpoint, although they focus more on their specific uses in education. They consider peer assessment to be variant of self-assessment, one which is a sophisticated skill that needs time and practice to properly acquire (Isaacs et al 2013). They posit that some of the difficulties of peer assessment can be tackled by clear communication with learners, as well as guided training and practice of the principles needed in peer assessment. My interpretation of this is that clear and visual modelling, as well as examples, need to be given to the students in order to help them build their own peer assessment skillset. Ensuring that the modelling is also “sincere, meaningful and useable” (Robson, 2014) would aim to tackle the shortfalls that Robson (2014) warn of with this technique.

By contrast, Hattie & Timperley (2007) warn that regardless of efficacy of the feedback content, students will tend to reject or ignore so called “negative feedback” if it doesn’t agree with their own image of themselves, instead they will only pick up on the positives. With the feedback sandwich technique, this could mean that the children only hear the praise aspects and not the constructive feedback. Hattie & Timperley (2007) also indicate that engagement with the praise aspect of feedback can have an impact on its own; with pupils more likely to persist or return to an activity about which they have received positive feedback. To counter this, their solution is to help students restructure their thinking to provide cues and directions for future strategizing and feedback (Hattie & Timperley 2007). Whilst this means that some benefit might still be gained, it does illustrate that for the feedback sandwich to be most effective as a tool for educational development it needs skilled scaffolding and support.

Black and Wiliam’s seminal work “Working inside the Black box” (2004) is an important guide for how to effectively include AfL strategies such as peer and self-assessment within the classroom. They state that “self and peer assessment make unique contributions to the development of student’s learning” (Black et al. 2003:12) in a way that other strategies and methods cannot achieve. As Isaacs et al. (2013) identify, peer assessment is something that is heralded much more on paper than it is actively practiced in the classroom. This is something that needs to change. The benefits of using peer assessment in the classroom are numerous. It has been found to improve student motivation in their work (Black et al. 2003), it offers a mechanism for pupils to develop critical analysis, alongside other meta-cognitive skills (Black et al. 2003; Isaacs et al. 2013) and can be a vehicle for improving teacher-student communication (Black et al. 2003).

Improved teacher-student communication would logically lead to pupil voice playing a stronger role in shaping educational development, a principle which echoes those being outlined by the new welsh curriculum (Donaldson 2015). A simple example of how peer-assessment and feedback can help break down the teacher-student barrier is that children naturally use child-friendly language to explain things (Black et al. 2003). As such they can often explain things to their peers in a way that conveys meaning much more effectively than an adult could (Black et al. 2003).

Perhaps one of the reasons peer assessment is discussed more than it is practiced is because it's not an easy concept to teach effectively. Hattie (2012) outlines how, although peer feedback can be good, it can also have a negative effect if the feedback being given is inaccurate. In answer to this a study by Gan (2011) found that teacher prompts were a powerful scaffolding tool in helping students to give effective feedback and in further developing their peer-assessment skills. Black et al. (2003) also highlight the importance of structured goals in helping students to develop peer assessment skill. The difficulty is that student cannot achieve the learning goal (for example to give their partner effective feedback), unless they understand both the objective and what steps are needed to reach it (Black et al. 2003). In other words, clear success criteria are a crucial part of supporting the development of peer assessment skills.

## Research Methods

The principle methodology used for this research was 'Lesson Study'. Lesson study is a form of collaborative classroom-based research focused on professional development and improving pupil learning (Department for Children, Schools and Families. 2008). Lesson study is a Japanese practice that has more recently been adapted for use in countries such as the US, UK and Sweden (Dudley 2014). The methods of data collection that were used for this lesson study were non-participant observation of 3 focus children, focus group interview, reflection and an AfL technique called 'exit tickets'.

As part of a lesson study, two or more teachers work together to develop practice in the classroom. The focus of a lesson study is to solve a teaching problem (Dudley 2014); in this study the identified teaching problem was the improvement of pupil learning through engagement with the feedback sandwich peer assessment technique. One teacher takes a lesson which focuses on a specific technique or strategy, in this case the feedback sandwich, and the other teacher will observe and make notes on the impact of that strategy (Dudley, 2014). There is then a post lesson interview with a small selection of focus children to gauge their perceptions, opinions and attitudes about the use of the

strategy. This first lesson study is followed by analytical reflection by all teachers involved in the study. This reflection on the first lesson is then used to shape any appropriate changes to the second lesson (Dudley, 2014). A lesson using the same strategy is then taught again, by a different teacher to a different class. As with the first lesson, the other teacher observes and records, and there is a post lesson interview with a selection of focus children.

