

## Evaluation of *Primary Talk* Supportive Level Training

Project report

May 2016

I CAN Advisory Team



*Primary Talk* Supporting Communication is a staff training programme that supports the communication development of **all** children, including those with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and can help schools improve pupil outcomes.

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## SUMMARY

*Primary Talk* training has been designed to support primary schools to develop the learning environment through a whole school approach to support children's speech, language and communication (SLC) skills. It consists of a whole day's staff training, covering typical language development, universal level strategies and identification of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Schools purchasing *Primary Talk* training were invited to participate in this evaluation study between December 2014 and July 2015. In total 8 schools from Northumberland, Bristol and Southampton were involved, providing data from 20 classes; data from 14 classes and 39 children were provided at all 3 times.

The main question for this study was:

**Does *Primary Talk* Supporting Communication training lead to improvements in children's communication in the classroom?**

This was broken down into:

1. What changes can be observed in **how often selected children talked and the function of their language** in the classroom 3 months i.e. the following term after teachers have received the training?
2. For the classes involved, is there evidence of **increased engagement** of pupils? Are there more children volunteering to answer questions; more children asking questions?
3. **How effective do teachers rate the training** in supporting them to address children's SLCN?

The study used a repeated measures design, with double base-lining to include a no intervention period to act as a within-class comparison. Measures of language and engagement were taken approximately 1 term before *Primary Talk* training, just before the training, and then approximately 1 term after the training. This partly compensated for the lack of comparison schools who did not receive the training. If there was an effect of *Primary Talk* training on children's language and engagement, there should be a significant difference in these measures from Time 2 to Time 3 compared with Time 1 to Time 2.

In order to make the measures more manageable, a sampling technique was used. For the measure of engagement, three classes were chosen from each school, covering the age ranges (1 each at Key Stage (KS) 1, lower Key Stage 2 and upper Key Stage 2). For the language samples, the teacher from each of these 3 classes was asked to select 1 child who was below expected level for reading, 1 age-appropriate and 1 above expected level.

Initial analyses were carried out on the proportion of lesson time each child spent talking and the average number of utterances per session.

### Key findings –

- **Language sample**
  - School staff took language samples for selected pupils at all 3 times (n=39).
  - **There were no statistically significant changes between the scores at the different times.**
  - Further analyses by age (4-8 years old / 9-11 years old) and by reading ability also showed no significant difference at the different times.
- **Measure of engagement in class**
  - Observations were carried out in 14 classes at all 3 times (approximately 1 term before training, just before training, and approximately 1 term after training).
  - There was no significant difference in the ratings on each question from Time 1 to Time 2. **Ratings at Time 3 increased significantly from Time 2** for 3 of the 4 questions, suggesting that the children in the selected classes were more engaged in their learning after staff had attended *Primary Talk* training.
- **Teachers' rating of the training**
  - Of the 8 sets of school staff trained, evaluations were received from only 6 participants (the exact return rate is unknown but this is very low for 8 sets of staff).
  - **All responses indicated a positive impact of the training on their practice; four of the six responses rated the training as having a significant or very significant impact on their practice.**
  - Only 2 responses to the 3 month follow up survey were received. With such a small response, it is difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions from their replies.
  - A teacher's comment at the 3 month follow up demonstrated the impact: "More thinking time and visual prompts has helped to improve children's understanding in all areas of learning."

### **How attributable is the change to *PT* training?**

As a first study to explore the possible impact of *Primary Talk* Supportive level training directly on children's language and engagement with learning in the classroom there are some encouraging findings. There are indications that children were more engaged in their learning following whole staff training in speech, language and communication. However, the limitations noted in the above discussion demonstrate that it is not possible to rule out other explanations of the differences at this stage. Further research will help to explore these findings in more detail.

This study shows that it is possible to take a pragmatic approach to evaluate the impact of an I CAN staff training programme, working with schools as partners as part of their everyday work. School staff can also benefit in terms of their own professional development through being involved in such a study.

This study did not show an impact of *Primary Talk* staff training on language outcomes in children. It is not possible to say whether this is due to the training, or to the method of evaluation. Changes to the evaluation approach are suggested.

### **Recommendations for future studies**

In order to extend this project it would be useful to:

- Maintain the double baseline method.
- Work with school staff to carry out the measures again but with further training and using a different member of staff for each class/observation, taking steps to ensure inter-rater reliability.
- Focus on children working below or at expected levels only, preferably with more children.
- Link the measure of engagement to the same selected children as the language sample.
- Review the language measure – perhaps linking it more closely to specific strategies developed in class as a result of the training; looking at all utterances from each selected child.

## An evaluation of the effect of *Primary Talk* training on children's speech, language and communication (SLC).

### BACKGROUND

Schools are becoming increasingly focused on the evidence base of any interventions (including whole school training) that they are considering using. Whilst targeted interventions often have specific measures that can be used before the intervention and followed up afterwards in order to show progress, this is less common with whole school interventions or training programmes such as *Primary Talk (PT)*. This study was set up in order to find out if whole school training could be shown to have an impact directly on children's language skills.

#### *Primary Talk* training

*Primary Talk (PT)* training has been designed to support primary schools to develop the learning environment through a whole school approach to support children's speech, language and communication (SLC) skills. It consists of a whole day's staff training and includes 3 main sections:

1. An introduction to speech, language and communication and typical language development in the primary years
2. Communication supportive strategies that can be used in the mainstream classroom (i.e. universal level strategies)
3. Awareness of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and how to identify when a child is struggling.

The training includes practical activities, staff discussion, video and related resources and is designed to be as interactive as time allows. Participants are expected to bring to the training their experiences and prior knowledge and to contribute this where relevant. The training<sup>1</sup> provides many opportunities to reflect on professional practice. Research into adult learning highlights the importance of reflection, building on previous learning and experiences, and understanding the purpose behind training (i.e. linking back to the intended outcomes for the children).

All staff within a primary school are encouraged to attend, including governors and lunchtime supervisors. *PT* helps to develop a communication supportive environment

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 7 for learning objectives

underpinned by a whole school approach to ensure greater consistency amongst staff and to promote a shared responsibility amongst all staff for supporting children's SLC skills. The strategies included in the *Primary Talk* training are based on sound evidence and / or have face validity among professionals in the field of SLCN. They are aimed at developing the SLC skills of all children, whatever their starting point.

