How to teachers experience carrying out a whole-class Vocabulary Enrichment Programme (VEP) in schools of social disadvantage?

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Abstract

Background: Research has examined the efficacy of whole-class language intervention implemented by mainstream teachers to school-aged children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (Goodwin & Ahn 2013; Hadley et al. 2000; Joffe 2011) however, little research has explored the experiences of these teachers.

Objectives: This study examines the experiences of teachers delivering a whole-class Vocabulary Enrichment Program (VEP) to first years in schools of social disadvantage.

Methods: A qualitative methodology was used for this study. 8 teachers who had delivered the VEP participated in semi-structured interviews about their experiences delivering the programme. Interviews were video and audio-recorded and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results: Analysis of the interviews identified 5 factors which were key to teacher experience of the VEP: (1) Initial teacher reactions to programme; (2) Support given; (3) Practicalities of programme delivery; (4) Student reactions and results; (5) Team-teaching experience.

Conclusions: Results indicate that teachers had a positive experience delivering the VEP and found it to be beneficial for students. This study begins to fill a gap in the research regarding how teachers experience delivering a whole-class programme in schools of social disadvantage, giving important insights that may be used in the future in designing and delivering similar programmes.

Introduction

Over the past number of years as more research has been carried out in the field of speech and language therapy, one of the areas in which there has been an increase in research is regarding the link between language and socio-economic status (SES) (Bryan & Gregory, 2013; Clegg, et al., 2009; Ginsborg, 2006; Joffe & Black, 2012; Law, et al., 2011; Lesaux, et al., 2012). In May 2005 the government rolled out a programme aimed at addressing educational inequality in Ireland. This was the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) programme (Department of Education and Science, 2005) and is part of a wider trend internationally towards addressing educational inequality in schools (Bercow, 2008; World Education Forum, 2000), a move that increasingly involves delivering whole-school/whole-class language programmes to students in schools of social disadvantage in an
attempt to put them on an ‘equal playing field’ with students from less impoverished backgrounds (Department of Education and Science, 2005). This move has coincided with a second trend: the move toward inclusion of children with additional needs in mainstream classrooms. This includes children with increased speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN) (O’Toole & Kirkpatrick, 2007; Lindsay, et al., 2005).

SLCN may be due to a number of reasons including primary language impairment, cognitive impairment, or the limited exposure to language associated with socio-economic disadvantage (Lindsay, et al., 2010). The link between SLCN and SES has been well documented (Kelley, et al., 2010; Hart & Risley, 1995; Locke, et al., 2002; Law, et al., 2011; Myers & Botting, 2008; Wasik, et al., 2006). Locke et al. (2002) found that up to 50% of children from social disadvantage have SLCN, and researchers have suggested that whole-school support be provided in areas of social disadvantage due to the rates of undetected language problems (Spencer, et al., 2011; Joffe & Black, 2012). Research by Tomblin et al. (1997) found that only 29% of preschool children with specific language impairment (SLI) had been diagnosed. While being carried out on a different population, this study illustrates how easy it is for children with language difficulties to ‘fall through the cracks’. SLT provision and service delivery should be diverse in order to pick up any change in SLCN as the child grows (Lindsay, et al., 2010). Children who may have had adequate communication in primary school may show SLCN as they grow older and the demands on their language increase (Gleason, 2005). However, once they leave primary school children have decreased access to SLT services (Joffe, et al., 2012), meaning less access to services for some children who previously had access, and a decreased chance of assessment and diagnosis for children who develop SLCN.

The recommendations for whole-school/ whole-class language intervention for schools of social disadvantage and the move towards greater inclusion means that teachers in schools of social disadvantage may be called on to deliver whole-class language programmes to classes with an increasingly wide range of student speech, language, and communication abilities.

The use of whole-school and whole-class language intervention approaches implies the collaboration of SLTs and teachers to design and deliver such programmes. Research supports this move towards increased collaboration. Studies have found that both teachers
and SLTs are willing to collaborate (O’Toole & Kirkpatrick, 2007; Hartas, 2004) and there is a recognition of the value of this collaboration (O’Toole & Kirkpatrick, 2007; RCSLT, 2005). In a number of studies teachers have voiced their feelings that collaboration with SLTs may be beneficial to their students and allow for a more holistic approach in addressing student needs (Baxter et al., 2009; Wright & Kersner, 2004; Wright & Graham, 1997). Further studies have shown that collaborative programmes are beneficial (Kelley, et al., 2010; Korth, et al., 2010; Dockrell & Lindsay, 2001) and other research has shown that the more engaged and knowledgeable teachers are about student speech and language needs, the more effectively they can give students the support they need (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2001). In one study, Korth et al. (2010) found that by carrying out a language programme teachers increased their own knowledge of speech and language and that having a strong supplemental programme with teacher-SLT collaboration led to pre-school teachers adopting new, research-based practices, benefitting students.

In addition to these benefits, past studies have found that there can be significant barriers to collaboration (McCartney, 1999; Hartas, 2004; O’Toole & Kirkpatrick, 2007). These barriers included time and organisational structures, for example, teachers trying to deliver a programme within the limitations of a school setting versus SLTs working within a health system but providing intervention in schools (McCartney, 1999). A study by Hartas (2004) with teachers of school-age children in a special school for children with language and communication difficulties found other challenges in collaborating to be that it can take more time, increase stress to develop effective interdisciplinary working, and result in having to compromise decisions. These barriers were partly due to the fact that in the past much of the SLT provision in schools was provided through a withdrawal model (McCartney, 1999).

The Current Study
While there has been research on the benefits of whole-class language intervention for students from social disadvantage and research on how teachers feel about collaborating with SLTs, there is a gap in the literature regarding the teacher experience of delivering a whole-class language programme in schools of social disadvantage with SLT support. Learning about teacher experience in delivering a whole-class programme is essential to obtaining a truly holistic view of whole-class intervention for children. In order to determine
the best model of service delivery, research must include the perspectives of the teachers implementing the programmes.

The purpose of the current study is to examine the experiences of teachers in delivering a whole-class Vocabulary Enrichment Programme (VEP) to first-year students in schools of social disadvantage. This is a timely investigation in light of the recommendations for whole-school and whole-class language support for children in schools of social disadvantage.

The use of a vocabulary programme for this study is also important as research has shown that the biggest difference in language scores between children from low and average SES backgrounds is on measures of vocabulary (Kelley, et al., 2010; Hart & Risley, 1995; Locke, et al., 2002; Law, et al., 2011; Myers & Botting, 2008; Wasik, et al., 2006). In response to this, whole-class interventions often focus on vocabulary (Kelley, et al., 2010). It was therefore important to learn about teacher experience in delivering a whole-class vocabulary programme.

**Methods**

*Design*

The qualitative design of this study is the most appropriate design as it allows for a rich description of the experiences of teachers carrying out the whole-class Vocabulary Enrichment Programme (VEP) to first years in schools of social disadvantage.

Although there are a number of methods that may be employed within the qualitative paradigm, a methods-based qualitative model is most appropriate and provides the greatest rigour to the study. Many qualitative studies do not clearly outline the methods of analysis and as such it is difficult to assess the quality of the results being presented (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In an attempt to avoid this, in the current research a method-based approach is used through thematic analysis closely resembling that described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This allows for rigorous and structured analysis of qualitative data.

The design and ethics for this study was reviewed and approved by the University of Limerick EHS Ethics Board.
Sample

Data for this qualitative analysis was collected from a total of 8 interviews with teachers who carried out the VEP.

Letters were sent to a number of secondary schools in an area characterised by social disadvantage inviting them to participate in a study that would determine the efficacy of a whole-class VEP and explore teacher experiences of delivering the programme. The first two schools who replied affirmatively were selected as intervention schools and the teachers of first-year English were given the VEP to carry out. The region in which the study was carried out was chosen for its quality of social disadvantage and its convenience of location.

A total of 11 teachers from 2 schools delivered the VEP to 7 classes with 9 of the 11 participants team-teaching the programme. Near the completion of the VEP teachers were asked whether they would like to take part in an interview to discuss their experience in carrying out the programme. 8 teachers took part in interviews, with at least one teacher being interviewed from 6 of the 7 classes. This was consistent with the aim of obtaining both a representative sample as well as gathering richly detailed information about teacher experiences in delivering the programme. Classes that teachers taught varied in ability with four teaching low-ability streamed classes, 3 teaching mixed ability classes, and one teaching a high-ability streamed class. There was also variation in service delivery as one teacher taught alone and others team taught for the majority of the days. Refer to table 1 for description of participants.

Participant Consent

Participant consent to participate in the VEP was obtained through the principal of each school who provided each teacher with a copy of an “Information for Teachers” leaflet. Refer to Appendix A.

For the interviews, teachers were asked face-to-face whether they would be willing to participate and if they were willing they were presented with a consent form to sign. At the beginning of each interview teachers gave verbal consent for the interview to be audio and video-recorded.
The Vocabulary Enrichment Programme was designed to teach key concepts and vocabulary to first year students through use of word associations, mind mapping, and word building exercises. Concepts targeted included synonyms, antonyms, multiple meanings, definitions, categorisation, and classification of words. Targeted vocabulary items were taken from the National Curriculum.

The programme was delivered to 7 first-year English classes by 11 teachers. Teachers received 5 hours of initial training spread over two days to orient themselves to the VEP before beginning to deliver it. Teachers then administered the VEP over 12 weeks, with 2 sessions per week, each lasting approximately 40 minutes. This took place between September and December 2013.

Training and programme delivery was supported by the primary researcher (Senior Speech and Language Therapist).

**Programme Delivery**

**Materials**

In carrying out the programme, teachers were provided with the following materials:

- An initial information leaflet on the VEP. Refer to Appendix A
• A blue folder containing a summary of aims and objectives for each session along with session timings and a fidelity checklist to be filled out after each session
• An orange folder containing a number of activities that could be used in teaching session objectives

Data Collection

Although there are a number of methods of data collection that could have been used, it was decided that semi-structured interviews would be most appropriate for gathering information from teachers as they would provide nuanced information within a structured framework. The set questions of the semi-structured interview allowed for more reliable and comparable qualitative data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006), which was especially important as interviews were being collected by 3 separate pairs of student SLTs. The semi-structured format however allowed interviewees the flexibility to stray onto relevant themes not addressed directly by the interview questions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Interviews were carried out in January 2014 with the 8 teachers who consented to being interviewed and followed a semi-structured format consisting of open-ended questions. To ensure the most complete information possible, interviewees were prompted to provide any further thoughts until they had exhausted their thoughts on the intervention. Refer to appendices D through K for interview transcripts.

During the interviews participants were prompted to expand on their answers, with interviewers being aware of trying not lead the participants. For example: “… you just mentioned time there, would you have liked more time? To implement some parts? Or what way would …”

The eight guiding questions for the interviews were:

(1) How did you feel about the programme overall?
(2) What did you first think of the programme?
(3) How did you feel the programme progressed?
(4) Do you feel the students benefitted from the programme?
   (a) If so how?
(5) Do you think the students enjoyed the programme?
   (b) If so in what ways?
(6) How did you find the support you got in running the programme?
(7) What would you change about the programme and why?
(8) Do you have any other information to give about the programme and your experience working on the programme?

Setting
Interviews were carried out one-to-one with a student SLT in rooms on the school premises. A second student SLT was present in the interviews to manage recording equipment. This setting along with the assurance of confidentiality aimed to provide an environment that put interviewees at ease so that they would feel free to express their thoughts on the programme.

Data Recording and Handling
Interviews were recorded using a hand-held voice recorder and a digital camcorder mounted on a tripod. After the interviews were recorded they were transcribed verbatim and analysed. The identity of the participant was erased to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis
Following data collection, the interviews were transcribed by two separate student SLTs and 25% of the transcripts were compared to ensure inter-rater reliability.

Data analysis began by immersion in the data during interview transcription as well as through multiple readings of the transcriptions and listening to the audio. Each transcription was then reviewed line-by-line and significant units of meaning were distinguished and coded as themes. The data from the interviews was compiled in a spreadsheet by theme (rows) and participant number (columns) to determine which themes re-occurred across participants. This data was then re-checked with the original transcripts to ensure accuracy and to guard against the context of themes being lost. Next, coded data was sorted into larger themes and sub-themes using the criteria of internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton 1987 as cited in Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). These themes were then re-examined next to the original transcripts to ensure that all major
themes or ideas were represented. In this way it was ensured that themes that reoccurred frequently and important themes that only occurred once or twice were given due importance and included in the results and analysis. As analysis of themes progressed, the relevant literature was reviewed to gain further insight into the findings and a better understanding of the implications of the results.

**Findings**

8 individual semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded for analysis. Each participant was given a number between 1 and 8. There were 2 hours and 7 minutes of recorded data available for analysis.

**Codes**

Analysis of interview transcripts led to the creation of 61 separate indexing codes. An attempt was made to create codes without losing as much of the context as possible. Appendix B lists these codes and can be used to compare code frequency across participants and by classroom type (i.e. low ability stream, mixed ability, high ability stream).

**Themes**

Themes and their associated codes may be found in appendix B. The codes were aggregated, according to semantic relationships, into 5 themes: (1) Initial teacher reactions to delivering the programme; (2) Support in delivering the VEP; (3) Practicalities of programme delivery; (4) Student Reactions and Results; (5) Experience of team-teaching. Refer to appendix C for themes and subthemes.

**Description of the Themes**

**Summary**

The themes describe elements noted by teachers as factors that impacted their experience of the VEP.

Each theme is described in detail and includes illustrative quotes specified by participant number. Table 1 may be referred to for details of the teacher’s class ability level
and whether the teacher was team-teaching. The aim of this thematic analysis is to provide a rich description of the experiences of teachers.

*Initial teacher reactions to delivering the programme*

This theme reflects the initial thoughts and feelings of teachers on being given the VEP to deliver.

All 8 teachers had positive initial thoughts and expectations of the VEP when it was first introduced to them.

I thought ‘Fantastic’ because it’s something that we’re always complaining about, the kids’ vocabulary is terrible... (Participant 4)

Teachers also noted that initially they felt the programme to be well laid-out, well thought-out, and enjoyable.

However, three participants noted that they did have some initial concerns. These were: (1) Concerns over their own ability to deliver the programme as it was something new to them; (2) Concerns over how much more work it would be to implement the programme compared to a typical class; (3) Concerns over how students would react to the programme; and (4) Concerns about taking time away from the regular curriculum.

*Teacher experiences of support in delivering the VEP*

This theme reflects how teachers felt about the supports that were provided to them in delivering the VEP.

All 8 teachers who were interviewed reported that they were provided with sufficient support in implementing the programme and interviews highlighted four different types of support that they had received: (1) The initial training for the VEP; (2) The support of the senior SLT (the primary researcher); (3) The provided programme materials; and (4) The support of other teachers.

(1) Teachers received 5 hours of initial training in the VEP before beginning the programme. Three teachers highlighted the training as being good, and one also reported:

...[the training was]Brilliant, I would have like a little bit more of it but sure we always want a little bit more. (Participant 5)
(2) All 8 teachers spoke enthusiastically about the support provided by the senior SLT involved in the programme. Teachers noted the good cooperation between her and themselves with one teacher going on to describe how that impacted initiating the programme in the school:

... [we have] such a good relationship with [the senior SLT]... the cooperation is very good and it’s so professional and because of the relationship that we have with [her] there was a lot of very positive energy around rolling out the programme...

(Participant 2)

Teachers had weekly scheduled meetings with the senior SLT, which they found useful, in addition to which the senior SLT was reachable by phone or email with any questions or concerns regarding the programme. One teacher commented:

[The support was] fabulous, absolutely fabulous, we always knew that if we had a question that we could ask it and that it would be addressed and [the senior SLT] had time for us every week to sit down so that was, that was really a benefit because we really wanted, we wanted to make sure that we were doing it right and to...I suppose exploit its full potential. (Participant 2)

(3) Many teachers also commented on the programme materials that they had been given, their usefulness, and how easily laid out they were.

... it was ideal you know, the instruction folder at the start laid out perfectly for us, we knew exactly where we stood so we had no support issues. (Participant 1)

Two teachers did however comment on the fact that the materials provided were extensive and that it took a lot of time to go through the folder with all of the activity options in it. One teacher commented:

...the orange folder... was a bit too detailed so maybe a kind of condensed or compressed version of that would be more useful...it was a lot to get through to be honest. (Participant 4)

(4) Teachers from both of the intervention schools talked about how beneficial it was to have other teachers in the same school carrying out the programme at the same time.

