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FINAL DISSERTATION

Analysis of the use and impact of the Talk for Writing methodology in Heath Mount Primary School, Birmingham

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Abstract

Talk for Writing is a curricular programme that was introduced to schools in England with the aim of raising the standards of writing, helping children to improve their reading and writing skills. This document presents an overview of the use of this methodology at Heath Mount Primary School (Birmingham) where children's writing is analysed to see the influence of the T4W on their results and the impact on other areas of learning. To carry out this study, a whole T4W process has been observed with Year 5 students, two interviews conducted, and school documents analysed. The results indicate that Talk for Writing helps children to improve both their writing skills and their overall results, and that reading plays a key role in the whole learning process.

Key words: Talk for Writing, Thinking Skills, Writing Skills, Guided Reading, Teaching

Resum

Talk for Writing és un programa curricular que es va introduir a les escoles d'Anglaterra amb l'objectiu d'elevar els estàndards de l'escriptura, ajudant als infants a millorar les seves habilitats lectores i escriptores. Aquest document presenta una visió general de l'ús d'aquesta metodologia a Heath Mount Primary School (Birmingham) on s'analitzen els textos escrits dels alumnes per veure la influencia del T4W en els seus resultats i l'impacte en altres àrees d'aprenentatge. Per realitzar aquest estudi, s'ha observat un procés sencer del T4W amb estudiants de cinquè curs, s'han realitzat dues entrevistes i analitzat els documents de l'escola. Els resultats mostren que el Talk for Writing ajuda als nens a millorar tan les seves habilitats d'escriptura com els seus resultats generals, i que la lectura té un paper fonamental durant tot el procés d'aprenentatge.

Paraules clau: Talk for Writing, Habilitats de pensament, Habilitats d'escriptura, Lectura guiada, Ensenyament.

Resumen

Talk for Writing es un programa curricular que se introdujo en las escuelas de Inglaterra con el objetivo de elevar los estándares de escritura, ayudando a los niños a mejorar sus habilidades de lectura y escritura. Este documento presenta una visión general del uso de esta metodología en Heath Mount Primary School (Birmingham), donde se analiza la escritura de los niños para ver la influencia del T4W en sus resultados y el impacto en otras áreas de aprendizaje. Para llevar a cabo este estudio, se ha observado todo un proceso de T4W con los alumnos de quinto año, se han realizado dos entrevistas y se han analizado documentos escolares. Los resultados indican que Talk for Writing ayuda a los niños a mejorar tanto sus habilidades de escritura como sus resultados generales, y que la lectura juega un papel clave en todo el proceso de aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: Talk for Writing, Habilidades de pensamiento, Habilidades de escritura, Lectura guiada, Enseñanza.

Introduction

The National Curriculum in England states that "The overarching aim for English in the national curriculum is to promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written language, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment". So, it aims to ensure that all pupils "acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar, and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language" (National Curriculum, 2014, p.14).

In Heath Mount Primary School (Birmingham), where I did my final placement, the Talk for Writing methodology was introduced in 2016 to improve their results. Heath Mount Primary School is a school where the majority of students come from different ethnic minorities. This means that almost half of them are of Yemeni origin and the proportion of students believed to speak English as an additional language is more than five times the national average. According to the Ofsted report in 2015, Heath Mount was a school with difficulties in the progress of the students, especially in writing, but also with low results in reading, grammar and mathematics. However, the latest Ofsted report (2019) while noting that the school still needs improvement, commented on progress in writing due to the introduction of the new approach to the teaching of writing. Thus, "more than 50% are reaching the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics" (Ofsted, 2019).

For this reason, and after attending the presentation of the final dissertation of Cristina Serrabassa, *Talk for Writing in KS1 in Ladypool Primary School,* which produced very impressive results, I wanted to focus my study on this methodology and how it is used in Heath Mount Primary School. I wanted to know more about T4W, how it is used in KS2, what changes the school has seen in the different skills of writing, thinking, reading and grammar, and whether teachers have seen any evidence of the usefulness and impact of this methodology in other areas of learning.

Theoretical framework

Thinking and Writing Skills

We all use thinking skills when we try to solve problems, ask questions, make decisions, organize information, make plans or make sense of specific experiences. However, not everyone is able to use these thinking skills effectively as the ability to think is something that needs to be developed, learnt and trained over a period of time. For this reason, some people see possibilities and solutions to problems where others only see obstacles.

Thinking skills are defined by Kelly (2011) as "the mental activities we use to process information, make connections, make decisions and create new ideas. Thinking enables us to connect and integrate new experiences into our existing understanding and perception of how things are". Furthermore, as children learn writing skills, thinking skills allow them to visually structure their thoughts and ideas as they write. The connection of these two skills helps to structure us mentally. Thus, it is possible to increase the complexity of thinking skills, and consequently, of writing.