Previous research into *PT* was conducted by I CAN and a team from Sheffield University. This was done through a combination of observation and staff interview. The evaluation showed that changes could be demonstrated to the classroom environment and to teachers' confidence both in using strategies as well as knowing what to look out for in terms of children who might be struggling<sup>234</sup>.

**The purpose of this study was to find out if using the strategies from *PT* training improves children's communication in the classroom.**

More specifically:

1. What changes can be observed in **how often selected children talked and the function of their language** in the classroom 3 months i.e. the following term after teachers have received the training?
2. For the classes involved, is there evidence of **increased engagement** of pupils? Are there more children volunteering to answer questions; more children asking questions?
3. **How effective do teachers rate the training** in supporting them to address children's SLCN?

The study used a repeated measures design, with double base-lining to include a no-intervention period to act as a within-class comparison. Measures of language and engagement were taken approximately 1 term before *Primary Talk* training (T1), just before the training (T2), and then approximately 1 term after the training (T3). This partly compensates for the lack of comparison schools who did not receive the training. If there was an effect of *PT* training on children's language and engagement, there should be a significant difference in these measures from Time 2 to Time 3 (i.e. after training) compared with Time 1 to Time 2 (i.e. before training).

Another important aspect of this study was to explore how feasible it was for school staff themselves to take the measures as part of their everyday work. Simple measures and a

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<sup>2</sup> Leyden, J., Stackhouse, J. & Szczerbinski, M. (2011) Implementing a whole school approach to support speech, language and communication: Perceptions of key staff; *Child Language Teaching and Therapy* 27: 203

<sup>3</sup> Stackhouse J, Szczerbinski, M. and Leyden, J. (2009) – I CAN's Primary Talk Training and Accreditation Package: An Evaluation of the Pilot Phase in one Local Authority, October 2009. University of Sheffield

<sup>4</sup> I CAN Internal evidence gathering: "The impact of Primary Talk on the school environment final"

sampling technique were used so that school staff could see how to monitor outcomes for children as a result of whole staff training. Three classes were chosen from each school, covering the age ranges (1 each at Key Stage (KS) 1, lower Key Stage 2 and upper Key Stage 2). From each class, the teacher was asked to select 1 child who was below expected level for reading, 1 age-appropriate and 1 above expected level. This was hoped to provide an indication of any changes across the school to children's language arising as a result of the training. As stated above, *Primary Talk* Supportive level training is intended to give staff strategies to support **all** children's SLC skills, whatever their starting point, hence including a sample of children from across the ability range.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

Schools were self-selecting. They were recruited to the study through *PT* Licensed Tutors or when booking direct delivery of *PT* Supportive level training. The potential benefits to the school were highlighted as a means to encouraging their participation:

- Evidence of improved pupil language and engagement with learning as a result of staff training.
- Access to a tool to measure children's engagement with learning.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities - understanding of how class-based measures can be used as evidence of improved outcomes.
- Evidence to show the effective use of school funding to improve outcomes for pupils.

Eight schools in total were recruited, although as some of these were neighbouring First and Middle schools this meant in effect 6 sets of data from across the primary year groups. The schools covered a range of catchment areas in Southampton, Bristol and Northumberland (see below). Schools were required to leave 3 months / 1 term between booking the training / agreeing to their participation in this evaluation project and the delivery of the training. This allowed for measures to be taken at 3 times:

- Time 1: 3 months / 1 term prior to training
- Time 2: a week before training
- Time 3: 3 months / 1 term after training

All school staff were required to attend the *PT* training.

- **School background information**

The participating schools were from a wide variety of areas with varying school profiles. The 6 combined schools ranged in size (87 to 518 pupils on roll; average 339; the national average (2014) was approximately 260<sup>5</sup>) and catchment (Index of Multiple Deprivation<sup>6</sup> varied from 13.8% to 91.7%; average 49.5%). The percentage of children with SEN ranged from 11% to 28%; children on free school meals ranged from 10% to 52%; and children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) ranged from less than 1% to 81%. All but 1 school were rated as “Good” in their most recent Ofsted inspection (the other was in the “Requires Improvement” category) and 4 schools had received other training for some staff to deliver a specific SLC intervention in the last two years.

- **Background information of selected children**

Each school was asked to identify one Key Stage (KS) 1 class, one lower KS2 class and one upper KS2 class to take part in the study (in the case of neighbouring First and Middle schools, their data was combined). Teachers in each of these classes selected 3 children based on reading ability: a child below / at / exceeding expected ability for their age according to teacher assessment (the selected children).

Some pupils moved school and one school was able to provide data for 2 lower KS2 classes. This provided full data across all three times for 39 children in 13 classes.

The intention was to collect background information about each selected child in order to help interpret the outcomes. This information included:

- Reading ability category (teacher assessment)
- Year group
- Gender
- English as an Additional Language (EAL) status
- Free School Meals (FSM) status
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support / Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) including the area of concern (using the 4 SEN categories from the SEN Code of Practice)

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<sup>5</sup> Department for Education

<sup>6</sup> This was obtained using the school postcode via <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/> looking at the “neighbourhood” level. The combined figure for overall level of deprivation (based on a number of measures) was converted to a percentage (of the 32844 neighbourhoods in England and Wales); the higher the percentage, the more deprived the area.

However, there were some difficulties with this (see results and discussion for further details).

### Project information / permissions

The project plan was approved by I CAN's ethics committee. The academic partner (Professor Sue Roulstone, University of the West of England) was also consulted for advice in this area.

Schools were made aware of the requirements of the study (especially data collection over 6-8 months) through an information sheet and this was reiterated during the staff training.

General information about the project was shared with parents (see appendix 1). Permission was sought specifically from the parents of the selected children (see appendix 2). Permission was also obtained from the children, although this was carried out with all the children in the selected children's class in order that the children didn't know exactly whose words were being used (see appendices 3 and 4). Language samples and the engagement in class measure were taken in the context of everyday lessons. These were non-standardised materials that were trialled in other schools (see appendix 5).

### Measures

The language sampling and engagement measures were devised by I CAN advisors for this study. They were trialled before this study in schools not participating in the study.

