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**The Power of ‘Yet’: A small-scale study looking at
how positive verbal feedback influences
children’s attitudes towards their learning**

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Abstract

This small-scale study looks at how positive verbal feedback influences children’s attitudes towards their learning. There is a particular focus on how the phrase ‘I can’t yet’ is influential in this regard. Participants were first asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their thoughts on feedback in school, an intervention then took place, before a semi-structured small-group interview was held. Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected, with the results suggesting that referring to and using the ‘power of yet’ may help support children in creating a more positive attitude towards their work.

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Introduction

This small-scale research project aims to advance understanding of the potential impact that positive verbal feedback can have on children’s attitudes towards their learning. Throughout this study pupils’ perspectives were used to uncover the impact of positive verbal feedback, on their attitudes to learning, with specific reference to the ‘Power of Yet’ (PoY).

It has been estimated that children spend approximately 15,000 hours in the classroom during primary and secondary education (Thorp, 1994). This is the time during which children are experiencing their most formative years and they are also relying on their teachers for support and comfort, as well as learning (Burnett & Mandel, 2010; Levy & Wubbels, 2005; Reeve, 2006). For positive environments to be created teachers must be cognisant of the emotional impact they are having on the children in their classrooms whenever they give them feedback, be it verbal or written (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Reeve, 2006). Yet, research investigating the impact of positive verbal feedback inside the primary classroom is limited.

The definition for ‘feedback’ can be divided into two sub-sections. The first concerns effort feedback which focusses on the amount of energy that an individual puts into learning, for example, congratulating a student for working hard in the lesson (Burnett, 2002). The second sub-section focusses on an individual’s perceived ability to complete a task, for example telling a student that they are ‘really smart’ (Burnett, 2002). Studies often combine the two sub-sections and generally define feedback in terms of directing individuals towards ways in which they can progress by providing information that will improve their ability or performance (Craven, Marsh & Debus, 1991; Hattie, 1992; Marsh, 1990).

This piece of research was motivated by Carol Dweck’s commentary regarding the power of changing the phrase ‘I can’t’ to ‘I can’t yet’ regarding children’s attitudes and resilience towards

their learning (Dweck, 2014). Other influential pieces of literature were Dweck's (2006) theory of growth mindset and multiple studies that identify the positive influence of a significant adult's verbal commentary on young children's personal development, and attitude when the comments are directly aimed at the child (Burnett, 1999; Porlier, Laurent, & Page, 1999). Hence, the following research questions were formulated.

Research Questions

The main research question (RQ) for this study is: 'What impact does positive verbal feedback have on children's attitudes towards their learning?'

Following are the three sub-questions (SQs):

SQ1. Does using the phrase 'can't yet' instead of 'can't' during verbal feedback encourage children to have a positive attitude towards their work?

SQ2. What forms of feedback do children already recognise in the classroom and what are their personal preferences?

SQ3. How do teaching staff think positive language changes the children's attitudes towards their learning?

Literature Review

The few studies that have focused on positive verbal feedback suggest that it is imperative in the process of creating a welcoming and stimulating environment for the children in the classroom (Burnett & Mandel, 2010; Partin, Robertson, Maggin, Oliver, & Wehby, 2009; Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008). One approach to providing positive verbal feedback is using the PoY. The idea behind the PoY is in its infancy, but predominantly follows the widely discussed theory of 'growth mindset' brought to many educator's attention by Dweck (2006). Dweck (2006) describes growth mindset as recognising that one's talents can be developed through hard work or with support by others. It is believing that you have the power to change your future, by persevering and putting energy into succeeding (Dweck, 2006; Dweck, 2016; Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017). The PoY is a continuation of this, as the idea is that individuals rephrase the sentence 'I can't' to 'I can't yet' creating a pro-active approach to learning. However, Dweck's (2006) theory of growth mindset has

experienced criticism, with some researchers finding limited evidence to support her claims that resilience can be taught and that individuals with a growth mindset experience positive outcomes within education (Sisk, Burgoyne, Sun, Butler, & Macnamara, 2018), especially regarding secondary school students (Donohoe, Topping, & Hannah, 2012). This was considered, however, I decided that due to the lack of literature on this topic, regarding primary aged children, a small-scale study would be useful in determining the perspectives of children regarding the PoY.

Children's perspectives are essential to the improvement of any education system (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000). Tuning into children's perspectives provides insight into their preferences and motivations to learn in a school environment. Despite this, evidence of primary children's perspectives on the use of verbal feedback is lacking within the current field. Thus, this study aims to investigate the impact of the use of positive verbal feedback on children's attitudes towards their learning, from the children's perspectives.