Radloff and Harpe (2001) argue that being able to write well helps the learning and understanding of new content and allows the student to document processes that have been learned. Writing, as part of learning, requires students to think about, and make sense of, new knowledge and ideas. Therefore, students who have well developed writing skills will be able to master the subject and contents, take notes, synthesize information, etc., unlike students who do not have these writing skills.

On the other hand, comments from teachers show that many of them are not happy with the quality of their students' writing skills. As reflected in Bate and Sharpe, 1990; Cowen, 1993 and Torrance, Thomas & Robinson, 1992, these complaints are expressed about students at both undergraduate and graduate levels and grow with the increasing diversity of students. Although there is ongoing debate about whether the "literacy" skills of school leavers are improving, decreasing, or remaining static, there is general agreement that expectations for higher levels of these skills are growing in college courses and as career and work demands change and become more complex" (Bate and Sharpe, 1990; Cowen, 1993 and Torrance, Thomas & Robinson, 1992). For this reason, it is important to pursue this learning of writing skills by using methodologies such as Talk for Writing, helping students develop and use their writing skills through their study.

As Russell (1990) says, instead of blaming students for their poor writing, teachers should support them in developing their skills. To which Hattie, Biggs & Purdie (1996) add that teachers must spend more time supporting writing in the context of subject learning if students' writing skills are to be improved, because developing writing skills requires intensive practice with timely and appropriate feedback. This means that "students need to engage in regular writing activities that are discipline specific and integrated into their course of study" (Radloff & Harpe, 2001). Thus, developing effective writing skills and positive attitudes towards writing requires time and effort, support, instruction and opportunities for practice and feedback, and not just telling students what they should and should not do.

If the teacher provides writing support in the context of student learning, this can help students develop their writing skills. However, teachers need and appreciate help to do this. Radloff & Harpe (2001) claim that this help is most useful if it is practical and easily adapted, non-threatening, and appropriate to the student's needs. For that reason, the authors believe that the role of teachers in supporting writing can lead to benefits for both teachers and students. In this way, feelings of competence and confidence can grow, which in turn can allow for more time and effort to be devoted to improving writing for learning. As Biggs & Moore (1993) add "…the answer to better writing across the curriculum has got to be in the hands of the teacher who sets the writing context".

Figure 1 (Kellog, 2008) shows how the development of writing is conceived as a process in three stages. Learners progress from a beginner's stage, where writing is used to tell what one knows, to a stage of transformation of what one knows for the benefit of the author, until reaching the final stage of elaborating what one knows for the benefit of the reader. We can observe that this process is lengthy, and writing skills can continue to improve beyond the length of formal education.

Figure 1. Macro-stages in the cognitive development of writing skill (Kellog, 2008)
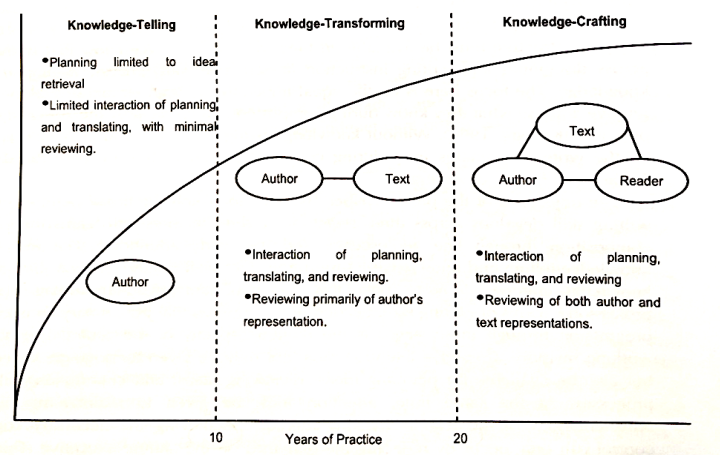
Writing is a continuing process of discovering how to find the most effective language to communicate one's thoughts and feelings (Peyton, 1993), and also "enhances language acquisition as learners' experiment with words, sentences, and larger chunks of writing to communicate their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they are learning in class" (Bello, 1997).

There are two general approaches to writing: Free Writing and a Process Approach.

In Free Writing, which is not necessarily edited or worked on further, learners write for a period of time in class on a topic of interest to them. Payton & Staton define it as a way of writing which "can take many forms, including quick writes, which are time-limited". In general, it is done individually, though it may sometimes be shared. These writings may be kept in a portfolio or notebook. The authors add that "from these pieces, themes may emerge that can act as springboards for more extensive writing that is discussed, revised, edited and published".

On the other hand, Process Writing is described by Crandall & Peyton (1993):

> Process writing usually begins with some form of "pre-writing activity" in which learners work together in groups to generate ideas about a particular topic. This could include sharing the free-writing piece described above, brainstorming, making a list or timeline, or simply reflecting on an experience. Each group member then works alone to compose a "first draft", concentrating on getting ideas down on paper, without worrying about spelling or grammar. They then read their drafts to each other in pairs or small groups. They encourage each other with constructive comments and questions as they seek better understanding of what each other is trying to write. They might discuss the purpose of the writing, what the author learned or hopes others will learn, and what the reader likes best or has trouble with (Crandall & Peyton, 1993, p.65).