...we were well supported within the department as well. If there was one teacher in particular who was making amendments to the power points ... she was adding stuff to it and we were doing the same. If I felt that there was something that I needed added I’d add it and [we’d] share it among each other. (Participant 4)
One teacher also described the support of other school staff for the programme and its effect:

...It was great that all the staff knew about [the programme] because [the senior SLT] came and made a presentation... so they were very on board as well as a group so...when it interfered with any class, if we had to take extra time they were totally on board. (Participant 2)

*The practicalities of programme delivery*

This theme reflects the teachers' experiences of the practicalities of delivering the VEP to their classes.

As would be expected, teachers encountered both positive points and challenges in delivering the VEP. Practical points highlighted by teachers were: (1) The work load associated with the programme and the need to adapt the programme to the level of the class; (2) The need for more time to deliver the programme; (3) Student interest level; (4) Working with weaker and stronger than average students; (5) Absenteeism.

(1) Two teachers made note of the fact that they spent a lot of extra time in preparing to deliver the VEP. One of these teachers taught a high-ability streamed class and the other taught a lower-ability streamed class.

Teachers also remarked that they spent time in trying to adapt the programme to their class, making small changes to activities or, for the teacher of a lower-ability class, trying to adapt it to the student level:

...well the students that I was teaching are, would be very low literacy levels so I found aspects of it where maybe even wording was a little higher than the kids I was teaching it to. So in that it involved a lot of me having to change... some of the information that was given to us, just so that I could target it, speak to them at a lower level. (Participant 6)

(2) Several teachers made mention of the fact that they did not feel there was enough time to effectively deliver the lessons. One teacher reported:

... I found that I was rushing it too much because there was so much to get done... (Participant 5)

(3) Teachers found that in general student interest in the programme was higher at the beginning of the programme and waned near the end.
One exception was that Participant 1 found that it took his students a while to get into the programme but they eventually embraced it more as they better understood it.

The first initial issues obviously were classroom management but I found...once it became routine for them they did embrace it as well and they started to see the overall purpose of it and they started embracing it more as well. (Participant 1)

(4) A number of teachers noted particular difficulties in delivering the programme to students who were stronger than average and weaker than average. The teacher of the high-ability class and a teacher of a mixed ability class felt the programme was repetitive for strong students. This led the teacher of the mixed ability class to question the suitability of the programme for a mixed-ability group. She remarked:

I felt as well it was a little bit repetitive, I could understand why because it’s a mixed ability class, I understand you need an element of repetition for the weaker students... But because it’s a mixed ability class you have the high flyers who are sitting there going ‘we did this last week...’ (Participant 5)

However, teachers of the lower-ability classes found that students had particular difficulty with abstract concepts and found that they had to adapt the language of the programme to the lower literacy levels of the students. Teachers also found that students needed extra encouragement and that the programme had to be delivered at a slower pace:

...the dictionary work even took 4 classes because I had to go around individually to them and actually show them and some of them didn’t have the alphabet learnt off, some had English as a second language, so to go and you know show the alphabet and write it out higher case, lower case and they then actually had to figure out... they were literally then going from that place. (Participant 8)

In delivering the programme to a lower-ability class one teacher found that students responded to group work especially well, as they would have been more self-conscious of their weaknesses when working individually.

(5) Three teachers mentioned the challenge of student absenteeism and the fact that it negatively impacted delivering the VEP. One teacher said:

...then there was absenteeism, with the same students that found [the programme] challenging...And so if they’d missed the introductory part of lesson 1 then they obviously were kind of lost for the second part of the lesson and then you hadn’t really time to go back and re-teach... (Participant 3)
**Student Reactions and Results**

This theme reflects the teachers’ experiences of how their students reacted to and benefitted from the VEP.

A number of teachers talked about how their students enjoyed the VEP overall. In particular they noted that the students found the novelty exciting. Teachers highlighted the fact that students most engaged with interactive and concrete activities, and that they especially enjoyed the visuals and activities that seemed more useful to daily life such as the idioms and homonyms/synonyms.

They quite liked the homonym/synonym...because I suppose some of them were quite...the words that were shown were ones that they’d use on a regular [basis], which was useful to them. (Participant 8)

Teachers also noted that their students did not engage as well with some of the lessons, and this varied between classes although 2 teachers named lessons on superordination as being the least favorite class. One teacher also reported that her students were generally not interested in learning about grammar but that they still engaged in the activities.

All 8 teachers felt that students had benefitted from the VEP. One teacher of a lower-ability class noted:

…it was positive that it broke down a lot of barriers for kids in terms of accessing language. (Participant 1)

Two teachers also reported that the programme had helped to bring attention to students who had more difficulty with vocabulary and language:

We’re great for picking up the very very very weak, but maybe the girls that...you might miss their weaknesses in understanding, comprehension and literacy and stuff...it did kind of flag people that you might have missed. (Participant 5)

7 of the 8 teachers felt that students had definitely benefitted from the programme and saw improved comprehension, ability to break down words, ability to think of words more quickly, and ability to deal with new words. One teacher who was also teaching the class regular English curriculum twice a week observed generalisation of the skills the students were learning in the VEP into the regular English class:
...actually in regular English class, they were throwing stuff back at me that they had learned during the programme ... you know if there was a prefix or a suffix...they were trying to work them out or sound them out. (Participant 4)

One teacher however felt that the programme had been pitched at too high a level for her class and was unsure whether her students had benefitted much from it, this was despite her saying that by the end of the VEP her students had more awareness of the parts of speech and were able to think of words more quickly. She reported that while her students learned these things she was not sure how beneficial it would be for them practically-speaking.

Teacher experience of team-teaching
This theme reflects the teachers’ experiences of team teaching. 7 of the 8 teachers who were interviewed team-taught and 4 of these 7 spoke about the benefits of team-teaching. General benefits that were highlighted were that classroom management was easier with two teachers, that the teachers were able to play off one another’s strengths, and that an additional benefit of having another teacher in the room was that one could circulate during activities to see how students were managing. One teacher also felt that students enjoyed the dynamic created by team teaching.

I think the team teaching element that we used was great, it was really good because if we were doing written work one teacher could go around and look at the written work which the other could kind of gauge aurally what was going on. And it was just, we just had different ideas on how to do things as well so I think everybody was able to engage with one or the other of us. (Participant 4)

In addition to benefits of team-teaching, one of the teachers who team-taught also noted that she and her co-teacher had different teaching styles which they had to adjust in order to work together.

A further challenge was the fact that due to school timetabling in one of the schools, some days both teachers were able to be present and other days they were not. These teachers spoke about the fact that this was not ideal:

I’d love to team teach it again I think that worked well, but I’d want to do all the sessions myself with them...just for myself, being able to walk in knowing exactly where they are because I kind of, when I walked in I didn’t know which individual kids
weren’t getting something or whatever, so just for to be able to walk in and say “She needs a little bit extra work or a little bit extra attention or whatever, that’s where I felt I was kind of going in a little bit blind sometimes. (Participant 4)

Discussion
The aim of this study was to better understand the experience of teachers delivering a whole-class VEP to first-years in schools of social disadvantage. A review of the literature found that while there has been research into the efficacy of such programmes, there is a scarcity of research addressing the experiences of teachers delivering these programmes.

This study found that teachers had positive initial thoughts and expectations of carrying out the VEP. While in other studies teachers have expressed how important they feel vocabulary to be, particularly for children from social disadvantage (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008), a review of the literature revealed no other studies exploring initial teacher thoughts and expectations of delivering a similar programme.

Two of the teachers in the present study reported initial concerns about their ability to deliver the VEP due to the fact that they had never carried out a similar programme. While there have been no studies directly researching initial teacher feelings to carrying out a vocabulary programme to children in schools of social disadvantage, this concern is consistent with reports finding that teachers are not confident about what is best practice in vocabulary instruction (Berne & Blachowicz, 2008) and feel they do not have the knowledge to deal with children with heightened language needs (Wishart & Manning, 1996; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Teachers also spoke of concerns about taking time away from the regular school curriculum. Although very little research has explored this topic, reviews of the barriers to collaboration between teachers and SLTs have shown that systemic barriers to collaboration can include the teacher and SLT working within different management structures, barriers due to time and location of service delivery, and competing curriculum structures. In the present study, apart from concerns about taking time away from the regular curriculum, these systemic barriers to collaboration were not considered to be significant. This was due to the model of collaboration used: the VEP was designed to be delivered by teachers within the school setting, the role of the SLT was primarily supportive and she was able to be contacted whenever needed.
The findings from this study about teacher concerns regarding ability to carry out the programme, work load, and student reaction begin to fill a gap in the research. The contributions of this study to the research then are the findings that teachers had positive initial thoughts and expectations of delivering the programme as well as a number of concerns.

The fact that teachers noted these concerns in interviews says that initial teacher concerns are important to note. This suggests that in collaborating with teachers it will be beneficial for the SLT to be aware of any concerns teachers have about beginning the programme.

The findings of this study are encouraging as they suggest a willingness of teachers to collaborate with SLTs to deliver a programme and are also beneficial as they highlight concerns that teachers may have initially. This is important information for SLTs who are collaborating with teachers to deliver a whole-class programme.

In delivering the VEP teachers had a number of different types of support: the programme materials; weekly consultations with the SLT and access to the SLT by phone and email; the support of other teachers carrying out the VEP in the same school; and the initial 5 hours of training. In this study, teachers found all of these supports to be beneficial.

The finding that the programme materials were beneficial is reinforced by Lesaux et al. (2013) who found that in delivering a whole-class language programme teachers found the programme curriculum to be supportive. In the current study a couple of teachers did note however, that while they were useful, the programme materials were too extensive and that this increased the amount of time spent preparing to deliver the programme. This challenge reported around programme materials is consistent with findings that the ease of use of the materials is important to how teachers experience delivering the programme (Lesaux et al. 2013).

The findings that teachers found weekly consultations with the SLT and access to the SLT by phone and email to be supportive is consistent with previous research (Lesaux et al. 2013). The finding that teachers felt supported by other teachers delivering the programme is also consistent with previous findings in the area (Lesaux et al. 2013) and consistent with research from Berne and Blachowicz (2008) who found that beyond wanting a vocabulary programme, teachers were most concerned about there being a consistent approach to
vocabulary building in their school. They hypothesised that this indicated a need for community that teachers feel when part of a group trying to improve their practice. This theory has been further supported by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2005), which also states that being part of a community of learning is essential to effective education delivery and that teachers want the support of other teachers as well as the support of the SLT in delivering a whole-class programme. In the current study teachers also reported that they felt training to be useful. This is consistent with previous studies which found that training led to teachers feeling more supported in the classroom (O’Toole & Kirkpatrick, 2007).

There has been very little research on how teachers can be supported to deliver whole-class language programmes. As the move toward inclusion and whole-school/whole-class language support to schools of social disadvantage continues and teachers are asked to deliver whole-class language programmes, it is essential for teachers to feel able to work with their students and to feel supported in delivering such programmes (Lindsay & Dockrell, 2000). Marshall et al. (2002) found that while trainee teachers felt positively about working with children with SLCN, they felt they were unprepared to do so. This study adds to information of how teachers may be supported to work with children with SLCN.

The findings of this study are consistent with the previous research that has been done. These findings about what teachers feel to be useful support is key to properly supporting teachers to deliver whole-class language programmes in the future.

The third theme that emerged from analysis was the practicality of teachers carrying out the VEP to their class.

A couple of teachers found that there was an increased work load associated with the VEP and that absenteeism had a negative effect on delivery as children missed parts of the programme. As there is a lack of research regarding this, this study gives valuable information on how absenteeism impacts teacher experience of delivering a programme. Teachers in this study also found that they had to adapt the programme to the language level of their students and that they had too little time for delivering the programme, especially with weaker students. This is consistent with research by Kelley et al. (2010) in which teachers found student weakness a challenge to delivering a vocabulary programme.
and with research by Dockrell & Lindsay (2000) which found that teachers felt time pressure to be an obstacle in working with children with language difficulties.

These findings regarding some of the practicalities in delivering a whole-class language programme are important as they reflect how a programme might need to be adapted be carried out in everyday practice. These findings regarding the impact of absenteeism, the fact that teachers felt rushed for time to deliver the VEP, and the challenge to adapt the programme to student language levels have clinical importance as elements to take into consideration in designing whole-class language programmes in the future.

Student response to and benefit from the VEP is directly linked to teacher experience of delivering the programme and was identified as the fourth theme during analysis of the interviews.

The findings of the current study were that teachers found students enjoyed the VEP. In terms of activities used, an overall trend that emerged was that teachers reported students to be more able and willing to engage in activities that were visual, concrete and interactive. One teacher also noted that the visuals were beneficial for her dyslexic students. This is unsurprising as other research has found that students, especially those with poor language skills, find concrete and interactive activities more engaging (Korth, et al., 2010). However, some teachers found direct teaching of grammar to be boring or too abstract for weaker students in particular.

In addition to teachers feeling that their students enjoyed the programme, all teachers felt that students benefitted from it in some way. This is consistent with the results of the study that the VEP was modelled on (Joffe, 2006). Unexpectedly, however, one teacher of a lower-ability streamed class (Participant 8) did report that while her students may have benefitted in some way from the programme she was unsure how useful the programme had really been for them as their language levels were so low that they had difficulty accessing the material. There has been no previous research on how teachers feel specifically about how very weak students benefit from whole-class programmes. The findings of the current study were that of the four teachers of lower ability streamed classes, the other 3 teachers found the programme to be beneficial to their students as they were delivering it. It should be noted that one of these other 3 teachers co-taught with Participant 8. It is possible that teachers wanted to give favourable information about the programme.
and this may explain the divergent results. Another reason for this outlying experience may have been the fact that Participant 8 had a strong opinion that a different language programme would have been more beneficial to her students and she was comparing her students reactions and benefits to what she felt would have been the outcome of this other programme. Another reason may have been that while teachers were informed that they would have to adapt the programme to the level of their students, this teacher reported that she did not spend much time preparing for the class (compared to other teachers who reported spending a lot of time adapting the programme). Her preparation may have impacted her perception of how beneficial her students found the programme. However, as estimated preparation time was not given by any of the teachers the impact of this is unknown. Participant 8 did report that in retrospect she felt she could have delivered the programme more effectively.

A second unexpected comment was from the teacher of a mixed-ability class who questioned the suitability of the VEP for a mixed group. The reason for this was that the teacher felt that with a class of a wide range of language ability, the programme was too simple for strong students. This teacher felt that the programme would be better delivered to just the weaker students to put them on an ‘equal playing-field’ with the other students. Both of these opinions were unexpected as this is the population that the programme was designed to be used with; first-year students in schools of social disadvantage.

A benefit for teachers in delivering the programme was that 2 teachers reported that as they delivered it they were able to identify students in their classes who had particular difficulty with vocabulary and had extra language needs that they had been previously unaware of. These findings are consistent with research that found that a training programme in speech and language resulted in increased teacher awareness of student language difficulties (Joffe & Nippold, 2012). This is a significant finding and is supported by previous research that found that teachers are often unaware of a student’s extra language needs (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2001). As there is a lack of SLT provision in schools, particularly in secondary schools (Bercow, 2008; IASLT, 2007), it is very easy for the extra language needs of children to go unnoticed and for them to not receive the assessment or intervention they need. The fact that after delivering the programme these 2 teachers were able to identify these students was significant to those teachers as they then knew to focus more on helping those students and referring them to an SLT if necessary.
The findings that teachers felt delivery of the VEP to be mainly enjoyable and beneficial to students and themselves is clinically significant as it shows the qualitative benefits of delivering a whole-class language programme for both teachers and students.

The fifth theme that emerged in the current study was that of the experience of team-teaching. In the current study teachers found that teaching in a team was beneficial for classroom management, and responding to student needs. One teacher also reported that team-teaching created a dynamic that students enjoyed. These positive findings are consistent with research that found that teachers and SLTs felt team-teaching to be the best model of whole-class intervention (Beck & Dennis, 1997). In addition to the benefits of team-teaching, one teacher in the current study also highlighted the fact that in team-teaching challenges may arise when the teachers have different styles of teaching and that in her experience, herself and her co-teacher had to adapt to working together.

These findings that teachers have positive experiences of team-teaching support the continued use of it as a service delivery method in the future.

The results of the present study are important in that they add to the research base about the experience of teachers delivering a whole-class programme alone or in a team, and to a variety of ability levels. In addition, the feedback and reports of teachers is essential to holistic design and delivery of whole-class language programmes. With the increased move towards whole-school/whole-class language intervention programmes delivered by teachers, the results of this study are timely. The results of this study support previous research as well as the move toward whole-class delivery of language programmes in schools of social disadvantage.

**Limitations**

As the current study progressed one specific variable became apparent which had not been accounted for originally and not addressed in interviews. This was the fact that there was no clear way of knowing how much preparation teachers carried out for the programme. Teacher preparation may have impacted on teacher experience in delivering the programme and on the results of this study. As there is no way to correlate teacher experience of the programme with preparation time, this is a limitation. This limitation may also impact on the
generalizability of results. Any future research should address this to allow for greater comparability and validity of results.

