Does 'Talk for Writing' have a positive impact on learners' independence, metacognition and confidence when applied to extended writing?

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1. Introduction

Talk for Writing is a method of teaching extended writing, which was first created for primary schools by Pie Corbet, and subsequently adapted for secondary schools by Julia Strong. It teaches writing through the viewpoint of genre, and requires students to look at models of writing which they are encouraged to learn (or learn elements of) orally, then imitate and innovate on, in order to develop their own writing skills.

Talk for Writing has gained popularity in schools because it can provide clear evidence of progress, as shown in Corbet and Strong's books on the method where they show samples of students' work evidencing the improvements between baseline tasks and final assessments (Strong, 2013). These improvements typically show students adopting the vocabulary, style, and sentence constructions of the model text - learnt orally - in their own writing, thereby aligning their writing more closely to the requirements of the genre they're being taught. In the current educational climate, where a school's performance in Ofsted inspections and exam results league tables are fundamental to their success, being able to physically evidence students' progress plays a central role in proving that a good quality education is being provided. Not only is it a requirement from Ofsted, within schools a culture of accountability formed through initiatives such as performance related pay, means that providing physical evidence of progress is also important for individual classroom teachers. The Talk for Writing method claims to provide swift, visible progress in children's writing, something which supports teachers in providing this evidence of progress.

Furthermore, the Talk for Writing method supports children in adopting the appropriate register, tone and style for their writing, and teaches them how to vary this according to the genre and purpose for writing. These more nuanced elements of forming a writer's voice are challenging to teach as they change depending on audience, purpose and text type, meaning that students need exposing to many types and contexts of writing in order to see the differences and the differing effects on the reader; this also requires students when writing to appreciate the effect of their

language choices on the reader, rather than simply following rules of language such as spelling and grammar. However, this more complex understanding of a writer's voice is vitally important if students are to effectively meet the demands of their various examinations (SATS, GCSEs, A Levels), all of which require competence in a wide range of writing styles; this may well be a further reason for Talk for Writing's growing popularity.

Within my own context, Talk for Writing is a fundamental part of my teaching practice. The school in which I am working and researching became a Talk for Writing Training School in 2019, having adopted the Talk for Writing strategy school wide in 2017. In my role as a member of the Talk for Writing Project Team in school, I have received training from both Julia Strong and Pie Corbet and, have helped to embed the approach within the school. With this research, I hope to improve my understanding of the impact of this method on students' confidence and independence as writers, and use my findings to support my colleagues in their implementation of the method. The Talk for Writing strategy is also something which I believe could be adopted metacognitively by students as a learning tool, meaning it could potentially have a positive metacognitive element to it which is as yet unexplored. Within my research, I would like to investigate this metacognitive element and see whether or not the Talk for Writing method could support students in becoming independent learners as well as improve their writing.

2. Questions for Literature Review

After considering the Talk for Writing method and its potential for an additional metacognitive impact, I identified a number of key questions to explore further in existing literature. I wish to establish the following:

- What is Talk for Writing and how does it work?
- Where does the Talk for Writing method fit in relation to existing theories on the teaching of extended writing?
- What is metacognition?

- What is independence as a writer and a learner?

3. Literature Review

3.1 What is Talk for Writing and how does it work?

3.1.1 A Vygotskian View of Learners

In the Talk for Writing method, the learner and the process of learning itself is viewed from a Vygotskian perspective. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory states that social interaction plays a fundamental role in learning and development; that it is interaction with a more knowledgeable or capable other in a meaningful context which influences and develops a learner (Van Der Stuyf, 2002). For Vygotsky, learning isn't about the passive receipt of information but the active internalising of new information followed by the application of that information to progress the learner's own development. An integral part of this is Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) – this is defined as the distance between the actual level a student is working at and their level of potential development through problem solving under guidance (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD requires the learner to engage with a more capable other, such as a teacher or peer, to move beyond their existing understanding, internalise new knowledge and ultimately apply it independently.

The Talk for Writing method functions predominantly within the ZPD, as it offers a range of interactive activities supported by a knowledgeable other (the teacher) to navigate learners from their existing level to the next, with the ultimate aim of seeing students be able to independently apply new knowledge about each writing type.

3.1.2 The Talk for Writing Process

According to Strong, what lies at the heart of this method is the internalising of "the pattern of language" (2013, pg 3). Through exploration of exemplar texts and by learning elements of these

exemplars orally, students gain familiarity with and ultimately internalise the patterns of speech, tone and sentence construction which underpin each text type, enabling them to effectively reproduce that in their independent work.

The Talk for Writing process takes students from a Cold Task (baseline assessment), where they attempt to write in the style of a text type (such as an essay, newspaper article, letter etc.). It then introduces them to a model text, which is a high quality example of that text type. Students internalise the language of the model text through vocabulary activities (both written and oral), and by memorising key phrases through oral repetition supported by mime and gesture to aid the memory. Talk for Writing also encourages the use of images in, what the process calls, a 'text map', so that students can orally recite a phrase simply by looking at their own hand drawn images which represent the phrase committed to memory.

Students then imitate the exemplar text and learned phrases in writing, leading them to innovating on the exemplar text by writing their own version. The process also aims to develop their understanding of the structure of a text type through a process called 'boxing up' which asks students to consider the content and organisation of paragraphs so that they will be able to imitate these structural features in their own writing.

These same techniques of boxing up, text mapping and oral recitation aided by mime, can then be reused by the students when planning their independent writing for the final assessment (Hot Task). Students are encouraged, particularly in the Primary years, to compose their texts orally first, and prepare to write them by planning the content - creating a text map/ reciting aloud aided by mime – and planning the structure - boxing up. Within the time constraints of a secondary curriculum however, there is considerably less emphasis on the use of oral composition, although the tools of text mapping and boxing up are employed as planning strategies. The process culminates in a Hot Task (final assessment) where students are asked to write in the studied text type independently (Strong, 2013).

The success of the process is most visible by contrasting the Cold and Hot task responses, as the progress students have made in adopting the style, vocabulary and language patterns from the model text is usually evident and extensive. This process falls into what Vygotsky (1978) terms the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development). In his 2013 research, Thompson (2013) explored the ZPD in a three-figure model into which the Talk for Writing strategy fits clearly.

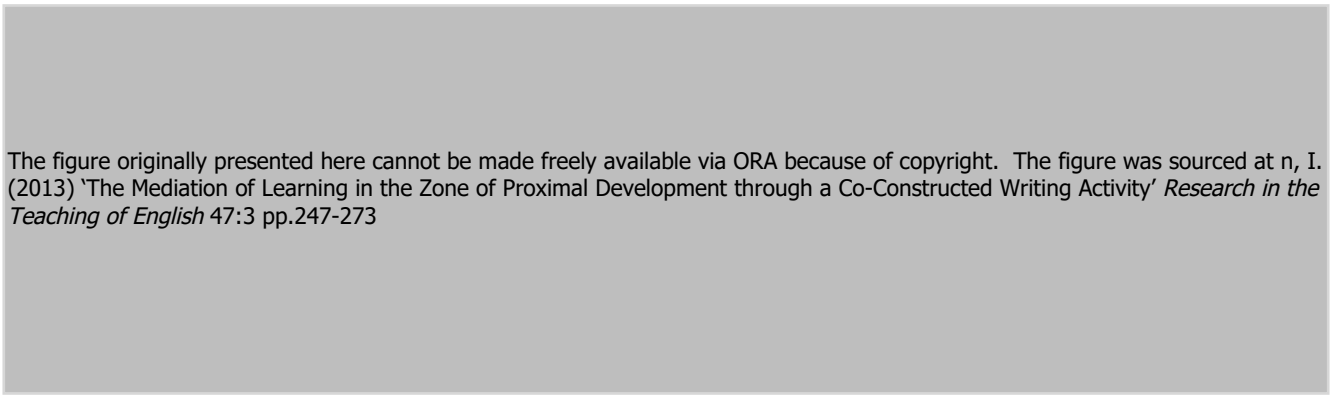

Figure 1: A learner's progress through the ZPD (Thompson, 2013, p.255)

The actual level or current level of working is defined by the independent work a student completes without assistance - in the Talk for Writing process this would be identified as the Cold Task; the potential level, which is a level of performance achieved by the student with assistance, would encompass the imitation and innovation elements of the Talk for Writing process, as the students undertake these supported by the teacher and their interactions with the model text; and lastly, the realized level – the independent performance of the student after this assistance, which equates to the Hot Task. Through this three-figure model, it appears that the Talk for Writing strategy could be viewed as the mediational tool used within the ZPD to scaffold the learning and development of students, with the Cold and Hot task assessments acting to determine whether or not a student has progressed through the ZPD.

3.1.3 Increasing students' independence as writers

The Talk for Writing process, Strong (2013) argues, transforms students' ability to communicate and, by the time they leave secondary school, the use of this process across all subject areas should enable them to be effective communicators in all the relevant text types required of them to pass their exams, and to communicate effectively beyond school life. This development of students as effective writers is a strong argument in favour of this process. However, Thompson (2013) points out that whilst students often seem to have mastered a skill after a sequence of lessons, they sometimes revert to a prior level of performance in subsequent work. The claim of Talk for Writing, that it is transformative, may be true in the short term, but in order to benefit students longer term, it needs to help students retain the skills for future performance. In terms of a ZPD, this issue of retention underpins the debate over whether Talk for Writing takes students through the ZPD to a new actual level of independent performance, or if they simply remain in the ZPD, needing to rely on innovating on the model and using teacher scaffolding rather than fully and independently mastering writing in a certain style.

3.1.4 Increasing students' confidence as writers

There are multiple stages of the Talk for Writing process which can have a positive impact on students' confidence (Strong, 2013). Firstly, the exemplar text provides the students with a clear success criteria regarding the writing task they've been set, and the process of deconstructing that exemplar helps to outline to students what is expected of them and should therefore increase their confidence in approaching the task. Secondly, the imitation and innovation stages of the process give students plenty of guided, scaffolded practice, enabling them to build their skills whilst supported by both the exemplar text and teacher input. This means that by the time students are asked to write independently, the task is no longer unfamiliar and is actually just a slightly altered version of things they have done before – in this way students' confidence in approaching it should be greatly increased. In my research, I would like to put this to the test by monitoring the confidence levels of my students throughout the process.

3.1.5 Impact on metacognition

The Talk for Writing process, whilst not explicitly promoting itself for its metacognitive benefits, does have rich opportunities within it for students to become self-aware as learners and build skills that they can consciously apply independently in other scenarios. Ultimately, if students understood the process and its purpose, they could apply it independently as a learning strategy in future, rather than just being participants of that process when it is delivered in class. For this reason, I would like to find out in my research whether students engage with the process on a metacognitive level, and if not, whether this is something that can be developed when delivering the strategy.

3.1.6 Scaffolding

As an approach, the Talk for Writing method acts as a scaffolding strategy to support students to progress through the ZPD. Scaffolding is a conceptual metaphor first introduced by Wood, Bruner and Ross in 1976 (Verenikina, 2003) which is underpinned by Vygotsky's view of learning, and specifically the concept of the ZPD. The purpose of scaffolding is to help the student move through their ZPD offering a temporary support which can be reduced and then removed allowing the student to become independent (Van Der Stuyf, 2002; Van de Pol, Volman & Beishuizen, 2010). Van Der Stuyf defines a scaffolding resource, activity or task as: something which motivates or enlists the student's interest; something which makes the overall task more manageable or achievable by simplifying it; something which provides direction to help the student focus on achieving their end goal; something which reduces frustration and risk for the student; something which clearly indicates the differences between the student's current work and the desired standard; and lastly, something which models or clearly defines the expectations of the goal to be achieved (2002). Some critics, such as Wells (1999), consider scaffolding to be the direct application of teaching in the ZPD – something Wells terms 'operationalising' Vygotsky's concept (1999). However, others argue that scaffolding as a technique only partially reflects the much broader and richer concept of educational interactions within the ZPD (Daniels, 2001). The consensus of both viewpoints however is that the

idea of the ZPD lies at the heart of scaffolding: a student engages with a knowledgeable other (the teacher) and ultimately the responsibility is transferred to the student and they leave the ZPD at a new level of performance.

A major criticism of scaffolding as a conceptual metaphor lies in the way it is interpreted by teachers. Because it is a metaphor, there are no specific guidelines regarding how to use it, leaving it open to interpretation (Verenikina, 2003). In particular, concern has been raised around the metaphor scaffolding encouraging a one-way communication process which is adult led (Lave & Wenger, 1991 *in* Verenikina, 2003). If interpreted in this rigid way, scaffolding can become the imposing of a structure on students, something which creates a fairly one-sided and adult-driven interaction, making students passive receivers of a support structure, rather than Vygotsky's more interactive, student focused vision for teaching in the ZPD.

On the other hand, a 2010 review of research into scaffolding considers that, because the metaphor is broad, it is open to being interpreted far too generally, ending up becoming simply synonymous with 'teacher support' (van de Pol, Volman & Beishuizen, 2010). Therefore, the review argues, for something to be termed scaffolding, it must adhere to three clear phases: A) contingent support (defined as a teacher adapting the support offered to the needs of a student/ group of students) B) the fading or gradual withdrawal of scaffolding by decreasing the amount of support offered over a period of time, and lastly C) the transfer of responsibility from the teacher to the student so that the student takes control over their own learning (van de Pol, Volman & Beishuizen, 2010). Talk for Writing can be viewed through these criteria indicating that it is a scaffolding method: the Cold Task offers teachers a baseline assessment from which they can adapt the support they offer based on the students' current level of understanding therefore providing what has been termed here 'contingent support'; secondly, the process requires the gradual fading of support over time leaving students to entirely independently approach their Hot Task; and lastly, by withdrawing the scaffolds and posing the independent Hot Task, the teacher is transferring the responsibility to the student.

However, when refining the term scaffolding to avoid it being used too generally to describe teacher support, this definition does not prevent teachers from interpreting the metaphor too rigidly, and does not entirely mitigate the possibility of scaffolding interactions becoming one-sided and adult-led.