Burnett (1999) completed a study with 269 children aged between 8-13 years from a primary school in Australia investigating the relationships between positive and negative self-talk, alongside significant others' positive and negative statements. Self-talk refers to the statements that we say to ourselves, and can be positive, indicating a self-enhancing disposition or negative, indicative of a critical, self-defeating outlook (Hardy, 2006). Burnett (1999) administered a 'Self-talk Inventory' and a 'Significant Others Statement Inventory' and found that children who perceived that significant others talked positively to them, appeared to have higher positive self-talk and lower negative self-talk than children who reported that their significant others said negative things to them. Hence, it appears that what significant others say to children effects their self-talk. It was also found that for boys, parental statements played a predictive role for both positive and negative self-talk. Boys with high positive self-talk reported that their parents spoke to them positively and negatively, whereas boys with high levels of negative self-talk reported that their parents spoke predominantly negatively towards them. In stark comparison, parental statements were not predictive of either type of self-talk for girls. Instead, for girls the verbal commentary made by their teachers was far more influential. For example, positive statements by teachers were indicative of positive self-talk, whilst low rates of positive statements by teachers were predictive of negative self-talk. This therefore highlights that significant others' verbal comments do have an impact on children's attitudes, which in turn may mean that teacher's feedback could play a significant role in children's perceptions of themselves. Nevertheless, this study was completed over two decades ago,

in a different jurisdiction and therefore lacks generalisability and currency. The results do, however, remain to be relevant when compared to modern-day findings discussed later in the essay.

More recently, Burnett (2001) completed a research study measuring primary school children's preferences for teacher praise and feedback based on the Praise and Attitude Questionnaire (PAQ) (Elwell & Tiberio, 1994). Out of 747 children aged between 8-12, 91% said that they preferred to be praised often or sometimes and 84% preferred to be praised for trying hard or putting in effort, rather than for their ability. However, 69% stated that they did not want public praise. These results suggest that if teachers are to meet the praise preferential of children, they will predominantly be giving one-to-one effort-based feedback. Results from Burnett's (2002) follow-up piece of research went on to show that negative, effort-focussed feedback subsequently fed into children's perceptions of their classroom environment, making them feel less respected and more unhappy about coming to school. Burnett (2002) also found that children's perceptions of the effort feedback that they received from their teacher was directly related to their relationship with their teacher. He purported that the results showed that children aged between 9-10 years appeared to have a heightened sensitivity to teacher feedback and reported that they wanted more positive teacher feedback in the future. This study had a large sample and was utilising a pre-determined, valid questionnaire; thus one can suggest that children may place a lot of focus on the feedback that their teacher provides them, particularly when it is perceived to be negative. It follows that teachers should be aware of the feedback they provide to children, particularly verbal feedback because of its public nature (Burnett, 2001). This was considered when formulating the research questions for this study.

Further, Kerr (2017) completed a case-study with four year-nine students and found that students perceived verbal feedback as a positive form of focused conversation, which was substantially different to normal classroom dialogue. Kerr (2017) also found that children identified verbal feedback with signals such as personal and task goals. However, using a case-study methodology reduces the external validity of the results, in that they are not generalisable (Wilson, 2013). Nevertheless, the findings from Kerr's (2017) case-study do corroborate with the results from Tan Whipp, Gagné, & Van Quaquebeke (2019) research. Tan et al. (2019) investigated the perceptions of 32 Year 9 children (aged 14-15 years) regarding two-way feedback interactions with their class teachers. The main methodological approach was respectful inquiry and the findings suggested that when teachers asked questions, started a two-way discussion with pupils, and clearly engaged with

individuals through eye contact and facial features; the Year 9 students thought of their interaction as more positive and useful (Tan et al., 2019). Tan et al. (2019) concluded that there are parts of verbal feedback that create positive interactions which subsequently may determine children's overall perspectives on its use. However, this study used a sample of secondary school age children and cannot therefore be generalised to children of a primary age, as it is possible that they may have different perspectives regarding the criteria for 'good verbal feedback'. The sample size of this study was also relatively small further reducing the generalisability of the conclusions that were made.