A second limitation of this study was the fact that only 8 of the 11 teachers who carried out the VEP consented to be interviewed, which may have led to participant bias.

A third limitation was that it is possible that participants felt obliged to focus on the positive aspects of the programme despite being asked to say both positive and negative points. Only 2 of the 8 participants spoke of how they felt the VEP may not be suitable for their class, one due to the low level of her class and the other due to the presence of stronger students in her class. The fact that only two participants raised this point raises the question of whether the other teachers had similar feelings but did not want to say negative aspects of the programme. This consideration must be taken into account when assessing the results of this study.

Another limitation was the use of semi-structured interviews. There were instances when themes that came up in one interview were not always addressed in other interviews. This means that it is difficult to determine whether certain experiences were common across teachers or not.

The semi-structured interview format may also have led participants to focus more on specific topics than they normally would have, causing a bias in the results.

As the aim of the study was to get a rich overview of the experiences of teachers in delivering a whole-class language programme to students in schools of social disadvantage, these limitations are not judged to have had a significant impact on the results. However, it is suggested that future research avoid the same limitations.

Future Research

During interviews teachers noted changes that could be made to the programme in the future, including altering the delivery timeframe and extending VEP use to older students and ESL students in addition to first-years. Teachers also suggested that the VEP be better integrated with the curriculum, a move that would be supported by other research (Cirrin & Penner (1995) as cited in Korth et al. 2010) and recommended by best practice (RCSLT, 2005). Further research should be carried out to explore teacher experiences of the VEP with the suggested changes implemented. Teachers of weaker classes encountered additional challenges in delivering the programme. Further research is recommended to examine how
these teachers may be supported in delivering a whole-class language programme. Further research is also recommended to explore teachers’ self-perception of working with children with increased language needs after delivering a whole-class programme such as this. While there has been research on the impact of training on this and Kelley et al. (2000) found that after delivering a whole-class vocabulary programme teachers felt more able to teach vocabulary effectively, there should be direct research on how teachers feel about their ability to identify and work with students with increased SLCN after delivery of a whole-class language programme.

**Conclusion**

The above results have added to the knowledge base regarding teacher experience in delivering a whole-class programme in schools of social disadvantage. Analysis of the interviews identified 5 important factors which were key to how teachers experienced delivering the VEP: (1) Initial teacher reactions to delivering the programme; (2) Support in delivering the VEP; (3) Practicalities of programme delivery; (4) Student Reactions and Results; and (5) The experience of team-teaching. This study begins to fill a gap in the research regarding how teachers experience delivering a whole-class programme in schools of social disadvantage, giving important insights that may be used in the future in designing and delivering similar programmes.

**References**


Gascoigne, M., 2006. Supporting children with speech, language and communication needs within integrated children’s services, London: Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.


Law, J. et al., 2002. Consultation as a model for providing speech and language therapy in schools: a panacea or one step too far?. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy, 18*(2), pp. 145-163.


Lindsay, G., Dockrell, J. & Peacey, N., 2008. Effective and efficient use of resources in services for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs, s.l.: University of Warwick.


Appendix A: Information for Teachers Leaflet

Oral Vocabulary Skills Intervention
(Adapted from the Vocabulary Enrichment Programme)

Overview
The Vocabulary Enrichment Programme (VEP) was created by Dr. Victoria Joffe with input from post-primary subject teachers, SEN teachers and students. Dr. Joffe is a Specialist Speech and Language Therapist and Senior Lecturer in Developmental Speech, Language and Communication Science at City University, London. The aim of the VEP is to:

- Enhance the understanding and facilitate the expression of a wide range of basic and relevant concepts, meanings and vocabulary in students with varied SLCN in post-primary school.

Rationale for Programme
Students aged 12-17 years are exposed to 10,000 new words from textbooks alone (Clark, 2003) when they transfer to post-primary school. Students with limited vocabulary often find this a significant barrier to their learning. In addition, vocabulary learning has been identified as being one of the most significant problems experienced by students with speech, language and communication needs (Bishop, 1997; Gathercole, 1993; Sim, 1998). Vocabulary knowledge is also viewed as central to cognitive development, particularly literacy (Cunningham et al, 1997). Yet, despite its importance, little direct time is devoted to vocabulary instruction in school (Dockrell & Messer, 2004). Vocabulary training has been found to be effective in improving language performance and has been identified as an area that can be modified as a result of intervention (Nash & Snowling, 2006; Parsons et al, 2005).

UK VEP Research (2006-2010) - Enhancing Language and Communication in Secondary Schools Project (ELCISS)
This UK project, funded by The Nuffield Foundation, was managed by Victoria Joffe in collaboration with Nita Madhani, Speech and Language Therapy manager from Redbridge PCT. The project explored the prevalence and nature of language impairment in post-primary school students in two outer London boroughs. The results from the project indicated significant improvements on non-standardised measures of vocabulary.

Provisional Data from Trial of the VEP (2012-2013)
Students:
- Level 3 intervention - 19 students presenting with behavioural difficulties completed the programme in small groups (3-6 students).
(Appendix A cont’d)

Results:

• Nearly 90% improved on a standardised test of expressive language (explaining how words go together).

• Nearly 60% improved on a standardised test of receptive language (their understanding of word links).

• Approximately 53% improved on a standardised test of sentence structure (their ability to put a grammatically correct sentence together).

Tables 1, 2 & 3: The % of 19 students who improved by at least 1 Standard Score

**Oral Vocabulary Skills Intervention– The 2013-2014 Project in Practice:**

• Two intervention Schools - 12 week programme (16\textsuperscript{th} September to 13\textsuperscript{th} December, 2013)

• Two control schools – 12 week programme (January-April 2014)

• 40-45 minutes twice per week (2 classes).

• Taught by 1\textsuperscript{st} year English teachers with continuous support from SLT.

• Option to include learning support/BFL/BSC as team teachers where appropriate/necessary.

• All training and material will be provided by SLT to the intervention and control schools in September and January, as appropriate.

• SLT will provide support once per week – Meeting with group of teachers involved 20 mins-40 mins (as suits-SLT can be flexible).
**Appendix A cont’d**

- Pre and Post Assessment - All students will be individually assessed for 30-40 minutes each by UL research Speech and Language Therapists under the supervision of a Senior Speech and Language Therapist and Professor from the UL Department of Speech and Language Therapy:
  - pre intervention in August/September, 2013
  - post intervention in January, 2014
  - post intervention in April/May, 2014 to ensure maintenance

**Key Skills to be developed during the Project:**

- Understanding all the **characteristics of a word** *(Basic or Extended Word Map Templates, Antonyms/Synonyms, Word Categorisation, Multisensory Definitions).*

- Understanding the **context of the word**. (Breaking words into smaller elements -prefixes, suffixes, roots)

- Understanding the **grammatical function of the word** (All parts of speech – Nouns, verbs, adjectives etc.)

- Understanding the **multiple meanings of words**. (Idioms, homonyms, homophones)

- Being able to **use the word in multiple contexts** (Expressive language development, discussion, sentence creation).

- **Being able to use a variety of strategies to understand the meaning of a word**. (Word detective, dictionary work).

**Link to Overall School Literacy Development – Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life Strategy DES (2011)**

- Focus on **Oral Language Development** and on **Semantic Vocabulary Learning Skills**.

- **Key links to School Self Evaluation:**
  - Perspective 2 - Theme 2.3 Learning to Learn.
    - Focuses on key skills students need to learn for vocabulary building
  - Perspective 3 – Theme 3.2 Attainment in Literacy.
    - Targets oral language learning.
    - Aids identification of students who have significant oral language difficulties (some students may need more individual support).
### Appendix B: Themes and associated codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Low (4 Teachers)</th>
<th>Mixed Ability (3 Teachers)</th>
<th>High (1 Teacher)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Teacher impression of the Programme</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive initial impression</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>A lot of extra work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a lot of extra work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial concern about work load</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial concern about ability to deliver programme</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concern about student reaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern about covering school curriculum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Programme Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher felt supported</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good support from SLT</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from other teachers carrying out VEP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from other teachers in the school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful training</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted more training</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials were supportive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many materials- hard to navigate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Teaching</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Beneficial to delivery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher was not there for every class- would like to be there.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenge of team-teaching with another teacher with a different teaching style</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't team-teach, wanted to team-teach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students liked team-teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Reactions &amp; Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlighted students with language needs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students found VEP useful for other classes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked interactive activities/exercises</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students enjoyed the VEP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>
(Appendix B cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Reactions &amp; Results (cont’d)</th>
<th>Low (4 Teachers)</th>
<th>Mixed Ability (3 Teachers)</th>
<th>High (1 Teacher)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repetitive for strong students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students liked group work because self-conscious of weak language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Liked visuals</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked mix of group/individual work</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Liked activities relevant to daily life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not interested in grammar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic about the VEP</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked the novelty of the VEP</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost attention with abstract concepts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good response to concrete activities</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good response to interactive activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students used to asking questions. Asked more questions near end of VEP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students benefitted</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No increase in vocabulary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved ability to break down words</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned grammatical terminology</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved comprehension</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visuals helped increase comprehension</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalisation of skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More able to deal with new words</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programme too high a level for weak group</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased speed of thinking of words</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practicalities of Programme Delivery</th>
<th>Low (4 Teachers)</th>
<th>Mixed Ability (3 Teachers)</th>
<th>High (1 Teacher)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management hindered delivery</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom management improved as students got into routine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest waned near end of 12 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made changes to materials as programme progressed</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra photocopying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absenteeism a problem</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time needed to deliver lessons</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow pace with weaker students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of time spent adapting materials</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with abstract concepts</td>
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</table>
(Appendix B cont’d)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Practicalities of Programme Delivery cont’d</th>
<th>Low (4 Teachers)</th>
<th>Mixed Ability (3 Teachers)</th>
<th>High (1 Teacher)</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of student motivation when they found materials challenging</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Students needed encouragement</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Visuals good for dyslexic students</td>
<td>1</td>
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Appendix C: Themes and Subthemes

Theme 1: Initial teacher reactions to delivering the VEP
  - Positive initial reaction to the VEP
  - Subtheme 1: Teacher concern of own ability to deliver the VEP
  - Subtheme 2: Work load associated with the VEP
  - Subtheme 3: Student reaction of the VEP
  - Subtheme 4: Taking time from the regular curriculum

Theme 2: Teacher experiences of support in delivering the VEP
  - Teachers reported being given sufficient support
  - Subtheme 1: Initial training for the VEP
  - Subtheme 2: Support of the senior SLT
  - Subtheme 3: The provided programme materials
  - Subtheme 4: The support of other teachers

Factors Impacting Teacher Experience of Delivering the VEP
  - Theme 3: Practicalities of programme delivery
    - Subthemes: 5 practical considerations in VEP delivery
      - Subtheme 1: The work load of the VEP and need to adapt it to student level
      - Subtheme 2: Need for more time to deliver the VEP
      - Subtheme 3: Student interest level
      - Subtheme 4: Challenges working with weaker & stronger than average students
      - Subtheme 5: Absenteeism

Theme 4: Student Reactions & Results
  - Student reaction to lessons and activities
  - Student benefits from the VEP

Theme 5: Teacher Experience of Team-Teaching
  - Benefits of team-teaching
  - Challenges of team-teaching
Appendix D: Transcript Participant 1

Transcript Participant 1

Interviewer: Like I said, everything is confidential within the team and we’d just really want to hear about your experiences with the vocabulary programme, so that includes both positive and negative... we want to know everything so we can improve it for the next time.

Teacher: Ok

Interviewer: Ok, so I guess how did you find the programme overall?

Teacher: Well overall I found it a very useful as a tool, you know, dealing with kids who wouldn’t have had much contact with the written word, so to speak, so you know, even the basics of verb, noun, adjective, adverb they didn’t have, so to start from that point was useful. Now the other side of it was the abstract explanation of stuff and you’d kinda be losing them halfway because of they’d cause a lot of classroom management issues, the other side of that, on top of that I was on my own doing it whereas in the other groups there was two teachers working together so I had to handle a group on my own which I did... but it was positive that it broke down a lot of barriers for kids in terms of accessing language and on the overall was positive with a few bit of negatives thrown in, that was it.

Interviewer: And so you found some things negative..

Teacher: Well, on my own experience yeah, I found that there was big areas they were trying to explain abstract concepts to the kids and they were just they were gone- they don’t want to know about them d’you’know and it was concrete kind of work-related activities they really embraced much much better and maybe I was one classroom as well but you know I found that if I had, if I was explaining I was losing them basically, then classroom management problems and they’d get distracted...which kinda interfered with the delivery of the programme as well.
Interviewer: And what did you first think of the programme?

Teacher: I thought it was a great idea when ye presented it to us, like with our kids, anything that can help them access vocabulary in any sense at all is great because our kids just don’t have the language skills and even when they go into an exam situation, even if it’s maths they don’t understand basic words like describe... imagine... words like that you know which is very very hard for them then to access the exam which means they don’t perform to their ability because of lack of vocab so that was a huge problem and that would be a huge benefit for us going forward, yeah definitely.

Interviewer: So how do you feel the programme progressed? From your initial...

Teacher: The first initial issues obviously were classroom management but I found once they got into the routine of it and knew what to expect and knew what we were doing then they kinda progressed a bit better as well and by the end while they hadn’t got, say, the whole lot of it they had got a lot, they had taken on board a lot more than what they had going in at the start and I found that once it became routine for them they did embrace it as well and they started to see the overall purpose of it and they started embracing it more as well.

Interviewer: So at first they didn’t find it...

Teacher: Well at first they just thought it was you know, stupid English stuff, and they didn’t really know what...and they didn’t know...but then they saw when there was the exercises and activities putting into practice then they’d improved interactions and they saw it as a challenge then and they started trying to access it a bit more then after that.

Interviewer: Do you feel the students benefitted from the programme?

Teacher: Oh yeah, definitely... varying degrees obviously, like on a very simple level I’ve highlighted 4 or 5 students who were having trouble accessing vocabulary which means we can now look at them and work with them independently and improve
their vocabulary and skills independently outside the group so on that sense alone it definitely improved things..

Interviewer: And overall do you think it benefitted?

Teacher: Oh yeah

Interviewer: Do you think they enjoyed the programme?

Teacher: Again, what I said earlier, there were teeny problems I suppose but they got there in the end and I think they did again, once it became routine because kids hated change especially I find normally they do hate change and this is something really new, something that they hadn’t done before but once it became routine and became part of their weekly routine they did embrace it more. They did start to enjoy it.

Interviewer: And do you think they found anything specifically enjoyable? More so than other things?

Teacher: Actually the activities they enjoyed a bit more as opposed to the learning off concepts, you know, and they definitely enjoyed the activities and challenge to try to figure out the idiom activities, they really embraced that on a very great level, and that was probably one of the better ones when I thought this is actually working and starting to break down the barriers, you know, that was kind of a change that showed.

Interviewer: How do you feel, how did you find the support throughout the programme?

Teacher: Oh well it was good that [the SLT] was there on a weekly basis, you know, we could always touch base and I knew when she was here so that was perfect, it was ideal you know the instruction folder at the start laid out perfectly for us, we knew exactly where we stood so we had no support issues.

Interviewer: Anything specifically about it?
(Appendix D cont’d)

Teacher: No, well, just the weekly contact just to see, you know, because sometimes even though you’re trying to teach, you’re not too sure you’re doing it right, you know? And just like, I’m going this way, is that ok and she say yep that’s perfect you know just to be sure you’re going in the right direction- that you’re not veering from the path so-to-speak.

Interviewer: And is there anything you’d change about the programme?

Teacher: Just a little bit I don’t know how you’d change it because you do have to deliver these abstract ideas to the kids...but it...bringing in a couple more activities just to show there ...or maybe even the way I delivered it, maybe I could have improved that a little. As it stands it’s very good, but, I think it could have been...and maybe having a second teacher as support would ...maybe then I’d of had no issues then .

Interviewer: So the co-teaching...

Teacher: Yeah, the co-teaching would be much much better you know. Now I did have difficulty as well, so that...

Interviewer: And do you think, like, the time frame and stuff like that was..

Teacher: Yeah the time frame was a bit difficult for me because I had a student teacher in as well so I had to split the class a bit, so I found it, I was only doing half. Now I was – If I was to do it in the timeframe again I’d like to go consistent the whole way through four periods a week, doing vocabulary enrichment and just really concentrating it into a shorter and shorter bursts  to be honest with you because you’re jumping in jumping out , that inconsistency, you find then the kids aren’t bringing in their form on the Monday and so they’re missing the worksheets or they’re not bringing in their book for the novel and they’re bringing in folders – it’s confusing for them so just bringing in... having vocabulary programme for  six weeks now and it’s going to be four class periods , I think that would work much much better to be honest with you.. I know there’s the logic behind it but I think just doing more concentrated works much much better.
(Appendix D cont’d)

Interviewer: So then you have any other information about the programme or your experiences...