When exploring Talk for Writing as a scaffolding strategy, it needs to be considered how it actually works to support students' progress and what the benefits are. Van de Pol, Volman and Beishuizen's 2010 review offered multiple possibilities for how scaffolding actually works. Firstly, they cited Stone (1998 *in* van de Pol, Volman & Beishuizen, 2010) with the argument that students internalise the support structure associated with the scaffolding meaning that it can ultimately be removed as the student can provide their own support from the structure they've internalized. This theory seems to align with the interpretation of scaffolding as providing a structure for students, making the scaffolding intervention more teacher-led with students in a receptive rather than interrogative role. On the other hand, the 2010 review then suggested that scaffolding may function differently: possibly by reducing the cognitive load for the student enabling them to attempt parts of a task that they otherwise wouldn't have been able to; or possibly through the creation of a common understanding and shared meaning through the discourse between student and teacher, something which aligns much more closely with a Vygotskian view (van de Pol, Volman & Beishuizen, 2010). It is therefore possible, when considering these theories, to suggest that there may be a link between the way the metaphor itself is interpreted and the understanding of how it works.

A number of advantages to the scaffolding approach have been identified such as: the clarity it offers of expectations for students; the reduction of uncertainty, surprise and disappointment that might arise for students approaching a task unaided; and the provision of clear direction to students which will reduce their confusion (McKenzie 1999 *in* Van Der Stuyf, 2002). These three advantages in particular would suggest that scaffolding approaches such as Talk for Writing would have a positive impact on students' confidence due to the reduction in confusion and uncertainty. Furthermore, Van

Der Stuyf (2002) argues that scaffolding engages the student in their learning, develops a 'can do' attitude alleviating the fear of an insurmountable task, motivates students, and provides many opportunities for positive feedback at each small step of progress. These advantages all suggest that the Talk for Writing approach could result in an increase in students' confidence and motivation. Furthermore, Van de Pol, Volman and Beishuizen's 2010 review also concluded that, based on the research, scaffolding can be viewed as an effective teaching strategy, although they did counsel that further research was required due to the fact that only a small number of effectiveness studies having been conducted so far, therefore meaning that the data is fairly limited.

However, there are also potential areas of weakness in scaffolding. Van Der Stuyf, for example, cautions that without proper training, teachers may not implement scaffolding strategies properly and therefore they may not see the full effect (2002). With scaffolding as a metaphor open for interpretation, the idea of implementing it properly is a challenging one, and in particular it requires teachers to have an understanding of Vygotsky's view of learning and specifically the ZPD. Van Der Stuyf is here emphasising the importance of practitioners being trained and having a thorough understanding of the ideas which underpin scaffolding as a strategy.

A further concern is that scaffolding, whilst assisting students to some extent, could also restrict them from demonstrating their full range of knowledge (Donovan & Smolkin, 2002 *in* Verenikina, 2003). A scaffold offers support, but it also encourages students to conform, and therefore may discourage or prevent them from going beyond the scaffold. When considering writing in particular, the creative and subjective nature of the subject means that whilst scaffolds can be useful, they could well limit students' freedom and creativity. With regard to Talk for Writing, this is a concern as students are encouraged to conform to a specific checklist of genre features and imitate the structure of an existing text, both of which could place limitations on students' creativity.

3.2 Where does the Talk for Writing method fit in relation to existing theories on the teaching of extended writing?

Within the academic sphere, I wanted to research where the Talk for Writing method sits in relation to existing research into the teaching of extended writing. My aim was to find out if the method is supported by research regarding what makes effective teaching and learning.

3.2.1 Discourses of Writing

Ivanič (2004) developed a framework identifying six discourses of writing, which categorise the beliefs about the teaching and assessment of writing, and subsequent pedagogical approaches, into six clear categories. Ivanič presents, what she calls a "comprehensive view of language" (2004, p. 222) in which the textual element of language is "embedded within, and inseparable from, mental and social aspects." (2004, p. 222) The six discourses of writing she identifies all prioritise these elements slightly differently. The skills discourse, for example, prioritises the text itself, with a focus on the accurate application of linguistic skills; the process discourse is far more concerned with the cognitive processes and actions of drafting and revision of writing; the creativity discourse places its focus on the content and style of the writing and advocates self-expression as being at the heart of writing; and both the social practices discourse and the socio-political discourse prioritise the significance of social context. Talk for Writing falls into what Ivanič calls the genre discourse which, as the name suggests, focuses on the way in which texts conform to genre conventions, and teaches writing as a set of text types which will vary linguistically depending on their purpose and context (Ivanič, 2004).

3.2.2 The Genre Discourse

Ivanič (2004) states that this discourse lends itself to teaching because it allows for specification of linguistic features that will be present in a given text type, enabling teachers to assess students writing based on its appropriacy. For the students, the process becomes one of learning the linguistic

characteristics of a text type and applying them in order to be considered successful, and this is what we see in the Talk for Writing approach. In this way Talk for Writing itself is not revolutionary, as the pedagogical realisation of this discourse, known as genre theory, has been well established since the 1980s (Barrs, 1994). Ivanič (2004) also notes that this discourse is often viewed as very logical or systematic, making it appealing in terms of teaching when contrasted with the creative discourse, for example, which presents a greater challenge to the teacher due to its focus on self-expression.

The beliefs about the teaching and assessing of writing which underpin the genre discourse and Talk for Writing, consider assessment of 'good writing' to be measurable because the genre based approach offers a linguistic checklist making a very clear success criteria (Ivanič, 2004; Marshall, 2014). As Marshall (2014) describes, writing viewed through the genre discourse becomes a process of identifying and reproducing the linguistic checklist, or 'rules', of any given genre in order to demonstrate understanding. She goes on to point out that, "in a discipline that has traditionally characterised itself as eschewing the 'right answer' there is a possibility, in a genre based approach, that knowledge becomes fixed and inflexible, that there are 'right' answers" (Marshall, 2014, p.17). In the current educational context where measurable success and progress are valued so highly, it is therefore not surprising that the Talk for Writing method is viewed positively.

The problem with a genre based approach to teaching writing is the concept of quality. Whilst students may well be able to identify and reproduce a linguistic checklist, the concept of what makes quality writing requires judgement and aesthetic appreciation that the genre approach does not prioritise (Marshall, 2014). She further argued that this limitation of the genre discourse also limits the students' own progression as writers, as it focuses too heavily on the rules and regulations of each genre rather than on the students' own self-expression; as Marshall puts it "art will not be produced if it is too rule bound" (2014, p.21) and in some cases, the concept of quality in English requires students to look beyond the prescriptions and regulations of appropriacy. To combat this, Marshall cites Sadler's concept of 'guild knowledge' which requires students to engage with the

concept of quality through “exposure, discussion and peer assessment. Through this means, rather than through a checklist of criteria…pupils begin to understand and internalise what a good piece of work looks like.” (Marshall, 2014, p.23)

The Talk for Writing strategy does go some way to addressing this limitation. As mentioned earlier, the Talk for Writing approach believes that the teaching of good writing is intrinsically linked with the teaching of reading; a key element of the strategy being students’ exposure to high quality model texts (Strong, 2013). Furthermore, the ‘Talk’ element of Talk for Writing involves students committing the high level language patterns and vocabulary from the model texts to memory, thereby going some way to supporting students in internalising what good writing looks like.

3.2.3 Genre vs Process

A further criticism of the genre approach is that it views writing as a product. Atherton, Green & Snapper (2013) raise the concern that when students view writing as a product, they fail to appreciate its role as a “process that can assist the development of ideas” (p. 172). The predominant alternative to genre theory is process theory – the idea that writing should be taught as a process not as an end product. Process theory promotes the teaching of writing with a focus on helping students to develop their skills of creative decision making and drafting so that they may learn by a process of planning, decision making, editing and re-drafting, what makes the most successful and effective self-expression (Murray, 1972). Process theory rose to prominence as a pedagogical approach in the 1980s, particularly in Australia, after the work of Flower and Hayes (Hodges, 2017).

In essence the process approach poses the idea that writers cycle through elements of the writing process (such as planning, drafting, revising and editing) multiple times during the process of composition, rejecting the idea that writing follows a linear progression. Within the classroom, teaching from a process viewpoint allows for creative writing without any set, regimented process, and students are encouraged to value all of their creative ideas, saving those which don’t get used for future writing projects (Hodges, 2017). During the 1980s concerns over the teaching of writing in

this way were raised: it was considered that the process approach led to the dominance of narrative writing over other genres; the focus on the writing process led to the neglect of the end product; and lastly, it was argued that teachers needed to be providing far more explicit knowledge to students about language and how it is used (Cairney, 1992). As a result of these criticisms, genre theory rose to popularity as an alternative.

Genre theory appears to address the concerns raised over teaching with a process focus, for example by reducing the dominance of narrative writing, and exposing students to a wide range of genres including those which they are more likely to encounter in adult life (Martin, 1989; Barrs, 1994; Martinez Lirola, 2015; Ivanič, 2004).

However, in critiquing genre theory Cairney (1992) raises a number of concerns. Firstly, the issue of identifying genres to be taught is challenging; Cairney (1992) argues that by defining genres too specifically, there is a risk of "imposing sanitized forms" (p. 29) and points out that history suggests that genres change and do not remain fixed to a particular set of rules. Secondly, Cairney (1992) raised a concern over the genre approach teaching language in decontextualized lessons, ignoring the role of purpose and meaning. In this way the genre approach risks placing significance on structure and language over meaning. Next, Cairney (1992) argued that learning takes place when students use their own language to explore their understanding, rather than when they are forced to conform to particular language conventions, a viewpoint which strongly seems to favour the freedom and self-expression offered in the process approach over the restrictions imposed by the genre approach. Lastly, where process theory had been criticised for a lack of explicit teaching of knowledge about language and its use, Cairney offers the caution that genre theory could go too far the other way by taking control of the learning process away from the learner themselves, and placing it firmly in the hands of the teacher (Cairney, 1992).

In terms of marking and offering feedback, both process and genre theory have their complications. Process theory encourages a more subjective and creative view of writing, which makes it more

challenging for a teacher to mark when contrasted with genre theory's 'right answers' (Marshall, 2014). However, in a critique of literature on genre theory, Barrs (1994) found that when viewing students work through the lens of genre, students' efforts were being considered as 'failed adult texts' rather than children's writing developing towards a more mature form. Barrs (1994) noted that critiquing writing from a genre perspective invited criticism, and as such students' creative decisions and creative content were being dismissed if they did not fall within the relevant genre framework and linguistic requirements for the task. If viewed from a process viewpoint these creative elements would be celebrated and encouraged, but from a genre perspective these things become invalid, leading the genre approach to potentially restrict students' creativity in writing. However, it is perhaps because the genre approach offers this clarity over right and wrong in such a subjective subject, that it thrives in the current educational climate where results, outcomes and measurable data are valued most highly.

To conclude, the genre/process debate illuminates the potential limitations of a genre based approach like Talk for Writing: whilst the Talk for Writing process may well support students in learning to produce the end products that will be assessed against a predetermined criteria in their external exams, in terms of developing their skills as writers, this method does not offer the key elements of planning, drafting and revising which students will require later in life, nor does it celebrate creativity in the way that a process approach would. However, the current return to linear exam courses and the removal of coursework from the GCSE specifications, could account for the increasing interest in a genre approach like Talk for Writing over the process approach in today's classrooms.

3.3 What is metacognition?

The term metacognition originates in the work of John Flavell in the late 1970s, where he first simplistically described it as "thinking about thinking" (Flavell, 1979 p.906). As more developed

definition from Reeve and Brown, states that metacognition is: “individuals’ ability to understand and manipulate their own cognitive processes.” (Reeve and Brown, 1985, p.343). The development of metacognition is predominantly viewed through a Vygotskian view of learning. Within social interactions, adults initially articulate the metacognitive processes and over time the child starts to take charge of their own thinking behaviours instead. Through a process of joint problem solving, a student is able to take on more responsibility until they are able to do it independently; “the adults’ role in the interaction can be thought of as that of the expert who manages the situation by providing an appropriate cognitive scaffold” (Reeve and Brown, 1985).

Metacognition has been explored in two distinct categories: cognitive knowledge - the knowledge about oneself as a learner; knowledge of learning strategies; and knowledge of when and how to employ those strategies – and cognitive regulation – the ongoing awareness a learner has of their comprehension and performance in relation to a task, which could also include self-evaluation and assessment in relation to determined learning goals (Brown, Bransford, Ferrara, Campione, 1983; Flavell, 1979; Cross & Paris, 1988; Schraw & Moshman, 1995; Schraw et al., 2006). Within the classroom, metacognition involves students stepping back to consider their own cognitive processes and can be used to regulate learning through the planning of activities, the monitoring of activities during the learning process, and the checking of outcomes (Brown et. al. 1983). In this way, metacognition considers students as active problem solvers and processors of information: students are required to understand what is being asked of them; to be aware of their own capabilities; to plan strategies that will enable them to achieve the outcome, and be able to monitor and coordinate the activities they complete to achieve this (Reeve and Brown, 1985).

Flavell (1979) argued that a relationship exists between the two elements of metacognition (cognitive knowledge and cognitive regulation). Flavell argued that a metacognitive experience which allows for the monitoring and regulation of cognition plays a role in refining and developing

the cognitive knowledge. In this way, after applying cognitive knowledge, by using cognitive regulation students would be improving and developing their cognitive knowledge (Flavell, 1979).

3.3.1 What are the benefits and challenges of metacognition?

Reeve and Brown point out that "children are instructed or induced to perform particular processing routines but are not helped to understand the significance of such activities" (Reeve and Brown, 1985, p.345); whilst the immediate outcome of teaching in this way may be positive, it does not equip students with any transferable skills or any understanding about the way in which they acquire knowledge that they could then use independent. What metacognition allows for is a student to take a strategy they've been taught in one problem solving context and then apply it again in a similar but new context (Kuhn & Dean, 2004). This offers a deeper and more beneficial layer to the learning process, enabling students to gain an awareness of how they achieved their goal and re-apply that strategy in future. Over time, by increasing their ability to gain conscious control of and regulation of their cognitive processes, students will see the growth of their problem solving skills (Reeve and Brown, 1985).