The most recent literature relating to verbal feedback can be found in a report from UCL's Verbal Feedback Project 2019 (Quinn, 2019). The report's aim was to question the theory behind why written feedback is considered the foremost method for providing commentary on a child's work. During this time the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) also published a report reviewing the evidence on marking (Elliott et al., 2016). It was found that a 'typical teacher' spends up to nine hours marking pupils' work each week, but the report found little evidence to show which methods of marking have a positive effect on pupils' progress (Elliott et al., 2016). Subsequently, the lead collaborator and report author (McGill and Quinn, respectively) of UCL's Verbal Feedback Project, went further and aimed to find out whether a verbal feedback approach to marking had an impact on educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, with a focus on factors which may contribute to the children's chances of progressing into higher education including: improved attainment, attendance and wellbeing. Quinn (2019) observed and collected data from 13 secondary school teachers in England. The teachers were asked to apply verbal feedback strategies and reduce the written feedback they gave to their students. The findings suggest that children were showing an increase in attainment, had a more positive attitude towards their work and were willing to contribute more during lessons when positive verbal feedback was used. The impact on teacher workload was also positive with the data suggesting that teachers felt an increase in their confidence, experienced a reduction in workload because they were spending less time marking, and felt they were becoming more pro-active and flexible teachers. Quinn (2019) purported that whilst verbal feedback is not always easy to implement in class, it is something that teachers should learn to apply as the data revealed that it has a positive impact on learners' attitudes in lessons.

However, despite the evidence discussed here, it remains apparent that there is a lack of recently published literature on the topic of positive verbal feedback and its subsequent impact on children's

attitudes towards their work, particularly in reference to primary education. It is hoped that the findings of the current study will stimulate interest in the area of verbal feedback and will result in further research being completed regarding the influence of the PoY, with the intention of improving the educational experiences of next generation of learners.

Methodology

The methodology employed for this research is that of a mixed methods approach collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The two methods of data collection are combined using triangulation (Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2006; Sarantakos, 2005). The reasons and advantages for this are threefold. The first is to increase reliability in the results (Denscombe, 2007). This is possible because mixed-method approaches provide two sources of information. Secondly, it enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the results that are yielded through the data collection. Similarly, the third reason is so that any point raised in the quantitative data analysis can be investigated further during interview. This all accumulates to create a rich data set for analysis (Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2006).

Participants

For practical reasons and time constraints, convenience sampling was applied. There were 21 participants within the sample. The children in the classroom were all aged between eight and nine years, with 13 boys and eight girls making up the final sample. This sample is therefore not representative of the wider population of all primary school children. For the semi-structured interview four focus children were randomly selected from the register to take part. This created, by chance, a group of two girls and two boys.

Questionnaire

A time limit (three afternoons) was put in place for data collection, which created restrictions as to how data could be effectively and efficiently retrieved. Thus it was decided that a questionnaire would be the most appropriate form of collecting data, as it is a quick method of obtaining large amounts of quantitative data (Wilson, 2013). Furthermore, it was decided that to ensure validity at the point of data collection the instructions and questions on the questionnaire were to be read aloud

by the class teacher (Wilson, 2013). This also ensured the children felt able to ask the teacher to repeat a question or clarify any words that they did not understand.

The questionnaire used for this study (see Appendix 1) was designed such that the first two questions focussed on the children's perspectives of their attitude towards learning in general. The following five questions were based on growth mindset and the resilience that the children display. The final five questions focused on the feedback methods that the children currently receive and whether they find them useful for their learning progression. Questions 10 and 11 were multiple choice and Question 10 encouraged children to select multiple answers. This was to enable the researcher to get a broad idea of the different feedback methods that the children recognise which fed directly into the questions asked in the interview at the end of the week.

It was decided that a questionnaire should be designed specifically for this study to ensure the results closely matched the research questions. If this study was to be replicated on a larger scale, time should be taken to create a reliable and pre-tested questionnaire. The data yielded from the questionnaire was analysed by coding and collating responses to uncover whole-class opinions and trends. Percentages and values were then calculated and results presented in graphs and tables, referred to in the Discussion and Analysis of Results section.

Intervention

In a research memorandum Midgley (2014, p.4) defines an intervention as “a purposeful action by an agent to create change”. Hence, it was decided that because children and staff members were going to be encouraged to use the PoY, after watching a video focused on the topic, this part of the research study would be termed as an intervention.

The week-long intervention was completed in the same Year 4 classroom that the questionnaire was completed in. After the questionnaire was completed, a video clip created by Tzue (2015) was played. It shows a young girl who initially fails to create a paper airplane but, after help and perseverance, ends up succeeding in her mission. The significance of the video was discussed with the children, explaining that the girl was not able to make her airplane *yet* but after not giving up and expecting help, she was then able to succeed. The second aspect of the intervention was that the two staff members who were teaching the children in the classroom, were to encourage and remind children about the use of the word ‘yet’ when engaged in conversation and feedback with them. It

was also repeatedly emphasised that the children were to re-word their sentences so that they said, 'can't yet'. Comments from staff members about their observations of the children's use of the PoY were noted.