Teacher: I found it hugely beneficial for kids from disadvantaged groups because their access to literature is minimal – they don’t even look at the paper, they barely read websites you know, so to just get things down for them, show how important language can be, that was hugely beneficial to them and to show them how language operates is hugely beneficial for them, I think it’s giving them a platform so hopefully as the next couple of years progress before the exam they can ready to perform to their ability in the exam situation. So that would be my overall impression.

End
Interviewer: Everything is anonymous, as in we’re going to use the recording and everything just to transcribe the data so everything that’s said and then there’ll be no names or schools on anything written down.

Teacher: Perfect

Interviewer: Ok so is that alright?

Teacher: That’s perfect

Interviewer: Ok so the first question, so this is just a list of questions just to structure the uh, the interview. So how did you find the programme overall?

Teacher: I found it a very, incredibly well thought out programme. I found that we had, I suppose because we have such now such a good relationship with [the SLT] and obviously now with [her assistant] that, the cooperation is very good and it’s so professional and because of the relationship that we have with them there was a lot of very positive energy around rolling out the programme. It was great that all the staff knew about it because [the SLT] came and made a presentation to staff about speech and language and communication needs, so they were very on board as well as a group so if we had to take them out of classes, oh no we didn’t for that sorry, so that when it interfered with any class, if we had to take extra time they were totally on board. Positivity then I would say rolled over and it was infectious and the students were really really, to use a colloquialism, up for it. If I met them in the corridor, “are we VEP today, when are we having it?” You know, they were really really enthusiastic about it. They loved the individual sessions, they loved the visuals, the structure of it, they loved getting their handouts, I suppose the whole organisation of it that it was part individual, part group work, and I suppose they felt they were engaged with it the whole time. And the fact that it was new of course, was, you know there was an element of I suppose uniqueness to it like that.
(Appendix E cont’d)

Interviewer: Ok, that’s great you kinda just focused there a bit on the relationship so do you think that was obviously a big part was it? Of the programme and the... was it collaboration was it between the teacher...

Teacher: Co-operation ... collaboration between staff members themselves and between ourselves, and ye obviously and [the SLT] as the spearhead for all of that, yeah

Interviewer: Ok, great. And, X, what did you first think of the programme?

Teacher: I thought grammar, I thought wow that is fabulous. How are we going to sell this? So that was my initial reaction, yeah. Because I would be a grammarian as in I, my language background would be German, I teach German so.

Interviewer: So did you have a strong interest in that then?

Teacher: Yes, definitely, yeah..

Interviewer: Ok, so was it a positive initial reaction? To the...

Teacher: Oh absolutely! Yeah, yeah...

Interviewer: Ok, so you could see positive...

Teacher: I could see how it could fit in and how it could benefit yeah..

Interviewer: Ok great, yeah, and then I suppose going on from that, how did you feel the programme progressed then from your initial kinda thoughts? How did you feel it went? You know, progressed during the three months?

Teacher: It would have peaked at one stage, as in the level of interest of the students and enthusiasm, and I suppose that waned towards the end because it was Oh yeah, it’s
just Miss.X... and you know, giving the class and yeah it’s it’s VEP, so obviously the uniqueness and the ... a natural peak and then a waning off.

What did you ask me again?

Interviewer: Just how did you feel the programme progressed?

Teacher: Yep. I suppose the individual units what I found myself in delivering it that I thought it was a little overambitious. I thought it was very well thought out and we were given fantastic pointers and structure for it, there was never enough time. I would have loved to have more time to deliver it. And I suppose for the pick-up of how individual students were getting on with being able to use what we were teaching them, for instance I wasn’t a part of that, the aftermath we’ll say, I didn’t have them for English class afterwards to be able to or for any of their subject classes to see whether it was impacting.

Interviewer: Ok so would you just be interested to see how it was impacting?

Teacher: Yeah... yeah

Interviewer: Ok great, and you said time there, so did you...

Teacher: I thought it was quite ambitious as to the amount and we moved very quickly on from one section to another, within our sessions I mean. But now, I don’t know what I’d cut out having said that, because it’s all important. I mean I did see the validity and the value of everything that was put into the programme so...

Interviewer: Ok, so do you think there’d be any like options to you know...

Teacher: I suppose the way...you know I was thinking about it, we’d done it two different ways, now we did it as a pilot programme last year with a group of students, then we rolled it out to all first years this year. I think possibly an extension of that would be to yes have it for all first years but over the whole year...
(Appendix E cont’d)

Interviewer: Over the year..

Teacher: Would be I suppose one way of maybe, I think, that we could get more value out of it. And then you wouldn’t have to change the integral parts of the programme.

Interviewer: Yep, ok, mhmm great. And you said the programme peaked, was there a certain time when it peaked or...

Teacher: I’d say about session 7, yeah. And then they were very relaxed in school, just from themselves... you know.. and their transition into secondary school... and ehm, I suppose their social relationships within their class groups and everything they’d all pretty much settled down by I suppose you know November... their midterms were over so yeah, I’d say it had peaked at that stage.

Interviewer: Ok, and how would eh the relationships influence...

Teacher: Well I suppose students who would maybe have been more reticent or reluctant to speak at the beginning then felt that they had more class cooperation and they would have spoken up a little bit more as it progressed, students feeling happier in the group.

Interviewer: Ok, great...and just on the overambitious part, so it’s the time management almost aspect of where you had to put so much into each session...

Teacher: Yeah

Interviewer: So that would have been maybe just to change that is it maybe over the year could be an option or ...

Teacher: Yeah yeah...mmm

Interviewer: Ok
Teacher: And we’re very conscious of the fact that we were taking up one quarter of their English course.

Interviewer: One quarter

Teacher: Yeah, they would have four English classes per week and a quarter of those were then taken up with... actually it was more than that... two classes per week ... so it was half..

Interviewer: Ok...

Teacher: Yep, so that would have been at a time where ehm now we... it is mixed ability and there was no changing to levels and there hasn’t been since, but it that could have happened during that time, the department could have decided to change and put it into maybe an honours or a faster moving honours or a slower moving honours..

Interviewer: The first year group

Teacher: Yeah, it could, it could have happened, now this is only our second year to do mixed ability and we have changed maths and Irish maybe after the midterm or coming up to Christmas and streamed them, so it could have been a question, eh, for the English department but with this I suppose that was not a fight.

Interviewer: Great ok ... and how do you feel the students benefitted then from the programme and if they did benefit how?

Teacher: They, yeah, the use of terminology to be able to understand the basic grammatical terminology. It would have helped their comprehension, the breaking down of words... prefix, root and suffix and that and would have improved their comprehension as well... use of dictionary worked great that they could access a tool as such to help them if they didn’t have help at hand from somebody else, the dramatic phrases to show them things didn’t always mean exactly what they were...
synonyms, antonyms, eh I suppose to create a bigger file as I call it in their brains, to access that, eh, I think I’ve nearly got every aspect of the programme.

Interviewer: You felt a lot of the aspects they benefitted from ..

Teacher: Yeah

Interviewer: Ok, and so do you think the students enjoyed the programme?

Teacher: Definitely, most definitely.

Interviewer: And in what way? What did they most enjoy or least enjoy?

Teacher: Eh, they did find it challenging when we came to what was it, session 10 where we give them the paragraphs, and they had to... the word detective, they did find that a bit challenging and I would have loved to have had more time to work on that with them.. ya know just to give them the confidence, ehm and I suppose the routines, to embed the routines as to what to look for and how to use that exercise , l’d have loved to ..

Interviewer: Sorta going back to time there again..

Teacher: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah, ok...and what then did they find the, what was the most enjoyable aspect for them? That you think...

Teacher: Yeah, I know one group they liked when we did the team teaching when myself and one of the other teachers taught, in fact two of the groups I would have team taught in and they liked that, they liked the dynamic...

Interviewer: The dynamic
Teacher: Between the teachers themselves, you know, as adults teaching in a room and then people taking turns, I mean at least teachers taking turns to teach them then... it was just something I suppose new for them.

Interviewer: ok, and was there anything like in particular in that dynamic that they might have, you know, benefitted from...

Teacher: I think that it created a more relaxed atmosphere for them.

Interviewer: Sure. Ok that’s great. And X, how did you find the support you got? In running the programme?

Teacher: Fabulous, absolutely fabulous, we always knew that if we had a question that we could ask it and that it would be addressed and [the SLT] had time for us every week to sit down so that was, that was really a benefit because we really wanted, we wanted to make sure that we were doing it right and to give it you know, the full, to I suppose exploit its full potential.

Interviewer: And did you find you did that? Exploit the full potential of the programme?

Teacher: I think so, I hope so.

Interviewer: I hope so too... That’s great, and then X, would there be anything you’d change about the programme?

Teacher: Just the timing, just what I said earlier, maybe roll it out over the whole year so that you could work on the individual aspects at different times and also embed them into your general English lesson plans as well.

Interviewer: Ok, and would you know how... like how would you do that then? Embed them into the...

Teacher: As in, use the routines, I suppose embedding the routines with the students maybe.
Interviewer:  Ok... is it like generalising those skills that they’re learning in the...

Teacher:  Using them in particular, remember we did the root suffix and here’s an example, of that in this lesson.. you know.. I suppose, ehm to be able to use it more. And then give it time then for them to absorb it maybe...

Interviewer:  Hmmm time to absorb it ... so would that be going back to the maybe intervening over the whole year... you know... to give them...?

Teacher:  I think so yeah..

Interviewer:  And do you think that would have been an issue or not? That they mightn’t have time to absorb it or...

Teacher:  I think so yeah...

Interviewer;  Ok... because it was so fast-paced..

Teacher:  Yeah..

Interviewer:  And you said they enjoyed the handouts, or they got handouts did they?

Teacher:  Yeah, the exercises that we printed off and also all of the powerpoint presentations, it was lovey for them to have the visual. And some of them as was indicated later did need the visuals for them to understand it

Interview:  So that was another we’ll we say positive part of the programme then

Teacher:  Definitely, yeah...

Interviewer:  And so we’ve said what you’d change about the programme, the timing and ...
Teacher: I think so yeah.

Interviewer: That’d be the main thing anyway then would it?

Teacher: mhmm

Interviewer: Ok so then just X do you have any other information to give about the programme or your particular experience working on it?

Teacher: Let me think...umm...

Interviewer: Of just even from your own teaching experience was...you know did you find it like..

Teacher: Well it was lovely actually to be handed the folder, it was lovely to have all your lesson plans done for you and to be told the timing and everything so yes that was an absolute em that was a pleasure to be handed something ready-made. And to have the back-up as well from [the SLT] yeah...

Interviewer: And were you happy with what was handed to you right away?

Teacher: Absolutely... now we did agree to some changes to it with [the SLT], you know we had our feedback chats afterwards and she was all interested to know what went well, what didn’t, what would you change and that, so we would have made minor adjustments along the way.

Interviewer: Minor adjustments

Teacher: Oh, minor yeah...just to exercises maybe

Interviewer: Ok, so I think that’s everything, we’ve kind of hit on all the different areas, is there anything else you’d like to add or is that about everything?

Teacher: No I think that covers it, I think...

End
Interviewer: So all of this is completely anonymous and confidential and nothing, like, goes outside this room.

Teacher: Yep, Ok.

Interviewer: So feel free to say anything positive or negative because we want to improve the programme, ok?

Teacher: Yep

Interviewer: So, I guess the first question is really just how did you find the programme overall?

Teacher: Well I found the program fairly useful overall like it is a twelve week programme so especially when you’re working with boys I felt twelve weeks was probably a little bit too long, it would have been better if it was condensed a little bit, I think maybe 8 weeks or else maybe not just twice a week, maybe once a week over seven or eight weeks just because the group of students I was working with were quite challenging and I just felt that time-wise it was difficult to deliver the programme effectively. But overall it is quite a useful programme, it’s just down to the time constraints when you’re trying to get a curriculum finished as well.

Interviewer: How do you mean, like can you explain a bit on how you meant in delivering the programme...

Teacher: Well there’s a couple of different lessons where you just have a forty minute class to get two lessons delivered or two lessons delivered over two 40 minute classes I meant, some of the lessons I felt just ran on, there was a lot more time needed for one or two of the different lessons. That’s really what I mean.

Interviewer: What did you first think of the programme when you got it?
Teacher: Initially I was kind of, because I’m a resource teacher and not specifically an English teacher I was a little bit, I suppose concerned that I might not be able to deliver the programme myself effectively. But basically I was only co-teaching with the main teacher, with the main English teacher, so I initially thought that when you see the folder and you see the lessons, this is going to be heavy work. And that it would be quite challenging work load. But once we actually got sat down together and went through the titles of the lessons and content it was actually quite good.

Interviewer: And so then as the programme progressed in a sense..

Teacher: Yeah we got into it as the programme progressed, it’s like everything, when it’s something new and you’re not sure of it you kind of, you nearly need to take the time to preplan and prepare what you’re going to do as opposed to just going straight in and producing the programme towards the students.

Interviewer: So I guess through the programme, how did you feel, like did you feel the students benefitted from it?

Teacher: I do think they benefitted from it, I do feel somehow that some students though maybe some weaker students did find it a little bit challenging. And that’s what I mean about earlier I was talking about earlier when I was talking about the time constraints, it would have been nice to have extra time or to maybe have the students targeted towards to have certain students targeted for more time. You know because the challenging, the more weaker students would always find it a lot more difficult to get work done at the same speed, or the same pace as the more able student.

Interviewer: So they found it challenging...

Teacher: There was at least four or five students out of the class that found it very challenging and obviously in turn then that kinda makes them lose interest and lack motivation if you find the work too difficult.

Interviewer: And I guess, with the challenging, can you say a bit more about this.
Teacher: Well I found that behaviour wise it was a little bit difficult to, not control, but manage some students and then there was absenteeism, with the same students that found it challenging, which meant a bit more difficult again because you may have moved onto a different lesson. And so if they’d missed the introductory part of lesson one then they obviously were kind of lost for the second part of the lesson and then you hadn’t really time to go back and pre-teach, you obviously did a recap at the end of each lesson and did and you did an introduction and a recap of what you’d done in the previous lesson but it was difficult then because they’d missed one lesson before or then they may have attended the second lesson and then may have missed the next lesson of week three say for example or week four so that was a little bit challenging to deal with.

Interviewer: And do you feel like, do you think they enjoyed the program?

Teacher: I think they enjoyed it, I think the main aspect of the program, the parts of speech and the grammar section I did think they found most challenging even though you’d initially start teaching a noun, what is a noun, and they all seemed to know ok a noun is a person, place or thing, but when you actually got into more detail on it I think they didn’t really, they only had the very basics, so they did find the parts of speech quite challenging but what they did seem to enjoy was the powerpoint images on idioms because it was obviously a lot more interesting, it was a more interactive one, people that found it a bit challenging were able to give a guess as to what they thought was happening in the picture or photo or image as opposed to ‘name this part of speech’ where as someone maybe couldn’t remember the different parts of speech.

Interviewer: But they were still able to...

Teacher: Yes, they were still, but obviously the programme is geared towards everybody but you try to do as much of it as you can and the student... you know but. I do think the idiom part, that they really enjoyed that bit.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that they, that would come to mind...
Teacher: That they enjoyed?

Interviewer: Yeah,

Teacher: I think they enjoyed the fact that it was a little bit of a break from their regular English class as well. And I suppose it was just a twelve week programme so it was an introductory to different parts of English you know as opposed to just focusing specifically on a novel for twelve weeks, there was a lot of scope in it, there were different activities that they could do. Like even in the first activity where you just represent how there are different types of speech with jenga blocks and they really enjoyed that because it was kind of hands on and using concrete materials, so that was actually fun for them as well. Now I have to say, as well, because it was my first time doing the programme with the mainstream English teacher I was a little bit apprehensive about introducing all the different activities because you kinda think great it’s fantastic, it’s a great idea but at the same time as a teacher you are a little bit apprehensive, will the class be too noisy, will the class actually participate, will everybody kinda roll in on this, you know? That’s kinda what’s the challenging part for the teacher to get their head around but I mean it is fun and it is worth doing the activities, but I guess it’s just you have to get your head around the classroom will be a bit nosier and some students may or may not enjoy the programme. There’ll always be a few that will be a bit more difficult or challenging.

Interviewer: So it sounds like you were a little bit unsure going into it.

Teacher: I was a little bit, yeah.

Interviewer: But then, how did you find the support throughout the programme then?