Reeve and Brown (1985) also found that through metacognition, students' feelings of competence and control over their learning increased, and they were also able to improve their skills independently. This finding is supported by other research which indicates a significant link between metacognition and student motivation. Schraw et al. (2006) define motivation in the context of metacognition as "beliefs and attitudes that affect the use and development of cognitive and metacognitive skills" (p. 112). They then divide motivation into two subcomponents: self-efficacy – a student's confidence in their ability to perform a given task – and epistemological beliefs – beliefs about the nature and origin of knowledge (Schraw et al., 2006). The positive impact of metacognition on these two areas could therefore explain the findings of Reeve and Brown (1985) and suggest that through metacognition it is possible to see an increase in students' confidence and motivation in learning.

On the other hand, research suggests that there are limitations to the effectiveness of metacognition which can impede students' progress. Metcalfe and Kornell (2007) raise the idea of 'metacognative illusions' – students believing that they have learned something when actually they have not, or they have errors and misconceptions they are unaware of. In particular, if students are learning independently with limited or no feedback, then errors simply remain unaddressed and the students remain unaware of the error in their learning (Metcalfe and Kornell, 2007). Furthermore, when placing students in a position of control over their learning, this relies on the students' own awareness of what they need to know: for example, when encountering problem solving situations, if a student has a 'metacognitive illusion' around their level of understanding they may choose not to apply the appropriate learning strategy. Whilst a metacognitive understanding of learning may well be beneficial, this research by Metcalfe and Kornell suggests that it does necessarily mean that students will be able to apply their metacognitive understanding entirely successfully when working independently.

Furthermore, research suggests that metacognition is something that requires explicit teaching, emphasising the importance of giving explicit instruction regarding both cognitive knowledge and cognitive regulation in order to support students' metacognition (Cross & Paris, 1988; Schraw et al. 2006; Kuhn, 2000). This makes the incorporation of metacognition into the classroom increasingly challenging due to the time constraints that already exist within the curriculum. An additional challenge, outlined by Kuhn (2000), involves the type of instruction required: Kuhn (2000) argues that instruction for metacognition should be given at a meta-level rather than at performance level. In other words, teacher instruction should focus on supporting students awareness and control of the meta-task rather than simply instructing on task procedures. This again makes the incorporation of metacognition into the classroom time consuming and more challenging for teachers.

3.3.2 Metacognition and Talk for Writing

The Talk for Writing process offers students the opportunity not only to learn in the short term how to write appropriately in each text type, but also to expand their cognitive knowledge by learning the strategy itself as a problem solving strategy to apply to future, similar learning scenarios.

3.4 What is independence as a writer and a learner?

3.4.1 Independent writers

The Talk for Writing process claims to help students to become independent writers by equipping them with an internalised 'toolkit' for writing in a range of genres (Strong, 2013). Therefore, to be an independent writer, as defined by Talk for Writing, students should be able to write in a range of genres, showcasing their knowledge of, and competency using, the required linguistic criteria for each text type. However, as considered previously, Talk for Writing views writing through the lens of the genre discourse, a discourse that Ivanič (2004) noted was criticised as being "prescriptive and simplistic," (p. 234) suggesting that perhaps teaching writing in this way leaves some elements of writing unexplored. Advocates of process theory in particular, argue that teaching through genre theory does not necessarily include all the vital elements of the writing process such as idea generation, drafting, revising, and editing (Hodges, 2017). And whilst process theory acknowledges the significance of a writer's awareness of audience, purpose and context (Hodges, 2017) – all central elements covered in genre theory – genre theory does not place any real significance on the broader writing process that process theory advocates. The debate would therefore suggest than in teaching through the lens of genre, students could be missing out on learning some key elements of the writing process. This therefore raises the question of whether learning to write independently from a genre perspective, is truly becoming an independent writer.

In addition, it should also be considered that neither process theory nor genre theory particularly comment on the technical side of language use, which Ivanič (2004) terms the skills discourse. In

order to be independent writers, the viewpoint of the skills discourse prioritises the requirement for technical accuracy, something which is also significantly valued in the exam mark schemes at all Key Stages in 2020. In this way Ivanič's (2004) discourses of writing would suggest that in order to be an effective independent writer, students need to have an understanding of writing from the perspective of multiple discourses rather than just one.

3.4.2 Independent learners

With regards to becoming an independent learner, the concept of metacognition has played a key role in bringing in to schools the idea that students can have some control and independence over their learning, through cognitive knowledge and cognitive regulation. The purpose of encouraging metacognition in students, is to support them in being able to independently apply problem solving strategies that they've been taught before, to new contexts (Kuhn & Dean, 2004). In this way, students develop cognitive knowledge of problem solving strategies, and can use cognitive regulation to be aware of and revise their ongoing learning through the problem solving process. It is this metacognition which enables students to become independent learners in the sense that they're able to select appropriate learning strategies for themselves, apply them, self-monitor and regulate, and self-assess their learning in relation to their learning goals. The aim of developing a metacognitive understanding of Talk for Writing would be for students to be able to use it independently as a learning strategy.

However, the concerns raised by Metcalfe and Cornell (2007) including the idea that students experience metacognitive illusions, and the prospect that students may not have accurate cognitive knowledge or accurately regulate their learning, all suggest that having a metacognitive understanding of the strategy will not necessarily make students independent learners.

Research has been done specifically looking at ways to support students in becoming effective learners, and support them with the challenges of accurate cognitive regulation. Rosenshine in particular has been influential in bringing this cognitive science research into the classroom through

publishing Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction (2012) - ten practical instructions for teachers founded in research. Rosenshine notably defines learning as the gaining of knowledge, suggesting that students need to "develop strong readily accessible background knowledge" which is "well rehearsed and tied to other knowledge" (2012, p.30). With regard to metacognition, Rosenshine's principles advocate testing and quizzing to promote regular recall of knowledge supporting its transference from the working memory into the long term memory – in particular Rosenshine advocates 'self-quizzing' by students as a metacognitive activity to help students develop a more accurate awareness of their cognitive knowledge. However, it should be noted that Rosenshine's viewpoint has the potential to reduce learning to a very simplistic concept: the act of committing knowledge to memory – something which more closely aligns with what Schneider and Lockl (2002) term 'metamemory' which is more specifically "knowledge about memory processes and contents" (Schneider & Lockl, 2002, p. 5). In this sense, whilst Rosenshine's approach does support metacognition, it does not necessarily support students in becoming independent learners as the focus of his work remains narrowly on knowledge retention rather than on broader problem solving strategies.

In terms of students developing a metacognitive understanding of Talk for Writing, the Talk for Writing process offers a learning strategy that is more diverse than simply committing knowledge to memory, and therefore it is possible to conclude that students could retain it as cognitive knowledge which they could then apply independently for problem solving. However, Rosenshine's work can also be applied to elements of the Talk for Writing strategy such as committing the 'writer's toolkit' to memory which is something that could effectively be achieved through an activity such as self-quizzing. The 'talk' element of the process also relies heavily on the use of memorising; for instance, memorised vocabulary and sentence construction form the basis of students' understanding of the text type, a view of the learning process which is supported by Rosenshine's belief that students need to develop "background knowledge" that is "well rehearsed and tied to other knowledge"

(Rosenshine, 2012, p.30). Therefore application of Rosenshine's (2012) research and Principles of Instruction, could support students in developing a metacognitive understanding of Talk for Writing.

3.4.3 Do students need to be independent learners?

In 2020, the assessment specifications across both the primary and secondary age ranges require students to retain an extremely large quantity of factual information. In the absence of coursework and a shift to linear exam courses, it is clear to see why Rosenshine's Principles (2012) and the focus on 'metamemory' (Schneider & Lockl, 2002) has become increasingly popular and significant to schools. Furthermore, a political climate that prioritises exam results and uses these to determine the quality of education a school provides, encourages school leaders and teachers to seek out methods and research which focus on knowledge retention. As mentioned earlier, it is within this political climate that the genre discourse thrives as it removes subjectivity and offers a more quantifiable 'right answer' in a creative, artistic subject (Marshall, 2014) and offers elements such as a linguistic checklist which can be memorised and then used in an exam. Therefore it is possible to conclude that the modern curriculum does not prioritise students' ability to be independent problem solvers, and instead prioritises knowledge retention. This then begs the question as to whether it is necessary for students to develop a metacognitive understanding of Talk for Writing. However, as Martin (1989) points out, the types of writing that students will encounter in adult life are both extensive and varied, and therefore the process of learning to write needs to equip them to be prepared for these demands, a view shared by Ivanič (2004). This viewpoint suggests that having the Talk for Writing strategy as part of their cognitive knowledge would be beneficial to students in later life, and therefore supporting students in developing a metacognitive understanding of it would add a beneficial dimension to their writing education.

4. Refined research questions

From my findings in the literature, I have developed my research questions for my practitioner research:

- Does the use of the Talk for Writing strategy increase students' confidence?
- Does the use of the Talk for Writing process increase students' independence as writers?
- Does the Talk for Writing process support students in becoming independent learners through a metacognitive impact?

5. Methodology

5.1 Overview of research

In order to answer my research questions, I conducted two cycles of practitioner research in school. The aim of the first cycle was to implement the Talk for Writing strategy, and assess whether its use helped to make the students more independent as writers; more confident in completing writing tasks; and to find out whether or not the students had any metacognitive awareness of the Talk for Writing process. After reviewing the findings of cycle 1, the aim of the second cycle was to make some modifications to the delivery of the strategy, to see if it was possible to increase student independence and metacognition.

The data collected was predominantly qualitive due to the nature of what was being assessed: the concepts of independence and metacognition are both broad and subjective, and would be very difficult to measure numerically. The only quantitative data collected was a numerical rating of confidence from the students using a scale of 1 – 10. The purpose of collecting student confidence scores was to compare their confidence levels at the beginning and end of the Talk for Writing process, and therefore numerical data was the most appropriate form of data for this type of analysis.

The cycles of practitioner research were conducted simultaneously across two subjects: English and History. I chose to collaborate with a colleague in History in order to gain a cross-curricular perspective of Talk for Writing as a literacy strategy, and to support the school's aim of embedding Talk for Writing in all subject areas. By completing cycle 1 concurrently in two subjects, there was also an opportunity for collaboration both when making reflections on cycle 1, and when planning alterations for cycle 2. A timeline, figure 2, outlines the stages of the intervention.

Month	**English**	**History**
July	*CUREC completed and approval granted for research.*	
September	**Cycle 1** Introduction to Mythical Creatures unit. Cold Task Collection of student confidence scores. Deconstruction of model text to identify the 'writer's toolkit'. First student interview.	**Cycle 1** Introduction to Early Britain unit. Cold Task. Collection of student confidence scores.
October	Students memorise the model sentences and key vocabulary. Imitation and innovation on model text. Students create their own mythical creature.	Deconstructing a model text to identify the 'writer's toolkit'. Co-constructing a new answer/ creating a second model text using the 'writer's toolkit'. Students memorise the key language from the model.
November	Hot Task.	Hot Task.

	Collection of student confidence scores.	Collection of student confidence scores. Teacher interviewed regarding the cycle in History.
Review/ evaluation with colleague, and preparation for cycle 2.		
January	**<u>Cycle 2</u>** Introduction to Poetry unit. Cold Task. Collection of student confidence scores. Deconstructing a model text to identify the 'writer's toolkit'. Co-constructing to use the 'writer's toolkit'.	**<u>Cycle 2</u>** Introduction to Normans unit. Cold Task. Collection of student confidence scores.
February	Students memorise the model phrases. *(Follow up exercise to Cycle 1 – students set a writing task for the writing type learned in cycle 1. Task was completed unaided. Student interview data collected along with written tasks).* Imitation of the model. Innovation on the model.	Deconstruction of a model text to identify the 'writer's toolkit'. Co-construction to use the 'writer's toolkit'. Students memorise key language from the model.
March	Hot Task.	Hot Task.

	Collection of student confidence scores. Final student interview.	Collection of student confidence scores. Teacher interviewed to discuss cycle 2 in History.

Figure 2: Timeline of data generation.

5.2 Practitioner research

The research undertaken was practitioner research and it was informed by Menter's model of 'The Reflective Teaching Cycle' (2011, p.6)– outlined in figure 3. This cycle offered opportunities for collaborative discussion and planning, as well as collaborative analysis and evaluation after the actions had been implemented. This cycle also facilitates utilising the outcomes of the first research cycle to inform the planning of the second, which supported my aim of making changes to the delivery of the strategy in cycle 2 to see if this could create an increase in independence and metacognition. Lastly, this cycle met a broader professional development aim of my colleague and I by supporting us in improving our delivery of the Talk for Writing strategy based on our research and reflections.

Figure 3

5.3 Collaboration

I conducted the research in English collaborating with a colleague who actioned the same two cycles in History. These subjects were selected as both involve a great deal of extended writing, making them well suited to using Talk for Writing. My colleague and I both had experience of using the strategy as members of the Talk for Writing project team within school. Our research aimed to improve our understanding and delivery of the strategy, enabling us to then share our findings with the wider staff body, and improve our use of Talk for Writing as a school.

The types of writing required in both subjects are varied, offering a broader spectrum of writing types through which to assess the effectiveness of the strategy. Furthermore, History was selected to provide a cross curricular perspective as a subject where the aim is to teach content rather than just writing; in this way the Talk for Writing process could be evaluated as a tool to support students' literacy at a cross curricular level rather than just as a tool to teach writing in English.

