

**Lost in Thought: Communication & Literacy
Developing GCSE English Readiness in FE
Literacy Skills in Further Education Learners**

by

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Abstract

“I don’t know, my head is just not in the right space”.

College student aged 17 (2020)

Numerous elements might jeopardise a productive learning environment in the classroom, including issues students carry over from their homes, demotivation, test-related stress, and more. During times of a global pandemic, an escalating level of importance needs to be placed on psychological well-being (Public Health England, 2014), as student well-being needs are evidently proliferating.

This research draws on the work of Robin Alexander (2018) as his Dialogic strategies are used in English Language GCSE lessons to explore how effective communication can help to build a culture of collaboration and nurture a safe learning environment. It examines both cognitive and affective learning using a mixed-method approach of open discussions and questioning with a specific focus on breaking down emotional barriers to enable students to successfully participate and engage in the learning process.

This research is framed by an interpretive approach and aims to represent the voices of FE learners. It seeks to answer the following questions: How do dialogic strategies in GCSE English Language classrooms affect student’s attitudes to learning? What are the student experiences of using a well-being resource to support their study of GCSE English Language?

Findings indicate some improvement in attitude towards learning using dialogic strategies. Learners express positive experiences when using well-being resources to support the study of GCSE English Language. Results also display outcomes from the pandemic relating to learners’ preferences toward learning environments that are dialogue rich that promote collaboration and cooperation.

Keywords: Learning Community, affective domain, Communication

Introduction

Having accrued over a decade of experience within the further education sector, encompassing diverse subject domains, I have discerned a prevalent issue not only within GCSE English classrooms but also across different subjects and levels where students are entering classrooms without a conducive readiness for effective learning. By being 'not ready to learn,' we imply a discernible cognitive hindrance, often stemming from external influences inundating their thoughts.

In response to this concern, I argue an imperative to establish an educational environment that prioritises both the mental and physical well-being of students, aligning with Brookfield's notion of fostering health and well-being while enabling individuals to attain their highest potential (Brookfield, 1999).

The impetus driving my commitment to this study stems from a profound empathy for these students, forged through personal experiences. During my academic journey from ages 16 to 18, I struggled with challenges involving depression and alcoholism within my family that significantly impeded my ability to concentrate on my studies. In hindsight, these adversities undeniably influenced my learning trajectory and hampered my capacity to engage effectively in lessons. Furthermore, in reflection, it is evident that opportunities to prioritise my well-being were scarce. The prevailing mindset dictated that I should persevere without acknowledging or addressing the external circumstances that were profoundly impacting my educational pursuits, particularly in the context of critical qualifications like GCSEs.

Presently, as a teacher guiding my dedicated cohort of students year after year, I recognise a profound responsibility to go beyond the principles and practices of a traditional educator role, one of didactic instruction, and embody that of a learning facilitator. My commitment lies in fostering an environment conducive to both personal growth and academic accomplishment. Particularly in the realm of further education, where students have navigated prior challenges, having previously faced setbacks with their GCSE examinations, a distinctive pedagogical approach is warranted.

One prevailing issue I have identified pertains to students' perception of the classroom environment. Regrettably, students often do not regard the classroom as a collaborative space for sharing ideas with peers, and prevailing instructional resources are perceived as outdated

or inadequate. An affirmative academic environment, however, is one where students experience a profound sense of inclusion, are motivated to confront obstacles, embrace risk-taking, and feel encouraged to pose inquiries (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009). Therefore, this research introduces dialogic strategies with the intention of building a collaborative space to not only provoke meaningful conversation and improve learning but also to develop critical thinking, provide structured opportunities for communication and social skills to be honed, and equip students for success in a variety of spheres of life. As such there are several motivations behind the use of dialogic strategies as a teaching approach in this research.

When implementing dialogic strategies, the primary objective is to use this approach as a countermeasure against detrimental impacts, striving for enhancements in communication efficacy when approaching the English GCSE curriculum. This research is framed by two core questions:

1. How does the integration of dialogic strategies within GCSE English Language classrooms influence students' attitudes towards the learning process?
2. What are the students' experiences in leveraging a well-being resource to increase their engagement with GCSE English Language studies?

Through a systematic exploration of these questions, this research endeavours to shed light on the potential pedagogical shifts that can change the educational experience and outcomes for students for the better in their study of GCSE English Language.

The participants encompassed in this study pertain to a cohort of students aged 16-19 who are engaged in a GCSE English Language course retake while concurrently pursuing a Health and Social Care Level 2 vocational program. Spanning six weeks, changes were implemented in this GCSE English lesson, with sessions held for one hour each week. Utilizing Bloom's Taxonomy of objectives, revised by Anderson and Krathwohl in 2001, the goal was for students to achieve the following by the end of the lessons:

- Understand the term resilience and motivation when discussing the nature of this at college.
- Interpret information in a given text- discuss this after reading.
- Analyse the language used in a given text.

During these six weeks, higher expectations were set for learners to ensure they could achieve these objectives comfortably. This included tasks such as extending their understanding of the effect of language on the reader and encouraging deeper interpretation of implicit meanings in texts. The research involves the utilisation of two distinct well-being articles sourced from the 'Teen Breathe magazine. A full break down of the intervention week by week can be found in chapter 3.