Teacher: I found the support was very good and I felt even the fact that we had the checklists and that we had basically [the SLT] was at our disposal at any time if we needed to ring her or, like we had weekly meetings so that did help, so she’d ask ‘How’d you get on yesterday’ for example, and if you felt that the lesson didn’t go particularly well it wasn’t like that you were really tested or you didn’t deliver the lesson well, it was just more about the feedback as to maybe we could improve the programme or
improve maybe how much time we allocate to delivering that lesson, as opposed to me personally feeling ‘I did not deliver this programme’ which is obviously very helpful. Because then it gives you more motivation for the following week and as it is a new programme it is challenging because I know for next year if I deliver this programme again I’ll know exactly what I’m doing, I’ll know even in terms of content that we’re using, I’ll be a lot more familiar to be able to see this worked well last year so I may use that again, or I might adapt my plans for the following week in different lessons.

Interviewer: So overall you found the support..

Teacher: Overall I found the support very very useful.

Interviewer: I sounds like it was a really interesting experience, is there anything that you would change about the programme.

Teacher: I think at the start I was saying initially that because I was working with a group of students, a group of boys in particular, it’s very difficult to maintain their attention all the time. And especially if you’re doing like, as I mentioned earlier the parts of speech, it’s very difficult to make grammar seem interesting to a group of 12-13 year old boys. So that’s why maybe if there were more activities around how can we introduce grammar in a more user-friendly and interesting way that might be more beneficial to students because it is quite daunting. Like we had lovely power points and we did have like we were able to bring in.. to get them to work in pairs and small groups and guess what words they should put in for the different part of speech, but it is still quite challenging to make that area sound interesting to boys you know. So maybe that area could make maybe focus more information or more resources for activities around making some of the lessons interesting and also I think I spoke with some of my other colleagues as well and they just felt that the 12 weeks was a little bit long, that maybe it if was 8 weeks, twice a week for 8 weeks as opposed to twice a week for 12 weeks because it was quite challenging coming up to the last few weeks and plus because it was towards Christmas time there was a little bit of absenteeism for the last month and you just wanted to get the programme
fully delivered then and you didn’t have a full class which was quite unfortunate then for the last few lessons. But other than that I think it went well. I think it’s good to target first years because they come in straight away, I think they’re more willing to go with the programme then, as opposed to if you leave it to second or third year. But obviously it’s mainly first year. I do know some, like I had used this programme with some international students that are in second and third year that are exempt from doing Irish so I’d like to use this programme with them because obviously their English isn’t at the same level as a native speaker. So it’s quite useful across the board for other students. Which I think is very helpful then because you know it’s an extra resource for teachers that need to kind of give extra English grimes or tuition to students that are non-native speakers.

Interviewer: And is there anything else about the programme that you would change, that you were, like if you were to implement it again next year, say?

Teacher: I don’t think so, I think mainly just as I said, the time allocation and also just to vary the lesson material for certain parts of speech or certain activities within it. Like I did find it a very useful programme overall and I definitely think it benefitted the students. Some of the weaker students or less able students did find when they were able to do certain parts of the programme it did give them motivation to continue on with the programme and I think the mainstream English teacher found it useful as well because it kind of went hand in hand with what she would have been doing in her weekly plan in English anyway but it just targeted more specifically and I suppose the activities that went hand in hand were kind of useful… as opposed to using the text book all the time because we did have the powerpoint images. I think actually what we found very useful was the fact that the blue booklet basically had everything. The targets were already there set for you so you put them at the start of the class and say ‘this is what we’ll do today’ it kind of focused you as a teacher as well that you kind of knew this is exactly what we’re doing now and once the students then were aware of what we were doing it was better for them, they kind of knew what we were actually going to be learning that day, as opposed to ‘today we’re just going to do grammar’ which you may say in your mainstream English
(Appendix F cont’d)

class. It was very targeted I felt, which was quite good. So overall I don’t really think there’s anything else I’d change in the programme.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that comes to mind about the programme that you’d like to flag up for us or about your experience in working in the programme?

Teacher: Well, I think I really did enjoy it but as I said at the start initially I was a bit apprehensive because I’m not a mainstream English teacher, like I’m qualified in resource and I have a background in languages, in German in particular, but I suppose I did find it is a useful programme overall, I’m just trying to think in terms of anything else. I suppose you could, like I did like the time that we had between September and Christmas but I guess if it’s a bigger school with more students in the first year group, or maybe if you wanted to target a specific group of first year students that find they have more difficulty in English then it may be useful for that, or if you wanted to target maybe some schools have streaming so a better able group may also find it beneficial because it would be very challenging for them as well. Overall I just felt it was very useful so I don’t really think there’s anything else I’d change, Possibly just as I said with a different school they may decide to use the programme after Christmas, between Christmas and February or Christmas and Easter.

Interviewer: And anything about the way, about the service provision or about the working in...

Teacher: I actually found it quite good, the way I was working with a mainstream teacher as well, you didn’t feel on your own. I mean, that was obviously essential to delivering the course effectively because you had two teachers so it was co-teaching essentially or team teaching which was very useful. So for example I might have felt a little bit more confident teaching one part of the course or one lesson and I might have said to the mainstream teacher ‘I’d be more confident teaching this instead of...’ Or for example, lesson 3, someone else may have felt more confident teaching, so that’s what I did find that useful. Because obviously the mainstream teacher has the background in language and in English.

Interviewer: You could really work together...
Teacher: Yes and I think as well in terms of support, not just in delivering the course but also in delivering, making sure the course went smoothly, classroom management was obviously a lot better as a result of having two teachers instead of one because we did have I think about 22 students and as I said there were a few that were a little bit challenging because there was obviously students with learning difficulties within that class group so they needed a little extra attention, so from that point of view it was important to have a second teacher to help those students so they don’t fall behind, or while the lesson is being delivered and then then lose motivation and kind of feel upset in themselves that they weren’t able to complete the work completely. And I also thought the homework, there was a small bit of homework recommended every night, and I felt that was useful too because it kind of followed through on what we’d actually learnt. Now the homework wasn’t extremely taxing in anyway, it was just a follow through on what they’d actually started and, like we’d have always have given them the last few minutes to start the work and go around and see anybody who had difficulty, make sure we’d target those students and helped them with the homework so that they were at least able to fill in some part of the worksheet.

So I felt overall it was very well put together in terms of you had [the SLT] there if you needed help, you had a mainstream teacher if you needed extra assistance, and you also had your handouts and everything produced on, your powerpoints and everything produced on USB so you could take that home in an evening yourself and look through if you wanted to. So overall that was it really. It was very useful.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you’d like to say?

Teacher: I don’t think so, I think I’ve covered most of what I was thinking of actually saying all also. Just as I said, maybe it is beneficial for other students that don’t have English as a first language, because it is quite, the programme is quite concise while at the same time there is scope for having your own extra lessons too if you wish to make it longer. Like as I said, it’s just a targeted programme for 12 weeks but that could be expanded on or you could work at a slower pace for students that don’t have English as a native language.
(Appendix F cont’d)

Interviewer: Ok great, well those are all my questions

End
Appendix G: Transcript Participant 4

Transcript Participant 4

Interviewer: Thanks a million for doing this with us. We just want to find out your experience of implementing the programme, so both positive and negative. So it’s just for us to find out the good and bad points so we can improve the programme or, you know, [the SLT] can improve for the future. Ok?

Teacher: Ok

Interviewer: So the first question we have, this is just a list of a few questions just to structure it, so how did you find the programme overall?

Teacher: Really beneficial, the girls engaged with it, they enjoyed it, which I always feel is kind of the first hurdle to get over with something when you’re teaching the girls or any kids, if they enjoy it they tend to take something away from it. It was different, which was nice, it’s always nice to have a little bit of a challenge in class and kind of do something new, overall it was kind of, it was, I don’t feel it was once I actually got into it it was kinda taxing or any additional workload on top bar a little bit of photocopying and that kind of stuff, but it so it was easy in that sense. It was actually just coming to grips with actually delivering it and after that I found it was very doable.

Interviewer: And you said once you got into it, so was it...

Teacher: Once I got the first or second week out of the way it was kind of, because we were team teaching as well so...

Interviewer: Oh so were you on a team?

Teacher: Yeah, myself and the coordinator [from the school board] were team-teaching together. So that was the first time I’d ever done anything like that as well so once I got the jitters out of the way it was grand. So it was a combination of team-teaching plus delivering the course for the first time as well so.
Interviewer: So it was all new kind of...

Teacher: Yeah, so it was all new ground for me yeah, personally.

Interviewer: And you found it a challenge as well, so was it challenging to do ... was it the new part of it that was challenging? Or.

Teacher: It was... cause I missed out on the course that they gave at the start of the year

Interviewer: Oh the training?

Teacher: I was in Brussels you see with the school group so I came back and had to kinda catch up really quickly so for me I missed out on the first little introduction but when I came back then and [the SLT] actually sat down and explained the rationale behind it and everything like that I was grand.

Interviewer: Ok so did you get the same amount of training then?

Teacher: Yeah, I got exactly the same amount, yeah yeah but I just got a little bit later, so everybody else was talking about it and planning and what-not and I hadn’t a clue what was going on for about a week but once I had that with [the SLT] and once I went in and started doing it then it was grand. It was probably just more so my nerves than anything else to be honest.

Interviewer: Oh of course, definitely. And X what did you like first think of the programme when you were given it?

Teacher: I thought ‘Fantastic’ because it’s something that we’re always complaining about, the kids’ vocabulary is terrible and I’ve taught all over the country, I’ve taught in different school systems, I’ve taught in schools that would you know not be DEIS schools where the kids there’d be a higher expectation of what they’re able to do and vocabulary in general is terrible all over the country, because they’re not reading, they’re not really practicing their writing that much, so to actually be able to do
something to improve that and their skills in actually dealing with new words and stuff like that I just thought straight away it was a fantastic idea because I had noticed as an English teacher that vocabulary was very poor.

Interviewer: And would you think that would be like, for most teachers would notice that or was it just you particularly...

Teacher: Every English department I’ve ever taught in it’s something that we’ve kind of lamented was the fact that their vocabulary was generally poor. Now we do have some students who are great readers or great communicators and their vocabulary would, you know, it would be impressive, but the vast majority of students I would have considered it to be poor.

Interviewer: And then X, when you said when you got into it, into the swing of it how did you feel the programme progressed?

Teacher: I kinda noticed a slight little bit of a disjoint in it but that was more so too because of how we were doing it. So I would take one session a week with the coordinator [from the school board] and the coordinator would take another with one of the student teachers so they were doing things and then I had to kind of liaise with them and follow on so there was a little bit of disjoint there then..

Interviewer: Ok so you did one session..

Teacher: And somebody else did the other, and I was communicating through the coordinator so there was, for me I just felt at times I kind of... was going in blind on some occasions but that I don’t think it was a fault of the course, it was more so on how we handled it.

Interviewer: Do you think that was because like it was paired?

Teacher: No, no ... like the team teaching? Or?
Interviewer: Yeah

Teacher: No, no the team teaching I think worked fantastically, it was just the way that we were actually split, the two sessions were split like that so I, if I was, if I had to do it again next year I’d want to, I’d maybe, I’d love to team teach it again I think that worked well, but I’d want to do all the sessions myself with them, or you know, just continuity, and just for myself, being able to walk in knowing exactly where they are because I kind of, when I walked in I didn’t know which individual kids weren’t getting something or whatever, so just for to be able to walk in and say “She needs a little bit extra work or a little bit extra attention or whatever, that’s where I felt I was kind of going in a little bit blind sometimes.

Interviewer: And, ok, so that makes sense

Teacher: Yeah yeah

Interviewer: And do you feel the students benefitted from the programme?

Teacher: I said this to Miss X and few other people over the year, that they were actually in regular English class, they were throwing stuff back at me that they had learned during the programme when we were doing reading comprehensions or poetry and they didn’t know a word some of them were actually thinking, you know if there was a prefix or a suffix they were actually “oh we did this before” and they were trying to work them out or sound them out. Now not a lot in terms of you know the strategies cause you know we didn’t have a lot of time to do mind maps or word maps or stuff like that in class, but then you know you’re into another section but they were using other strategies, like when we were doing syllables in poetry, rhythm and rhyme and all that kind of stuff they were doing the jaw drop and the clap and all that kind of stuff to actually count syllables and they were then able to use that throughout haiku poetry and stuff. So they were..

Interviewer: So it was like a generalisation was it of what they were learning across classes?
Teacher: Through English anyway they were able to in different areas of study they were able to apply it practically...so yeah. That, it impressed me actually when I was doing stuff in poetry, like alliteration and rhyme and that kind of stuff, that they were able to say it before I had started. Which usually isn’t a guess. So, yeah, it benefitted them definitely yeah.

Interviewer: Would that be the main, kinda the main benefit of the programme overall?

Teacher: Eh, one of... another thing that I noticed was their ability to deal with new words. Was that they were actually, in a few cases, not the majority, but in a few cases they actually saw the practical benefit, the practical applications of what they’d learned, the strategies and whatever and they were able to, if they came across a new word, guess or have a go at it whereas before it would have been “sir, what’s this” maybe, there’s less of that now. Which you know, is because when I said earlier about the vocabulary being poor, that you’re usually dealing with a lot of ‘what does this mean’ ‘what’s that?’ whatever, and they’re treating you like a dictionary more than anything else. So for them to be able to do it themselves great, yeah.

Interviewer: Oh brilliant, and you just mentioned time there, would you have liked more time? To implement some parts? Or what way would...

Teacher: It felt rushed at times definitely did feel very rushed at times even when we were discussing this as a department we were just saying spread it out over the course of the whole year or something like that or you know, timetable it once a week or something like that, spread it out over the year rather than, you know, twice a week for a couple of months because we were trying to get stuff done especially towards the end where those, I think the section 10, 11 and 12 are fairly heavy and fairly jam-packed...and just trying to tick all the boxes there which you know usually is something I don’t like to do but for the sake of this I was trying to make sure everything was done and I don’t think some things were getting as much attention as they deserved or needed, especially towards the end.

Interviewer: Some things...
Teacher: Ehm, especially section 12, sections 11 and 12. That we were kinda focused on ye coming in to the individual assessments with the girls and we were just trying to get things kind of squared away. So there was a little bit of a rush, but even over the course of the whole year you knew that you had two sessions to get a section done and it was a little bit of a race, it was a little bit of a race at times.

Interviewer: And so how did you find the support that you got in running the programme, X.

Teacher: The training at the start of the year that I got from [the SLT] was brilliant, I mean, going in from a position where I hadn’t a clue what was going on I think within 5 or 10 minutes of that…, of the initial training session, I came in on the second session of training so I had a good idea then after about a couple of minutes but then when I went back in the second day and got the first half of the course… just completely made sense to me and then [the SLT] was available I think it was every Tuesday she was in here, Ms X is communicating with her by email so it there was anything at all we needed to get in contact with, yeah we were well supported and we were well supporting within the department as well. If there was one teacher in particular who was making amendments to the power points and stuff like that were provided, you know if she felt there was an area that we didn’t have enough she was adding stuff to it and we were doing the same. If I felt that there was something that I needed added I’d add it and share it among each other.

Interviewer: And you felt empowered to do that, we’ll say, to make amendments and everything like that.

Teacher: Yep, yeah.

Interviewer: Great

Teacher: No we didn’t feel there was an issue there at all. It was more so kind of making sure that everything was kinda represented in the power points and that there was an activity for everything, basically.
Interviewer: And was everything outlined ok, outlined for ye in the programme, was that all ok, the activities and all that kind of...

Teacher: Yes, oh the orange folder was brilliant, in terms of it was a little bit tricky to follow and a bit, you know you’ve seen the size of it like, it’s...

Interviewer: Actually haven’t

Teacher: It’s a bit massive, like, there’s lots of pages in it and there’s a lot of stuff that we wouldn’t have used in it but the resources that were in there, once we found them, were great. SO it was just a little bit kind of...

Interviewer: Once you found them...

Teacher: Once you found them, so the book, the orange folder itself was maybe a little tricky to navigate but once we got in there it was grand.

Interviewer: Ok, great, perfect. And X do you think the students enjoyed the programme?

Teacher: Definitely, yeah. The way we treated it was a little bit different to a regular English class in that it was kind of it was mostly discussion with little bits, with bits of pair work and written work in between. It was more so the students sharing their understanding of what was going on and showing, demonstrating that they were able to apply the strategies and use what they learned. So it was a noisy class, but it was a good class. They definitely enjoyed it, but that’s English in general I think that English is a noisy class, but in this case it was noisier than usual but that was good.

Interviewer: Noisier than usual...

Teacher: As in like we would have to get a certain amount of written work done in a regular English class but we focused more so on their understanding and accuracy in the sessions than we did in a regular English class.
Interviewer: And was there anything like in particular you think the students might have enjoyed? Or not...