5.4 The Sample Students

The students selected for the research were a group of 8 Year 7 students (aged 11-12 years). They represented a full range of abilities and were taught by both myself and my colleague. Year 7 was selected as it was unlikely that these students would have had any experience of the Talk for Writing strategy before, because they were new to the school; therefore they were unlikely to be influenced by any pre-existing knowledge of the strategy. Furthermore, these 8 students in particular were selected as they were the only students taught by both myself and my colleague, and we wanted to base the study in both subjects on the same students in order to eliminate additional variables in the data collection. All the students were informed about the research that we conducted and were offered the option to opt out – this took place in a short meeting with the students during a break

time, accompanied by written information which was taken home by the students to share with their parents/guardians. Permission for the research was granted by the headteacher acting in loco parentis, as discussed further in my ethics section.

As both my colleague and I were teachers of these students, we were aware that we held positions of trust and power in our relationships with the students, which could potentially influence their reactions to the research. To mitigate this, I made it clear to the students that there were no right or wrong answers to any interview questions - our research was to find out what their thoughts and opinions were, so we weren't looking for a specific correct answer. I also explained to them that, whilst I would look at their work for the purposes of research, this would be separate from any grading or reporting, so there would be no connection between their involvement in the research and their academic outcomes.

5.5 Bias and Objectivity

Working within a Talk for Writing training school, a significant potential bias existed for myself and my colleague as researchers. Both of us were members of the Talk for Writing project team who introduced the strategy to the school originally, and our continued work supporting the development of Talk for Writing to the point of becoming a training centre in 2019, meant we both had a positive bias towards the strategy and an existing belief in its effectiveness. As such, before commencing the research, we agreed to gather data and evaluate with as much objectivity as possible, remaining vigilant for any bias influencing our findings.

Additionally, as a social science rather than a physical science, teachers as researchers are likely to be influenced by the social reasons which motivate their research, thereby potentially impeding objectivity (Menter, 2011): as a teacher, I have a vested interested in seeing the strategy work as it would benefit my students, so my neutrality was compromised. Therefore, when analysing and

evaluating the data, I had to ensure that I remained vigilant for any bias that might arise from my motivations for conducting the research. Furthermore, my motivations to improve the educational experience of my students, to support them in becoming independent learners and writers, and desire to equip them with skills, might all influence my delivery of the strategy. Therefore in planning and delivering the lessons, I had to ensure I was rigid in following the Talk for Writing strategy in order to gather data on it and its effectiveness, rather than adapting my teaching in order to influence the outcomes for students, as I might normally have done.

5.6 Ethical considerations

When undertaking the research, I was conscious that all the participants needed to be 'treated fairly, sensitively, with dignity, and within an ethic of respect and freedom from prejudice' (British Education Research Association, 2011 pg 5). This was particularly important as the research involved children, and was conducted by myself and my colleague who both held positions of authority over the students. The research was therefore conducted in accordance with BERA ethical standards (BERA, 2011) and after approval had been received from University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee and the school's headteacher, acting in loco parentis. Both the students, and my colleague were clearly informed of the purpose of my research, and were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality should they choose to be involved. They were also given the opportunity not to participate. Within all the data collected and the final report, the students are identified by using a letter as a pseudonym (A-H), and my colleague is unnamed. The teaching role of my colleague is described only vaguely to further ensure anonymity. The data collected (field notes, interview transcripts, confidence scores) were held securely in order to ensure they remained confidential, and were destroyed after the completion of the research project.

Lastly, the Talk for Writing strategy was applied within our normal roles as classroom teachers, and was done so with an understanding of its pedagogical benefits and limitations. The expected

benefits to the students from using the strategy were believed to outweigh any limitations. Both my colleague and I had received thorough training, and had experience of implementing the strategy prior to the research. As a Talk for Writing school, all students across the year group were taught using the Talk for Writing strategy, and as such the sample students were not placed at an advantage or disadvantage in comparison with their peers.

5.7 Data collection

5.7.1 Field Notes

The first source of data was a log of my observations in the role of 'participant-as-observer', recorded in a diary of field experiences which was recorded from September to November (cycle 1) and then from January to March (cycle 2) (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007). My observations were direct as I was present in the lessons where I used the strategy and was able to write my field notes immediately afterwards. I also marked the students' work to observe the outcomes and add to my field notes. The focus of my research was the programme and interactional settings (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007) and specifically the Talk for Writing strategy and its impact.

The primary benefit of this source of data was my immersion, as it enabled me to provide highly detailed and accurate observations. However, a potential limitation was the students' awareness of my role as researcher, as it may have impacted on their effort and response to the strategy. I attempted to mitigate this by reminding them that the research was about our normal classroom work and therefore I needed them to work as they typically would. I also conducted the research over consecutive terms (Autumn and Spring) so that it became part of our standard classroom practice rather than being highlighted to them as a specific event which may have influenced their behaviour .

A further consideration when it came to the field notes was the reliability of the data. This was difficult because of my role as the observer. However, by triangulating this data with the student voice data (interviews and confidence scores) and with the data collected from interviewing my colleague, I hoped to mitigate this difficulty as much as possible and improve the validity of my research.

5.7.2 Student confidence scores

In order to address my research question regarding student confidence, I chose to use numerical data. At the point of each Cold Task and Hot Task the students were asked to rate their confidence in completing the task on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 representing the highest confidence. These scores were collected in both History and English and through both cycles of practitioner research – see Appendix 1.

The benefit of using numerical scores was that it made the data easily comparable. I was able to plot the scores into bar graphs (as shown later in my findings) and clearly assess whether or not the students felt more or less confident at the point of each Hot Task. I selected bar graphs for this purpose due to their visual clarity when drawing comparisons. I believed that the concept of confidence, if articulated verbally rather than numerically by the students, would provide vague data which would not easily fit into a scale, and so would limit my ability to identify whether the students truly felt their confidence had increased or decreased. Similarly, if I had posed this as a question to the students ('do you feel that your confidence has increased?') I was concerned that they could potentially feel bound to say yes because of the position I held as their teacher. I did not want the students to feel any pressure to say what I wanted to hear, so by adopting a numerical scale I hoped to reduce the chance of this.

On the other hand, the limitation of numerical data is that it does not give any insight into the motivations of the student when they were selecting that score, nor does it give any information about what caused those feelings of confidence or lack of it. Whilst the data I collected was useful and informative, I believe that any further research into student confidence would require a wider range of data in order to develop a more detailed understanding.

When collecting the data I wanted to ensure that the students felt they had privacy, to encourage them to give a truthful score. In order to do this, I gave each student a piece of paper and asked them to write their score down and fold it up so that none of their peers could see it. I emphasised to them that it was private and that there would be no judgement made about the score that they wrote.

To analyse the data I used two methods. The first was plotting the data into bar graphs in order to compare the Cold and Hot task confidence scores. The second was finding an average confidence score for each Cold and Hot task by finding the mean of the scores from each set of data. These averages allowed me to compare the increases in confidence across cycles (as discussed further in my findings and discussion sections). For example, I was able to identify whether cycle 1 or cycle 2 had caused the greatest increase in confidence or whether the level of increase had remained the same across both cycles.

5.7.3 Interviews

5.7.3 (a) Informal student interviews

I chose to use interviews due to their flexibility, and ability to provide information on people's perceptions and attitudes (Menter, 2011) which would enable me to understand how the students viewed the strategy and themselves as learners. Informal questioning during lesson time was used, rather than a formal interview at an arranged time, in order to ensure that the students' responses

were unplanned and not over-thought. I believed that informal questioning in our normal learning environment was the most likely situation that would encourage the students to speak freely and honestly. Furthermore, my aim was to avoid any implied expectation of a right answer, and to ensure that students did not give responses that they thought were required because they felt put on the spot or tested in a formal setting.

One of the most significant benefits of interviews is their adaptability: interviews allow a researcher to probe and investigate the responses that are given to reach greater understanding of the participants' meaning (Bell, 2005). For example, in some cases when asking the questions of the students, I was able to follow up with prompts such as *"why?"* once they had given a response, in order to gather more specific and detailed data on their thoughts. However, when choosing to use interviews, I also had to be aware of their limitations. Firstly, was the potential for interviewer bias and secondly was the time consuming nature of this form of data and its analysis. Both of these I addressed during my planning of the interview questions in order to mitigate these issues as far as possible.

To collect the data, I posed planned questions verbally to the selected students at the end of selected lessons. I spoke to the students collectively in order to manage time constraints, and whilst this did mean that the students' answers were not anonymous from each other, they were assured that their answers would not be shared with anyone else, and my notes would be destroyed after the research was completed. I recorded the answers in note form by hand, before typing them along with my field notes after the lesson. I used a relatively fixed question format which I had pre-prepared in order to ensure that my interview aligned closely with my research questions on each occasion. I had also pre-planned the wording of my questions to ensure that they were as neutral as possible, and would not inadvertently lead students in any particular direction. I made these thorough preparations as I am not an experienced interviewer, and I did not want this to lessen the reliability of the data. When planning my interviews I was also conscious of my need to transcribe

the data, as I had to do so unaided. I therefore limited the number of questions I asked on each occasion, and allocated a specific, limited amount of time on my lesson plans to the interviews; these measures ensured that I could realistically record the student responses on paper, and then write them up myself in the time I had available.

From an ethical standpoint, I assured the students that their responses would be kept anonymous. I also explained to them that the records I kept of what they said were for my use only and would be kept securely. I assured them that any comments they made which were used in the written report would not be tracible back to them personally.

When wording my interview questions, I was conscious that the concepts I was researching (independence and metacognition) were sophisticated and potentially challenging to explain, and in particular the word metacognition was highly unlikely to be familiar vocabulary to the students. Therefore when planning my questions I avoided including these concepts directly, and instead phrased simpler questions which would result in answers that could indicate to me the students' level of metacognition and independence. For example, I asked the students *"Without looking, can you remember what the key features of each writing type are?"* rather than asking them if they knew the writer's toolkit and could write using it independently. By answering this question, the students would indicate to me how much of the writer's toolkit they had retained. Furthermore, I was able to cross reference their verbal answers with the evidence in their written work which I had written up in my field notes. By combining the two sources of data in this way, I was able to develop an understanding of how the 8 sample students were progressing with the writer's toolkit and whether or not they were successfully writing in that style using the toolkit. I could also elicit whether or not they were consciously choosing to use the toolkit as writers.

5.7.3 (b) Interviews with my colleague

To collect data on the cycles in History, I interviewed my colleague at the end of each cycle (Appendix 4 and appendix 7), an approach I again chose for the flexibility it offered my colleague to

develop answers in detail, and for myself as an interviewer to probe and investigate responses (Bell, 2005). I worded the questions to focus specifically on the areas of independence and metacognition in order to align with my research questions. I planned the questions in advance and limited the number in order to keep the interview to a realistic time frame and ensure that I would be able to record it thoroughly on my own, as I did not have any administrative support. As with the student interviews, I made hand written notes and typed them up at the end of the interview.

I assured my colleague that the notes I recorded were for the purpose of the research only, would be held securely, and would be destroyed at the end of the research. I also explained that for the purposes of anonymity my colleague would not be named in the research report. As my colleague and I work in separate faculties and are not connected in the appraisal system, we were both able to speak honestly about our experiences when conducting the research. I also believe that our good working relationship enabled my colleague to feel confident in speaking openly about the positive and negative elements of the Talk for Writing strategy.

Through the wording of my questions, I offered the opportunity for my colleague to make reflections and give opinions. As my colleague is trained in the Talk for Writing strategy, this data offered a second perspective on the use of the strategy, which I could then use to inform my analysis of the other data (student voice data, field notes). I was also able to cross reference between the student confidence scores in History and my colleague's reflections to get a more detailed picture of the students as writers and learners in History, and the impact of the Talk for Writing strategy in that subject.

5.8 Alterations to the research

As the second research cycle was concluding, the school was closed due to the global Coronavirus pandemic. Although both cycles had been completed, the final interview with my colleague in

History (Appendix 7) and final informal interview questions with the students (Appendix 6) were not able to be conducted as planned. I sent the pre-prepared interview questions to my colleague and the students via email in order to get their responses electronically instead. However, this did put limitations on the data, firstly as I was unable to discuss the responses and elicit further meaning, and secondly because only 5 of the 8 students responded. The findings from these concluding interviews therefore may not be as detailed and revealing as they would have been had the interviews been conducted in person.

The school closure due to the Coronavirus Pandemic also meant that the sharing of our findings could not take place. Menter (2011) suggests that practitioner research is most useful if it is shared with other practitioners, something which is particularly relevant in the context of a Talk for Writing training school where my colleague and I take on the role of supporting staff in improving their use of Talk for Writing in the classroom. Whilst the sharing of our findings has to be delayed due to the school closure, we hope to do so in the next academic year.

6. Findings

6.1 Did the use of the Talk for Writing strategy increase students' confidence?

Below are presented the students' personal confidence ratings (see Appendix 1) in the form of bar graphs. The students were asked to numerically rate their confidence on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being highest confidence) and the two bars represent their score at first the Cold then the Hot task. Students are identified by letters A-H.

English

It Is evident that in both cycles, students felt more confident writing in their Hot task than in their Cold task. Students appeared to feel more confident in the cycle 1 Cold task than they did in the cycle 2 Cold task; this could be due to the nature of the writing type as cycle 1 looked at descriptive

writing, something which students are taught in Primary school and therefore may well have some prior familiarity with which could have boosted their initial confidence.

Interestingly however, the increase in confidence appears to be consistent in both cycles: the average confidence increase in cycle 1 was 4.5 and in cycle 2 was 4.25. This would suggest that, despite the lower confidence apparent in students beginning cycle 2, students were able to increase in confidence as they had in cycle 1 regardless of the less familiar writing type (analytical writing).

These results represent the students' personal perception of their own confidence in each writing type, so they cannot be used to conclusively state that students made any real progress academically. However, the evidence from the field notes of both cycle 1 (Appendix 2) and cycle 2 (Appendix 5) show that students did make academic progress through both cycles alongside their increasing confidence.