Within each lesson there were three 'case pupils' who formed the focus of the observation and interview. The three focus children were chosen to be representative of the overall class. This is in line with traditional lesson study practice as outlined by Dudley (2014). For each of the lessons a higher, middle and lower ability child was asked if they would like to take place in the lesson study and follow up interview.

My partner and I planned the specific research aspects of the lesson together, ensuring, as best as was possible, consistent data collection and recording across the two research lessons. This was done through the creation of observation forms using an adapted version of the Leuven involvement scale (Laevers 2005). The Leuven scale uses identifiable visual and behavioural characteristics to determine the involvement of a child on a 5-point scale. The Leuven scale suited our purpose as it's been specifically developed for use in educational setting to aid the professional development of educational practitioners (Laevers 2005). Through use of the Leuven scale observation process, the aim is to consider learning from the perspective of the child; how they approach and interact with a specific task or aspect of a lesson (Laevers 2005).

We combined aspects of both the well-being and involvement scale to create a scale which most accurately reflected the range of engagement indicators we might expect to see in a year 3 classroom (Fig 1). Fredricks et al (2004) identify that engagement is a multidimensional concept and argue that research often does not fully account for this. Their assertion that engagement is something that should encompass behaviours, emotion and understanding is something that provides a neat illustration for why, in this research study, we have opted to focus on multiple indicator types to more accurately determine engagement.

Over the course of each lesson there were three uses of the feedback sandwich technique. Each time the technique was used, the three focus children were observed to determine their engagement with using the feedback strategy. As each lesson would be the first time each class had used the feedback sandwich, we decided to accompany its introduction with a visual stimulus. A labelled picture of a sandwich was used in both lessons to help the children remember and grasp the steps that formed the 'sandwich'.

**Figure 1: This observation form is derived from the Leuven scales for child wellbeing and involvement.**

| Involvement Level  | Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | [tick] | Notes |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 – extremely low  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child displays little or no interaction with peer</li> <li>• Child seems absent, and displays no energy</li> <li>• Child stares into space, or looks around to see what others are doing (negative body language)</li> </ul>  |        |       |
| 2 – low            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child displays minimal verbal interaction with peer</li> <li>• Child engaged for some of the time</li> <li>• Moments of non-activity, distraction or staring into space</li> </ul>                                            |        |       |
| 3 – moderate       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fairly routine level of engagement with activity, few signs of real involvement</li> <li>• Child doesn't display much energy or emotion</li> <li>• Child is easily distracted</li> </ul>                                      |        |       |
| 4 – high           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intense moments of engagement seen</li> <li>• Child displays positive body language</li> <li>• Child is not easily distracted</li> </ul>                                                                                      |        |       |
| 5 – extremely high | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child shows continuous and intense engagement</li> <li>• Child is concentrated, creative and energetic</li> <li>• Child expresses self-confidence and self-assurance in relation to the activity / peer assessment</li> </ul> |        |       |

As observational data is reliant on accurate noting of body language and response indicators, it is at risk of being affected by the observer's own personal bias (Cohen et al. 2007). We aimed to mitigate this by the inclusion of other forms of data collection. 'Exit tickets' are an AfL classroom tool which allows the teacher to get a glimpse at the opinions or the understanding of the children in the class. Isaacs et al (2013) outline that, to be successful, feedback should be a two-way street. We have chosen to incorporate this into our lesson study as this type of student to teacher feedback is an important way to help further develop both teacher practice and shape the pupils 'next steps' in their education journey. It is also in line with the United Nations convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC) article 12, which states that "When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their