1. For the children's language (how often they talked and the function of their language) a language sample was taken for selected children in whole class lessons in the selected classes. Staff were asked to choose a lesson in which pupils needed to talk, such as guided reading or topic discussion. A member of staff (usually a teaching assistant) was instructed to write down *the first thing* that the selected child said in each 2 minute period for the duration of the class discussion, which was typically 15-20 minutes long. Appendix 5 shows the language sampling template.

The language sample was coded by the member of school staff completing it. The codes used were based on the categories of language function described by Halliday<sup>7</sup>. This coding was then checked by two members of the project team. In certain cases it was found that more than one language code could be applied to the same utterance. In some samples where the child said a second utterance within a 2 minute period, this was ignored for the purposes of this study in order to simplify the analysis.

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<sup>7</sup> Halliday, M. (1975) *Learning How to Mean*, London: Edward Arnold.

It was hoped that as a result of teachers using more communication supportive strategies in the classroom, the children would say more in class and that this would be more closely connected with what they were learning/discussing.

2. For the measure of engagement a member of the school senior leadership team was asked to observe a whole class discussion (not the same session in which the language samples were taken) and rate the session on 4 aspects on a five-point scale (see appendix 5 also for the engagement measure template):

The proportion of the class –

- Volunteering answers
  - Asking questions in whole class sessions
  - Discussing their learning with a partner or in a small group (on-task behaviour)
- and
- Staff rating of frequency of explicit attention prompts.

The analysis examined the average rating given (1-5) for each question at each of the three time points across the 14 classes with full sets of data.

Staff training on the use of the language sampling and engagement measure was provided by an I CAN advisor or I CAN *Primary Talk* licensed tutors (either by phone or in person).

3. The third measure was staff evaluation of training, using the standard evaluation form for *PT* training, completed online twice; once immediately following training, and again 3 months after the training (see appendix 6; the link was emailed to participants).

**RESULTS**

**Language sampling**

Language samples were analysed in terms of:

- How often selected children talked
- The function of the language they used

School staff took language samples for 39 pupils at all 3 times.

Initial analyses were carried out on the proportion of lesson time each child spent talking (calculated by the number of 2 minute periods in which the child said something as a proportion of the total number of observations made) and the average number of utterances per session (see appendix 5).

**There were no statistically significant changes between the scores at the different times** although a slight increase was seen over time (see figure 1; between time 1 and time 2  $p=0.629$ , between time 2 and time 3  $p=0.269$  and between time 1 and time 3  $p=0.464$ ).

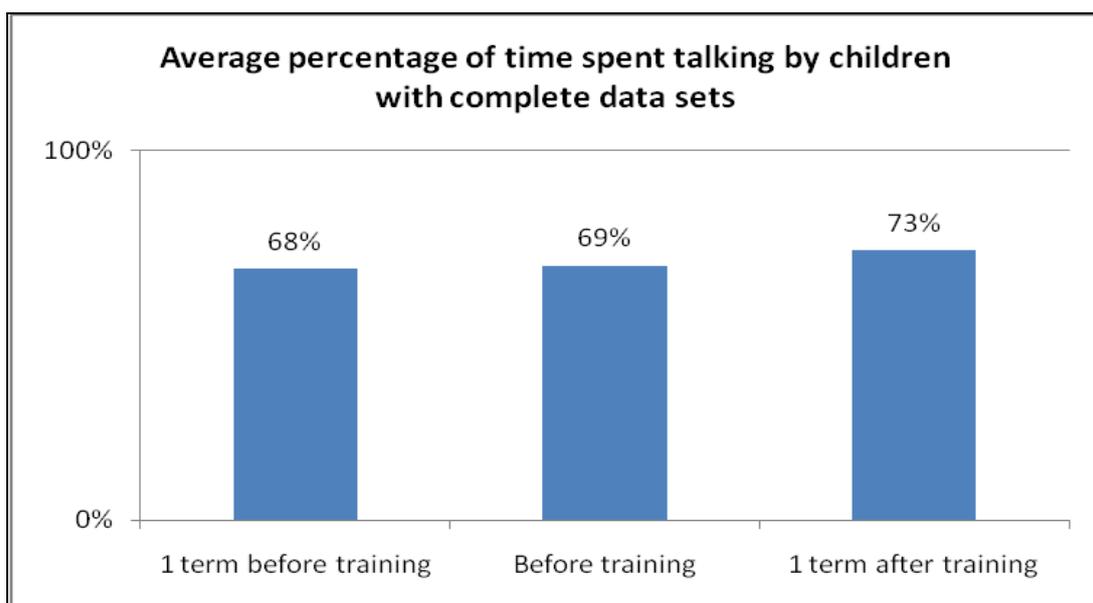


Figure 1: Average percentage of time spent talking (as a proportion of the total number of observations made in the sampled session).

	Total number of observations	Total number of times spent talking
Time 1	412	279
Time 2	392	271
Time 3	395	290

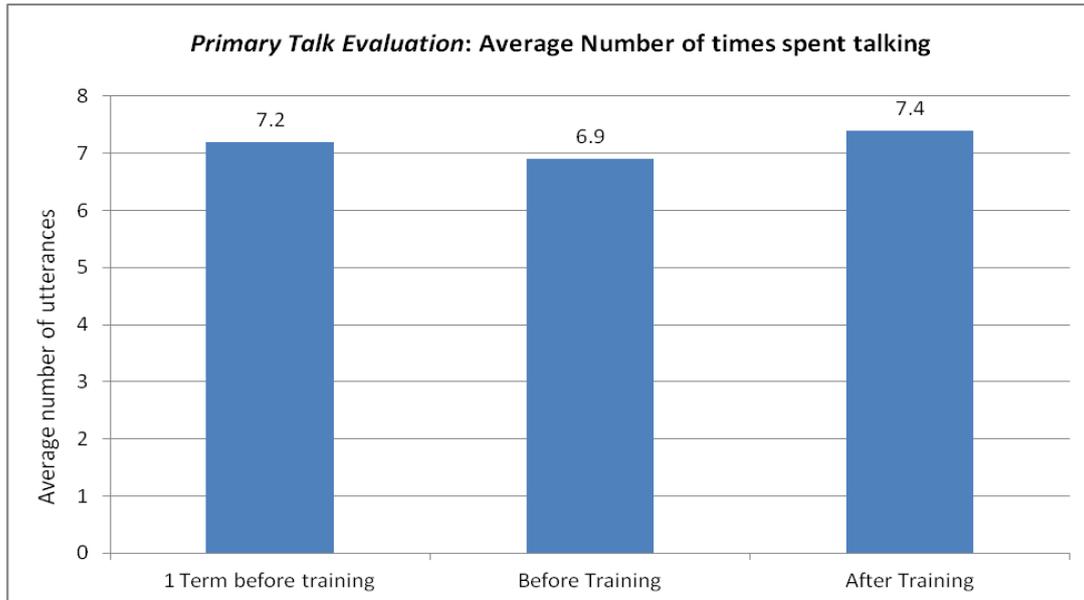


Figure 2: Average number of times spent talking for each child in the sampled session.