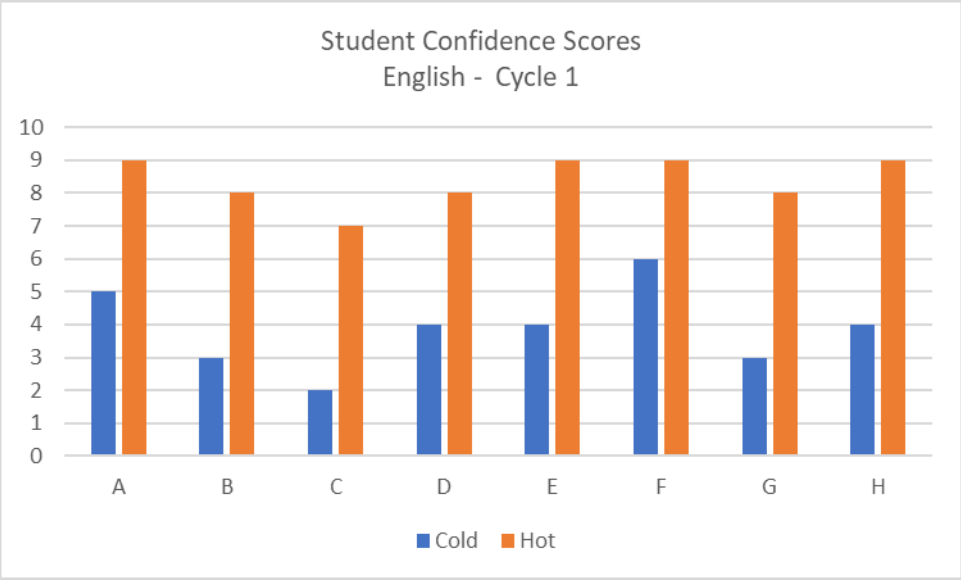

Figure 4

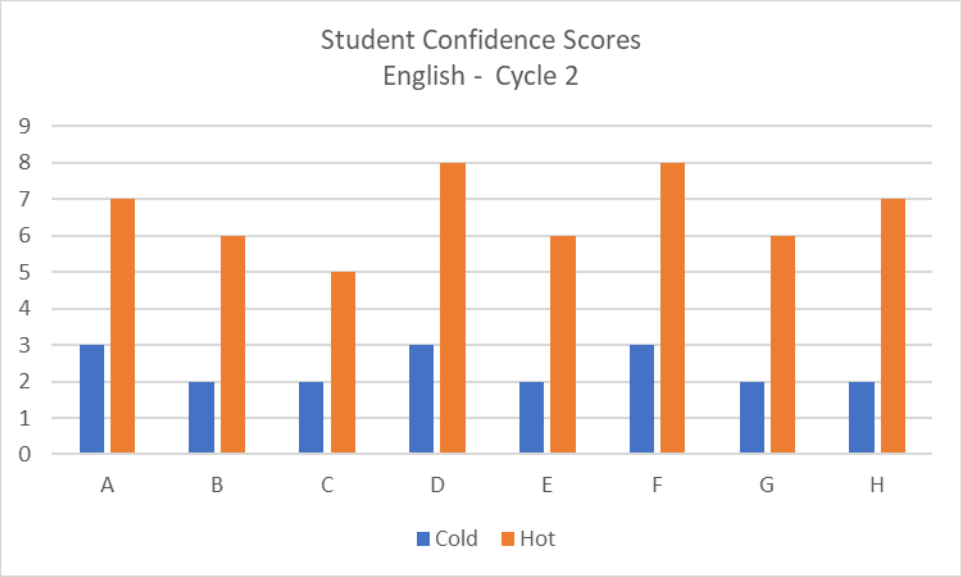

Figure 5

History

Similarly, the results of the data from the two History cycles indicate that students increased in their confidence between Cold and Hot tasks. In History cycle 2, students appear to have had a greater increase in confidence when compared to cycle 1: the average increase in cycle 1 was 4.12 whereas in cycle 2 it was 4.5. This finding is supported by their History teacher's observations recorded through interview at the end of cycle 2 (Appendix 7): *"Some students definitely displayed a greater confidence [compared to cycle 1]"*. This could stem from the fact that the writing required in cycle 2 had some similarities to that of cycle 1. The students' History teacher particularly believed that *"reflection on where they had used some of the required language before in cycle 1…may well have made them more confident that they could do it again in cycle 2."* Whereas in the two English cycles, the writing types were totally different and did not offer the opportunity for students to transfer and develop prior learning. This finding would suggest that the Talk for Writing method could have a more significant impact increasing students' confidence if the sequence of units using the method were organised to build on skills used in the prior unit.

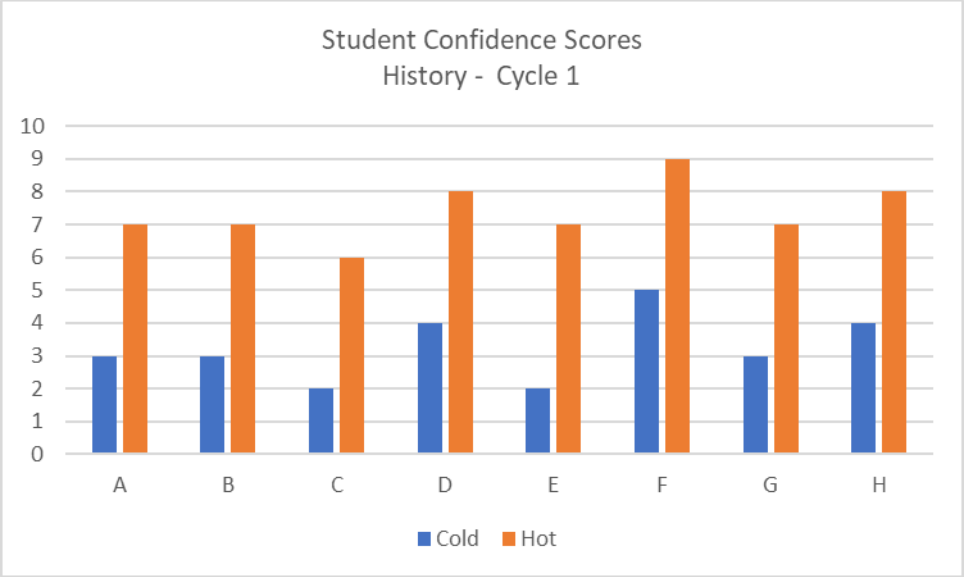

Figure 6

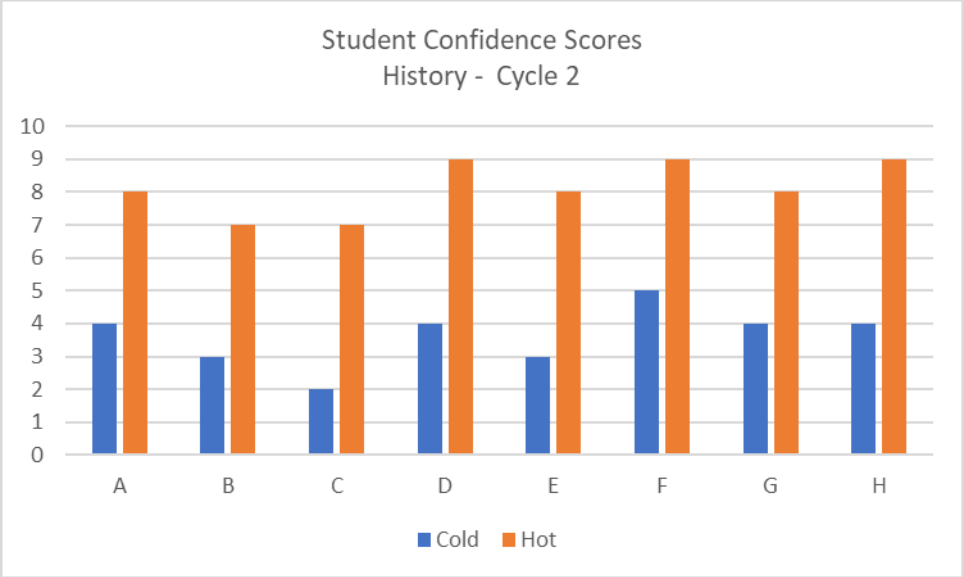

Figure 7

6.2 Did the use of the Talk for Writing process increase students' independence as writers?

The reflections from the two English cycles (Appendix 2 and 5) and the interviews reviewing the History cycles (Appendix 4 and 7) show that students were making academic progress in their writing

between Cold and Hot tasks, and that they were able to approach the Hot Tasks with less reliance on teacher support by the end of Cycle 2 in both subjects.

6.2.1 Cycle 1

Both the field notes and interview notes show a concern at the point of the Hot tasks regarding whether or not the students had actually ***learned*** how to do the writing type or whether they are simply still imitating. This is significant in terms of students' progress through the ZPD, because if students were still imitating the model then they were still relying on the support provided by Talk for Writing as a scaffolding strategy, and this would mean that they had not reached a new 'realised level' of performance and left the ZPD (Thompson, 2013).

The students' History teacher said of the Hot task in cycle 1:

> "*I think they can do the skills immediately after we've done the process and it's fresh in their minds, but I don't think they're internalising those skills.*" (Appendix 4)

This viewpoint is also raised in the literature by Thompson (2013) where he noted that students may appear to have progressed to a new level of working at the end of a series of lessons, but they then regress to an extent once that teacher input is no longer fresh in their memory. Therefore, what may appear to be proof of independence and learned information, is not actually the case. This concern mirrors the findings of my own field notes from cycle 1:

> "*I don't believe students can be said to be fully independent when they did their hot tasks: partly because I offered them the boxing up, so their structure was supported, and partly because many of them had not fully internalised the purpose of the task and were not consciously choosing to*

write in the style they had seen in the model text. I found that in small chunks (such as imitating the mimed/learned phrases) students were able to innovate well, but, rather than retain this and embed those sentence structures into independent writing, students simply used the sentence starts word for word from the model, or did a close imitation of the sentence starts from the model." (Appendix 2)

These reflections suggest that the students have not necessarily learned how to write in the required style independently at the completion of the cycle – instead they suggest that the students remain in a stage of imitating a successful example, and that the students are only able to complete the task immediately after/with teacher input; in some cases students aren't even making the conscious choice to match their writing to the purpose of the task at all. In Vygotskian terms, this would suggest that the students have not yet left the ZPD because they continue to rely on their teacher's involvement (Vygotsky, 1978) and therefore they cannot be said to have fully learned the skill of writing in the required style. Even the more simplistic view of learning as committing facts to memory, seen in Rosenshine's work (2012), cannot be said to be met by this evidence, due to the concern over students lack of retention of the skills and lack of conscious awareness of the success criteria they were required to meet.

To further investigate this issue of retention, the students were set an additional independent task in English, 3 months after the completion of cycle 1 (this task was in no way related to their cycle 2 learning). The students were set a descriptive writing exercise mirroring the type of task they were learning to do in cycle 1, but were given no teacher input. The findings from this exercise, recorded in my field notes, were mixed:

"I discovered that students had retained a knowledge of several descriptive techniques – most notably similes, onomatopoeia and personification. Students were also appearing to make

conscious vocabulary choices for effect. This would show some retention of the descriptive writing toolkit. There was no clear evidence of structure or organisation of ideas in any of the students' work, nor did any of them apply a planning method. This would suggest that the planning method (boxing up) was not retained." (Appendix 2)

These findings suggest that, despite the concerns around retention, the students had in fact committed elements of the success criteria to memory and were able to replicate the writing style independently to some extent. In terms of the ZPD, this evidence shows that students had progressed from their original 'actual level' (the Cold Task in cycle 1) to a new, 'realised level' (Thompson, 2013) and we can define it as a 'realised level' rather than a 'potential level' (still within the ZPD) because in this exercise the students had no scaffolds or teacher support to assist them. However, although the students had improved to a new level of performance, the writing produced did not show a retention of the full linguistic checklist required, showing that the students needed further teacher input, and had further progress to make. In this way, whilst it can be concluded that the students had progressed to a new independent level of performance, they were not fully competent independent writers within that text type.

The students were also interviewed about this follow up task (Appendix 3). Interestingly, 5 of the 8 students said that they couldn't remember anything from the descriptive writing 'toolkit' (success criteria) despite the written work showing that all students were using elements of it. This was particularly interesting as it suggests that these students weren't making a conscious choice to write in that particular style with consideration of its requirements, and yet they were independently able to write in that style with some success. It should be considered that their response to the question may not have been a true reflection of their thoughts – particularly with the majority of students giving this response - it could be influenced by a desire to fit in with the peer group (as discussed in

my methodology, students answered the questions in a group). However, if it is read as an accurate response, it would suggest that learning had taken place, but students were not conscious of it.

For the 3 students who said they had remembered and drawn upon the learning from cycle 1, their memory of the 'toolkit' (success criteria) matched up exactly with what was evident in their written work: personification, similes, metaphors and vocabulary choices were all mentioned in the interview and these were the features visible in the written work. This would certainly suggest that for those students, the learning had been retained and they were responding to this exercise as effective independent writers: they had learned and could verbalise the linguistic checklist for the writing type, as required by the genre discourse (Ivanič, 2004), and their knowledge and ability to apply it accurately was evident in their written work.

However, the retention was only partial and focused around the descriptive techniques most familiar to the students; the newly introduced material such as the planning strategy of 'boxing up', the sentence structures, and less familiar descriptive techniques were not retained. This is particularly interesting when illuminated by a comment from one of the students during the interview: *"Student B: I did it a lot in primary school – that's the only reason I remember."* (Appendix 3) The elements of the success criteria which were retained were all things that the students had pre-existing familiarity with from their Primary education, and none of the new material taught in cycle 1 was evident in either their written work or interview responses. This could suggest that in fact none of the students were retaining the information due to the Talk for Writing strategy, and instead were all drawing on skills which had been embedded over a longer period of time.