From here, the "revising" grows out of the comments received. Here the main aim is clarity, where the writer has to look at the organization and sequence of ideas, if there is a need to include additional information or examples and observe if there is any confusion and ensure that any words or phrases that are added make the writing clearer (Cheatham, 1992).

Finally, the "ending" where the focus moves to spelling, grammar, punctuation, transition words and signal words. Students should be encouraged to edit paying particular attention to what they have studied.

Bello (1997) suggests some writing activities that "can be engaging and challenging and can add variety to writing instruction". The author points out that "The writing that emerges from an activity may be an end in itself or may lead to more extensive writing." (Bello, 1997).

Assessing Needs: Ask students to write about what they want to learn. This is a good way for the teacher to assess the needs of the class.

Reacting to a Text or Stimulus: Students can record their reactions to various stimuli by doing a free writing.

Writing Letters: Write different types of letters such as, letters to complaint, cover letters or letters of advice, practicing some types of writing that will be useful in their daily life.

Analysing and Synthesizing Information: Prepare students to interpret information that appears in graphs, maps, tables, etc. To do this, students can fill in grids based on information collected from surveys in the classroom or community.

Making Lists: They can make different lists like, of their favourite foods, places they like, wishes, etc. These lists can help them to generate vocabulary and provide the basis for big pieces.

Talk for Writing methodology

According to Corbett and Strong, the creators of 'Talk for Writing', this approach is based on how children learn and, through formative assessment, places the child at the centre of the planning, teaching and learning process (Corbett & Strong, 2017). The authors emphasise the 'talking' part of this process which, for them, includes "not only all the talk that surrounds the teaching of writing but also the wider learning within a unit. It helps the children become better speakers, listeners, readers, writers and thinkers" (p.12).

This method goes through different stages and can be adapted to the needs of students at any stage. Doherty (2016) argues that the Talk for Writing (T4W) approach

> "allows children to read and write independently for a variety of audiences and purposes within different topics. A key feature is that children internalize the language structures necessary for writing through "speaking the text" as well as close reading. The focus shifts from dependence to independence with the teacher using shared and guided instruction to develop children's ability to write creatively and powerfully. Therefore, this Talk for Writing method helps children orally imitate the language needed for a particular topic, before reading and analysing it, and finally being able to write their own version" (Doherty, 2016).

On the other hand, Wallace (2007) argued that (cited in Ying-Chih Chen, 2011) "talk is more important for distributing knowledge, while writing is important for manipulating, consolidating, and integrating knowledge". However, for Corbett & Strong (2017) this distinction is not so clear

cut. They argue that children get engaged in talking through ideas, and in this way improve their oral and written expression. Their participation in discussions and explanations allows them to develop their understanding of what is being studied and, in the process, improve their reading and writing.

The T4W approach to teaching writing emphasizes three teaching stages, with the aim of improving writing skills by giving students an understanding of both the structure and elements of written language: "*imitation* (where pupils learn texts by heart, so they can discuss and dissect them); *innovation* (where pupils adapt texts to create their own versions); and *invention* (where teachers help pupils to create original texts of the same type)" (Dockrell, Marshall and Wyse, 2015).

Although the theoretical essence is simple, the practice is always more complex. As Corbett & Strong (2017) emphasize:

> "The art of effective teaching is being able to identify where the children are on their learning journey and providing the right skills for them to add to their repertoire through imitation and innovation, so they can apply and develop them independently across the curriculum. In such a way, the children will achieve breadth and depth and will have mastered flexible writing skills that can be adapted to suit the needs of any writing task in any subject" (Corbett & Strong, 2017, p.13).

The T4W process is summed up in Figure 2, below (Corbett & Strong, 2017, p. 14).

Figure 2. Talk for Writing process (Corbett & Strong, 2017, p. 14)
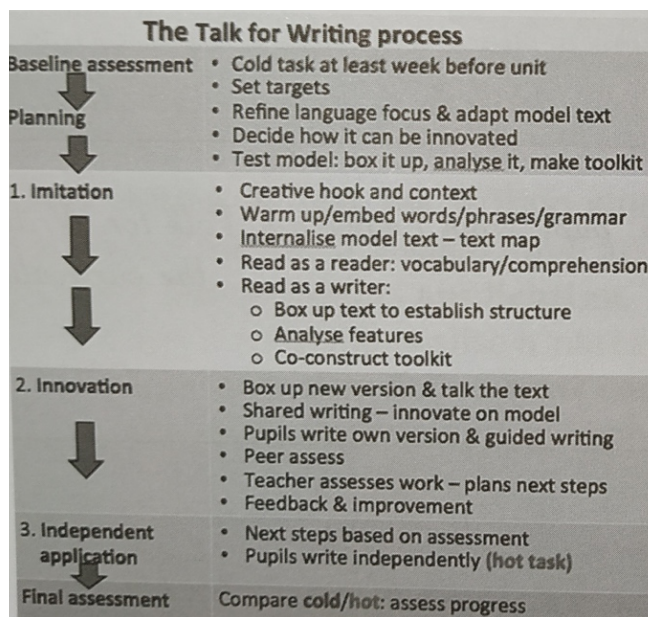
At the beginning they start with the cold task in which students will be asked to write about something they know, or are interested in, that will need a familiar context. Warm up the topic with a brief discussion, but without providing any instruction on how to write about this topic. The evaluation of these 'cold writes' will help teachers to identify the specific skills on which the unit should focus to help children progress.