**Figure 2: Focus Group Interview Questions**

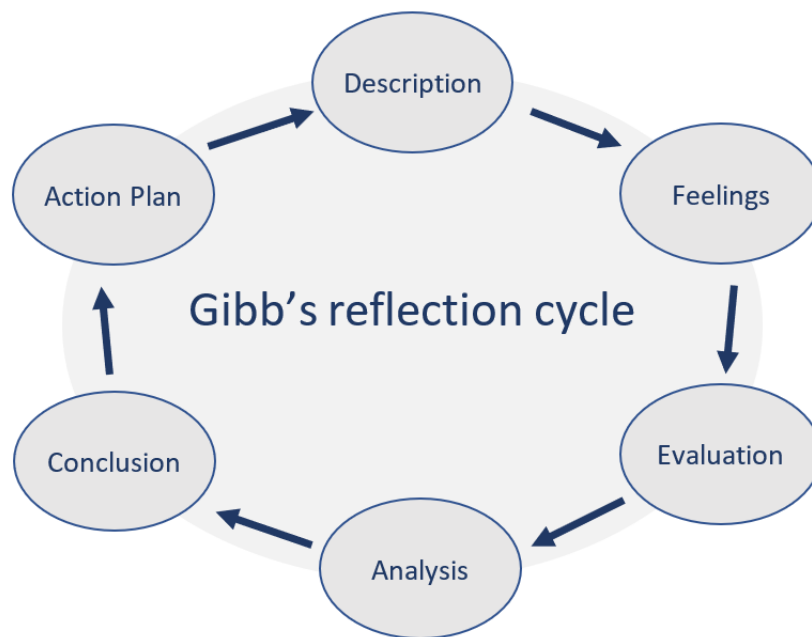
1. What did you think of today's session?
2. How did you feel about using the feedback sandwich? – what did you like about it? What did you dislike about it?
3. How does using this type of feedback help you with your learning?
4. Miss X is going to teach this lesson with her class tomorrow, what could you change about using the feedback sandwich?
5. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

opinions taken into account.” (UNCRC, 1989). For this lesson study we developed “exit tickets” in which the children could give a star rating on the feedback strategy and anonymously leave comments about the use of peer assessment in the lesson.

Each lesson was followed by a qualitative post lesson research interview with the focus children. To ensure consistency across the two post lesson interviews, my partner and I prepared a short list of the questions that would be asked. In line with ethical principles (UWTSD 2017) and out of respect for the children we were interviewing, this was limited to just 5 questions which were carefully worded so as not to lead the interviewees responses (Fig. 2.).

Following each of the lessons, both researchers completed a reflection form on the experience. These reflection forms were guided to help us consider and identify strengths, weaknesses and whether any changes were needed moving forward. The design of the reflection form draws aspects from both the Gibbs (1988) and Brookfield (2005) models of analytical reflection. The Gibbs reflective model (Fig. 3) is a reflection cycle which uses 6 sub headed steps to structure and guide reflective practice (Dye 2011). Each of the steps focuses on and helps to “unpack the reflective process” (Dye 2011; 230). The downside of using Gibbs reflective model is that it only guides the user to reflective on themselves. Brookfield's model involves critical reflection using four lenses (Brookfield 1998). They argue that to be true and effectively reflective “we need to find some lenses that reflect back to us a stark and differently highlighted picture”, in other words we have to consider our actions from more than just our own point of view. These lenses focus reflective analysis from several different view points and enable the user to build up a picture that encompasses more than just their own personal reflections. Personal reflection is important however, and this forms the first lens. The second lens is that of the students' eyes; what were their thoughts, opinions and responses? The third lens is to look at things from our colleagues' perspective and the fourth to use literature and research to aid our reflection (Brookfield 1998). Brookfield developed these lenses as a framework for educational practitioners to become truly critically reflective.

Figure 3: A illustrative outline of the Gibbs reflective model,  
(derived from Dye (2011))



## Ethical Considerations

Undertaking research in an educational setting needs careful planning and consideration of the ethical issues that might be encountered. In line with BERA (2018) and University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) (2017) guidelines, no research could take place without informed consent. As we were working with children consent from parents or guardians was required. This was done by sending out letters with permission slips that could be returned to show whether permission was or wasn't given. If no permission slip was returned this was taken as permission not being given for that child to be included in the research. A copy of the letter is included as Appendix 14.