When discussing this issue of retention during the end of cycle 1 interview, my colleague in History raised the suggestion that the cognitive load was too great for the students to manage, which could be a cause of the lack of retention:

> *"I think it [the Talk for Writing strategy] works in Primary because they're just doing one writing type and they're doing it for an hour every day. But when they get to secondary and they're*

getting it from all their teachers about multiple writing types – it's a huge increase of cognitive load and I'm not surprised they can't retain it all. Like in history we're teaching them multiple exam questions and we do each in the Talk for Writing way, but that'll be the same across all their subjects. Maybe it's just the nature of secondary school that Talk for Writing just won't work as well because there is too much to commit to memory." (Appendix 4).

The nature of the primary timetable, as my colleague points out, could mean that the writing types covered in Primary years are potentially more thoroughly embedded as a result of the regularity with which they are practiced. This could support the findings from the student interview which suggested that students were retaining the learning from their Primary education but not from the cycle 1 teaching at Secondary school; however, further research would be required to compare the level of retention from the Talk for Writing strategy in Primary and Secondary contexts before any firm conclusions could be drawn.

A similar delayed follow up exercise for the cycle 2 writing (analytical paragraphs) would be very interesting as a point of comparison, as the students had never before encountered analytical writing. Unfortunately, due to the school closure during the Covid-19 pandemic, this data could not be collected.

6.2.2 Cycle 2

In both the History and English cycle 2 Hot tasks, all scaffolds and teacher support were removed to ensure that what was written came from the students' own retention of the learning; however, because the Hot task is conducted as the final lesson in the Talk for Writing cycle, the students were not having to retain the information in their long term memory, and so whether or not it had been truly learned is difficult to determine.

In their English task, my field notes revealed that the students appeared comfortable approaching the task:

> *"all of them were able to write their Hot Task relying on the learned sentence starters, totally without additional assistance from me. Student questions in the Hot task lesson weren't about how to write it, but there were questions about the content."* (Appendix 5)

This would suggest that the students had learned what was required for this writing type and felt able to produce it. However, the level of independence is called in to question by this further reflection:

> *"Students are using the sentence starters independently – none of the students are innovating on these to use their own words instead; they seem to prefer to stick to the memorised sentence starters from the model texts."* (Appendix 5)

This reflection shows that students had memorised key phrases from the model which supported their writing, however, the Talk for Writing strategy considers students to be writing independently when they're able to innovate on what they've learned from the model, making independent language choices which mirror the style and genre characteristics that they've learned (Strong, 2013). In this case the students' lack of adaptation of these learned phrases from the model would imply that they remain in the imitation and innovation stages of the progress rather than progressing to independence, as defined by Talk for Writing.

However, the literature regarding scaffolding raises the interesting question in this scenario as to whether or not relying on an internalised scaffold constitutes student independence. One of the ways in which scaffolding is believed to work is by providing students with a support structure which they can then internalise and use to support themselves (Stone, 1998 *in* van de Pol, Volman & Beishuizen, 2010). In scaffolding terms, the lack of need for teacher support or for the scaffold to be given to the students again, would suggest that the students are independent, because they are supporting themselves. If considered from this perspective, the fact that the students were able to use memorised sentence starters without support or reminders in order to complete the task, could be viewed as a level of independence.

Although the school closure prevented an investigation into longer term retention, the students' final interview responses (Appendix 6), collected two weeks after the end of cycle 2, do offer some insight into their potential longer term retention of this writing type. Only 5 of the 8 students responded to the emailed interview questions, but all 5 mentioned some elements of the 'writer's toolkit' (success criteria) for the analytical paragraphs – most notably the sentence starters they'd memorised and the need for quotes to be included:

Student A: For analytical paragraphs you have to use the sentence starters.

Student B: For analytical paragraphs you have the sentence starters, quotes from the poems and you say what your opinion of the poem is.

Student C: I know the sentence starters for analytical paragraphs.

Student E: You have to have quotes.

Student F: Analytical paragraphs needs quotes and logical links between your quotes and what you're saying.

In contrast to cycle 1, this would suggest that some of the new learning presented through the Talk for Writing strategy was retained. Analytical paragraphs are particularly useful as a writing type in this regard, as they are not taught in primary school, so this retention can be confirmed as a direct result of the Talk for Writing strategy. The data is limited however as the two week period is much shorter than the three months allowed prior to the investigation into retention from the cycle 1 learning.

In History, teacher interview data from the second cycle did suggest that students were gaining independence to an extent:

"*the data shows that the majority of the students were still able to score well on the cycle 2 Hot task without several of the Talk for Writing supporting structures from cycle 1 being maintained in*

place. If anything I think I over-scaffolded for them in the cycle 1 Hot task and removing those scaffolds in the cycle 2 Hot task gave a more realistic impression of their independent ability. I think that further practice and cycles embedding the skills would further improve the independent application".(Appendix 7)

These reflections show that the students were independently able to complete their Hot task in History with some success, just as in English. Furthermore, their teacher reflected:

"*I'd certainly suggest the students were not passively following instructions in their Hot task, something which was likely to have been the case for many in cycle 1, and this can be seen through their confidence and lack of support requests."* (Appendix 7)

This aligns with the findings from the second cycle in English, suggesting that with the removal of scaffolds and teacher support during the Hot tasks, the students independently understood what was required and how to complete it. However, their History teacher did highlight the need for further practice and more time spent embedding the skills, which suggests that, although progressing, the students require further input. This requirement for further teacher support would suggest that students are not yet fully independent writers.

Additionally, the concern regarding retention was raised again:

"the key aspect for me here would be the retention of both the structural elements of the question and the required language over a longer-term period." (Appendix 7)

As data on long term retention was not able to be collected due to school closures, the question as to whether the students can retain their learning and ability to write in the style independently, remains unanswered.

To conclude, the findings do suggest that students gained some level of independence: in terms of internalising a scaffolding strategy (Stone, 1998 *in* van de Pol, Volman & Beishuizen, 2010) and being able to approach the Hot task without the need for teacher input or provision of scaffolds, but

instead relying on independent knowledge of the scaffold; also, the evidence for some retention of the linguistic checklist (Ivanič, 2004). However, these steps towards independence do not mean that the students were effective independent writers within each text type as they could not competently write using the full linguistic checklist, and in some cases were still imitating the model text provided. There was also considerable concern around the retention of the learning, which would align with Thompson's (2013) argument, that students regress once time has elapsed after the end of the series of lessons, and as such their performance at the end of the sequence of lessons is not necessarily their true new level of independent performance.

6.3 Did the Talk for Writing process support students in becoming independent learners through a metacognitive impact?

6.3.1 Cycle 1

During and after cycle 1 in English, the students were interviewed to assess whether they had developed a metacognitive understanding after using the Talk for Writing strategy (Appendix 3). Whilst, on the one hand, students were able to express the rationale underpinning reading and imitating a model text, there did not appear to be any further thought given to transferring this process to future learning. When asked why we were using the model text, students said:

> *"Student F: To find out about the style of the writer so we can learn how to do it like that."*
>
> *"Student A: Now we know examples of really good sentences we can use it in our writing. It's like she's our idol and we're looking up to her to find out how to do it well."* (Appendix 3)

These responses clearly demonstrate the students' understanding of the purpose of the model text and it's role within the learning process, so when considered against the definition of metacognition: "an individuals' ability to understand and manipulate their own cognitive processes." (Reeve and

Brown, 1985, p.343) it does suggest that the students were developing some metacognitive awareness in their ability to understand the cognitive processes they were going through when deconstructing the model text.

Students also demonstrated their awareness that descriptive writing was just one of the many writing types they'd be learning about in school:

> *"Student F: We wrote newspapers, diary entries, stories, non-chronological report and some others at Primary."* (Appendix 3)

This response was supported by all the students in the sample group who, when asked whether there were other types of writing aside from description, acknowledged, in the form of raising their hands, their awareness that there were other writing types. This again shows that the students had some metacognitive awareness of their own cognitive knowledge.

However, the students did not appear to view the Talk for Writing strategy as a process which they could transfer and employ when learning how to write in other styles. When asked what they would do if they were instructed to write a newspaper report and didn't know how to, the students responded with a range of answers, none of which aligned with strategies from the Talk for Writing process.

> *Student E: Ask the teacher or my mum or dad if I was at home.*
>
> *Student G: Ask my older sister.*
>
> *Student F: Think about what we did in primary when we did newspaper reports.*
>
> *Student C: Use a thesaurus for better words.* (Appendix 3)

Only student F showed some signs of metacognition with reference to prior learning and the idea of applying this learning to a new context. Despite this, it cannot be concluded that the students were

metacognitively aware of Talk for Writing as a learning process that they could use as independently when approaching new learning at the end of cycle 1.

Furthermore, in the retention of learning exercise conducted three months after the completion of cycle 1, many of the students stated that they hadn't used any of their cycle 1 learning to support them, suggesting a lack of awareness that this prior learning could assist them with the task.

> "*Students A, B and F all raised their hand to indicate that they had thought about their descriptive work in term 1."* (Appendix 3)

This reveals that 5 of the 8 students had attempted the follow up descriptive task without trying to recall their prior learning. As Metcalfe and Kornell (2007) noted, the limitation to metacognition is the application of it by the student – if a student believes they already know how to do something then they won't apply the learned strategies. It could be in this case that the students felt they didn't need to recall their prior learning as they already knew what to do. The findings from reviewing their written work would support this:

> *"When marking, I discovered that students had retained a knowledge of several descriptive techniques – most notably similes, onomatopoeia and personification. Students were also appearing to make conscious vocabulary choices for effect. This would show some retention of the descriptive writing toolkit."* (Appendix 2).

Overall, the findings show that from cycle 1, the students did not gain a comprehensive metacognitive understanding of the Talk for Writing strategy. When asked how they'd tackle a new writing type, the students do not appear to have the metacognitive awareness that they have been equipped with skills they could use to support themselves independently. When asked to complete the descriptive task three months after the Talk for Writing process focused on descriptive writing, very few of the students were consciously re-engaging with that prior learning, aware that it would support them. As mentioned previously, those who did recall elements of the writer's toolkit were

only able to recall part of the toolkit, and those parts being ones that had been embedded in the Primary years as well as through the Talk for Writing process which means that it is unclear which prior learning they were drawing on. Research in existing literature could explain why the students were not forming a metacognitive understanding: a number of critics argued that for metacognition to develop it needs to be explicitly taught (Cross & Paris, 1988; Kuhn, 2000) which was not the focus in this first cycle of research; however, in the second cycle of Talk for writing, both my colleague and I made changes to our delivery of the strategy in order to teach the metacognitive dimension more explicitly, which will be discussed in further detail later. Furthermore, Kuhn (2000) describes the development of metacognition as something gradual, suggesting that perhaps the course of one Talk for Writing cycle was not a lengthy enough period of time to allow the metacognition to develop. Flavell (1979) argued that there was a relationship between the experience of cognitive regulation and the development of cognitive knowledge, which like Kuhn's argument, suggests that a lengthy period of time and repetition of metacognitive experiences are required in order to help students develop a metacognitive understanding. Therefore these findings are not surprising given the lack of explicit metacognitive focus during the delivery of Talk for Writing and the limited time frame of the cycle.

6.3.2 Cycle 2

For cycle 2, both my colleague in History and I agreed to trial amending our delivery of the strategy in order to give more explicit instruction regarding cognitive knowledge and cognitive regulation. In English, I explicitly highlighted the process to students, indicating to them through the use of a diagram drawn on the whiteboard where we were at each stage, and what the purpose of the process was; in this way I hoped to make it more explicit and develop their cognitive knowledge of the process as a learning strategy. My colleague in History focused on the use of questioning, using recall quiz questions about the process and the learning gained from it, and also leading questions to

guide students to where they might look for support, such as the model text or writer's toolkit, in order to start developing their cognitive regulation.

In History, my colleague reflected that this had a positive effect on the students' engagement with the process, in particular citing their increased confidence and independence when approaching their Hot task:

> *"I'd certainly suggest the students were not passively following instructions in their hot task, something which was likely to have been the case for many in cycle 1, and this can be seen through their confidence and lack of support requests."* (Appendix 7)

This would suggest that the use of questioning had been effective in helping students to understand how the Talk for Writing process was equipping them with the support they needed, so they were less reliant on their teacher for guidance in the Hot task. However, there are many variables that could have led to their increased confidence which we cannot have a full awareness of, so this is not entirely conclusive.

When asked if the students had a metacognitive understanding, my colleague reflected:

> *"Yes, in terms of focusing on this specific type of question but I can't extrapolate on whether they could then export their knowledge from this into other areas. Students seem to compartmentalise their learning somewhat, so I'd need to set up further extended writing tasks that are not 'Write a narrative account…' tasks and see if they are able to transfer the skills and language which they did clearly independently demonstrate in this instance."* (Appendix 7).

Whilst this response does show that the students appeared to have developed a metacognitive understanding of the learning process, and an awareness of how to use the strategies and learning from the process independently to complete the Hot task, it does raise the question of whether or not the students view these skills as transferable. Similarly to cycle 1 in English where students were aware that they were looking at a model to help them improve their descriptive writing, it seems

that the students may only be metacognitively aware of their learning process as it applies to that individual unit of learning; in English the students didn't consider that they could use a model text when they were learning to write in other styles, and likewise in History their teacher was concerned that they might compartmentalise the Talk for Writing process believing it to be only applicable to that one unit.

In English, I asked students in the end of cycle interview (conducted electronically due to the school closure) what they could remember about the learning process itself, to assess whether or not they had a metacognitive awareness of their learning process using Talk for Writing. Only 5 of the 8 students responded (Appendix 6).

Student A: Can't remember.

Student B: There's always the model text and the boxing up and the hot task.

Student C: I don't know.

Student E: The model text. I can't remember the rest.

Student F: First there is a cold task then we go through as a class then do a boxing up grid then do the hot task.