Further analyses by reading ability (as a measure of overall ability; see figure 3) and by age (4-8 years old / 9-11 years old; see figure 4) also showed no significant difference at the different times.

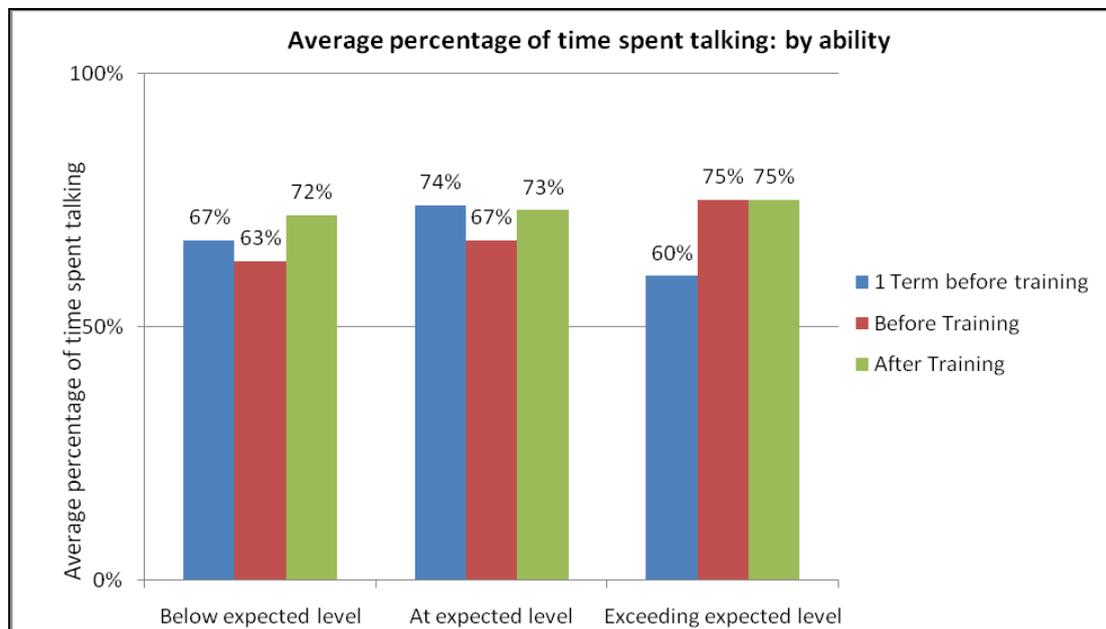


Figure 3: Average percentage of time spent talking (as a proportion of the total number of observations made in the sampled session) by reading ability group. (Children below level n=12; children at expected level n=13; children exceeding expected reading level n=13).

Average number of times spent talking	1 term before training (time 1)	Before training (time 2)	After training (time 3)	P values Time 1 to Time 2	P values Time 2 to Time 3
Below expected level	7	6.4	7.3	P=0.55	P=0.39
At expected level	7.8	6.8	7.5	P=0.11	P=0.39
Exceeding expected level	6.4	7.3	7.5	P=0.17	P=0.82

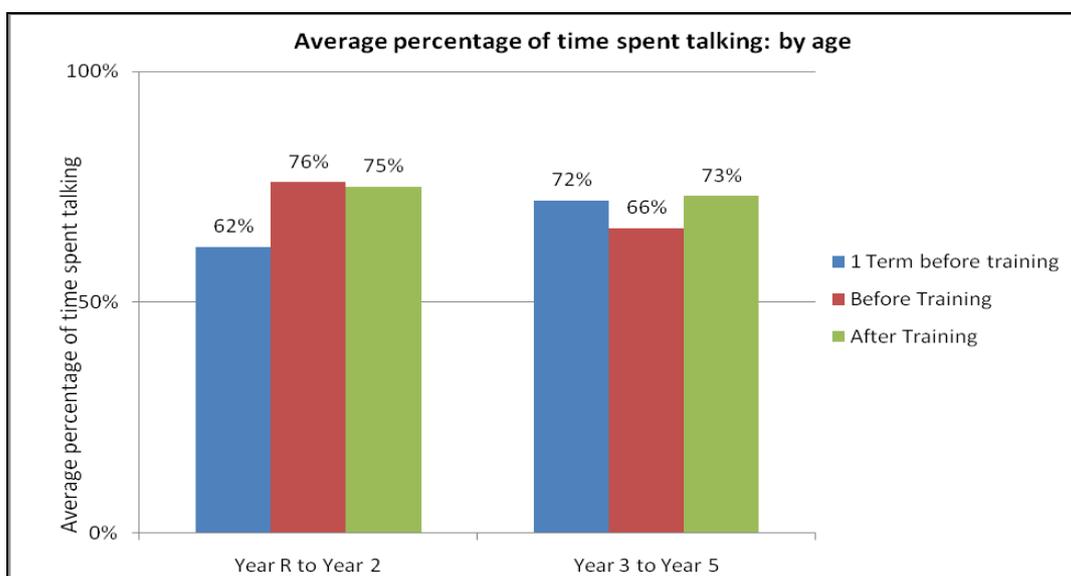


Figure 4: Average percentage of time spent talking (as a proportion of the total number of observations made in the sampled session) by age. (The children were grouped together by these ages as it ensured the group sizes were reasonably well matched (younger group n=15; older group n=24).

Average number of times spent talking	1 term before training (Time 1)	Before training (Time 2)	After training (Time 3)	P values Time 1 to Time 2	P values Time 2 to Time 3
Year R to Year 2	6.5	7.6	7.3	P=0.16	P=0.64
Year 3 to Year 5	7.5	6.5	7.5	P=0.03	P=0.12

Unfortunately not all schools supplied information relating to the EAL, FSM or SEN status for their pupils. The amount of missing data therefore meant that no further subgroup comparisons were possible.

