To what extent can peer assessment enhance learners' ability to independently improve the quality of their writing?

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Introduction

This inquiry investigated the impact of implementing scaffolded peer assessment in the MFL classroom on the learning outcomes and independence for a group of learners. My aim was to develop a pupil-centered learning environment and enhance learner engagement and motivation through facilitating opportunities for learner collaboration with a focus on critical reflection for improvement.

Key inquiry quote

"When students help each other, it is those who give help that benefit most." Jones and Wiliam (2008, p16)

Justification

Learners appear unable to proof-read effectively as evidenced by having to re-mark work that was previously self or peer assessed and comments such as:

'Nice presentation'

'Write neater'

As this is a required skill of the LNF – 9.WS1: improve writing through independent review and redrafting, it is something the Welsh Government believes is imperative for school life and beyond.

Therefore, now more than ever, there is a need for the development of high quality teaching and learning strategies for self and peer assessment throughout KS3 and KS4. It is imperative learners feel confident enough to apply this skill and excel in the new MFL GCSE, as well as across the curriculum and life in post-education.

Research Questions

1. To what extent are staff aware of peer assessment and its impact on learners' quality of writing?
2. To what extent is a second language a barrier to effective peer assessment?
3. What effect do peer assessment and explicit success criteria have on peer feedback and learners' understanding of what constitutes good quality work?

Intervention

My intervention was carried out over a 4 week period with a set 2 Year 9 French class. Learners applied a peer assessment grid, of collaboratively developed success criteria, to various spoof texts to learn how to identify strengths and weaknesses and provide advice for improvement.

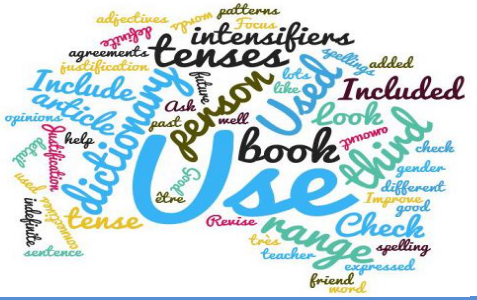
Opportunities were provided for learners to take ownership of their learning and work effectively in collaboration. Through pair work, group work and class discussion, they developed an understanding of what good quality work looks like and how to improve further.

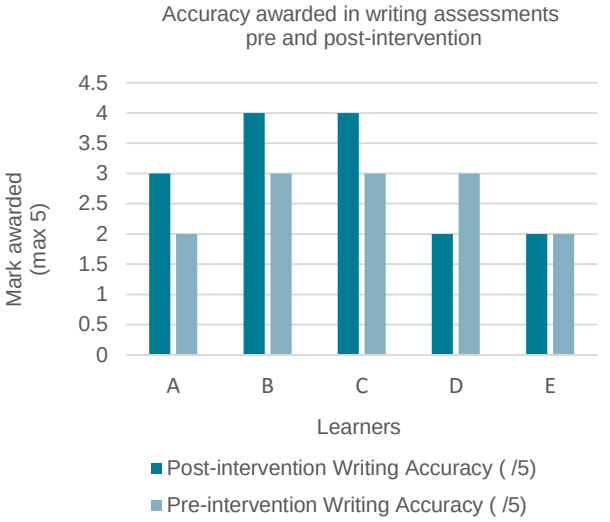
Action research was used to conduct this inquiry and various methods were employed to collect data including questionnaires, interviews, observation, a reflective journal, learner work (including test results) and most importantly, learner voice.

Inquiry findings

Several key findings emerged from the data analysis:

- Peer assessment is **not embedded consistently** in practice across the curriculum.
- Learners perceive **subject knowledge to be their greatest barrier.**
- Scaffolding helped **improve learner feedback**.
- Group work contributed to **increased confidence levels in identifying errors and providing constructive feedback.**
- Peer assessment has had a **positive impact on writing accuracy for most learners.**





Conclusions

When implemented effectively, scaffolded peer assessment with explicit success criteria can be a successful strategy to enhance independent learning and improve the quality of work through critical reflection.

Teachers need to collaborate and embed good peer assessment practice consistently in their own practice.

Barriers to effective peer assessment should be considered and addressed, particularly subject knowledge and ability.

Teachers need to become facilitators of learning to encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and become more independent.

Key References

- Black, P. and Wiliam, D. 1998. *Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment*. King's College London: Department of Education and Professional Studies.
- Jones, J. and Wiliam, D. 2008. *Modern Foreign Languages inside the black box: Assessment for learning in the Modern Foreign Languages classroom*. King's College London: Department of Education and Professional Studies.

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