Teacher: The one thing that really stands out was at the end I revised all the strategies that they could use if they didn’t …if they came across a new word that maybe they weren’t familiar with and they didn’t understand or wanted to find out what it was and I think I went through maybe in one class I went through maybe six or seven different strategies that they could use and everybody at one stage they had to come up to the top of the room and demonstrate one of the strategies, either I think they were like charades, there was using the board to do a mind map or a word map, acting it out, describing it without actually using the word, that kind of stuff, and they loved that, they all loved getting up and being able to show and it was voluntary but in the end everybody got up to do it. So got up performing, they love showing how great they are so yeah...

Interviewer: Was that part of the programme? That final section?

Teacher: It was kind of revising the techniques, it didn’t actually... I don’t think that it actually stipulated that they should actually demonstrate but I think it was beneficial for them to show it and practice, and they enjoyed it again..

Interviewer: Yep, brilliant, ok. And so X what would you change about the programme and why..

Teacher: As I’ve already said, the time, the amount of time I think ideally I would like to see it done over the course of a year continuously, so once a week for a year with the continuity of having the same teacher. I think the team teaching element that we used was great, it was really good because if we were doing written work one teacher could go around and look at the written work which the other could kind of gauge aurally what was going on. And it was just, we just had different ideas on how to do things as well so I think everybody was able to engage with one or the other of us.

Interviewer: Two heads is always better than one isn’t it you know for things
(Appendix G cont’d)

Teacher: Well look I wouldn’t be arrogant and say that I know everything so it was actually great to have somebody in there who had a different understanding and a different way. So we were...

Interviewer: Who had been trained as well...

Teacher: Yeah, so we were able to hit every student basically I feel. So there was the time, I’d like to see the team teaching continue, and just the continuity of having the same teacher all the time or the same teachers all the time. I said the orange folder as well, like I said that I think was a bit too detailed so maybe a kind of condensed or compressed version of that would be more useful. It was kind of- it was a lot to get through to be honest.

Interviewer: Yeah, that’s great. And so do you have any other information to give about the programme and your experience working on it?

Teacher: Other that what I’ve said already, just em what I felt was useful was just to add in some things that I would have done myself, I mean I use traffic lights just to gauge what were they following, what was going on, were they able to apply it, did they understand it...

Interviewer: Traffic lights...

Teacher: You know, you have three cards on a bit of a, on a string, so red... I’m trying to remember what colour traffic lights are... red yellow and green ... green I completely understand this and I can use it, orange I’m unsure, and red I don’t know how to use this . and they’d, nobody looks at each other, they’re looking at me, they hold up their cards and I’m able to see who maybe needs a little bit of intervention or something like that .

Interviewer: Is that something you use in class?
Teacher: That’s something I use in class as well so I think just not to be ... just to be a little open to using your own techniques in there as well. Especially if you know the group really well. And you know what works for them... cause they don’t really , if they don’t get something they’re not really willing to say ‘I don’t get this’ but if it’s anonymous or you know sorta you’ve got the traffic lights you could have the ticket in or the ticket out system you know you could have as well , just an anonymous way almost for them to communicate how they’re getting on, especially with a class like that where it wasn’t very written and I didn’t have lots of stuff to pick up and correct so it was good to actually have them admit it and for me to be able to work on it then.

Interviewer: Ok so that’s great, and you have anything else then to add to what we’ve said previously? We’ve got some great information in there anyway.

Teacher: Well if you’re happy then I’m happy. I can’t think of anything else that I’d like to add there, no.

End
Appendix H: Transcript Participant 5

Transcript Participant 5

Interviewer: So everything is confidential and anonymous and everything so and we’re just going to use this as a backup so.

Teacher: Yeah, no bother

Interviewer: So thanks for coming here today, we really appreciate it so we just want to find out more about your experience carrying out the vocabulary programme so everything is confidential and anonymous as I said and please feel free to tell us both the good points and bad points because we need to know both sides of it so we can develop the programme.

Teacher: Sure, perfect

Interviewer: Perfect, we’ll get started then. So first off, how did you find the programme overall?

Teacher: I really enjoyed it, I have to say, because for years I’ve been giving out about first years coming in not knowing nouns, not knowing verbs, just basic rudiments of the language. And I felt that this was an opportunity… the classes are never homogenous, they’re coming from different primary schools, so at least this was an opportunity for me to have a programme that was really well laid out that I could address some of those issues that some knew and some didn’t. And at least I felt at the end of it well they’ve all been exposed to this now, so the foundations should be laid so that I could move on from there instead of just giving out about the fact that they didn’t all know about it, at least now I felt like I was doing something.

Interviewer: You mentioned that it was really well laid out, so how did you feel, what was your first impression?

Teacher: Now my first impression was that I was very scared of it because its new and it was a change and teachers as a whole aren’t good with change, so I felt a little uncertain of my own ability because even though I can analyze Shakespeare to death sometimes I
myself have to think ‘preposition, what’s that again?’ you Know, so I was kind of a bit uncertain about it but no I have to say the actual way the programme was laid out was so user friendly and so compact in that one led onto the other led onto the other, it was nicely laid out and the blue folder was brilliant, the objectives were there, I knew exactly what I needed to do and when I needed to have it done by so the guidance was great, loved it.

Interviewer: Guidance, yeah. So, the training that you did with [the SLT], how did you find that?

Teacher: Brilliant, I would have like a little bit more of it but sure we always want a little bit more

Interviewer: Oh ok

Teacher: Timetabling and whatnot wasn’t suitable to that, but it really was very straight forward, [the SLT] was great, her support throughout, was brilliant. She came in once a week checked in with us which was nice because you kind of felt, not in a bad way, but you kind of felt that you were being monitored so there was no opportunity for slacking, you could have.. I could go off on a tangent sometimes but I knew at the back of my mind that I had to report to [the SLT] the next week so there was a kind of momentum to it.

Interviewer: So you saw it as a positive.

Teacher: Definitely

Interviewer: So how did you feel then from the start, how did you feel the programme progressed?

Teacher: Now this is where it all goes a little pear shaped, the programme I loved, the monitoring I loved, the timescale I didn’t. I would have rathered a full year, I would love to do this programme throughout all of first year. I just felt there was too much
pressure on us to have it done within the twelve weeks. I found that I was rushing it
too much because there was so much to get done...not so much to get done but I
would have rathered it expanded over the year. I would have rathered have a little
bit of opportunity to, for them to come back to me and a little bit longer group work.
I was just always clock-watching. I never felt that...that’s not my way of teaching
anyway so it wasn’t something I was very used to or very familiar with. I felt as well it
was a little bit repetitive, I could understand why because it’s a mixed ability class, I
understand you need an element of repetition for the weaker students, they need
that reinforcement and repetition. But because it’s a mixed ability class you have the
high flyers who are sitting there going ‘we did this last week...we’re doing this
again..’ and as soon as you hear that whiny tone coming into some of the students
you know you’ve lost them so I don’t know, I could see how it would be brilliant for a
small JCSP class or a speech and language class, I don’t know did it work brilliantly...
no it worked very well, don’t get me wrong but I don’t know was it perfect for mixed
ability first years.

Interviewer:  Ok, and was there certain areas of the programme you would have wished to expand
on more than others or...

Teacher: I would have liked to expand on the whole classification element of language, I
thought that was really interesting, word detective Yes, spider diagrams – too
repetitive. If they see another spider diagram coming at them they’re going to turn
into spiders themselves...really. Because I think as well that could be the school’s
issue too, we had a study week where we taught them how to use spider diagrams
for study and then it just happened to be that the next week of the VIP was spider
diagrams so it was like two weeks constant spider diagrams...and then I think later on
in week 11 and 12 we came back to spider diagrams again. I was like I’m going to
crawl up the wall myself because I’m turning into a spider...
But in the classification I really liked, the little kind of techniques- the last couple of
units I thought were really good where you can give them a little piece of writing and
all the different ways of figuring out the meaning of the word. We were using what
they had learned in actual reading – so they were applying it. I think a couple of more
(Appendix H cont’d)

classes of that. Because I think that some of them were only just beginning to get it and to get confidence in themselves and then it was “Alright well done, and we’re done!” . I know you’re thinking, but sure they’re going to be using this in their reading anyway but I’m just not going to say it.

Interviewer: No no that’s perfect like, we need to know exactly how it’s going because it’s different on the ground when you’re actually carrying it out..

Teacher: Yeah, I really do value the programme, I really do, I just felt it was a bit too repetitive for a mixed ability first year class.

Interviewer: So do you think the students benefitted from it overall?

Teacher: I do, I do. Definitely I do, because it allowed the weaker students to develop strategies and develop techniques. I think also it raised their confidence a lot. Because the real drive, I think all of us really drove to try it, attempt it, don’t be afraid of it, and they were really becoming much more comfortable with reading and not being afraid to be wrong. As well as that, they liked the classifications, subordinates superordinates and all of those, was I think something new to the high flyers and it gave the high flyers an opportunity to show off... I don’t know if that’s educationally sound, but it did give them an opportunity to show what they knew, and again, be comfortable with reading, which was lovely for first years coming into secondary school – they’re so frightened and so afraid that at least it gave them something that they knew... So they were comfortable with and they were happy with that. So it gave a little bit of something... I suppose they were all cheerful, but it gave them a little bit of something that...

Interviewer: That actually leads only our next question, do you think the students enjoyed it?

Teacher: At the beginning yes, I think the last maybe, definitely the last unit, maybe the last two units was too repetitive for them. Maybe they’d had enough at that point, plus I think they knew it was coming to an end so they were..
Interviewer: So it was the end of school...

Teacher: Exactly...‘we’ve had enough of this’

Interviewer: Ok, so do you think that would have carried on if you extended it?

Teacher: I think if they had known it was going to go on they would have kept the momentum going.. it was just that they knew there was a deadline and they knew they were finishing and they tapered off...their interest level and their enthusiasm tapered.

Interviewer: Ok so do you think was there anything specifically that their interest waned in? Or was it just in general?

Teacher: I think it was just in general.. I think so... that’s just the vibe I got from them.

Interviewer: Yeah, so as you mentioned before, just the timing and things like that is there anything that you’d change about the programme and why?

Teacher: This could be more our school issue rather than your programme issue. I would have rathered have two classes myself, I felt the division between two teachers, and the other teacher is my best friend so it didn’t matter, but I just felt neither of us got a momentum with the class because you never finished a unit. At least I started and X finished and she never saw the beginning and I never saw the end if you know what I mean. I know that’s a school timetabling thing but I think for both classes it should be the same teacher. The one teacher I think is easier than two. Because they’d kinda come into me going ‘are we meant to be with Ms X oh no that’s tomorrow’ and you had about that 30 seconds of confusion of what we were doing today. Where as if it was the one teacher it would be easier to follow through.

Interviewer: Is there anything else?

Teacher: No, I thought it was great. I really did think it was great and I think it identified girls that might have slipped under the radar. Which, I love if it even Identifies one that
might have slipped. Because we’re great for picking up the very very very weak, but maybe the girls that verbally could be fantastic or bold have a tendency to disguise their weaknesses through their verbal interactions in class that you might miss their weaknesses in understanding, comprehension and literacy and stuff, I think that was great, but it did kind of flag people that you might have missed.

Interviewer: So you think it really benefitted them

Teacher: Definitely, definitely, yep, huge benefit.

Interviewer: You saw, could you see the effects of it?

Teacher: I think so, it would be nice to see later on, I mean really I’d love if ye could all come back and test them at the end of the year to see have they continued to use the strategies and is their reading the same as it’s scoring now, has it gone up or gone down. That would... you probably can’t do that, but as part of it, I’d love if it was given maybe three months break and then re-test and see, and see has the momentum been kept up..

Interviewer: Has it continued to keep helping them.

Teacher: Yeah yeah

Interviewer: Yeah, that makes sense... Do you have any other information that you want to give us about the programme and your experience working on it?

Teacher: I don’t think so I’ll probably think of something now tomorrow... umm I don’t think so, as in just the timing. Timing was the one thing that just didn’t, that got me...

Interviewer: Yep so timing, continuity...

Teacher: Yep, continuity...
Interviewer: Yes, 

Teacher: Exactly, those are my two big issues. Other than that I really did think it was valuable. .. Can I see it going past first year, no ... I don’t know... I just , maybe that’s me, with the mixed ability general classroom situation No, but maybe for a JCSP definitely you could do the whole three years.

Interviewer: Sorry, JCSP...that’s..

Teacher: Sorry, that’s Junior Cert Schools Programmes, that would be kinda of the weaker students who get that extra resource I suppose, they have extra strategies and a programme to do to boost up their achievement in junior cert... I think it would be great throughout the three years for them. I just think that even the pictures and the power points and stuff come second year for the high flyers as I call them, it just kind of...

Interviewer: But you think for first years it’s beneficial...

Teacher: Yes, definitely.

Interviewer: That sounds good. I think that’s everything, you’ve given us great information there now. Now it’s great to see

Teacher: different perceptions of things.

Interviewer: you really need to learn, to see how it works with a group of kids

Teacher: I’d be much more comfortable doing it next year, because as I said, I really did doubt my own ability and understanding to do it, and I felt the big orange folder, God I have to do all of this and it kind of came to unit 4 or 5 before I realised No, I don’t have to do all of this , just take what works and try what doesn’t work you know, it was a bit intimidating, but yeah , I’d certainly be more comfortable with it next year.

Interviewer: Ok great, thanks a million!

End
Appendix I: Transcript Participant 6

Transcript Participant 6

Interviewer: So thanks for meeting with us today, so we just want to get an overall, your experience on implementing the programme. So everything that you say is confidential among the three of us and we just would really like to get both positives and negatives of the programme just for future implementation for our study.

Teacher: Ok, right.

Interviewer: So our first question is how did you find the programme overall?

Teacher: Yeah I think it was enjoyable, I think there’s a lot of aspects of it that I think are really important for your basic English, so I found in teaching the basics it was good.

Interviewer: And you found it enjoyable overall, was there anything...

Teacher: Yeah, I think it was enjoyable over all, yeah

Interviewer: Ok, and what did you first think of the programme?

Teacher: Is this myself or...

Interviewer: When you were introduced to it, yeah

Teacher: I thought it was fine, I think we were introduced now I think for the first time anyway, you know your first time doing anything it’s a little, it’s just trying to get it right, you know? I did find I spent a lot of time on it prior to my classes just so that I could have it well, fresh and you know, that I knew it myself before I went to teach it.

Interviewer: And how did you feel as the progressed?

Teacher: I thought that, I thought it was introduced quite well, I thought the earlier sessions were good, I thought there was enough in it. I suppose I’m teaching the, well the
students that I was teaching are, would be very low literacy levels so I found aspects of it were maybe even wording was a little higher than the kids I was teaching it to. So in that it involved a lot of me having to change, you know some of the information that was given to us, just so that I could target it, speak to them at a lower level.

Interviewer: And you said you changed it...

Teacher: We were given some power points so I felt in some of them that there weren’t maybe enough information on them and I did feel that I had to make up a good bit

Interviewer: Yourself

Teacher: Myself, which is grand because I think you have to adapt the programme for the kids that you’re teaching and I did feel that there were a lot of options within each section, within the folder itself, but I think for the time, when it’s your first time doing it that took a lot of time because you almost had to read through the vast majority of it to find a session that suited the kids that I was teaching. I didn’t find always that the information that we were given at the beginning was what I would have liked to use within the classes. But then it was said to us that we would have to adapt it ourselves, so that was grand but it was time consuming.

Interviewer: And do you feel the students benefitted from the programme?

Teacher: Yeah, I do think so, I think even quite close to the end even you know they’d have the idea that if they were stuck on something they would ask. So I think they understood that no that is like, I think it’s the 10th act, the 10th thing that you would actually do. And so it kinda felt like you know, in class I kept bringing it up and ‘No, no you can’t ask, what else are you going to do? What else is going to help you out?’ and I kept relating it back to exam situations where you can’t ask. And in actual fact a few of them are knocked out because you can’t use a dictionary and there’s no internet available so you really have to relate the information to the text around it, you know. Which I think is good, and I think it does make them more independent in
their thinking about the process. So I think that’s very, that would probably be the best thing I think..

Interviewer: And was there any specific content that you felt...

Teacher: I found the 9 parts of speech were very good. I found that especially because I teach a lot of learning support and we’re always talking about, and even with the seniors, we’re always talking about the use of adverbs and adjectives, how they’re more descriptive in language and I think once they knew what a verb is and you know, if they write a sentence and they know what a noun is, verb is, and how to make it a bit more interesting in giving more information about that and knowing ‘I’m looking for an adverb there’ or ‘I’m looking for an adjective’ and I found that it has actually really helped them that has helped yeah for certain..

Interviewer: How did you find the support you got in running the programme?

Teacher: Yeah it was fine, it was great, you know [the SLT] was there every Wednesday so there was, and I think as we went through the programme as a team ourselves we were very lucky that we have... the teachers involved in it were very focused in it and I suppose we did meet, we did discuss it and if I had a work sheet that I felt worked out for me then you know I’d give it to somebody else and it worked out, you know it was good. There was a lot of photocopying though so I would put that down as something that was time consuming I suppose.