Interview

Due to the subjective nature of this research study, in that it is asking for children's perspectives, it was decided that a focus-group interview would be appropriate in order to obtain some in-depth qualitative data about what children think of positive verbal feedback and how they think it influences their attitudes towards their work. Lewis (1992) suggested interviews can be a useful tool in research if they are completed with sensitivity and in an informative but professional manner, as this ensures the children feel at ease and not like they are being 'tested'. The interview was conducted following the administration of the questionnaire and after the PoY had been used in lessons. This allowed a rich set of qualitative data to be obtained that helped expand upon the children's comments in their questionnaires, as well as their perspectives of the PoY.

The participants for the interview were randomly selected from the register to make up a group of four. Gurteen (2000) states that smaller groups create a more dialogic style of communication, rather than allowing one person to dominate the conversation. The interview was semi-structured; I led the initial input and explanation of why the participants were involved. After asking some initial questions about positive verbal feedback I then allowed the children to build on each other's answers whilst also asking their own questions. As consent for audio recordings could not be obtained by the school, I took notes during the interview. These notes were analysed using thematic analysis and a bottom-up approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), identifying which comments expanded upon answers from the quantitative data and secondly which comments formulated new ideas. Four overriding themes were then created to categorise the data: 1. Positive impact of the PoY 2. Negative impact of the PoY 3. Links to the wider curriculum 4. Feedback preferences. This follows the recommendation of previous research to ensure that there is a clear understanding of what findings can be concluded from the qualitative data and allows for the data to be triangulated (Bryman, 2006; Denscombe, 2007).

Ethical Considerations

The questionnaire, intervention and interview that were created and used for this research study were designed to be non-intrusive and match the participating school's environment, as well as the classroom climate in which the children were based. No experiments were performed, and children missed minimal amounts of learning throughout the data collection process. Nevertheless, when any piece of research involves human participants, especially young children, ethical considerations must be discussed (Wilson, 2013). Prior to data collection a research proposal form was checked and signed by the class teacher and the researcher's personal tutor from the University of Cambridge. An ethics checklist was also signed by the same personal tutor and a consent form was checked and signed by the headteacher of the school detailing that consent was obtained from the children's guardians for their participation in educational research, and for their conversations with the researcher to be recorded in note-form. Consent was also obtained from staff members to use the comments they made about the PoY in this essay.

Throughout both methods of data collection children were clearly and repeatedly made aware that they were able to withdraw their participation at any point. No children made the decision to withdraw. The names of all children, the school and staff members involved in this research have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Discussion and Analysis of Results

For the clarification of the research findings, the data is presented using charts. To triangulate the data, the qualitative data is interwoven with the quantitative data throughout, as this allows for a greater understanding of the findings (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib & Rupert, 2007). So that the logical progression of the study can be followed, the sub-questions are not addressed in numerical order.

SQ2: What forms of feedback do children already recognise in the classroom and what are their personal preferences?

Figure 1 reveals that 16 children recognised the use of written feedback as being currently used, with 13 identifying verbal feedback from the teacher to the whole class. The latter stems from the

school’s ‘no marking feedback’ policy, whereby comments about consistent errors across all the children’s work would be mentioned at the beginning of a following lesson, instead of individual written comments in their books, so that the children could edit their work accordingly. It was therefore not surprising that this method of feedback was found to be recognised by the children. It also aligns to findings from Quinn's (2019) research that suggests teachers prefer to use feedback methods that reduce their written workload.

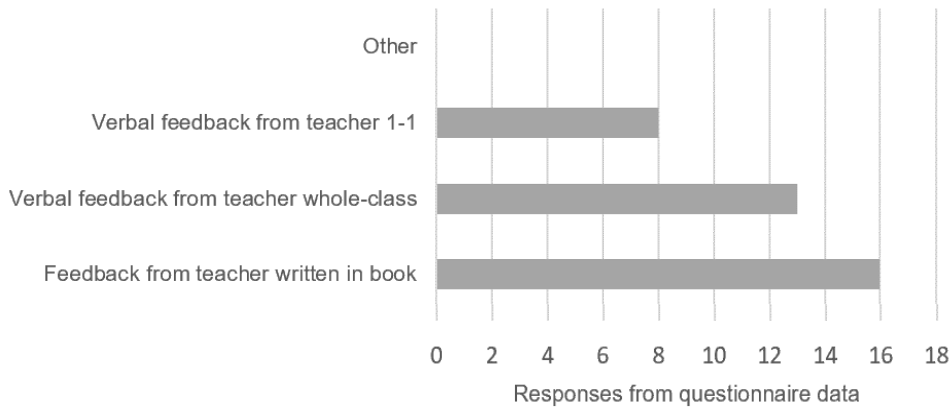


Figure 1: Methods of feedback children can identify in their classroom, from questionnaire data