All children were asked if they wanted to be part of the focus group and take part in the interviews. Whilst all pupils had to take part in the lesson, only children who gave their consent took part in the research. Consideration was made that children might change their minds, in particular during the interview sessions. BERA guidelines outline that for any reason and at any time, the participants have the right to withdraw their consent. This right was verbally outlined before, and at several points during, each interview. In order to make interview intentions clear, and to ensure fair and equal treatment of all children throughout the study, a short paragraph was written and read to the children at the beginning of the interview sections of each study (See Appendix 2).

The interviews took place shortly after the lessons, to facilitate accurate recall of the lesson by the children. However, both cases there was a short gap between the lesson and the interview to ensure that interviewees would not miss out on recreation time. Both

researchers took part in the interviews and the children were interviewed as a group to foster positive rapport between interviewer and interviewees. Both schools allowed audio recording of these interviews, however when preparing for the second lesson study interview the children expressed discomfort at the idea of being recorded. We respected their right to choose whether they wished to be audio recorded. Subsequently for the second interview, only a written transcript was made.

## **Lesson Study 1**

The first lesson study took place in my partner's school, which uses a carousel-based structure for all KS2 classes. This meant that, although the class contained 30 pupils, only 15 of these took part in the observed focus task. The use of 'feedback' was new vocabulary for the children, although some game-based activities had been used earlier in the week to get the children thinking about how well their partner had described something, so they had, unknowingly, already had some practice at giving feedback. The learning objective (L.O.) for this first lesson was for the children to design their own love spoon. At several points in the lesson, the children were directed to work in pairs to use the feedback sandwich to help pick out the positive point of their designs and suggest improvements. The use of the visual stimulus to help introduce the concept was something that both researchers reflected on as appearing to have a positive response. The image acted as a 'hook', piquing the children's interest and giving them a visual aide memoire for this new concept of a 'feedback sandwich'.

The first observed feedback session was to feedback on a verbal idea that the children had come up with in response to the question "What things would you put on your own love spoon?". The second and third feedback sessions were uses of the sandwich to peer assess their physical designs. This gave a valuable opportunity to observe whether the physical versus the verbal stimulus had an impact on the children's engagement with the strategy.

Isaacs et al. (2013) and Black et al. (2003) outline the importance of structured guidance and modeling when first introducing peer assessment. The first use of the sandwich strategy was followed with a short discussion session; "What feedback did you give?" The discussion pairs containing the focus children were chosen to explain what feedback had been exchanged. Where there were gaps in the feedback or other support was needed, the teacher gave guidance to help the pairs build on or develop their feedback ideas. By doing this with the whole focus group the teacher was able to both

| Involvement Level  | C1       | C2       | C3             |
|--------------------|----------|----------|----------------|
| 1 – extremely low  |          |          | 3.<br>1.<br>2. |
| 2 – low            | 3.<br>1. |          | (1.)           |
| 3 – moderate       |          | 3.<br>1. |                |
| 4 – high           | 2.       | 2.       |                |
| 5 – extremely high |          |          |                |

**Figure 4: The recorded engagement levels of 3 focus children during Lesson Study 1.**

**Key:**  
 C1 – Child 1  
 C2 – Child 2  
 C3 – Child 3  
 1. – First use of feedback sandwich (*Italics: with teacher guidance*).  
 2. – Second use of the feedback sandwich  
 3. – Third use of the feedback sandwich

model and support at the same time using real examples of feedback. The efficacy of this strategy was particularly noticeable in the engagement indicators show by C3 (Child 3) (Fig. 4.). Without teacher guidance this child was physically sitting in the corner and showing observation indicators in line with extremely low engagement. With teacher input they began to think of ideas and there was some observable engagement with their partner and the feedback strategy.

All the focus children showed an increase in engagement indicators between the first and second uses of the sandwich (Fig. 4). It is important to note that this could be due to several factors. Firstly, as mentioned, the second peer assessment session was on a physical design, and the first one on a verbal idea. It could be that the children found it easier to apply the feedback sandwich method to a physical piece of work, than on a verbal one. The increased engagement could also be because this was the second time the strategy was being used. The children had been given an opportunity to try out the strategy and had received modelling and support on its use and development. The logical and expected outcome of this is that they would be more familiar with the strategy the second time it was used and as a result show greater engagement with it.