These responses demonstrate that 3 out of the 5 students did have some awareness of the process itself which would suggest that by making it more explicit through the use of the diagram, the students had been able to develop some metacognitive awareness of how they were learning. In all cases, the students have an incomplete picture of the Talk for Writing process; their focus appears to be on the assessment tasks, the model text and the planning grid (boxing up), potentially suggesting that it was these elements which they found most significant or helpful to their learning. None of the students referenced the 'writer's toolkit' which is particularly interesting as it is that which provides the success criteria, based on what made the model an example of excellence. This is particularly interesting as, in order to be capable independent writers, the key element would be for the

students to know what their success criteria was and be consciously trying to meet it. These responses show that the students remember elements of the process, particularly scaffolds they could turn to for support, but they don't remember creating a success criteria which is what would help them to write effectively in the required style. This could be interpreted as supporting an earlier finding, that students had not fully left the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) by the end of the Talk for Writing process, as the focus of their responses centre around the scaffolds: the students are viewing their learning through the supports it offers to them to help them complete a task.

Overall, whilst there is some evidence that our adaptations to the delivery of the Talk for Writing process, to make it more explicit and promote metacognitive engagement, have been successful, the findings do not suggest that Talk for Writing has been completely adopted at a metacognitive level and become a transferable learning tool for these students. Once again Flavell (1979) and Kuhn (2000)'s arguments should be considered: that metacognition develops gradually and through repeated metacognitive experiences which in turn increase cognitive knowledge. My findings suggest that two cycles using Talk for Writing does not provide students with the length of time required nor the quantity of metacognitive experiences to enable them to develop a full metacognitive understanding. However, the metacognitive engagement by these students to the extent that it is visible does appear to have supported them in becoming more confident and independent when completing their Hot tasks. Whilst they may not be fully independent learners or writers, they have an awareness of where to find the support they require independently, and in this regard I believe it can be concluded that some metacognitive benefits exist.

7. Discussion

7.1 Did the use of the Talk for Writing strategy increase students' confidence?

My findings overwhelmingly show that in all cases students felt increased confidence with their writing after the Talk for Writing process. This pattern is evident in both English and History, showing that Talk for Writing can be used across a range of subject areas to increase students confidence

with literacy, in particular approaching extended writing tasks; this also highlights the value of collaborating in this research, as it has facilitated this cross-curricular data.

As discussed in the literature review, Talk for Writing is a scaffolding strategy, and I believe that this could explain why it has such a positive impact on the students' confidence levels. Van Der Stuyf (2002) argued that scaffolding motivates students by engaging them in their learning and develops a 'can do' attitude alleviating the fear of an insurmountable task. The confidence score data (Appendix 1) certainly suggests that a 'can do' attitude has been developed in the students surveyed, as all the confidence scores at the point of the Hot task (in both subjects and cycles) show a significant increase in the students' belief in their ability to complete their task effectively. Furthermore, all the main advantages to scaffolding, such as: the clarity it offers of expectations for students; the reduction of uncertainty; and the provision of clear direction to students which will reduce their confusion (McKenzie 1999 in Van Der Stuyf, 2002) are provided through various elements the Talk for Writing process. This further supports the theory that the increased confidence in students comes from the effectiveness of Talk for Writing as a scaffolding method.

Additionally, the students' developing metacognitive understanding of Talk for Writing could also account for their increased confidence when attempting the Hot Tasks. Research suggests there is a link between metacognitive understanding of the learning process and student motivation, specifically because metacognition increases self-efficacy and broadens students' epistemological beliefs (Schraw et al., 2006). Although my findings suggest that the students' metacognitive understanding of Talk for Writing as a learning strategy was limited, the findings did indicate that the students had some metacognitive understanding of the process. It is therefore worth consideration that this developing metacognition in the students could potentially have contributed to the increase in confidence and motivation when approaching the Hot tasks.

7.2 Did the use of the Talk for Writing process increase students' independence as writers?

From the Vygotskian point of view, a student has become independent when they have progressed through the ZPD and are able to complete tasks unsupported at a new, higher level. My findings show that the students were, by the end of cycle 2 in both History and English, approaching their Hot tasks unsupported, confident in their ability to do so, evidenced by the fact that they no longer sought teacher support for instruction regarding how to write their answer. There is also evidence that the students had internalised the scaffolds offered to them by the Talk for Writing process, and were able to use those scaffolds independently to support themselves. Therefore, the students can be described as writing independently in their Hot task.

However, the students own confidence to write independently does not necessarily mean that the students are in fact 'independent writers' in terms of fully progressing through the ZPD to a new, higher level. In the Hot task of English cycle 1, the students were confidently writing, but they were not independently hitting all the elements of the success criteria. The findings were the same in cycle 2, as the students appeared to be still partially innovating on the model text rather than progressing to true independence. The students therefore cannot be considered to be competent independent writers at the point of the Hot task in either case, as they required further intervention and support to meet the success criteria, suggesting that they remain within the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

Furthermore, both my findings and the literature highlight the fact that students are often able to perform at a higher level directly after a sequence of lessons, but this does not mean they have truly developed to a new independent level (Thompson, 2013). This therefore raises the question: can the Hot task really test students' independence as writers? And it was this question which led to the follow up task 3 months after cycle 1 in English.

In the follow up task, the student voice data (Appendix 3) revealed that not all students had an awareness of the success criteria for the writing type, and those that did, only had a partial success

criteria internalised. This finding was borne out in cycle 2, with the student voice data (Appendix 6) revealing that none of the students had retained a full knowledge of the success criteria requirements for the two writing types studied. If students are not aware of the full requirements of the writing types, then it cannot be conclusively concluded that they are independently able to write successfully in those writing types. Additionally, the elements of the success criteria which were retained from cycle 1, were ones which would have been covered in the Primary curriculum, and so it cannot be concluded that it was the Talk for Writing process which supported students in gaining that level of competence in their writing at all. Whilst the students partial retention of material from cycle 2 is a more promising finding (this being new material not taught in Primary school), the amount of material retained was very limited, and the data collection was only 2 weeks after the end of the cycle 2 teaching, making this data a far less effective measure of their retention of the knowledge.

My colleague researching in History was concerned in both cycles that the information the students were using to complete their Hot tasks was only present in their working memory due to the proximity of the Hot task to the Talk for Writing process, an issue of retention which was also raised by the literature (Thompson, 2013). My colleague was concerned that the information would not be fully retained, if retained at all, long term, and theorised that this may be due to the cognitive load experienced by the students in Secondary school education. Whilst the History cycles offered no conclusive data regarding this, the follow up data collection from the English cycles did support my colleague's theory as the students had retained only a limited amount of the linguistic checklist, and the quality of their writing in the follow up activity for cycle 1 was lower than it had been at the point of the Hot task. Therefore, whilst the Talk for Writing process appears to be effective in the short term at giving students the confidence and skills to approach a Hot task independently, these findings do not prove that Talk for Writing truly makes students capable independent writers long term.

Lastly, I considered in my literature review whether gaining independence as a writer when learning to write through the viewpoint of the Genre discourse, equated to being a truly independent writer. The Genre vs Process debate discussed in the literature, highlights the significant limitations of the genre approach: most notably the way in which the genre discourse provides a linguistic checklist rather than a more thorough concept of quality writing, and it fails to address the broader writing process including drafting and revision. Whilst both discourses have their merits, I would agree that the genre approach is too limited as it does not support the students in developing an independent ability to make creative decisions, re-draft or come to find an independent voice as a writer. Through the Talk for Writing process, the students are trained to memorise and then recreate a linguistic checklist, removing the need for any deeper independent creative thought. Therefore, as writers, I feel they are lacking a broader skill set which would make them truly independent.

7.3 Did the Talk for Writing process support students in becoming independent learners through a metacognitive impact?

As discussed in the literature, metacognition enables students to be aware of, and monitor their own learning process, ultimately supporting them in taking responsibility for their own learning (Reeve and Brown, 1985). Internalising the Talk for Writing process as a learning tool would theoretically allow students to become independent learners. However, my findings do not suggest that the process was internalised as a transferable learning strategy, and in order to do so, the students would require much more explicit teaching and practice, and far more time experiencing Talk for Writing.

In cycle 1 for both History and English the students did not appear to gain any metacognitive awareness of the process. The most promising data came from the cycle 1 student interview in English, where students did show some awareness of the significance of the activities engaging with the model text (Appendix 3); this shows some element of metacognition as the students are aware of the significance of the learning activity they are undertaking. However, the students did not

consider this a learning tool that they could apply more generally for learning how to write in other styles.

In cycle 2 my colleague and I both attempted to make the process itself more explicit following the guidance of the literature regarding the need for explicit instruction regarding both cognitive knowledge and cognitive regulation (Cross & Paris, 1988). A benefit of collaborating in this way, was our ability to trial a broader range of strategies than we would have individually, and it meant that the sample students were having an increased focus on the metacognitive element from both their English and History lessons, increasing the likelihood of impact.

The student voice data taken at the end of cycle 2 (Appendix 6) showed that students had a greater awareness of the process as they were able to name certain elements or stages of it. However, their lack of ability to describe the process, to remember all the stages, to explain the links between the stages, and crucially their failure to mention how this process enabled them to achieve an outcome, suggests that their metacognitive understanding remained limited. The findings suggested that, whilst the work my colleague and I had done had gone some way to helping the students learn what the Talk for Writing process was, they did not know, or could not articulate, what it was for, how it helped them, or how it could be used as a transferable skill.

The literature emphasises the fact that metacognition itself is something which needs to be learned and that it takes time to develop (Kuhn, 2000; Cross & Paris, 1988; Flavell, 1979; Reeve and Brown, 1985). Reeve and Brown (1985) theorised that one way in which metacognitive understanding is reached is through adult support: articulating, supporting the development of student understanding, working together to develop shared understanding, and lastly transferring ownership to the student (Reeve and Brown, 1985) – in this way, metacognition itself would appear to be something that requires learning, if learning is viewed from a Vygotskian perspective. Although amendments were made in cycle 2 to fulfil the requirement for explicit articulating by adults, it is not surprising that, at this stage, the students do not have a fully metacognitive understanding of Talk

for Writing: one cycle of Talk for Writing delivered in this way offers only one metacognitive experience rather than the multiple that are required to develop understanding. My colleague suggested during an interview, that further cycles might support the students in developing further their independent application of the process (Appendix 7), a view supported by arguments outlined in the literature which indicate the need for repeated practice (Flavell, 1975; Reeve & Brown, 1985).

8. Conclusion

This research has highlighted both the merits and the limitations of the Talk for Writing strategy. On the one hand, Talk for Writing worked as an excellent scaffolding tool to support students' learning, and increase their confidence. It offers teachers practical classroom strategies to provide high quality teaching to students, and support them in progressing in their learning. However, to be delivered most effectively, staff require training both in the philosophy behind it and in how to deliver it.

On the other hand, my findings were limited or inconclusive with regard to two of my research questions: the issues of independence and metacognition. In particular, the Talk for Writing strategy is considered as a strategy which helps students become independent writers, but my findings and explorations into the associated literature, suggest that this is not the case. My findings did not conclusively prove that Talk for Writing had supported students in leaving the ZPD, therefore meaning that they had not independently mastered the given writing types by the end of the Talk for Writing cycle. Additionally, the genre focus of Talk for Writing limits it in terms of developing independence in writers, because it fails to incorporate some of the core skills of effective independent writing, most notably those explored in process theory.

Lastly, the findings with regard to metacognition suggested that very limited metacognitive awareness developed in students through the course of the research. However, further research

would be required to determine if this could be developed over a much longer period, with explicit focus on supporting students to develop that awareness. The literature suggests that this could be possible, and therefore there could be a potentially positive metacognitive element to teaching with the Talk for Writing process.

Through collaborative research, my colleague and I were able to develop our understanding of Talk for Writing not only within our own subject areas, but at a cross-curricular level. However, this collaboration is limited to Arts subjects and we would recommend further research into the application of Talk for Writing for literacy in the Sciences, to draw more detailed conclusions about a wider range of subjects. Our research enhanced our individual application of the process within the classroom, but we were also able to compile our findings into a presentation for the wider staff body, to support the embedding of the strategy school wide (this presentation has unfortunately been delayed by the Coronavirus pandemic). By presenting our findings to staff, my colleague and I hope to develop staff awareness of the benefits and limitations of Talk for Writing, and the theories which underpin the strategy, in order to support staff in applying the strategy most effectively in the classroom.

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Appendix 1

Student Confidence Scores

English

	Cycle 1		Cycle 2	
Student	**Cold Task**	**Hot Task**	**Cold Task**	**Hot Task**
Student A	5	9	3	7
Student B	3	8	2	6
Student C	2	7	2	5
Student D	4	8	3	8
Student E	4	9	2	6
Student F	6	9	3	8
Student G	3	8	2	6
Student H	4	9	2	7

History

	Cycle 1		Cycle 2	
Student	**Cold Task**	**Hot Task**	**Cold Task**	**Hot Task**
Student A	3	7	4	8
Student B	3	7	3	7
Student C	2	6	2	7
Student D	4	8	4	9
Student E	2	7	3	8
Student F	5	9	5	9
Student G	3	7	4	8
Student H	4	8	4	9

Appendix 2

Summary of reflections from English teaching field notes – Cycle 1

Imitation stage:

- Responses were shared by the class at the end of the lesson and showed a thorough understanding of how to imitate. This showed an improvement in their sentence structures when compared to Cold Tasks, and students were becoming excited about the new vocabulary as they experimented with it in their imitations.

Innovation stage:

- Innovation tasks all showed improved vocabulary and integration of some of the descriptive techniques from the model text. Many students partially used sentence structures from the model text which had been learned through mime – their imitation of these in their own work however was often limited to the opening of the sentence rather than the full sentence structure being evident.

Hot Task:

- When marking, it appeared that the hot tasks were of a similar level to the innovation tasks – in some cases weaker where students had become very invested in talking about their mythical creature creation and forgot the descriptive purpose of the task. As with the innovation task, students were writing sentences where the opening was taken from the learned phrases either word for word or with some thoughtful substitutions made. Some students showed progress using semi colons but many did not attempt to use them. Use of the descriptive writing toolkit varied – many more students were using metaphor and personification, but students didn't seem to have made use of the full toolkit and there was no evidence that they were consciously ticking those elements off like a checklist.