The results from the questionnaire also suggest that, from the children’s perspective, one-to-one verbal feedback and written feedback are equally preferred (see Figure 2). However, during the interview, contrasting comments were made. For example Charlie said, “I don’t read my written comments” whereas Gemma said, “I like reading comments because they feel personal but when Miss speaks to me it’s better.” Charlie then admitted that he didn’t like “when one person gets told that their work is really good in front of the class” because it makes him feel “jealous and sad.” These comments question the value of written feedback for pupils and highlight the sensitivity required when providing whole-class verbal feedback.

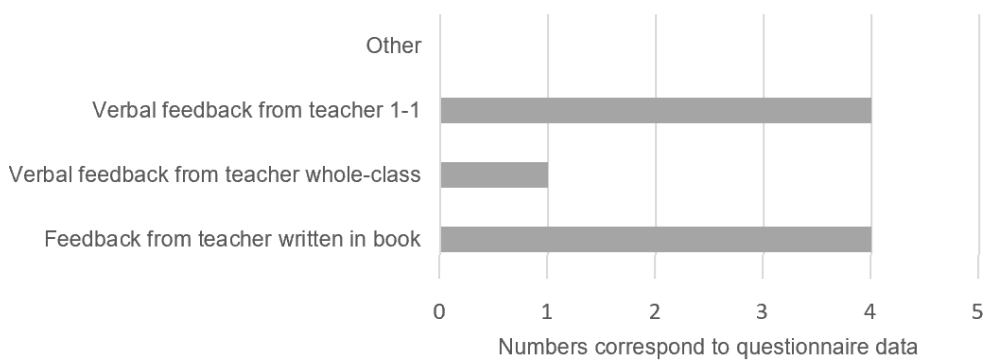


Figure 2: Children's preferred methods of feedback, from questionnaire data

Figure 3 shows that 52% of children reported that their teachers' comments were useful to their progression in learning 'all the time', which was confirmed at interview. Alternatively, Charlie stated that he liked verbal feedback because he can keep the comments to himself, quoting: "I don't have to tell my parents what Miss says to me when the comment is said just to me" whereas Sarah welcomed verbal comments that were one-to-one with her teacher because it makes them "more personal". This preference towards one-to-one feedback supports the findings of Tan et al. (2019) who concluded that Year Nine children preferred styles of feedback that feel personal to them.

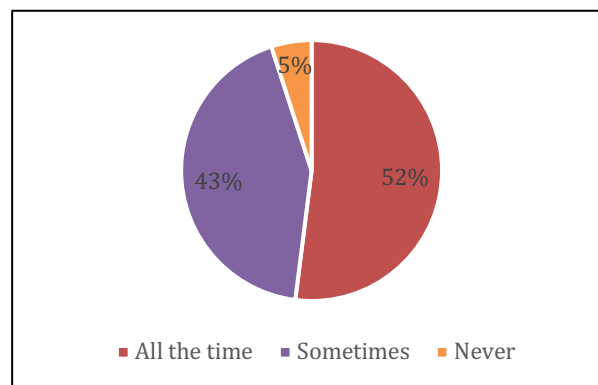


Figure 3: Responses to the question: 'Do the comments that your teacher makes about your work help you with your learning?'

To summarise, unlike previous research, no significant evidence was found to suggest that the participants had an overriding preference towards one type of feedback (Burnett, 2001; Kerr, 2017). Children in the focus-group identified the benefits and pitfalls of both one-to-one verbal feedback and written feedback, highlighting that often their preferences are individual and thus generalisations cannot be made across the sample, and further across the population of primary school children.

SQ1: Does using the phrase 'can't yet' instead of 'can't' during verbal feedback encourage children to have a positive attitude towards their work?