The third time the strategy was used there was a noticeable drop in the focus children's engagement. Possibly this was due to over use of the feedback sandwich? It was a new concept to the children, and a third usage might have been too much, or they might have found the repetition boring. Alternatively, it could be that the third use of the sandwich was simply not needed. The second peer assessment session was in response to the children's initial love spoon designs. Two of the focus children were observed to

show high engagement with this usage. C1(Child 1) and C2 (Child 2) exhibited positive body language indicators, including illustrative pointing and visibly leaning in towards the work. Both children made changes or added something to their work in response to the second use of the feedback sandwich technique.

By contrast the third peer assessment session was at a point where many of the children were adding colour and finishing touches to their love spoon designs. From their perspective it appeared no changes were wanted or needed, and they preferred to continue to engage with their work instead of the feedback mechanism. Correlation could be made to Black et al. (2003) who identified that students' lack of the necessary skills to determine and outline relevant targets was a common problem encountered by teachers when introducing peer-assessment into the classroom. Could guidance such as a must/should/could style differentiated success criteria (Fig. 5) have helped the children to pick out positives and improvements more easily for the third peer assessment session?

**Figure 5: An example of differentiated success criteria using the “Must/Should/Could strategy:**

*Learning Objective – To write an acrostic poem.*

**MUST** – Write an acrostic poem about friendship.

**SHOULD** – Use describing words (adjectives).

**COULD** – Write full sentences for each line of your poem.

## Lesson Study 2

In response to reflection and analysis of the interview and observations, several changes were made to the second lesson study. Visual use of the feedback sandwich was added throughout the lesson, active modelling and examples of feedback using the sandwich were also included.

The second lesson study was taught by myself and followed the structure of whole class teaching that my school uses throughout KS2. The L.O. was to write a rhyming couplet. As with the first lesson at three points throughout, the children were directed to work in pairs to use the feedback sandwich to help pick out the positive point of their designs and suggest improvements.

The concept of the feedback sandwich was introduced using the visual stimulus and a ‘my turn, your turn’ repetition strategy that the children were familiar with. The impact of this visual prompt and verbal repetition appeared to be effective. The children showed a surface understanding of the feedback sandwich and the steps involved in it. The first use

of the feedback sandwich illustrated however that there was definitely a lack of understanding of how to use and effectively implement the sandwich strategy (Fig 6.).

Only one of the focus children showed any engagement at all with the feedback sandwich during its first usage. Observation notes illustrate that even this engagement was limited and that the children struggled with the concept. To tackle this the second use of the feedback strategy was prefaced with a reference back to the sandwich image as well as a physically modelled example. I used my hands to indicate the layers of the sandwich and gave an example for each layer. On reflection I should maybe have got the children to have a go at modelling as this may have had more of an impact than the teacher modelling it.

Even following this modelling, the children showed low to moderate engagement with the strategy. For C3, this is partly due to them working in a three, as their learning partner was absent. The feedback sandwich is more suited to being used in pairs, particularly when it is a new concept.

I was initially surprised by this lack of engagement with the feedback sandwich mechanism. The regular use of the SNOT peer support mechanism was something that I had thought would lead in well to the use of formal peer assessment strategies. It meant the children were used to turning to each other for help with their work, before turning to a teacher and gave them prior familiarity of using a structured strategy with a whimsical name. However, C1 and C3 barely engaged with the strategy at all, and what engagement was observed did not lead to any constructive changes being made to the children's work.

The observation notes outline that, although they were showing minimal engagement with the feedback sandwich strategy, C2 was interacting with their partner to collaboratively write a rhyming couplet. This was a task that they were heavily engaged in,

| Involvement Level  | C1      | C2       | C3      |
|--------------------|---------|----------|---------|
| 1 – extremely low  | 1. + 3. | 3.       | 1. + 3. |
| 2 – low            |         |          |         |
| 3 – moderate       | 2.      | 1.<br>2. | 2.      |
| 4 – high           |         |          |         |
| 5 – extremely high |         |          |         |

**Figure 6. – The recorded engagement levels of 3 focus children during Lesson Study 2.**

Key:

C1 – Child 1  
C2 – Child 2  
C3 – Child 3

1. – First use of feedback sandwich  
2. – Second use of the feedback sandwich  
3. – Third use of the feedback sandwich

and which successfully produced a two-line couplet which rhymed. They were effectively using the mechanism they were already familiar with: SNOT. Although they weren't at all engaged with the feedback sandwich C2 was still supporting their peer and exchanging ideas; they used collaborative skills to successfully achieve the learning objective.