Afterwards, they start with the first stage called the imitation stage, where children internalize the language pattern of a model text by learning it orally. Corbett & Strong (2017) emphasize that "the first stage is the most important stage as this lays the pattern of language in the children's heads". The key aspect during this initial stage is to ensure that children understand the vocabulary in addition to the specific teaching of comprehension. It is important to read the text carefully line by line, exploring the vocabulary and deepening the oral comprehension through questions and discussions. There are also other ways to help children deepen their understanding of texts. Corbett & Strong (2017) list some of them such as talking about the text, analysing who writes the text, filling gaps created by taking out key language features such as linking words or phrases, comparing sentences or paragraphs and discussing which is most effective and why, reading paragraphs carefully and annotating them, searching for different features or commenting on impact, and so on. Thus, children must first participate in the analysis of the text they have internalized in order to move on to the next phase of innovation.

At the moment that children have become familiar with the original text, the second phase starts, the innovation stage, which involves using the original as a basis for creating something new (Corbett & Strong, 2017). Based on the structure and language characteristics of the initial text, the whole class, working together, produce a new version of the original text but dealing with a different topic, using shared planning and shared reading to structure their ideas for writing their new text. Shared planning consists of using a box-shaped grid where the original model is structured. It is then necessary to gather and organize new information in the planning grid. In this way, not only does it help to analyse the text in the model, but by adding additional columns and using the same structure, they can plan the innovation in the model. The teacher can then use the planning board to move from an oral to a written version. During shared writing it is important that "the teacher involves the children in the composition, taking suggestions and pushing the children to refine their ideas so that they are fluid, coherent and effective" (Corbett & Strong, 2017, p. 35). As Corbett & Strong (2017) said, "shared writing should be developed progressively to illustrate to children how to move away from the model" and "whilst their writing is arising from direct teaching through the shared writing, it is in many ways moving towards invention" (p.37).

To finish, there is the independent application stage, in which children move towards becoming more independent. In this phase the children can use the skills they have worked on during the process, as well as the structure created in the innovation phase, to start planning their independent writing. This independent writing is done as the 'hot' task, showing the knowledge they have acquired.

In T4W the quality of the model texts is very important for progress. They should be short texts that provide good examples of the main linguistic features on which they focus, and as they progress, they should increase in difficulty. From the process of working on the text, the children will build tools that they will perfect, year after year, as they develop their skills. With time, they will internalize these tools so that they do not need a visual support to write.

Corbett (2020), emphasizes that to become good and effective writers they have to learn to write about what they like, or are interested in, independently, just as they have to learn to make their own decisions about selecting and appreciating good reading.

> "The aim of Talk for Writing is to develop imaginative, creative and effective writers. In the same way, the aim of Talk for Reading is to grow confident, critical and appreciative readers. No student can be said to really be a reader until they make their own choices about what to read and begin to develop a taste. In the same vein, children are not really writers until they decide what they want to write and have opportunities to create their own writing tasks and write about their interests and lives creating stories, poems and informative writing for themselves" (see https://www.talk4writing.co.uk/about/).

The relationship between reading and writing is therefore an element to consider since, according to Corbett and Strong (2017), "Reading influences writing" to which they add "the best writers in any class are always readers". Many writers verbalize this connection between reading and writing. Eisterholdt ((1996) cited in Ethel & Simasiku (2015)) states that "traditionally, reading in the writing classroom is regarded as the appropriate input for acquiring writing skills, because it is assumed that reading passages will be used as models of writing". Krashen ((1984) cited in Ethel & Simasiku (2015)) adds that "Writing competence can be acquired from substantial amounts of reading for interest and pleasure". Al-Masour and Al Shorman ((2014) cited in Ethel & Simasiku (2015)) assert that an "extensive reading program encouraged learners to use the skills learned when writing an essay; this, therefore, developed their writing skills". Furthermore, Stotsky ((1993) cited in Ethel & Simasiku (2015)) concludes that although further research was needed in this regard, "those who read well also write well: those who read poorly also write poorly".

Therefore, as Corbett & Strong (2017) suggest, "a school would also need to consider how the teaching of reading fits into this approach" (p.246). The authors also consider that skilful writers are those who read. For that reason, they argue it is necessary to find strategies to increase children's enthusiasm for reading, such as reading quality texts aloud to the class, linking the texts selected for guided reading to the writing being worked on in class, or providing different text types for independent reading.