Personal Reflections

I don't believe students can be said to be fully independent when they did their hot tasks: partly because I offered them the boxing up, so their structure was supported, and partly because many of them had not fully internalised the purpose of the task and were not consciously choosing to write in the style they had seen in the model text. I found that in small chunks (such as imitating the mimed/learned phrases) students were able to innovate well, but, rather than retain this and embed those sentence structures into independent writing, students simply used the sentence starts word for word from the model, or did a close imitation of the sentence starts from the model. I did not feel satisfied that, if I set the students a descriptive writing task unaided, they would be able to draw on the planning strategies I had taught them, and in many cases I believe the students would fail to use the vocabulary, punctuation and sentence structures from the model text entirely. In this unit then, the T4W method does not appear to have made these students any more independent as learners and does not appear to have had much metacognitive benefit.

However, I do wonder to what extent I would have more success in seeing the students become more independent if I made it more explicit to them that they should be using the planning strategies independently (boxing up and toolkit). Students felt passive in this unit – I want to see if I can make them have more ownership of the toolkit so they feel that it is their own checklist and

challenge themselves to use everything on it; I want them to know how to box up and be able to then do it independently rather than being guided by my boxing up.

Successes: students did all make some progress from their cold tasks and student voice data revealed that they felt more confident regarding descriptive techniques and vocabulary choices.

3 months later – Independent descriptive writing task

- I gave the students a descriptive writing activity with no support. The students were given a picture and told 'do some descriptive writing based on this image' to test whether or not the learning had been retained and if they were in fact independent descriptive writers.
- When marking, I discovered that students had retained a knowledge of several descriptive techniques – most notably similes, onomatopoeia and personification. Students were also appearing to make conscious vocabulary choices for effect. This would show some retention of the descriptive writing toolkit.
- There was no clear evidence of structure or organisation of ideas in any of the students' work, nor did any of them apply a planning method. This would suggest that the planning method (boxing up) was not retained.

Appendix 3

Student interviews – Cycle 1

Informal interview 1

Teacher: Why do you think we look at a model text?

Student E: So we know what to do when we're trying to describe something.

Student A: To help us get ideas about what we're supposed to do.

Student C: Because I didn't know what to do.

Teacher: Why do you think we imitate a model?

Student F: To find out about the style of the writer so we can learn how to do it like that.

Student A: Now we know examples of really good sentences we can use it in our writing. It's like she's our idol and we're looking up to her to find out how to do it well.

Student B: So I can make my writing like that.

Teacher: Are there other types of writing or do we only write description?

All students: *hands up response indicating "*No"

Student F: We wrote newspapers, diary entries, stories, non-chronological report and some others at Primary.

Teacher: Would this model be useful for other writing types?

Student B: No. You wouldn't write descriptions like this in say a newspaper.

Student H: It only really helps if you want to describe a dragon.

Student E, G, A: *non-verbal agreement with students B and H.*

Teacher: Is looking at a model helpful?

All students: *hands up response indicating* "Yes"

Teacher: Why?

Student E: It shows you good techniques you can do yourself like similes and things.

Student C: It gives me good sentence starters to use.

Student B: I liked the vocabulary we got from it.

Teacher: If I asked you to write a newspaper report, what might you do to get some help if you weren't sure what to do?

Student E: Ask the teacher or my mum or dad if I was at home.

Student G: Ask my older sister.

Student F: Think about what we did in primary when we did newspaper reports.

Student C: Use a thesaurus for better words.

<u>Informal interview 2 (taken 3 months later when students had been set the independent descriptive writing task)</u>

Teacher: What did you remember you had to do in descriptive writing from our learning in term 1?

Student F: Personification, metaphors, onomatopoeia, adjectives… I'm not sure if there was anything else.

Student B: There was onomatopoeia, similes and personification.

Student A: I remembered we had to use good vocabulary and similes.

Students C, G, H, D, and E: *couldn't remember anything.*

Teacher: Why can we not remember?

Student E: It was in term 1 and that was ages ago. Months ago.

Student G: I don't think we did very much of it.

Student C: I wasn't listening in term 1.

Student B: I did it a lot in primary school – that's the only reason I remember.

Student F: I got so used to doing it but then we moved on to something else and I completely forgot what we did before. We've learnt other things now and I'm trying to remember them on top.

Teacher: Did you plan your work?

All students*: hands up response to indicate* "No"

Teacher: Why did we not plan?

Student C: We didn't know we had to plan.

Student E: Didn't have enough time to plan and write.

Student F: I think you were hoping we might plan but we didn't.

Student G: You didn't tell us to plan.

Teacher: Did you have a mental checklist of things you knew you should include?

Students A, B, E and F all raised their hand to indicate that they had some sort of mental checklist.

Teacher: Did you think about term 1 at all?

Students A, B and F all raised their hand to indicate that they had thought about their descriptive work in term 1.

Appendix 4

Interview with History teacher – cycle 1

Q: Are the students retaining the skills/knowledge?

A: I think they can do the skills immediately after we've done the process and it's fresh in their minds, but I don't think they're internalising those skills. I wouldn't say they're retained and so I suppose that means that they're not really independent.

Q: Why do you think they're not retaining the skills and knowledge?

A: I think it works in Primary because they're just doing one writing type and they're doing it for an hour every day. But when they get to secondary and they're getting it from all their teachers about multiple writing types – it's a huge increase of cognitive load and I'm not surprised they can't retain it all. Like in history we're teaching them multiple exam questions and we do each in the Talk for Writing way, but that'll be the same across all their subjects. Maybe it's just the nature of secondary school that Talk for Writing just won't work as well because there is too much to commit to memory.

Q: What do you find are the limitations of the Talk for Writing process?

A: I think that, for the more able students, it doesn't really offer much challenge. For example in history, a lot of the most able year 7s already know some of the signposting language like the time connectives and so the model isn't offering them anything.

Q: Do you think that Talk for Writing is building independence?

A: I think in the short term, coming straight off the back of the learning and models and scaffolds, yes they can then complete a task independently. But, if you were to test them in 6 months I just don't think they'd have retained any of it so they probably wouldn't be able to do it independently. I guess in that sense no not really. It's got the short term impact but not the long term. Personally, I think that's a lot to do with this cognitive load situation though – in primary schools, doing one writing type in detail at a time, it might well be retained more successfully, but with the amount they're being asked to remember in secondary, I don't think they've got much chance. It's too much to retain it all.

Appendix 5

Summary of English lesson field notes – Cycle 2

Imitation:

- Mime went well – students know the sentence starters
- Students are able to imitate the structure of the paragraph and put their own ideas and interpretations of the text on paper supported by the sentence starters.

Innovation:

- Students are feeling constricted by the sentence starters and haven't all (Students D and F excluded) developed their own original thoughts and opinions to know what content to put in their paragraphs. They're trying to write a sentence for each sentence starter rather than trying to express their own thoughts supported by the sentence starters. Possibly students are struggling with understanding the poem and don't feel confident in what they want to analyse?
- Students don't seem to understand the purpose of writing an analytical paragraph.
- I'm going to bring in a second model to deconstruct with the class with a focus on purpose and original thoughts/interpretations

Hot Task:

- Students listened to the suggestion that they should independently plan through boxing up and all created an appropriate plan for their 2 paragraphs – varying levels of detail.
- Students all have some level of personal interpretation which is being expressed in their paragraphs.
- Students are using the sentence starters independently – none of the students are innovating on these to use their own words instead, they seem to prefer to stick to the memorised sentence starters from the model texts.
- Students appear to have a better understanding of their purpose for writing than they did in the innovation task.
- Students C and G still appear to be writing to finish the sentence starter rather than writing for meaning in many parts of their work.

Personal reflections

I think students struggled more with the analytical paragraph as a writing type because it was entirely new and unfamiliar to them; it also requires analytical thought which draws on their comprehension and interpretation skills, whereas the descriptive writing relied on imagination which the students seemed to feel more comfortable with.

Students did make progress from Cold task to Hot task and all of them were able to write their Hot Task relying on the learned sentence starters, totally without additional assistance from me. Student questions in the Hot task lesson weren't about how to write it, but there were questions about the content.

By deconstructing a second model focusing on what the purpose for writing was, many of the students seemed to gain a better understanding of this writing type and progress was clear from the innovation to Hot task as a result. For Students C and G however, this did not appear to help and

little progress was evident between Innovation and Hot task. Students C and G particularly struggled with the comprehension and interpretation of the texts which I believe is what impacted their performance in the writing tasks.

I tried to make the process of learning a new writing type more explicit to the students through a diagram and showing how we were progressing through the process on that diagram. Whilst the students engaged with it, I don't feel confident that they could explain the stages of the process independently if the diagram wasn't in front of them. The interview responses to the question about the process also show that they (the students who answered) don't for the most part have a full metacognitive understanding of the process.

Appendix 6

Student interview – Cycle 2

Interview taken at the end of the cycle *(Interview was conducted electronically via email due to the school closure during the Covid-19 pandemic. Students D, G and H did not respond.)*

Teacher: Without looking, can you remember what the key features of each writing type are?

Student A: Descriptive writing needs good vocabulary and for analytical paragraphs you have to use the sentence starters.

Student B: Descriptive writing has to include all the descriptive techniques. For analytical paragraphs you have the sentence starters, quotes from the poems and you say what your opinion of the poem is.

Student C: Don't remember anything about descriptive writing except similes. I know the sentence starters for analytical paragraphs but I don't really get them.

Student E: Descriptive writing is descriptive. Can't remember for analytical paragraphs but you have to have quotes.

Student F: Descriptive writing should include similes metaphors personification and good vocab. Analytical paragraphs needs quotes and logical links between your quotes and what you're saying.

Teacher: Which type of writing do you feel most confident/comfortable doing AND WHY?

Student A: Descriptive because it's fun.

Student B: Analytical paragraphs are the most fresh in my mind so probably them.

Student C: None of them. I don't remember descriptive that much and analytical paragraphs are hard.

Student E: Descriptive writing because I showed my mum lots of the things I wrote and she really liked it.

Student F: I feel most confident with descriptive writing because we've done a lot of it in class and at my primary school so I feel very comfortable writing.

Teacher: Do you remember what the stages of the process are that we go through when we learn to do a new type of writing?

Student A: Can't remember.

Student B: There's always the model text and the boxing up and the hot task.

Student C: I don't know.

Student E: The model text. I can't remember the rest.

Student F: First there is a cold task then we go through as a class then do a boxing up grid then do the hot task

Appendix 7

Interview with History teacher – cycle 2

(Interview conducted electronically via email due to school closure during the Covid-19 pandemic)

Q: During cycle 2, what strategies did you include that you'd not used previously in order to build meta-cognition in students, and increase their independence?

A: We concluded after cycle 1 that the 'independence' aspect may be one of the areas that was not being developed fully through using T4W, as the supporting structures which were frequently being used through teacher illustration, may have actually prevented students from "learning" them through recall. These included deconstruction of a model text, analysis of required structure, use of signposting language and co-construction of answers.

Therefore, in cycle 2, after being introduced to a model text, students looked back and reflected on their cycle 1 piece of work, focusing on the signposting language they had already used which matched that in the model for the Cycle 2 writing (exam style answer).
I then used quizzes between Cold task and Hot task to ensure that the structural elements of the required exam answer, and signposting language, were embedded rather than presented by the teacher.

In cycle 1 I had used a co-construction activity to show the students how to innovate on the model text, and in cycle 2 I removed this activity instead relying on the recall quizzes to embed the knowledge of the required language and structure.

During the completion of the Hot task question, I deliberately limited what was on the whiteboard to spellings and explained that they already had learnt and used the language as opposed to providing them with an obvious selection to draw upon.

Q:Do you feel these strategies were impactful?

A: Yes, the data shows that the majority of the students were still able to score well on the cycle 2 hot task *without* several of the T4W the supporting structures from cycle 1 being maintained in place. If anything I think I over-scaffolded for them in the cycle 1 Hot task and removing those scaffolds in the cycle 2 Hot task gave a more realistic impression of their independent ability. I think that further practice and cycles embedding the skills would further improve the independent application of the process.

Q: Do you feel the students were able to become independent writers by the end of the process?

A: The results suggest they were, but the key aspect for me here would be the retention of both the structural elements of the question and the required language over a longer-term period. I'd hope that repeating the cycle may well give them the confidence of simply seeing this type of KS4 question (A narrative account of…) and knowing *exactly* what was required for it structurally and in terms of explanation, and also having the language to illustrate this.

Q: Did the students seem to have a metacognitive understanding of the process as opposed to passively following it?

A: Yes, in terms of focusing on *this specific type of question* but I can't extrapolate on whether they could then export their knowledge from this into other areas. Students seem to compartmentalise their learning somewhat, so I'd need to set up further extended writing tasks that are not 'Write a narrative account…' tasks and see if they are able to transfer the skills and language which they did clearly independently demonstrate in this instance.

I'd certainly suggest the students were not passively following instructions in their hot task, something which was likely to have been the case for many in cycle 1, and this can be seen through their confidence and lack of support requests.

Q: Did you notice any differences from cycle 1?

A: Some students definitely displayed a greater confidence, and I was genuinely surprised at the lack of support requested from me as they completed the assessment, suggesting that the *did* understand the process and that they felt able to complete work much more independently. This would be due to the repetition of the structural and linguistic demands of the question, and the continued quizzing about and reflection on the model text which would have made them confident that they were able to complete the task – especially the explicit reflection on where they had used some of the required language before in cycle 1 which may well have made them more confident that they could do it again in cycle 2.

I think the lack of co-construction may have led to some students incorporating less detail than they could have, as they had not been given the pre-task planning support which they had enjoyed during cycle 1. However, pleasingly the language requirements were met repeatedly.