One reason for lack of engagement could simply have been a confusion at what the lesson outcome was. Although I had started by introducing the L.O. (writing a rhyming couplet), I had then proceeded to outline the feedback before moving on to a task about rhyming. Possibly the rhyming couplet lesson plan was one which didn't benefit by the inclusion of the feedback sandwich. On reflection there was a feeling of the feedback sandwich having been shoehorned in.

During the post lesson interview, one child expressed the opinion that coming up with constructive feedback was hard. In my own reflection, I also identified that this was something the children had struggled with. As with the first lesson study it seems clear that a guide, such as the 'Must/Could/Should' differentiated success criteria would have helped to provide the children with a structure to follow when identifying improvement points for their peers. Following the advice of Black (2003) were I to teach this again, I would make the success criteria a more explicit part of the lesson and use it as a tool to guide the children's feedback. Then I would include more structured support in how to give feedback. Wan (2011) indicate that prompts, such as sentence starters or a checklist against the success criteria, are useful scaffolding and activation tools for helping learners with peer and self-assessment.

The exit ticket responses (Fig. 7) were a useful insight into the children's thoughts and opinions. It's clear that, according to their responses, the children enjoyed learning about rhyming couplets and found the lesson quite fun. Unfortunately, they were not very instructive about the reception of the feedback sandwich, unless the absence of feedback sandwich related comments can be seen as indicative. With the both the interview and feedback data, consideration needs to be made that giving honest feedback to a teacher is something that children may not be comfortable with. Cohen et al. (2007) illustrate this to be just one of a number of difficulties associated with collecting qualitative data from children. Chief amongst these is the problems associated with the interviewer being seen as an authority figure as well as the difficulty of encouraging children to assert themselves and say what they actually think, rather than what they think the interviewer wants them to say. Whilst efforts were made to mitigate these limitations, for example making the tickets anonymous and having the interview in an open and familiar setting, it is evident that our data needs considering with these limitations in mind.

| LS2             |   | Number of slips | Comments                                  |                                |                      |                                             |                                                             |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of Stars | 5 | 10              | I liked it because I learnt something new | I liked it because it was fun. | I liked it to be a 5 | Because it was <u>fun</u> and I like rhymes | [What] I liked about this lesson was learning about rhyming |
|                 | 4 | 2               |                                           |                                |                      |                                             |                                                             |
|                 | 3 | 8               | I thought it was fun and helpful          |                                |                      |                                             |                                                             |
|                 | 2 | 3               |                                           |                                |                      |                                             |                                                             |
|                 | 1 | 1               |                                           |                                |                      |                                             |                                                             |

Figure 7: The exit ticket data from lesson study 2.

## Discussion

The data produced by this lesson study highlights several factors that I would change if I were to introduce a peer assessment strategy in future. The most fundamental change would be to only introduce the feedback sandwich after first building up and developing basic feedback skills. The feedback sandwich is a useful strategy, but the children need a pre-developed ‘toolkit’ of peer assessment skills in order to be able to effectively engage with the strategy.

Overall, across the two lessons, the engagement with the feedback sandwich was minimum. However, there were some points where the students showed moderate to high engagement with the feedback sandwich. These occasions showed a small glimpse of the potential impact of peer assessment strategies if the strategies more effectively implemented, or if the strategy was more familiar to and better practiced by the students. The result of these snap-shots of effective engagement saw the children make improvements to their love spoon designs.

In the post lesson interview for lesson study 1, C2 commented, in response to a question about what they did/did not like about the feedback sandwich; “I like that it, um, helps us to like think of what things we can um do while we’re doin’ our love spoons.” This showed a promising understanding of the basic principles of feedback. This child also showed a high level of engagement with the second use of the feedback sandwich. Within this context the next steps would be to pair them with someone who was struggling with

using feedback; utilising the documented advantage of peer exchange using a “shared language form” (Black et al. 2003; 50). Then continue to develop an understanding of feedback techniques using a collaborative based approach.