Methodology

The data collected in this paper aims to analyse the use and impact of the Talk for Writing methodology in Heath Mount Primary School in Birmingham. Thus, considering teaching practice as a fundamental aspect, it is essential to see how this method can influence children's learning.

To analyse the role of this methodology in children's learning, different objectives have been set to guide this research:

- Explore the use of the Talk for Writing methodology in Heath Mount Primary School.
- Identify what teachers think about the use of the T4W methodology.
- Analyse the evolution of students' writing skills and try to identify any impact on results obtained in other areas of learning.

To do this research I used the interpretative paradigm, since I simply observed without modifying or implementing anything in the school where this qualitative work was being done. As Serrano (1994) states, "its basic objective is to understand the meaning of an experience".

The methodology used is that of a case study. Lopez & Morante (2004) state (as cited in Álvarez & San Fabián, 2012) that using this method, different types of qualitative information are collected in a descriptive manner, where the essential thing is to highlight key incidents through the use of interviews, field notes, observations, documents, etc. So, this research involves investigating and analysing a study using known research methods for data collection.

Four different instruments were used to collect data: a diary, direct observation, interviews and school documents. The diary was useful for collecting information about the way T4W was used, and the role of the teacher and children during the different sessions. Direct observation was useful for gathering data on how the different sessions were organised and planned. The interviews helped me to find out teachers' opinions and evidence on the T4W methodology and

the impact it has on children's development and learning. Finally, the school documents enabled me to contextualize and understand why and how the school applies the T4W methodology.

This research was carried out in Heath Mount Primary School, which is a community school in Balsall Heath, an inner-city area of Birmingham, UK. It is a mixed-sex school that offers Foundation stage and Primary Education and there are about 371 pupils aged from four up to eleven.

Balsall Heath, like many inner-city areas in UK cities, has changed substantially in the last 50 years. As the white working class population moved out of the area, successive waves of immigrants, mainly from the Commonwealth, moved in. Nowadays, the school's pupil population is 40% of Yemeni heritage, 35% Pakistani and the other 20% from smaller ethnic minority groups. The latest Ofsted Report (2019) stated that "A large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and most of these pupils speak English as an additional language". Now, Heath Mount Primary School describes itself as "a multicultural community, which respects and celebrates the diversity of languages and cultures of all its members in the way they teach and learn English" (Heath Mount Primary School, 2018).

This research focuses on the observation and monitoring of one of the Year 5 classes. It tries to analyse how the teacher works on writing following the T4W method, the process and evolution of the children in their writing, and the results obtained during this process, as well as whether this methodology has any demonstrable impact on other areas of learning.

Although the observation was made across the whole of the Year 5 class and in all the sessions, in terms of writing text results, I decided to analyse the work of three of the pupils more deeply. As the class is divided into groups of different levels, I decided to choose one child from each level (one from the highest level, one from the intermediate level and one from the lowest level). In this way, I was able to observe the evolution and results of each of them. The teachers who participated in this study were the Year 5 teacher, who does all the T4W work in the classroom, and the KS2 and curriculum leader, who knows the methodology well and monitors its operation in the school.

Results and discussion

The purpose of this section is to contrast information from the theoretical framework with results obtained from data collected at Heath Mount Primary School. The focus of this analysis will be on the observations made in the English classes where T4W was developed, on the texts written by the three selected children and the results of the interviews.

Class observation. How do they use the T4W method?

Corbett & Strong (2017) said that "The pupils will need a familiar context so that they have something to write about that they know about and that interests them". Thus, it is a good idea to set an activity to warm up the pupils with a brief discussion, but without providing any teaching on how to write about this subject (Corbett & Strong, 2017).

As I could observe in the Y5 class, they started with the 'Cold Task', where a persuasive letter was presented to them. They were given a small text introducing the recipient and what they had to say. In this case, they were to write to a famous astronaut inviting them to visit their school, so as Corbett & Strong (2017) state "linking persuasion writing to real events like the school is important because then children actually know something in detail about what they are trying to promote and will, hopefully, want to promote it" (p. 189). The first part of the letter was read and discussed all together, brainstorming what they could say and write, while the teacher noted the possible paragraphs or ideas to use. From here, they had to select two of the ideas and think more deeply about them in order to write two paragraphs for the 'Cold Task'. In this first part I saw that eight students provided their own ideas and wrote the letter independently. Twelve children needed to build on the shared ideas and modified or expanded these with their own ideas, while ten pupils basically copied the jointly written ideas to write their letter.

After that, they talked about the skills that should appear in this type of writing. In this case, they worked on persuasive openers, parenthesis and modal verbs, and the typical language pattern and vocabulary of a persuasive text. Once the paragraphs were written, they had to reread the text to locate the relevant skills and add if any were missing. In this way, when the teacher corrects it, she can check if they have had more or less difficulty writing it (it's like an initial assessment). Corbett & Strong (2017) suggest that teachers should "flip-chart the vocabulary, sentence signposts and key sentence patterns that emerge and start to create a

toolkit of useful ingredients for persuasion texts to support the children's speaking and writing"
(p. 197).