Interviewer: And did you implement it on your own or were you doing it..

Teacher: I did it with a group with another teacher, but I also took it on with elements of it with a second year group and I also took it on with my fifth year group. I have taken on a new fifth year group and I actually thought it worked really well with the senior group. Even though I know that wasn’t part of what you know, the initial research that she was doing. But I just found it really structured them, I thought it was good, I thought it was good at a senior level.
Interviewer: Ok, that’s really interesting. And for the older group how do you think, why do you think it benefitted them?

Teacher: See, I think when they, I think maybe, I think if they were given the same information a couple of years ago they wouldn’t have had to do it again. So, but for this group they had never done it so I felt that their higher thinking because they’re that little bit older so the information that you were getting off it, they were retaining it maybe that little bit better, even though they’re still a very weak group. But it’s actually for now we’re working on essay writing to get compositions for leaving cert so they have to write a really good essay and I keep saying to them it’s not, it’s about using your words, even if you can’t spell them, you know, they can speak very descriptively so why wouldn’t you write descriptively. I actually found that very good and I did think that they, maybe I think that they were higher level thinking because they were that little bit older as well, I think they just got it more. So if I go to them, like I corrected some essays today and I know I could go back and say ‘well this area is good but it could be better, what do you think would make it better, how could you make it more descriptive?’ you know they would know, say to me ‘oh I’d use more adverbs or I’d use adjectives’ so you know I think that’s a really good thing and also the idea that if they’re getting closer to an exam, I think the idea of becoming more independent in your learning is something that I think really could be brought in again at this stage in fifth years for you know a learning support group. I do think it would be beneficial and sometimes you know, when they’re a little bit younger they sort of forget it if it isn’t implemented continuously. So I do try that, even with my second year group, I always say it, I always bring it back to ‘remember when we did this, can you remember a conversation we had about it’? And it does jog their memory and I try to say to them, it’s the same as reading a word, say it out loud, try to put it into a sentence, you know and in saying it out loud, it’s like following the guidelines. In saying it out loud, have you heard it before, can you remember a conversation we had about that word before?” and even, one point I would say about it is that for a learning support group I really do think it needs to be a lot more visual. I suppose maybe it’s the kids that I’m teaching, I do think that, and that’s what I try to do a little bit more, is introduce the power points with a lot more visual information. Because we are hitting a lot of dyslexic students as well and ‘see it said
Here’ and I did feel it lacked a bit like that. But even you know there was the one where you had knocking your head off the wall, you know those images, I put all of those onto a power point so we had great conversations about trying to match them up and they all had them cut out and we made games over them and there were like prizes and I tried to make it as fun as possible. Yeah but I think they did enjoy it...they probably like the treats too. I did like it, yeah.

Interviewer: Ok, that’s great and what would you change about the programme, apart from adding visuals, is there any else?

Teacher: I think going into it now the next time myself, I think I have a lot of work done in how I would have adapted it so I think going into it again, I’d have more time to maybe look at other elements that I could introduce, you know I was quite busy trying to adapt it myself this time, you know the way you always feel like ‘I could have maybe done that a little bit more extensively , you know..’ I do think some areas of it could be shorter, other areas could be longer, I think we were stuck for time and I think particularly being on such time restraint for the sessions and I know we had to have been for this round, I’m just thinking of my first year group that I work with X with, yeah some of it was just really hard for them, they really just are a very weak group and I think more time... I know X definitely spent more time on some areas than were allocated.

Interviewer: Do you have any other information about the programme and how you felt your experience of working with the programme? Anything else you can give us?

Teacher: Yeah, I do think, let me see, I do think that it could be established again at a senior level but I think that’s maybe for the English teachers or the learning support teams to do. But I definitely think if a student doesn’t know, I think elements of it could be reintroduced on a yearly basis, or maybe be extended a little bit so you know it’s not just for one slot first year. As I said it is forgotten if you don’t go back to it. Certainly the parts of speech are really important when it comes to essay writing and kids write essays in history, geography, English, Irish even. I know some of the lads now in another class were saying they found it really good because they do, I think they do
French, and I think they found it good learning their different nouns and verbs and just the idea that the language, identifying language was kind of the same..

Interviewer: And you felt that some parts were time consuming...so could you just maybe give us information on how you added to it or...

Teacher: Well, for certain I’m a firm believer in visuals and I did spend a lot of time... I know they were on...just trying to put everything into a powerpoint or to extend the powerpoints ... Sometimes when you opened a powerpoint you know they were in different sections and it was about putting them all into one power point and kind of .... But I did feel I did a lot of extra work on it. I think because I was working with a much weaker group so maybe some other teachers would not have spent as much ...maybe they didn’t need to..

Interviewer: But you kind of adapted it to what you needed.

Teacher: Yeah, I did have to...

Interviewer: Ok that’s great, that’s all our questions...

End
Appendix J: Transcript Participant 7

Transcript Participant 7

Teacher: Loved the programme, it suited me as well as a French teacher because there would be a huge emphasis on grammar. So I just found that, in fact it’s funny because I had met with a couple of the other English teachers prior to us being told about this VEP and we’d said we’d love to introduce a module of grammar into first year English anyway, And then this programme was developed and given to us. I thought it was a brilliant programme. Very very good. In fairness I had a very good class as well so it was...you know.

Interviewer: And what did you think at first, before you started the programme, what were your thoughts on it?

Teacher: Well, again, I wouldn’t be typical of your type of teacher doing this in that it’s not like history or something is my other subject – because my other subject is another language this all fitted in very well with the training I have in language and language acquisition skills, and breaking down words and the semantics and all the rest of it so I was happy about it. I was well up for it.

Interviewer: As the programme progressed, like in the middle of it how did feel about it?

Teacher: Toward the middle, well I know that the kids kind of were tired, right, what I would suggest, if you could... putting it over 12 weeks is fine but what I found difficult was taking two weeks of our two lessons out of our allotted 4 every week and doing VEP on either a Monday and Tuesday or Tuesday and Wednesday or whatever and then clicking back in to maybe poetry or whatever else we were doing in the classroom – that was difficult because it was difficult to pull the kids back and kids got confused, is it VEP day, is it ordinary day, and also I wanted my VEP to be done on a Monday when they were awake and bright but the downside of that is that if somebody is going to be sick a lot of the time with kids it’s a Monday or a Friday so really I suppose I should have geared it toward mid-week where you’d have gotten more, you know, maximum attendance.
Interviewer: Yeah, that makes sense. And do you feel the students benefitted from the programme?

Teacher: Absolutely, I mean I didn’t see any of their formal assessments or anything. I hope they have, I hope they now understand and adjective and a verb and a noun and an adverb and all the rest of it but I think that they did. Again I had a very strong academically strong class.

Interviewer: Yeah and could you explain to me the ways you think they benefitted? How did they benefit from it?

Teacher: OK if you take that quite a lot of the kids, and I’m talking there might be 4 or 5 might be foreign nationals, Lithuanian, polish, it was very important for them because how in language learning you’re learning one language then you’re acquiring a second and acquiring a third in their case, in a lot of times, and they need it broken down, so they absolutely loved the programme. They loved the fact that this is a noun, what does a noun do, of that’s a collective noun, that’s a proper noun, that’s a common noun...now I understand. And in fact it was all integrated into their Christmas test so that I was testing the VEP myself and I found that it was very very good for that, for the skills for them. For our own boys, they’re coming from national school and really I think it depends on their fifth class and sixth class teacher, whether there’s going to be an emphasis on literacy or what they...I think it’s a question of the curriculum of primary school...it’s so heavy. And so top heavy on the teacher to kind of figure out what’s important, what’s not important. I would definitely hope that we’re going back to this, this cutting up of the language. Because it’s only by doing that that students can get a real grasp of how to use language and the benefits of it. Like as I said to them one day, we were doing adjectives and another day then we were doing adverbs and talking to them then about adverbs I said to them then ‘right , these are words that generally end in –ly and they can add so much to your store of knowledge and your store of writing.’ They were like, yeah, ok, they didn’t really get it. And then I said ‘How did he eat his dinner’ and one of them said ‘with a fork’ and I said ‘ok, he ate it with a fork, how did he eat it, what way did he eat it, hungrily...how did he eat it? Longingly, happily...you know.” And
then they began to see “that actually that gives me more power over what I want to write” . And as I say to them “look, paper has never refused ink, you can write what you want, but you have got to write correctly and this programme will show you how to write correctly” and I think that it definitely made a lot of sense to the kids.

Interviewer: ok good. And do you think that they enjoyed doing the programme, the students?

Teacher: I think they loved the newness of it at the start, it’s like anything with kids that age, they love something novel, they love the idea that it’s a programme and they’re the ambassadors of the school that are doing it and there’s only a few schools in Ireland that have been chosen to do this, and this plamasing that goes on, and then they settle into it and then they’re happy and then they get bored. And that is whether you brought in a rocket scientist from NASA they’d still get bored because that’s what boys and girls that age do. You give them something it’s the world of immediate gratification, they will not wait for anything, they want it now , they want to understand it now and if you kind of say ‘we’re going over such and such’, ‘we’re going over the root, prefix, suffix...” whatever part of it you’re doing, “Aw do we have to do it again” or if we’re going back over that “Aww do we have to do it again”, and they get pretty annoyed at that , but again a lot of it would be down to the fact that they are a very strong group. Maybe if I had a weak group I would have worked at a much slower pace. As it is, I finished the programme and I don’t think that every class group would be able because there’s an awful lot in it, it’s very intense, the programme.

Interviewer: OK, and how did you find the support that you got in running the programme?

Teacher: Well I was paired with X another teacher in the school. She would come in for one class, generally on a Tuesday morning or sometimes a Monday, it would just depend on her timetable, my time table, well my timetable doesn’t really change but, depending on how busy she was and whatever. I found it great, I found her very supportive, I found [the SLT] came in every Wednesday morning at about 20 to 10 and kind of asked me ‘how’re you finding it? Any difficulties?” but look again, to be
honest with you, it was fairly, as a teacher it was fairly basic to kind of convey all of this, I didn’t find it difficult in the least but I think it is important to have a support network there. Again, if I were a maths teacher and an English teacher I might find this more difficult but I keep coming back to the fact that being a language teacher already this was manna from heaven, I loved this course.

Introducer: Ok, that makes sense. What would you change about the programme and why?

Teacher: Ok what I would do if I were you is I would not run it over 12 weeks, I think it’s too long, I would run it full on for 6 weeks. And what I would do is in a school like this where you have maybe three or four first year classes I might say ok we’ll do a module from September to midterm break, that’s about 6 weeks, then a module from midterm break up toward Christmas and maybe a week after because there’d be an awful lot that would have been lost, if you like. That was another thing about your course, when we were drawing to the close of it the kids were very tired, they wanted something different. So I would make it 6 weeks, and it’s a very intensive 6 weeks. I think that you manage by doing it at the start of the school year or after Christmas, one or the other. I think actually the start of the new year was a great idea because it’s getting them into a very good habit. It’s getting them thinking ‘this is now expected of me if I want to write well, if I want to read well, if I want to do well in English...this is what is expected of me.’ And I think that’s important for the children, that they need to get that, that it’s.....and also to kind of show them that it’s not punishment (poetry), this is a fantastic opportunity for you to really get to grips with something and maybe a little idea would be for you to just to create small certificate “I completed the VEP Programme in whatever for first year of English” kids love getting something, they love putting it in the scrapbook or keeping it at home or giving it to their mothers and getting the10euro credit for it. That’s the way kids operate. They love having something to show and whether they’re 12 or 13, because you’ve got to remember, they are in their own minds big boys right now in the big school... they’re not, they’re babas until they’re about 5th or 6th year. So... you could make the contention that they’re babas all the way through. They don’t change in adulthood...especially boys. But yeah, that’s what I would say.
Interviewer: Ok, and is there anything else that you would change about the content of the programme?

Teacher: There was one particular part, session... the antonyms and synonyms they got they didn’t particularly like it. Oh yeah, the one that they didn’t like was superordination... is it superordination I’m trying to think of?

Interviewer: I don’t know, we don’t know the ins and outs of the programme...

Teacher: I think it’s superordination... it’s basically the subordinate and superordinate, yeah the superordinate...

Interviewer: Ok so within the categories...

Teacher: Within the categories... so you’d say for example, “tiger is what? It’s feline” and then the sub category would be tiger, cheetah, blah blah blah whatever. They found that just weird, they couldn’t really get to grips with that...but again, once they ...that would be the only thing that they found really difficult. I wouldn’t...as I say, there isn’t much that I’d change to the programme, I think it’s very very good. Maybe use more concrete examples of other subjects, so for example if you want to teach about superordination or whatever you might consider science and then you might consider the sciences, be they physics, chemistry, biology, whatever, you know, maybe make it more in tune with what they’re doing in school.

Interviewer: And finally, do you have any other information to give us about the programme and your experience working on the programme?

Teacher: No, I enjoyed it I found it fine. I found it very top heavy, I found there was an awful lot of work to do. I found that the orange folder that we got, the big thick folder, if [the SLT] hadn’t had the 3-4 hour introduction at the start before we started school and started the programme, if [the SLT] hadn’t come in to us and gone through each of the sessions and if we hadn’t taken the notes, like I took notes to say ‘right, go to this page for that, go to that page for that, don’t bother with that or go here for
that..” that of itself, to hand somebody a folder that thick and say “this is the programme we’re working through” – yeah perfect if that’s all I had to do, but I have 7 or 8 other classes in the day and you know it’s ... there’s an awful lot involved so I think that this blue folder that [the SLT] made up was great and actually I worked from that mostly. I think I only went to the other if I wanted to photocopy stuff. And I think the kids enjoyed it, they enjoyed it to a point and then as I say they got tired, so as I said, I think if you targeted it at 6 weeks you might be doing an awful lot better.

Interviewer: Ok great, thank you very much. That was super.

End
Interviewer: Yeah it’s just about your experiences implementing the programme, the positive and the negative experiences so that we have an idea of how to improve it. So I guess, like overall how did you find the programme?

Teacher: I thought it would be very useful but I had a very weak group. I just it was too much together for a weak group but I was hoping that they would learn lots of words, you know and they didn’t. They were really learning more about how sentences are put together and they really weren’t all that bothered about how sentences were put together, they wanted to tell stories and read stories. And they would actually have found it more fun with just words. If I had said that I was going to teach them this list of vocabulary some way or another over the next few months we would probably have put them into stories and they would have read them in short stories and picked them out and kind of explored them a little more. Mechanics of the sentences were really not any use to them at all. Which would be useful if it was say for instance, the punctuation is necessary in order for them to know if something is a proper noun or a common noun, if it’s a person or place when they don’t know what it means or the rest of the word around it “I’m guessing they identify well that’s either a place or person so I can try to figure out, it must be now that person or place” and they might be able to pull the sentence apart to better find out what it meant if they didn’t know what the words were meaning, but other than that mechanics didn’t really matter to them. I’d prefer myself to have put it over maybe the span of two years. Rather than trying to do it within 12 weeks or 10 weeks. You had to repeat a lot of stuff because some kids were out and we had to start again with what we did yesterday and that would take up half the class and by the time you did that you actually found that you couldn’t condense it, you know, that what was meant to be done in two classes usually took nearly three or four. And then they got bored because it was taking too long to do this, and we were trying to get as much of it in in that time. And there was team teaching for the first session and then the second session on the following morning, when we were recapping what we’d
done the day before and adding a bit more. But sometimes there are people either in
or out loads and you may go back then following that up and add a bit more of that.

Interviewer: Ok, so...

Teacher: For a weak group I would have not tried to do it in 12 weeks, I would introduce some
of the concepts to them, the knowledge over a period of maybe 3-4 years even. Two
years anyway, definitely, I wouldn’t try to condense it.

Interviewer: So the short time...

Teacher: Not in the short time, not for the weak group because they didn’t actually learn a lot
of vocabulary at the end of the day. They might have some idea that yes, this is a
noun, a verb...there’s prepositions, and there’s ...you know, some sort of a pattern in
this. But they didn’t learn any vocabulary. Very little vocabulary.
I also found then that part of it then, that nobody would try to go back and do
something the following day in the ordinary, the other classes- two other classes we
had left , the one class maybe tried a little bit of reading a passage and pick out
words in that , talk about the characters and follow the story- they enjoyed that ,
they wanted to do that every day. And then when we started the other kind of
mechanical work they’d say “oh, no...” and they’d be getting a little bit annoyed with
it in the end. It was grand in the beginning but then as we started to go more into the
mechanics, the superordinate, the subordinate...it was ok for 20 minutes then at that
point if you leave it then grand, then we, you know, had to, revising it further down
the line but they’re really... they wanted to do the story, you know, and I think they
would have learned more vocabulary that way. And stretch it out, and then
eventually, you had a time to do things like the suffix and prefix as much, we had
that more time to do ‘ok let’s look at the prefix’ and learn off these, what that
means, we actually found to introduce the concept and had nearly four classes on
prefixes and suffixes where they could see the breakdown of the word. We hadn’t
actually...we had to move on because we’d already spent 4 classes where we were
only supposed to spend 2 on looking at learning, you know what ‘con’ means,
what...you know is it going to be a negative or a positive idea . This...they barely got
an idea, a glance at that and I think that would have been more useful to have done
5 classes on that and not to have to worry about moving on the project, you know programme. That was...things that were interesting that didn’t have time to stay on them I think so they found totally boring, were totally useless to them.