Pre-intervention the children's attitude towards their work was one of apathy with 66% regarding it as neither positive nor negative (Figure 4, next page). However, Figure 5 (next page) reveals that 52% of children couldn't identify whether the comments about their work made by their teacher were positive or negative, responding with 'I don't know'. Conversely, 43% of children did respond that they believed that their teacher's comments about their work were 'positive' (Figure 5). Participants confusion regarding what constitutes as a positive comment was further investigated

during interview. They explained that the reason they responded, 'I don't know' to the question regarding the written feedback from their teacher was because some of them don't read their written comments, suggesting that verbal feedback may be a more efficient way for teachers to express their advice. This outcome concurs with Quinn's (2019) findings reporting that verbal feedback is a more productive use of teacher's time, as it has a direct influence on children's learning progression, as previously identified.

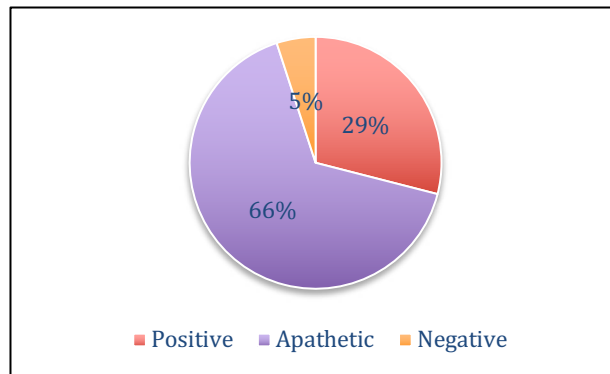


Figure 4: Children's overall attitude towards their work, from questionnaire data

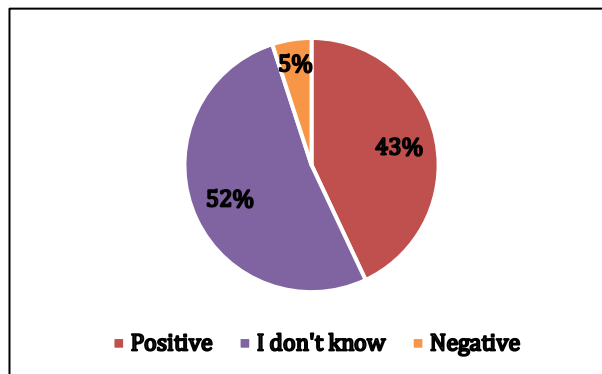


Figure 5: Children's responses to the question: 'Are most of the comments that your teacher makes about your work positive or negative?'

The answer to how the PoY influenced the children's attitude towards their work is based on interview data only because the focus group took place after the intervention. Children's responses were overwhelmingly positive with regards to the use of the PoY. Although the data set was limited, due to only undertaking one focus group interview, it is clear from the findings that children found the use of the PoY in their classroom helpful in creating a more positive attitude towards their work. For example: Charlie stated that "it pushes me on to do more work" which shows a clear link back to Dweck's (2006) growth mindset and the idea that thinking positively can increase a child's resilience. Gemma commented: "I tell my learning partner to use it when they're

stuck and don't want to work anymore.” And during the interview, Dylan highlighted that it “can be good when you get really stuck and say it to yourself.” He also shared that “I've used it at home”. These comments indicate that the PoY can change the perspective of children in terms of their motivation to persevere when learning activities are hard for them to complete, both inside and outside of school. Consideration of pupil perspective in this way provides understanding of what pupils find helpful within the classroom (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000), as well as helping to identify how the education of our young people can be improved in the future.

Conversely, there were some negative comments made about the influence of the PoY with regards to the children's work. Sarah commented that “it gets boring if you use it too much” and that “it takes a while to get it into your head”. Albeit a speculative assessment of Sarah's comment, but it may be that her response is evidence of her heightened sensitivity towards negative comments made by her teacher, as this is a conclusion Burnett (2001) identified when he completed research with 9-10 year olds. However it raises an interesting idea about the different influences that the PoY may have on children's attitudes towards their work, depending on whether they feel positive about their school environment.

To conclude it appears that the use of the PoY may have had a positive influence on the sample populations' attitude towards their work. Post-intervention it was clear that the focus group children had noticed the influence of hearing and using the phrase ‘can't yet’ instead of ‘can't’ in helping them to formulate a more positive attitude towards their work and increasing their motivation to learn.

SQ3: How do teaching staff think positive language changes the children's attitudes towards their learning?