The function of the language used and whether this changed was also explored. Initial descriptive analysis did not show any clear patterns (see figure 5).

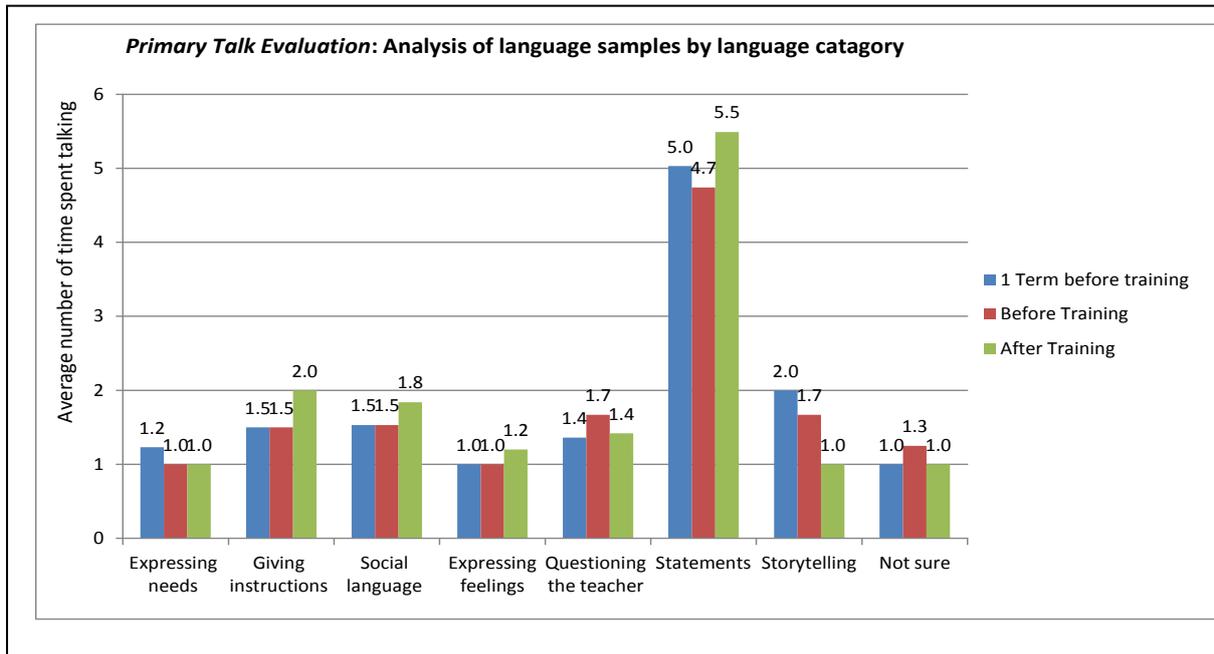


Figure 5: Average number of utterances by language category (“Statements” includes child making a statement or comment or answering a question).

### Measure of engagement in class

Observations were carried out in 14 classes at all 3 times (approximately 1 term before training, just before training, and approximately 1 term after training).

Appendix 5 shows the questions used in the measure of engagement. There was no significant difference in the ratings on each question from Time 1 to Time 2. **Ratings at Time 3 increased significantly from Time 2** for questions 1-3 (see figure 5).

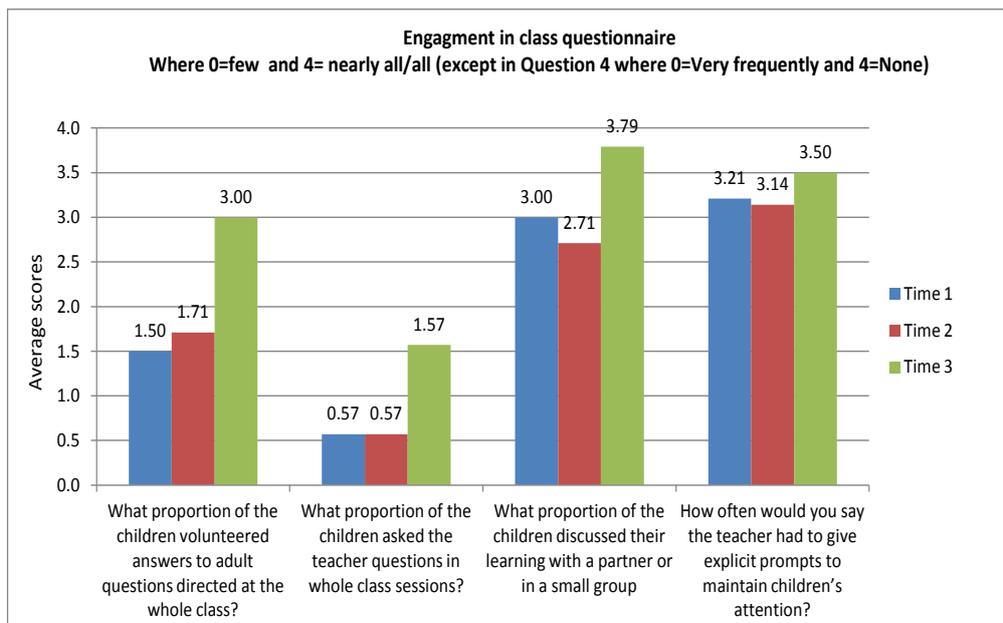


Figure 5: Average ratings for Engagement in Class Questionnaire

	Time 2		Time 3		Significance
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
<b>Question 1</b>	1.71	0.994	3.00	0.784	P = 0.003
<b>Question 2</b>	0.57	0.514	1.57	1.089	P = 0.000
<b>Question 3</b>	2.71	1.204	3.79	0.426	P = 0.010
<b>Question 4</b>	3.14	0.864	3.50	0.650	P = 0.055 (approaching significance)

This means, for example with question 1 (“What proportion of the children volunteered answers to adult questions directed at the whole class?”) that the typical response moved

from “about half” (score 2) before training to “most” (score 3) after the training. Question 4 relating to the use of attention prompts or reminders was found to be approaching significance for T2 to T3 but only moved from “occasionally” (score 3) to “none / very little” (score 4).

### Teachers’ rating of the training

Of the 8 sets of school staff trained, evaluations were received from only 6 participants (the exact return rate is unknown but this is very low for 8 sets of staff).