In the next activity, the teacher gave a model text to the children, a persuasive letter that was linked closely with the Topic. They focused on the main parts of the letter and how it was divided: the writer's address, the recipient's address, greeting, persuasive argument and closing farewell and copied it in their notebooks. They don't use a story map because as the teacher said, "a lot of children in year 5 can visualise the story". After that, they boxed up the text all together, with the teacher asking the children questions about different chunks of information so the structure can clearly be seen. Much importance was given to this part since "it will provide the basic structure for the shared writing innovation and the children's work when they come to create their own versions" (Corbett & Strong, 2017, p.202). Additionally, the Year 5 teacher added that "the area of T4W which I find most productive is the 'imitation stage'. This is because the teacher helps the children identify the skills and encourages them to write using these skills through Grammar Punctuation and Spelling (GPS)". GPS is a subject they work on three days a week (half an hour each day) doing grammar exercises, where they work on vocabulary, punctuation and spelling. For that reason, during the following lessons, they do many exercises based on these skills and vocabulary to practise and internalize everything they are learning.

At the same time, in the guided reading classes, they also work on a persuasive letter, focusing on the vocabulary, its structure and their understanding of this type of writing. As Corbett & Strong (2017) mention, "Tune the children into the style of this sort of persuasive writing by reading leaflets to them and providing leaflets for them to read. This might be done in quiet reading or as part of guided reading". (p.197).

Once the children had internalized the persuasive text pattern, they began the second stage, to innovate around this pattern by writing other persuasive paragraphs themselves. Using contextualised activities, they had to write different paragraphs autonomously using the structure and skills worked on in the imitation phase, modal verbs and parentheses. During this process the teacher supported them, and they shared some ideas to plan their writing. Corbett and Strong (2017) said that teachers should "support this process through shared planning and writing along with appropriately designed role-play activities to further strengthen their familiarity with language structure and patterns". After these activities, they began to box up the text, identifying the structure of the model text, so they could structure and plan possible new ideas for writing their own text. Corbett & Strong (2017) suggest "Display the boxed plan you just designed on the writing wall or on the clothesline where you and the class can see it,

while you write the children's ideas on a flip chart". Then individually, the children wrote on their grid their new ideas, using the tools they had worked on together, to be able to prepare for the next phase, the independent application. Although during this second stage Corbett & Strong (2017) suggested that it is important to share their writing with a partner or read it aloud in order to "test out their writing" and improve it together, this was not seen in the classroom since all the texts that the children produced during this activity were only checked by the teacher. The Year 5 teacher remarked that she would like to make T4W more creative by including more drama, games and speaking and listening activities as T4W allows for all these. But, she said, "sometimes we have less time, which means that we do not always get on to the creative elements which would really help the children with their imagination and writing".

Finally, they had to write their own persuasive letter. This final piece of writing is the 'Hot Task'. Children worked independently trying to demonstrate all the skills requested by the teacher and following the structure of this type of writing. It was the teacher who corrected and reviewed their writings after this process (the final assessment). As the Year 5 teacher said, "we have a whole year assessment sheet, which we fill in after each Hot Task (this is done after each unit)". Regarding the skills taught in each unit, "we assess this after they have completed their Hot Task and if children are struggling with this skill, this then turns into their individual target for the next term/unit". During this stage, it was observed that ¾ of the children were able to create their own persuasive letter with new ideas while ¼ of them simply followed the grid model with the jointly created ideas.

Although the latest Ofsted report said that the school requires improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, it emphasises that progress in writing is improving strongly. "The introduction of a new approach to the teaching of writing is ensuring greater consistency and higher expectations across the school" (Ofsted, 2019). So, the KS2 and curriculum leader claims that "using a writing framework to support children in understanding the patterns and structures of the story has helped raise the standards of writing, and children and staff have more confidence in writing". The Year 5 teacher added that is important to follow all the stages because T4W is a very organised and efficient way of teaching English. She said that "we try not to skip any of the three steps since they are very crucial and important".

Writing results

This section contains an analysis of the results of the writings produced by the children. As I mentioned before, three children from Year 5 are analysed, one from a high level, one from a medium level and one from a low level, as the classroom is structured.

Regarding the extension of the writings, the following graph compares the number of words they used in their 'Cold Write' and in the 'Hot Write' (Child 1 is the high level, Child 2 is the medium level and Child 3 is the low level).