Staff member's informal commentary about their observations of the influence of the PoY on children's attitudes towards their learning were recorded in note-form. The most noticeable comment from all staff members was that the children had really “taken to the idea” and were beginning to use it themselves across “subject areas”. Some noticed the links that the children were making to ‘bucket filling’ – a suggestion from the book ‘Have you filled a bucket today?’ (McCloud & Messing, 2016) which was read and discussed during Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) lessons, coincidentally and unrelated to the research. Dylan also made this link during interview. Staff members also highlighted how often children would remind their learning

partners “that they can’t do it *yet* but they will soon.” They also commented on the increased use of the phrase ‘can’t yet’ during Mathematics lessons specifically. This was an interesting observation as no consideration had been given to the benefits of the PoY to specific subjects. Overall, the reaction from staff members was positive and they reported that they would consider continuing using the PoY after the research period had been completed, citing the positive influence it had on their workload, which again concurs with Quinn's 2019 findings on the positive impact of verbal feedback with regards to alleviating teacher stress.

To summarise, it appears from the findings that the PoY was regarded useful by teaching staff as they observed a change in the children’s attitudes to their learning. They also highlighted children’s change to a more positive attitude to learning in mathematics lessons specifically, which warrants further research.

RQ: What impact does positive verbal feedback have on children’s attitudes towards their learning?

The results yielded from this study highlight the influential nature of words, in showing how encouraging children to change the phrase ‘I can’t’ to ‘I can’t yet’ can alter their attitudes towards their work. Literature on verbal feedback already exemplifies the importance of positivity in the classroom (Burnett, 2001; Kerr, 2017; Quinn, 2019) and the outcome of this study attests to that. Despite children originally stating that they preferred the process of verbal and written feedback in equal measure, during interview it was found that some of the children had noted the benefits of the PoY on their learning, potentially changing their perspectives regarding verbal feedback. This therefore implies that the use of the PoY in the classroom had a positive impact on some of the children. During the interview children identified this was because they recognised that altering their thought-processes to think more positively about their work reduced the likelihood that they would ‘give up’ after initially struggling because using ‘can’t yet’ “pushes [me] on”. Thus, there may be a benefit to further research in this area, to find out whether changing ‘can’t’ to ‘can’t yet’ can significantly impact a child’s attitudes towards their learning over time.

The findings from this study suggest that providing children with, and reinforcing the use of, positive verbal feedback such as the PoY, can help to influence their attitudes towards their learning. However, more still needs to be done to ensure that teachers are informed about the importance of their comments both in written and verbal format. This is especially important today,

as research concludes that those in the teaching profession are some of the most over-worked and stressed individuals (David, Albert & Vizmanos, 2019) and using more verbal feedback strategies may be beneficial to both them and the children in their classroom. Better understanding of feedback and children's perspectives of it is likely to help create interventions that better support teachers to use positive language in the classroom and encourage children to think positively about their learning progression.

Critical Reflections on the Research Methodology

Whilst this piece of research yielded some interesting results, there were some limitations to the methodology employed. Firstly, using a questionnaire prior to the intervention and a focus group interview after, resulted in difficulties in comparing the data sets as the comments in the focus-group interview did not always corroborate with the answers in the questionnaire. Therefore, because the children knew me as a trainee teacher in their class, they may have been concerned about ensuring they provided a correct answer (Denscombe, 2007). However, due to the small-scale nature and focus of this study, it was decided that obtaining a depth of knowledge about the children's perspectives of feedback and the influence of the PoY through interview was of a higher priority. It was also hoped that by using two data collection methods any potential bias from the single-methods would be reduced (Denscombe, 2007). However, future research would benefit from distributing the same questionnaire to the children after the PoY intervention so that the quantitative data can be directly compared during analysis.

Secondly, it is likely that questions in the interview which focussed on the children's thoughts about feedback pre-intervention would have been difficult for some to answer, as it was asking them to think back over a week. Replications of this study would benefit from completing a small focus-group interview both, pre- and post-intervention to retrieve more valid results. Audio recording the interview would have also resulted in a more reliable data set as a transcription of the interview could have been made and analysed in detail (Denscombe, 2007). In addition, 20 minutes is a relatively short amount of time to conduct a discussion with primary-age children. It would have perhaps been more appropriate to give the children longer to discuss their thoughts on the PoY. In this regard, it may also have been useful if multiple focus groups had been conducted to get a wider breadth of commentary focussing on the children's perceptions of the PoY. However, this was not feasible for this study due to time restrictions.

The inclusion of self and peer assessment within the questionnaire may have been confusing for the children as they are not methods of feedback and therefore could not be included in the data analysis. Future research should consider using a pre-determined and reliable questionnaire to ensure their results have high levels of validity (Wilson, 2013). In order to obtain an even broader perspective of the influence that the PoY had on the participants attitudes towards their work, it would also have been beneficial to ask more staff members, who interacted with the children, whether they noticed any changes in the children's attitudes towards their work.