**All of the responses indicated a positive impact of the training on their practice; four of the six responses rated the training as having a “significant” (i.e. high impact) or “very significant” impact<sup>8</sup> on their practice (see figure 6).**

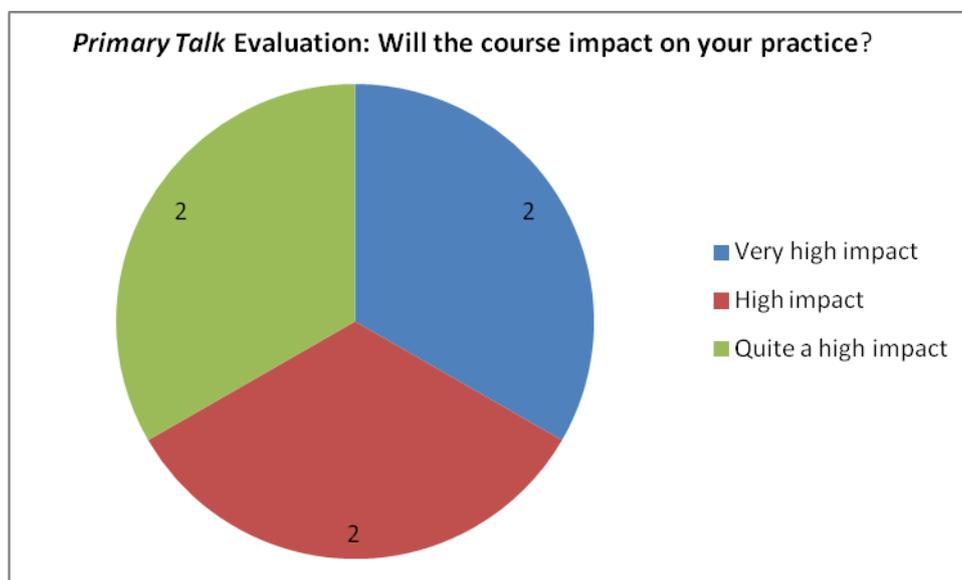


Figure 6: Impact of training (N.B. only 6 evaluations completed)

Only 2 responses to the 3 month follow up survey were received. With such a small response, it is difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions from their replies. One member of staff commented in the follow up survey on the impact of the training:

*“More thinking time and visual prompts has helped to improve children's understanding in all areas of learning.”*

<sup>8</sup> As part of the training evaluation, staff were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 (very little) to 6 (significant) what impact the session had on their confidence with supporting speech, language and communication and impact on their practice. See appendix 6 for full details.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to find out if using the strategies from *PT* training improves children's communication in the classroom through its development of a communication supportive environment. Due in part to the constraints of the project, a second aim was to see if school staff could be involved as researchers in exploring the effects of whole staff training in their own schools.

### 1. **Language measure** – this was used to explore the question:

What changes can be observed in **how often selected children talked and the function of their language** in the classroom 3 months (i.e. the following term) after teachers have received the training?

The results obtained show that the number of utterances per teaching session and the functions of language used by children in the selected classes did not change significantly following the training of school staff. This could have been for a number of reasons:

- The nature of the language measure – this might not have been sensitive enough to pick up on any changes in the children's language resulting from the training.
  - Using the number of 2 minute periods in which they said something may have been too general a measure to show if they were actually talking *more*. In some cases it was noted that the selected children said 2 or 3 sentences or phrases during the 2 minute period, but only the first utterance was used in order to simplify the analysis of the language functions.
  - The impact of the training may have been greater on other aspects of language, or teachers may have chosen to focus more on specific aspects (e.g. vocabulary or understanding of language), whereas the language sample focused more on children's spoken language.
- The sampling method – it was hypothesised that due to the nature of the strategies in the training, changes would be seen in children of all levels of ability. There may have been less change (or none at all) in the more able children, combined with the fact that sample sizes were small.
- The length of time between the training and the follow up measures at Time 3 – perhaps a longer time is needed to ensure that supportive strategies are firmly embedded in teachers' practice and for those strategies to impact on children's language performance.
- The nature of the lesson/discussion activity – this decision was left to the class teacher (in order to fit in with their normal teaching as much as possible) but it is

possible that some activities (e.g. composing a letter to Father Christmas – at T1) would have naturally elicited more language from the children.

- Using school staff to take the language sample may also have been an issue, since they were inexperienced at taking such samples and training to do so was only brief.

2. Engagement measure – this was used to explore the questions:

For the classes involved, is there evidence of **increased engagement** of pupils? Are there more children volunteering to answer questions; more children asking questions?

The staff made judgements about the proportion of children volunteering answers, asking questions and discussing learning with another child or in a small group, which are all behaviours typical of engaging with learning. The statistically significant changes from Time 2 to Time 3 for the first 3 questions suggest that the children were more engaged in their learning. This may be attributable to the supportive strategies introduced through the training, helping the children to understand more and/or giving them the skills or confidence to participate.

However, as this measure was carried out by school staff not “blind” to the study, this could have biased the observations. Schools were asked to submit their data at each assessment point, thus reducing the likelihood of them comparing their observations with what they had put at previous times. It is also possible that, as a result of the training, the staff carrying out the observations were more focused on these particular behaviours and this may have affected their perception of them at the different times.

3. Training evaluation and follow up at 3 months – these were used to explore the question:

**How effective do teachers rate the training** in supporting them to address children’s SLCN?

All the replies about the impact of the training were positive, but staff with alternative views may have decided not to complete the evaluation. Due to the small number of completed evaluations both immediately after the training and at the 3 month follow up, it is difficult to be certain about conclusions here.

## The nature of the study

The project constraints meant that it was only possible to carry out this study with the direct involvement of school staff. The measures were designed with this in mind, so that school staff could measure the changes as part of their everyday work. This provided an additional aspect to the study, exploring the possibility of using school staff in this way, rather than relying on researchers. The potential benefits to the school were highlighted as a way of encouraging their participation – schools would gain:

- Evidence of improved pupil language and engagement with learning as a result of staff training
- Access to a tool to measure children’s engagement with learning
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities - understanding of how class-based measures can be used as evidence of improved outcomes
- Evidence to show the effective use of school funding to improve outcomes for pupils

This study shows that it is possible for school staff to collect data using practical and feasible measures. Indeed, some of the coordinators commented that it was interesting to explore the impact of whole staff training in this way. The input from the project team to school staff was fairly brief, consisting of a conversation to talk through the measures, which were emailed to the school. The coordinator from each school was happy with this level of input and was confident about sharing the measures with their colleagues.