**Figure 3. Comparison of length of initial and final task.**
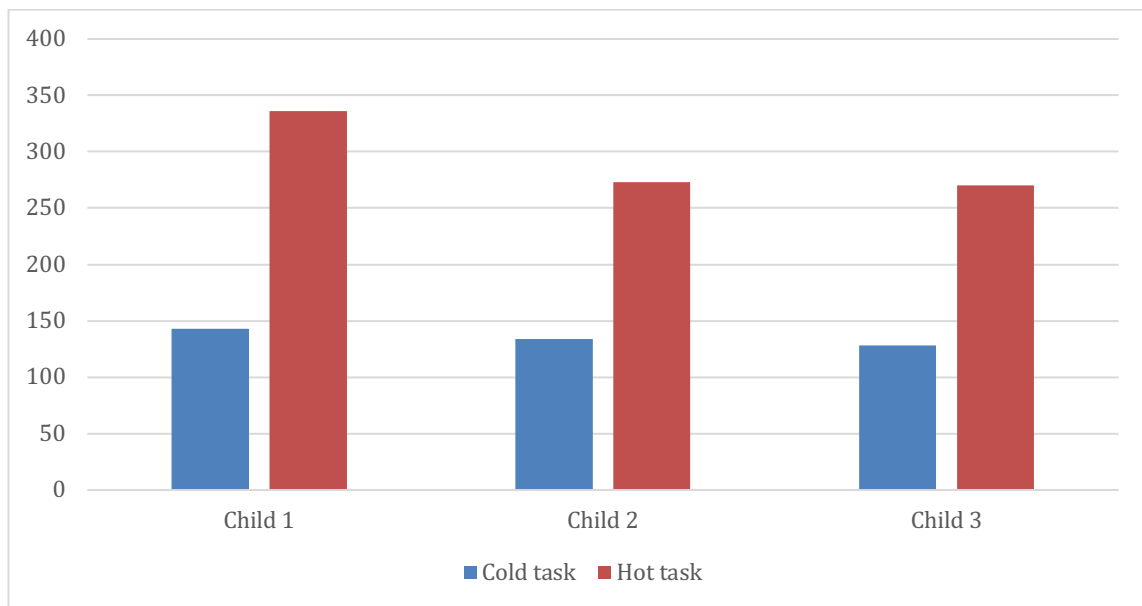
As the Figure shows, the difference between the three children in terms of the number of written words is not as great as might have been expected. However, there is a big difference between the first activity (cold task) and the last one (hot task). The results show that all three children wrote final texts that were twice as long as their initial texts.

In addition, another difference observed in the initial and final texts was the organisation of the texts by analysing whether they followed a clear and organized structure. The results were that all the texts were organized in different paragraphs. While in the cold task child 1 and child 3 wrote 2 paragraphs and child 2 wrote 3 (although less extensive), in the hot task they all finished their writing with six paragraphs each, showing a clear structure and all the parts that the text model needed. The biggest difference between these children was in the vocabulary and sentence structure used to express what they thought (new ideas).

Corbett & Strong said that " T4W concentrates on modelling the pattern of language required for a range of writing tasks so that pupils internalise appropriate patterns of language, including

how to subordinate clauses". The following figure shows the evolution focused on the different skills worked on during the process. The teacher focused initially on fronted adverbials, expanded noun phrases and relative clauses, already worked on in previous texts, adding in the final text the new skills worked on during the process, such as persuasive openers, parenthesis and modal verbs.

Figure 4: Comparison of the use of writing skills in the initial and final task
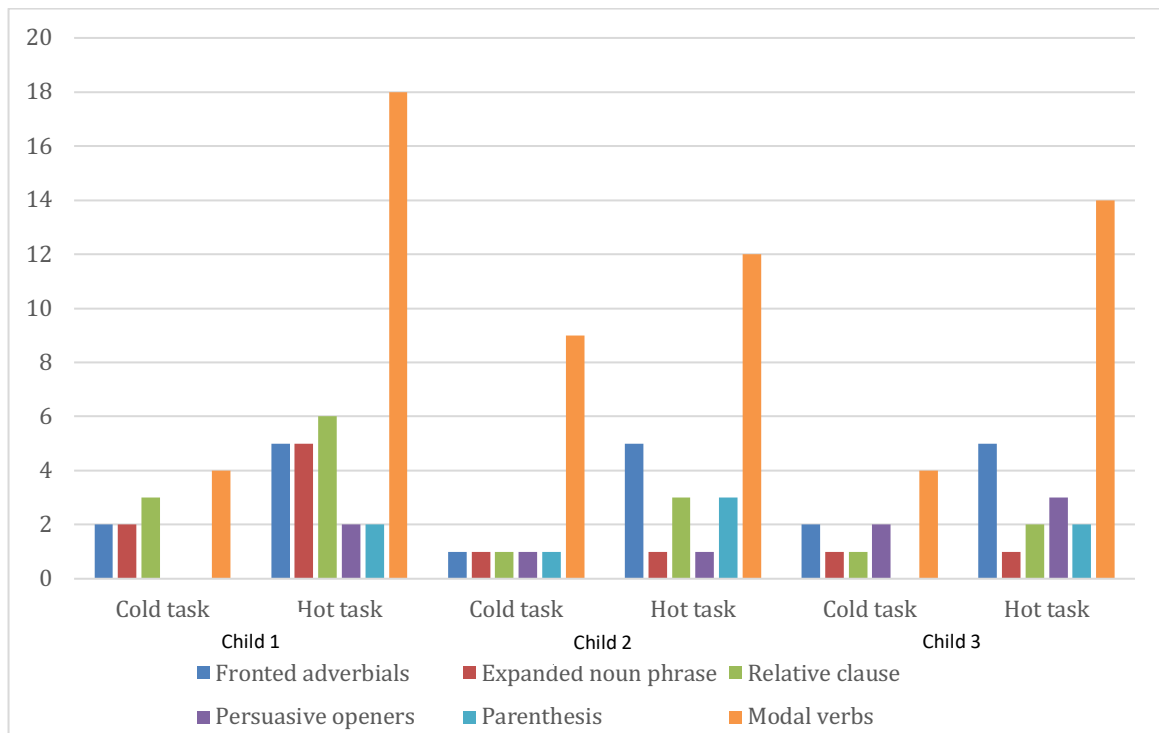
As shown in Figure 2, the children's results in terms of the writing skills used show a clear difference between the cold task and the hot task. While in the first activity they used fronted adverbials, expanded noun phrases and relative clauses, already worked previously, in the hot task, they not only expanded these forms, but added the new ones and used them correctly, forming coherent and meaningful sentences. This displays that they have acquired more knowledge and learned vocabulary, new skills and text structure, which lead to improved results throughout the process.