Interviewer: At the beginning, how did you, like what did you first think of the programme? Like, before it started?

Teacher: Well before I tried to apply it to the group. I thought this really useful, if, I was thinking in terms of in most groups, that I would start teaching the children that I had in the class not till afterwards. And I thought that we were to be presented with the whole programme in each class, that’s useful, a useful kit, a toolbox, to actually have. But then to a weak group didn’t work quite so well. I just felt you had to spread out, and done that...the pace that suited the children as opposed to trying to condense it into the 12 weeks, 12 sessions, with 2 sessions for each part, it didn’t suit the weaker groups that I had anyway. It didn’t suit me maybe but I just found that some days there were poor attendance, some days there were people going home half days and then I had them in the evening and then the following morning they were out... we couldn’t do it in the same way. If you had a very good group maybe they would quite like if you actually did this in 6 weeks, the whole thing and it might have improved their ability to actually break down sentences and words much better, a little faster to do the whole thing in 6 weeks. But for the weak group I just felt irrelevant part of the time. We were making games out of some of the things, but we were actually going and making a game out of the least challenging part and they didn’t learn new words, they were only bringing up the words they already knew so it didn’t enhance their vocabulary from that perspective, it just helped them to think of things faster, at the beginning it would take them ages, I felt that if you were going to teach them new words you really should have maybe a list of words you want them to know by the end of two months and have them in different stories in different context and some of them you could do little games with alright for homonyms and synonyms, that’s fine, they don’t mind that and they actually quite like those, that part of the story. The idioms they found fun to try and work out but we never got to really use them in context, we didn’t see them in drama, we didn’t see anybody saying it to anybody else, other than what does it mean, we went as far
as ‘what does it mean’, if I said to you ‘what do you think I mean’ and we’re looking at the picture, and they enjoyed that and were trying to figure it out like a puzzle... but they didn’t actually use them, we hadn’t time, we had to move on. As it was they were getting used to the notion of what an idiom is but it was trying to do too much for them and condense it and then became a mechanical thing that actually took the fun out of it. Whereas if they’d seen some idioms in a dialogue, in a drama, and could say ‘I know what he’s saying’ and the other kid doesn’t know what he means because he’s from a different place where they don’t use that idiom. That means something totally different, then you can laugh about it and somebody gets upset about something somebody else finds funny, that’s, you know, we could see them in context better to see it in a drama. I just, I’d stretch it out, the whole kit, the whole tool box, I’d stretch it out over two years for the weak group and with lots of words that I could actually say right I’ll go to these words for the first month or these words for the next and build them all up, and get them to describe things and ‘cause they’d actually hear a word in context and see it written maybe 40 times before they use it spontaneously themselves. Whereas we were teaching them mechanics, it’s kind of like I just want to use the computer, I don’t really need to know how it works, do you know what I mean? That was where they were coming from.

Interviewer: So it sounds like at the beginning you felt the programme might be useful but then as the programme progressed...

Teacher: As I was applying it and trying to apply it to the weaker group it wasn’t keeping their attention and they were getting a little bit bored and winging about having to do something. Instead of actually going at it with a sense of fun, which we’re trying to make fun then out of things that were a really small element of the actual session. That was fine but, it was really, they weren’t learning new words. That’s the key thing. It’s a vocabulary enrichment programme but it didn’t enhance their vocabulary. I would think that they would probably have gotten on better with storytelling, story writing, reading, drama, and using phrases that they picked up, maybe through the thing a bit more. So I would spread it out. It’s a good programme but I would spread it out for a weaker group over a period of two years.
(Appendix K cont’d)

Interviewer: And so do you feel that the students benefitted from the programme?

Teacher: It depends what you wanted them to benefit from, I guess they know there are such things as nouns and verbs and they know...but if I were to ask them now 2 or 3 months later, what’s a noun, what’s a verb I might not get the right answer. At the time some of them got it but they would really only have about 4 elements of speech that they could say they were... they’d be confused again by now. If I go back now I know that they would be confused as to which was which, at this stage. So I would not really consider it useful to their ability that if I were to enhance their vocabulary they could read stories, they need to have lots of words in order to use them for stories...whereas their writing didn’t improve any bit at all from the beginning of the programme. Not much at all. In that sense that I think that if we applied it in a different way, if the methodology was different and it was done over a period of two years it may work. But I didn’t find it worked with the group that I had and in that way it could have worked... There was also the team teaching on Thursday so one teacher had maybe a different style, you’d try to work it together, but then there were things that with the recap Monday morning and then by the time it came to the afternoon class, which I thought would work really well, of course you had the same teacher who was team teaching on the Thursday in the last class in the afternoon, they got that teacher for their homework, their resource time and I was coming in to them, by then they didn’t want to know about it. They’d get quite cross if I appeared at the door with their homework, you know by then they’d be like “go way go way we want to go” and they’d not be interested. They’re going to finish off their maths, they did not want to do any more of this until you know, you really had to say “just do a small bit” and I know they were tired of it by the end. I think if it was a story and write about it...

Interviewer: I see, you touch on this a little bit, but do you feel they enjoyed the programme?

Teacher: Parts of it, they enjoyed the games, they enjoyed the competitions, so much so they actually started to get used to having a little competition of some sort on Friday at the end of it, the end of the session and try to see if they could remember things and
they then after even finishing the programme almost instigated a kind of little test on Friday. What’s the competition today? Would be a question on Friday, so we had an impromptu test that I would try to... ok what are we going to do what are we going to test on, whatever, and put an impromptu test and they were quite diligent to go about trying to either work in groups, they loved the working in groups bit, and trying to come up with things, solutions to the answers, whatever, they loved that part. They got a little bit self-conscious if they were on their own or put on their own – they didn’t like to be put on the spot, but if they were put with somebody then they felt more comfortable together and felt better and that was grand. They enjoyed the...and they instigated then every Friday they were going to have a competition and the competition was really a test. And it was actually a test, but they would look at it as competition, I didn’t mind, there were no prizes. It literally was ‘can we get some sweets.’ I’m a bit mean about sweets, I don’t like giving them sweets, they were asking ‘what’s the prize?’ and ‘Oh, the prize is that you win!’ and you get to be the best as a group, you’re the best group. They were happy with that, to just be the best, or win, which is funny so they did, it did enhance, I guess maybe because they got used to having to ask questions or ask questions in class and talk but that was kind of partly the style I would have used anyway. I do find that they don’t mind me putting words into sentences for them to help them describe. Whether that’s a result of the actual programme or is it something that I’m trying to do anyway, I don’t know. In the sense that they’re trying to describe a story about his father and we were looking at trying to describe about accidents and there was one little boy in the class who wouldn’t have a lot of vocabulary and he’s totally, his father knew a man or someone who got killed when he ran off after a ball and he said “the road was like that” and he meant a steep sloping driveway and I said “oh a steep slope, was there a steep slope on the driveway?” and he said “yes, a steep slope on the driveway” – repeated it after me and I said “oh he had no chance at all so” because I was trying to draw him out another little bit - I find he doesn’t mind me adding in or putting it in here or there and he’s saying it after me whereas before that he might be a little more self-conscious of maybe not being able to say the right word or have the right word on the tip of his tongue and he might have been maybe a little bit more self-conscious if I added in something where as now it’s
just normal and it was quite ok for me to add it in and he was repeating without even thinking about it.

Interviewer: And that was because..

Teacher: I don’t know if it was because of the programme or not because that would be the style of teaching that I would try to use more in enhancing their vocabulary, if they’re telling me a story or trying to put in a word to describe or if they said one word I’d add another word and so they’d have two words then, they’d kind of stretch a bit, you know a little bit, and but I do think that in a very good group if you gave them a lot of logical breakdowns of sentences and we would have given them a lot of know-how to break down a word they weren’t sure of at first, for a very weak group I felt they were actually still working on learning words, like a small child, first time learning, as a parent trying to teach new words and adding another word to one they have already. So I think the weaker group in first year would definitely benefit from having it spread out but really to intensify word introduction and looking at words in stories and trying to figure out from a context what a word might mean and jotting them down and saying ‘right, we’re going to write a story tonight and we’re going to use five of those words that we have and then choose and maybe let them try to get into the words that they had picked out that they had used earlier in the class into a story of their own and I think that might build up their vocabulary a little bit quicker. But yet the mechanics are good for them to know and it is in the long term it would benefit them. But I just felt that for a weak group it was too much together and now even I find I go back to the book and if there’s anything to do with mechanics they’re like “Ohh!” they go cross about it. They’re always doing this you know…. we’d get there, it’s just we need to have a lot more story reading and story writing for a weak group.

Interviewer: In terms of, like throughout the programme, the support that was provided, how did you feel, like how did you find that?

Teacher: Oh I found that grand because if I felt, that this isn’t working then I could report back that this is what we did because this wasn’t working I usually found that’s fine
because it actually didn’t adapt something again and there was no point in actually, there…. there is nothing keeping their interest by overdoing an element that really just not, you know, something that they don’t want at all and that’s grand, I felt that’s ok then we don’t have to go doggedly through the material and then end up having a very disgruntled group in front of me, it was ok to leave out bits and ok to move on and ok to keep going with the bit that they actually liked. But the dictionary work even took 4 classes because I had to go around individually to them and actually show them and some of them didn’t have the alphabet learnt off, some had English as a second language, so to go and you know show the alphabet and write it out higher case, lower case and they then actually had to figure out that they were literally then going from that place…some of the lads that were English as a second language were better at learning the parts of speech and if I asked them what a verb, or adverb or if it was an adjective they’d constantly come up with the right answer more quickly than the lads that had more vocabulary in the first place, even though they were learning English as a first language. They were better at the mechanics, the boys that were learning English as a second language. But overall they all could have done with learning more vocabulary.

Interviewer: So in terms of the support then, how...

Teacher: Well I just found the support very good. That as a, even if I felt that some piece of material wasn’t working so well sometimes a different piece might have been given to me that was being used by the same… do I mention a name?

Interviewer: You don’t have to

Teacher: Well anyway, because the support person was teaching another group, a third year group that would have had a very weak vocabulary levels, and poor vocabulary and that would be a weak group, she thought she had changed lots for them and she’d often pass it back to me so. And I think she found the same that there were lots of the course that she had to kind of really really encourage to even sit down with someone to actually write down their answers. In order to actually get them out of them because they were kind of not interested…they’d take a while to get on board
because it wasn’t something that was immediately attractive to them but then once they saw that somebody else was writing down the answers and they didn’t have to be worried about their spellings, they didn’t have to know spelling to write down something, that’s good for the boys because it doesn’t matter to them about spelling, just write an example, begin with sounds, sometimes it’s very funny trying to read back some of theirs because I’d be like ‘what’s that again? What’s that again?’ and because I should say I could read their writing but their spelling meant nothing, totally off the wall, it was quite fun at the same time you know and they didn’t mind, they didn’t mind me asking them, it was grand, at least we were on a good relationship that they didn’t feel exposed if I said I couldn’t read their writing, but at the same time the spellings were terrible. So if their spellings were that bad I could understand why they can’t read everything in front of them, that the sound meant nothing whatsoever, they were flummoxed, in some cases.

Interviewer: You touched on it a little bit, but in terms of what would you change about the programme if it was meant to be done again in the future...

Teacher: I would have group supports that would be a set of words that might help us describe an incident, say an accident and a cluster of words that might be useful there, a cluster of words they might use for, you know that vocabulary for a day out, a fun day, a night at the disco, or something, whatever it might be that they’re interested in. And whatever the topic is, that you’d have words around the topic so that they could actually put them into the sentences without having to worry about spelling because that was one of the other big issues, they might go over it because they didn’t know how to spell it, they wouldn’t try to put it in and then they’d eventually get rid of it altogether. It’s kind of a ‘somebody else is kind of capable of saying that word’ but because they couldn’t write it down it sort of got lost from their vocabulary, they try to keep it very simple. They could, I think they’d feel more support for their work if they felt that they had the words they need for the task and it’s just to put them together then after that

Interviewer: If they had them...
Teacher: If they had them, like if, say core vocabulary for a topic, I would rather that you have say picture cards where there was lots of words around a topic that they could then write their story and pretend ‘OK, this is one of the cards I like, I want to write about this or I want to write about that.’ Where they could decide which card they liked to write about and then have the words and eventually you can actually build a vocabulary where they’re actually free enough to write down the word, you know. I would have more of that, less of the mechanics. Very much less of the mechanics. I would keep the mechanics down to just a noun, verb, and possibly then throw in a conjunction or something like that but I wouldn’t have very much more than that, 3 or 4 parts of a word is all they’re going to need. As to verbs and nouns I think it’s vital on the presentation it said proper nouns are given a capital letter and common nouns a small letter in all the presentations that wasn’t the case, some of the powerpoints proper nouns, oh sorry common nouns or proper nouns were mixed up as far as capital letter. And I think it was vital that you see everything straight away, if it says ‘cat’ in small letters, you know, if it says ‘Pussy’ as the title of the cat, they need to know that and it wasn’t on the presentation, the powerpoints sometimes were mixed up as far as capitals and small letters and I felt that didn’t help but I tried to change them. Sometimes it doesn’t change, it would go back to the old thing again and I couldn’t do anything about it but I did point it out to them that, you know, if this is a proper noun it should have a capital letter with it, you know, just to make it clear in their mind that they were able to figure out what the sentence was about if they could get the proper noun you know it’s about a person, place, you know... title of somebody. But after that [...] up.

Interviewer: So you’d cut down on the mechanics

Teacher: I’d cut down on the mechanics over all. It was handy to have the prefix and the suffix but only, I would have preferred if...superordinate, subordinate was irrelevant to them...And so were a whole bunch of things like, even I know there were lots of it that we didn’t do a lot on... if it was idioms, try to have idioms in your sentences in context. Because otherwise they were just irrelevant, they didn’t actually use them and where could they use them afterwards? And it would be great if we could follow
up and say, on the other two classes a week we will do idioms in a drama, but I thought they were supposed to be moving on by then. If I could go back and do everything with idioms in the story they were getting annoyed if I repeated anything from Thursday or Friday on Monday they didn’t want to know about it. By then they were kind of sick of it. So yes there were other parts that they loved, you know, they quite liked the homonym/synonym, they were quite happy about that because I suppose some of them were quite...the words that were shown were ones that they’d use on a regular basis and just you know, which one was which was useful to them.

Interviewer: So overall is there anything else that you’d like to say about the programme? Anything else positive or negative? Or your experience in working with it.

Teacher: No, maybe if I was...again, if I used it a second time and I was much more familiar with what was coming up, where as I was kind of looking at it on the Wednesday to see what was coming up for Thursday and Friday, that maybe if it was something that I knew more about, more rehearsing of myself maybe then I would have sold it better as well and that’s something that was, you know I was writing sometimes, you know if I had somebody who’d say something I’d say ‘oh yeah we had that synonym last week’ or you know...the thing is if I was more familiar with it as well maybe I would have delivered it better. That would make a difference, I find that with a new textbook, if you’re not as familiar with a textbook, what’s coming up, and what’s being done you don’t always make the best use of it so I do think definitely if I was more familiar with it the second time round it might actually help as well. And I was kind of going on a need-to-know basis for now, you know because you’re always so busy preparing classes and other classes, I knew this was for Thursday and Friday ok then let’s see what we’re doing and would prepare Wednesday for Thursday and Friday, you know, that kind of way. I’d probably jump a little, do a different order maybe at times or if we were doing something on Monday if I knew that was in the vocabulary enrichment programme I might actually drag something out of it and into Monday’s class you know, it might have happened in ordinary class then they didn’t feel that they were actually being drilled through a certain programme, but that it could be actually included through the overall teaching whatever was being used it
was a story or if it was when we’re reading a play then I’d actually, I’d be able to bring some of what was in the programme into an ordinary class or if they were writing a story and lets kind of write something in it that say, I’m going to include something from it that could be useful. It...maybe a little bit more user friendly, that way for me and for the weak group especially. And so it’s familiarity as well with the material.

Interviewer: Is there anything else?

Teacher: No

End