However, using school staff inevitably leads to some possible bias in the results. This could be reduced in future by using a researcher independent of the study to complete the measures alongside the member of school staff, and to compare their ratings.

## Other limitations

In addition to the limitations mentioned in the sections above, other points to note include:

- The schools were self-selecting – therefore their level of prior interest and motivation to see change as a result of *PT* may have influenced their observations.
- The sampling method – the teachers chose the selected children and the schools selected the classes.
- The sample size – a larger sample would have been more informative. However, working within the project constraints perhaps the study could have focused on changes for the lower ability pupils as they might potentially have the most to gain from communication supportive strategies.

- The double baseline method was used in this study as an alternative to using matched comparison schools which are often difficult to find. This method is not as rigorous as having matched control schools, however it did facilitate this research with the small number of schools involved.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

How attributable is the change to *PT* training?

As a first study to explore the possible impact of *Primary Talk* Supportive level training directly on children's language and engagement with learning in the classroom there are some encouraging findings. There are indications that children were more engaged in their learning following whole staff training in speech, language and communication. However, the limitations noted in the above discussion demonstrate that it is not possible to rule out other explanations of the differences at this stage. Hopefully further research will help with this.

This study shows that it is possible to take a pragmatic approach to evaluate the impact of an I CAN staff training programme, working with schools as partners as part of their everyday work. School staff can also benefit in terms of their own professional development through being involved in such a study.

This study did not show an impact of *Primary Talk* staff training on language outcomes in children. It is not possible to say whether this is due to the training, or to the method of evaluation. Changes to the evaluation approach are suggested.

In order to extend this project it would be useful to:

- Maintain the double baseline method.
- Work with school staff to carry out the measures again but with further training and using a different member of staff for each class/observation, taking steps to ensure inter-rater reliability).
- Focus on children working below or at expected levels only, preferably with more children.
- Link the measure of engagement to the same selected children as the language sample.
- Review the language measure – perhaps linking it more closely to specific strategies developed in class as a result of the training; looking at all utterances from each selected child.
- Be more specific about the discussion activity in which the measures are taken, so that the language expectations are more similar across the 3 times.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I CAN would like to thank all the staff and pupils who took part in the *Primary Talk* training and evaluation project, and the *Primary Talk* Licensed Tutors who supported the study. Thanks also go to Sue Roulstone (University of the West of England) and Tom Hopkins (University of Sheffield) for their support in the design and evaluation of this study.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

Letter template about the project for schools to share with parents –

Dear parents,

As part of our continual work to improve the quality of teaching and learning in XXX primary school we plan to hold a staff training day looking at children’s language and communication skills. We will be using I CAN’s *Primary Talk* training.

As part of this involvement with I CAN, the children’s communication charity, we have agreed to help them with a project looking at how this training improves children’s communication skills and their learning in general.

This will involve children from some of the classes in the school. **As part of normal lessons**, we will be looking at the words they use in class. The information will be passed on to I CAN for them to use in this project. We will make sure that this will be anonymous – no child will be identified by the information given.

If you would like further information about this exciting project, please contact the school in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 2 - Letter template about the project for schools to share with parents of proposed selected children –

Dear parents,

We wrote to you recently about our staff training using I CAN’s *Primary Talk* and the project we are doing on this.

Good language and communication skills help children to learn, to make friends and to do well in school. The whole school staff will be doing *Primary Talk* to help develop children’s language – and we want to know what difference it makes.

We would like to involve your son / daughter ..... in this project.

**What will this involve?**

During normal lesson time, a teaching assistant will note what your son / daughter says in class. This will be passed on, **without their name to identify them**, to the project team to use in this project. Your son / daughter will not miss out on any activities as a result of taking part.

If you have any questions about this, or would like further information, please contact your son’s / daughter’s class teacher.

**What do I need to do?**

If you are happy for us to make a note of what your son / daughter says in class and pass this on, please complete and return the permission slip below.

Thank you.

.....

**I CAN *Primary Talk* project**

I ..... give my permission for my son / daughter ..... to be involved in this project.

I understand that any information passed on to the I CAN project team will be made anonymous.

Signed ..... Date: .....

Appendix 3 – template 3 for school staff with children (plain version)

In [insert name of school] we try our hardest to help you to learn. Talking together in lessons can help you to learn. This term, the staff/teachers (and other grown-ups in school) are working on a project about talking. We need your help.

[insert name of TA] is going to write down some of the things that some of you say in class. Some researchers are going to use your words in the project about talking. They won't know anyone's name, but it will help them to have your words written down.

Is it ok with you if we use your words?



Yes – it is ok to use my words



No – I don't want my words to be written down

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 4 – template 3 for school staff with children (picture version)



In \_\_\_\_\_ we try \_\_\_\_\_ our hardest to help you to



learn.



Talking together \_\_\_\_\_ in lessons can help you to learn.

This term, the staff/teachers (and other grown-ups in school) are working on a project about talking.



We need your help \_\_\_\_\_.



\_\_\_\_\_ is going to write down \_\_\_\_\_ some of the things that some of you say in class.



Some researchers

are going to use

your words



in the project about talking.

They won't know anyone's name, but it will help them to have your words written down.

Is it ok with you if we use your words?



Yes – it is ok to use my words



No – I don't want my words to be written down

Signed:

Date:

## Appendix 5 – language sample template & engagement in class measure

### Language Sampling Protocol

#### Introduction

Your school has agreed to help us with our evaluation study on *Primary Talk* Supportive level training. We are asking 3 classes (one at each of KS1, lower and upper KS2) to carry out this language sampling on 3 children per class. This will involve the class teacher and another member of school staff (e.g. teaching assistant) to carry out the sampling at three specific times.

#### Aims & Method

Our aim for this study is to find out what, if any, the impact is of *Primary Talk* Supportive level training on children's language and communication skills. We will be using a variety of measures. This language sampling measure is a vital part of this, since we believe that the Supportive level training leads to staff introducing more communication supportive strategies that help children to develop their language and communication skills.