It is at this point that the teacher reviews the final result comparing it with the initial one (cold task), asking the children to revise and add, if necessary, some of the forms worked on. As Corbett & Strong (2017) explained, "Adding your comment to the child's comments helps to promote a dialogue about what needs to be done to improve the child's work". It is also important to "ask them to reflect on their learning by looking back at the cold task and seeing what progress they have made" (Corbett & Strong, 2017, p. 211). This is how the children

improved their final texts, revising, adding or modifying vocabulary and some sentence structure, in order to improve their final writing to obtain these good results. As the KS2 and curriculum leader said, "our results are rising. Assessments indicate children are more independent with their writing".

Results of the impact on other areas of learning

Corbett & Strong (2017) noted that "where a school makes a concerted effort to improve the teaching of non-fiction writing, this has had great benefits in other areas of the curriculum". Heath Mount School wanted to raise standards in writing and improve children's independence in writing and the evidence shows that this is happening. The KS2 and curriculum leader added that "we insist on cross curricular writing to ensure children apply their writing in other subjects. These independent writings are used as part of the child's overall assessment".

The Year 5 teacher felt that by improving pupils' writing skills, the development of thinking and organisational skills this involves may lead to improving results in other areas of study. She argued that writing skills help the development of thinking and organisational skills to improve results because "some children who read frequently had read about the Topic that we were focusing on so therefore, they automatically had more knowledge about the subject area". Hence, when it came to their Topic work they did better work. She added that reading plays a major role in writing. She explained that "Because good readers have seen good sentence structure many times therefore, it starts to come naturally to them when writing". Corbett & Strong (2017) reinforce this by saying that reading influences writing: "the best writers in any class are always readers" adding that "children who read for pleasure are also most likely to succeed in literacy, but also across the curriculum because of the way in which reading develops the ability to think in the abstract" (p.5). The teacher of Year 5 explained that "Good readers have also seen so much varied content which helps them make their writing interesting. They understand the level of creativity which is required as a writer as well as the level of vocabulary".

Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to analyse the use and impact of Talk for Writing in Heath Mount Primary School (Birmingham) to explore how the T4W process is developed in Year 5, to identify what teachers think about this methodology, to analyse the evolution of students' writing skills and to examine the evidence about the results obtained in other areas of learning.

The perceptions of the teachers interviewed were very favourable about Talk for Writing, commenting on the importance of following all the stages of the process because of its organization and efficiency in teaching English. The interviews revealed that at the end of the process both teachers felt there were positive results in terms of the children's writing and that their overall results were improving, generating greater confidence in writing in both children and teachers.

The objective writing data showed that children wrote more words and produced higher quality texts when comparing the first text (cold task) and the last text (hot task), showing a clear improvement. This demonstrated that this method was helping to improve their writing skills, and to better order and structure their ideas.

In terms of the impact of the T4W on other areas of learning, the teachers stated that improving writing skills can lead to improved outcomes in other areas of study. However, only the Year 5 teacher observed that it is reading that has a strong impact on writing, as she stated that children who read regularly have more creativity, more vocabulary and better text structure. However, due to time I could not observe more significant results regarding the impact of the T4W in other subjects, so the results in this area are limited and inconclusive.

Although the results obtained in Heath Mount Primary School were remarkable, I conclude that the study has certain limitations since it was not possible to examine more than one Year 5 class in a single school. The fact that, because of time limitations during my stay in the school, interviews had to be conducted by mail, rather than face-to-face, has also severely limited the quantity and quality of information that could be obtained. The results may well have been different if the number of participants from other schools and the number of teachers interviewed were wider. Given the evidence from Heath Mount, it would be interesting to evaluate the T4W methodology on a wider scale.

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