As part of developing their feedback ‘toolkit’ I feel children would benefit from practice giving feedback using example work. This would allow the children to have a go at giving feedback in pairs before they move on to individually giving feedback to a peer. This would particularly suit the whole class teaching style of the second lesson study.

The data illustrates that the children needed familiarity with the feedback concept, before they were able to use it effectively. This was seen within lesson study two when one child and their partner reverted to supporting and collaborating with each other (part of the SNOT principle that they usually follow) instead of engaging with the feedback sandwich. On reflection, it was a mistake to plan the lesson study in separation from the school practices already in use. For example, both schools use a pink/green/blue colour coding system for basic self-reflection and teacher feedback. Could this system be extended to peer feedback?

As part of lesson study 1, the small size of the focus group allowed the teacher to be continually interacting with the children, observing and intervening where support was needed. This is something that needs to be considered alongside the observation data as input from the teacher was observed to have an impact on the children’s engagement with the feedback sandwich technique. For example, an argument could be made that C2 showed a high level of engagement with the second peer assessment session because the teacher helped to scaffold the conversation. Observation notes highlight that C2 was happy to exchange ideas with their partner under directional support from the teacher. The process of peer assessment should ultimately be an autonomous and integrated practice, but it needs support for the students to reach this point. This is in line with Vygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Grigg 2015). The ZPD is a term which describes the gaps between what a child can currently achieve, and what can they have the potential to achieve. To reach this potential they need help and support from a more knowledgeable other (MKO). With peer feedback, all students have the potential to develop the feedback skills, but they can only achieve this if given the appropriate support from an MKO.

## **Conclusions**

Isaacs (2013) state that peer assessment is a sophisticated skill that needs time and practice to properly acquire, as a result this was not something that was possible to

**Figure 8: A summary of some of the key strengths and limitations of our research methods**

| Strengths                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Limitations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Observation of the children's engagement:</b><br>Observing a class other than our own enabled a focus on the children and their interaction with the feedback sandwich, without any prior conceptions of the children and their abilities influencing our opinions. | <b>Data collection issues:</b><br>In particular the lack of an audio recording for 2 <sup>nd</sup> lesson interview. This provides a clear illustration of the difficulties of qualitative data collection.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Post-lesson reflection:</b><br>Structured and focused reflection was a key tool. It allowed for better analysis of the lessons and as a result helped me to identify points which need further professional development and practice.                               | <b>Teaching vs. Observing:</b><br>There was a distinct difficulty in reflecting on a lesson you taught versus one you didn't. I found it challenging to compare and consider all the factors of the lessons and found it hard to be more objective with reflections on my own lesson. This will undoubtedly have resulted in an unconscious bias in my analysis of the results |

achieve within the context of one lesson. The practice of lesson study is definitely a useful tool for teacher professional development, but there are limitations to its uses as well. Figure 8. illustrates several of these key strengths and limitations as they have been encountered within this study.

Moving forward, this research has helped me develop a better awareness of my own knowledge of the steps needed to help develop effective feedback. Teacher training. is important too – in line with Isaacs (2013) teachers themselves don't always feel secure with effective provision of constructive feedback. It is not just the students that need support and training. Teachers need regular feedback on feedback giving too. This research project has highlighted how much this should not be underestimated. Even if we have prior experience with giving feedback, every situation is different. Each class is different and require different approaches.

The outcome of this research has shown that piloting the feedback sandwich method in advance would definitely have helped. If I were to teach this lesson again, then I would ensure that the following groundwork and skills development had been done ahead of the study; that the children had an understanding and familiarity with basic feedback concepts, that they had had opportunity to practice and develop these skills with modelling and appropriate support and that they had a guidance system that they could turn to if they needed help with peer and self-assessment. I would also integrate feedback strategies within pre-established school systems.

Feedback strategies such as the feedback sandwich have been observed as having the potential to increase engagement with peer feedback, however this needs to be used to help further develop pre-established peer-assessment skills, not as a way of introducing feedback concepts. To be effective, feedback needs to be clear, purposeful, meaningful, and compatible with students' prior knowledge and to provide logical connections to other aspects of their learning.

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