We will be collecting language samples at 3 times –

Time 1: **3 months (1 term) before** *Primary Talk* Supportive level training

Time 2: **Immediately before** *Primary Talk* Supportive level training

Time 3: **3 months (1 term) after** *Primary Talk* Supportive level training

#### Selecting the children

Your school will choose one KS 1 class, one lower KS 2 class and one upper KS 2 class to take part in the study. Teachers in each of these classes will select 3 children based on reading ability: a child below (B) / at (A) / exceeding (E) expected ability for their age (the selected children). You will need to note this information at the top of the recording sheet.

#### Selecting the lesson

Choose a lesson or part of a lesson in which the children will be expected to talk and ask questions both with each other and with adults. For example a plenary session at the end of a lesson, a shared reading session or a lesson where a topic is being introduced e.g. history. You will probably only write down the responses of 1 child per lesson. Therefore 3 lessons will be observed, 1 for each child at each time.

The same lesson type must be used when repeating the sampling at Time 2 and Time 3.

## Equipment

You will need a language sample recording form (below), a pen & timer.

## Recording

For each observed lesson, make a note of the date, the lesson title and the child's initials and year group on the sampling sheet. Note whether the child is B (below expected ability); A (at expected ability) or E (exceeding expected ability) in reading.

Repeat this process for 2 similar lessons/sessions for the other 2 children.

Start the timer; every 2 minutes:

- Write down the first thing the selected child says on the form below. This does not have to be immediately on 2 minutes, but the first thing said during that 2 minute period (i.e. anything said from 0.00 - 1:59 would be entered in the first row). This includes comments such as “mmm...”, short phrases (e.g. of 2-3 words), longer phrases and sentences. If the child is interrupted and then continues speaking, only the first thing they say (the utterance) should be noted.
- Enter the code “SI” (silence) if the child says nothing during that 2 minute period.
- Continue for 15-20 minutes, according to the length of that part of the lesson.
- Note what type of utterance this is using the code at the top of the recording form (you may find it easier to do this after the lesson):

EN	Expressing needs e.g. I need a pencil; can I go to the toilet?
GI	Giving instructions e.g. You need to write that down; put it here. (N.B. this is the child giving instructions, not the staff)
SL	Social language e.g. Hello; what are you doing?
EF	Expressing feelings e.g. I'm tired
QT	Questioning the teacher e.g. What do we do now Miss? What's the answer to question 10?
SA	Statements, comments, answers e.g. I've finished; She's copying me.
ST	Story Telling (narrative skills) e.g. At break time me and Michael played football and then we had to come in coz the bell rang.
SI	Silence: child doesn't say anything
NS	Not sure / not codable

Continue at two minute intervals for 15 - 20 minutes (depending on the length of the discussion).

School:

Date:

Lesson title:

Child initials:

Child code: B/A/E

Time	Utterance	code
0		
2		
4		
6		
8		

10		
12		
14		
16		
18		

20		

[print double sided form]

Thank you for helping us with our study. Please make sure to complete the details at the top of this form and return it to the member of staff coordinating this study.

## Measure of engagement in class

To be completed by member of school senior leadership in the selected classes.

School:

Year Group:

Date:

Completed by:

Role:

Duration of observation:

Number of children in session:

Completed 1 term before / immediately before / 1 term after training (delete as applicable)

During this lesson observation involving approx.15 minutes of whole class discussion:

1. What proportion of the children volunteered answers to adult questions directed at the whole class? (e.g. by putting up their hand to answer). *To be judged over a series of questions.*

0-19%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80-100%
few	some	about half	most	nearly all / all

2. What proportion of the children asked the teacher questions in whole class sessions? *(including asking questions for clarification / when they haven't understood)*

0-19%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80-100%
few	some	about half	most	nearly all / all

3. What proportion of the children discussed their learning with a partner or in a small group (on task behaviour)?

0-19%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80-100%
few	some	about half	most	nearly all / all

4. How often would you say the teacher had to give explicit prompts / reminders to maintain children's attention?

0-19%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80-100%
none / very little	occasionally	fairly regularly	quite often	very frequently

## Appendix 6 – Training evaluation

Completed immediately after *PT* training:

1. Were the course learning outcomes met? (1: Not at all; to 6: Completely)
2. Did you find that the course ... (1: No; to 6: Yes)
  - a. Content was structured and easy to follow?
  - b. Was relevant and interesting?
  - c. Involved the audience?
  - d. Acknowledged your skills?
  - e. Gave clear ideas about implementing what you have learnt?
  - f. Provided useful and relevant handouts (as appropriate)?
3. What impact has the session had on your **confidence** with supporting speech, language and communication? 1: Very little; to 6: Significant
4. What impact will the strategies and approaches outlined in the session have on your **practice**? 1: Very little; to 6: Significant
5. Which aspects of the course were particularly successful for you and why?
6. Which aspects of the course were less successful for you and why?

3 month follow up:

### Post training questionnaire for PT Supportive level

	Not useful			Extremely useful		
1) How worthwhile was it attending the training?	1	2	3	4	5	6

Please comment:

- 2) Are you implementing the approaches and strategies you learnt?

Never

Often

1      2      3      4      5      6

Can you describe this in more detail?

- 3) Have you observed a change in children's language?

Very little

Significant

- a) Understanding of language

1 2 3 4 5 6

Can you describe this in more detail?

b) Use of language

Very little

Significant

1 2 3 4 5 6

Can you explain further?

4) Are you aware of the stages of typical language development and able to identify children who are struggling? Y/N

Can you provide any examples?

5) Do you feel there has been an impact on children's learning?

Very little

Significant

1 2 3 4 5 6

Can you provide any examples?

6) Would you like to make any further comments?

## Appendix 7 – PT Training supportive level learning objectives

By the end of the course, participants will be:

- Aware that effective communication has a range of aspects involved in it
- Aware of a model for understanding language processing
- Aware of how children develop speech, language and communication and the stages of typical development
- Aware that language and learning are linked
- Aware of a range of positive approaches and strategies to support children’s language and learning within primary school
- Able to identify three actions that they will take to make their school more communication supportive
- Aware how many children may experience difficulties with speech, language and communication
- Aware of what to look for to help identify children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)
- Aware of the reasons why a child may have SLCN and the relationship between SLCN and EAL
- Aware of the impact of SLCN on learning, emotional and social development, and behaviour
- Aware of the process for raising concerns within the participants’ setting about a child’s language development, and external agencies who can offer support.