Whilst this mixed-methods, small-scale research study has some limitations, the data obtained must not be rendered meaningless. The results remain to suggest that the from the children's perspective the PoY did have some positive impact on their attitudes to learning. The teaching staff's enthusiasm towards the use of the PoY in their classroom, during the intervention, also implies that there is a potential benefit from the PoY for both staff and students. Overall, many of the limitations of this study could also be overcome by using a larger sample size and a pre-determined questionnaire, which future researchers should consider.

Implications for Future Development

This research activity has confirmed my preference for using verbal feedback in the classroom and creating an atmosphere of positivity by using the PoY. Hence, I intend on playing the video, used in the intervention, at the start of the year with my own class. I also hope to create a display in my classroom that references different 'powerful words' such as 'yet' and the need to build resilience in line with Dweck's (2006) growth mindset theory. Obtaining pupils' perspectives about their education is fundamental in the process of improving my own teaching, thus I intend on spending time at the beginning of the year finding out about children's preferences regarding feedback and will subsequently try and tailor my style of feedback to the children's needs. This is in line with research that suggests we should act upon and tailor our classrooms to the needs of children as much as possible (Rudduck & Flutter, 2000).

I will also ensure that during feedback children are encouraged to identify one thing they are proud of about their work, as well as identifying something they can improve on. This way children will be encouraged to think about their work within the wider context of their achievements and will

hopefully prevent them from becoming concerned with not meeting expectations or achieving certain goals, all the time.

Overall, completing this research has taught me how essential it is to ensure that children think about their educational careers positively (Burnett & Mandel, 2010). I believe that if we are to create a society whereby children feel comfortable and confident in striving for the best, they need to have supportive teachers who help them see clear routes of progression, whilst also helping them to identify their strengths and taking the time to celebrate these with them. As a teacher this is one of my main goals; children should enjoy their educational careers and remember them with fondness in years to come.

Conclusion

In summary, encouraging children to use the PoY by using the phrase ‘can’t yet’ instead of ‘can’t’ appears to have potential in supporting them to create a more positive attitude towards their learning. Teachers may also benefit from using increasing amounts of verbal feedback in the classroom, as this is likely to reduce their marking workload (Quinn, 2019). Thinking positively about one’s achievements is an essential tool for our youngest generation, and educators need to ensure that they are supporting children in their journey to understand how to achieve this and how to put it into practice. I am hopeful that further research in this area will be completed and would like to think that interventions such as the PoY, or others similar, will soon become commonplace within our classrooms.

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Appendix 1

A Copy of the Questionnaire Questions

1. How do you feel about your learning?
 - a) Very positive
 - b) Positive
 - c) I don't know
 - d) Negative
 - e) Very negative

2. How do you think your teacher feels about your learning?
 - a) Very positive
 - b) Positive
 - c) I don't know
 - d) Negative
 - e) Very negative

3. Do you give up when you find something difficult?
 - a) All the time
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) Never

4. Do you like to challenge yourself when you are learning?
 - a) All the time
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) Never

5. Do you enjoy learning?
 - a) All the time
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) Never

6. Do you try your best when you complete your schoolwork?
 - a) All the time
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) Never

7. Are you proud of the work you produce in school?
 - a) All the time
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) Never

8. Do the comments that your teacher(s) make about your work help you with your learning?
 - a) All the time
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) Never

9. Do you have time to make changes to your work after your teacher(s) have marked it?
 - a) All the time
 - b) Sometimes
 - c) Never

10. What type of feedback is used in your classroom? **You can circle more than one answer**
 - a) Marking my own work
 - b) Other children in the class marking my work
 - c) Comments from the teacher(s) in my book
 - d) Comments from the teacher(s) to the whole-class about our work
 - e) Comments from the teacher(s) about my work that are just said to me
 - f) Other (*please write your answer on the dotted line*)

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11. Which one of these methods of feedback do you like the most?

- a) Marking my own work
- b) Other children in the class marking my work
- c) Comments from the teacher(s) in my book
- d) Comments from the teacher(s) to the whole-class about our work
- e) Comments from the teacher(s) about my work that are just said to me
- f) Other (*please write your answer on the dotted line*)

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12. Are most of the comments that your teacher(s) make about your work positive or negative?

- a) Positive
- b) Negative
- c) I don't know