As a form of practitioner research this study involves me actively engaging in systematic inquiry to improve my teaching practices and enhance student learning. It is also allowing me to understand and explore the problem in context first-hand. Action research “is a powerful form of staff development because it is practice to theory rather than theory to practice. Teachers are encouraged to reach their own solutions and conclusions” (Burns, 1999:7). It has many other benefits including fostering student needs, professional growth, empowerment, customisation of instruction, problem-solving abilities, inquiry-based culture, cooperation, alignment with educational objectives, and knowledge contributions in the field of education. It is an effective instrument for raising standards for both practitioners and students.

The research methodology employed herein is firmly grounded in interpretivism. This theoretical framework is indispensable in qualitative research by striving to elucidate students' experiences beyond mere numerical expression. Interpretivism hinges on interrogative approaches and observational techniques to unravel a profound comprehension of the participants. Consequently, three primary methodologies have been employed to gather data within this research context:

1. Conducting two rounds of questionnaires with the participating students.
2. Administering two semi-structured interviews with members of the staff.
3. Facilitating a singular focus group session with the student cohort.

Overview of key findings

The study's findings suggest that the combination of dialogic strategies and a chosen resource has positively impacted student interest. The use of these strategies encourages discussions on relatable concepts like resilience, stress, and motivation, creating an engaging and enjoyable learning experience. Students express positive reactions, describing the experience

as 'new' and 'fun,' indicating a shift in their perspective towards reading and learning in the classroom.

The data reveals that students missed oral interaction during online learning, and increased dialogue in the classroom seems to be altering their attitudes. Students share insights about resilience and emotional strength, emphasising the importance of connecting with others. The contrast between feelings of loneliness during previous learning experiences and the current interactive approach implies that a more rigid teaching style may have contributed to this sense of isolation.

Despite some students preferring learning on laptops, the overall data reflects a predominance of positive comments. The argument is made that fostering oral interaction through a dialogic approach, combined with relatable resources, not only enhances interest but also motivates proactive learning. In conclusion, the study suggests that harnessing the power of talk in the classroom can engage students, stimulate their thinking, and contribute to a more positive and effective learning experience (Alexander, 2020:1).

The data presented highlights the theme of supporting students' study, particularly aligned with the AQA English Language GCSE qualification requirements. The findings demonstrate that the implemented methods and resources have positively influenced students' emotional and academic development. Wiliam's eight conditions for learning, discussed in Chapter Two, offer insights into the teacher's role in organising activities and lesson plans, aligning with students' output and learning objectives.

The varied approach, including the use of a magazine resource with mindful and nurturing topics, fosters a positive rapport between teachers and students. Feedback from students emphasises the desire for more speaking and listening activities, indicating a need for pastoral care alongside subject skills support. The careful use of dialogic questioning enhances the tutor's role in providing both academic and emotional support.

Challenges arise from group work, as confident learners may dominate discussions, posing a limitation to measuring individual accountability. Despite this, the research acknowledges students' deep insights into their learning, providing space for their voices, reflections, and feedback. The interactive nature of learning is emphasised, highlighting the collaborative process between teachers and students and the negotiation and recreation of knowledge.

In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of dialogue, both between individuals and collective knowledge, in promoting a pedagogy that values collaboration, understanding, and the development of students' sense of responsibility for their learning. The findings suggest that a holistic approach to teaching, incorporating varied resources, dialogic strategies, and individual reflection, contributes to positive student experiences and academic success.

Overview of recommendations

The subsequent recommendations are offered for consideration by tutors and managers of GCSE English provision within the Further Education sector. Below, four pivotal areas have been outlined.

Classroom Readiness

In preparing the classroom environment, it's essential to prioritise student well-being. This can be achieved through several strategies. Firstly, educators should focus on developing engaging teaching materials that centre around wellness. These resources should not only aim to meet academic needs but also address the mental and emotional well-being of students. Additionally, fostering inclusivity is crucial. Utilising dialogic teaching methods promotes an environment where students feel heard and valued, contributing to a sense of belonging. Integrating employability skills into lessons is another vital aspect. By incorporating well-being-related skills such as stress management and resilience building, students are better equipped to navigate challenges both within and beyond the classroom. Lastly, educators should regularly address well-being concerns. Providing access to therapeutic reading materials and creating opportunities for open discussions about mental health can help students feel supported and understood, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being and academic success.

Prioritising Teaching, Learning, and Well-being:

When prioritising teaching, learning, and well-being, educators should adopt a student-centred approach that actively involves students in the learning process. Seeking student input is paramount, as it allows educators to tailor teaching and learning approaches to meet the individual needs and preferences of their students. Additionally, promoting community collaboration fosters a sense of belonging and collective responsibility for student well-being. By involving the wider community in problem-solving and discussions, educators can

leverage diverse perspectives and resources to support student success. Furthermore, engaging in regular discussions on teaching methods and well-being topics is essential for continuous improvement. These discussions provide opportunities for educators to reflect on their practices, share insights, and explore innovative strategies that enhance both learning outcomes and student well-being.

Equipping Tutors for Student Well-being Enhancement:

In equipping tutors for student well-being enhancement, it is imperative to leverage various resources and strategies. Firstly, utilising online resources, such as relevant magazines and therapeutic materials, provides educators with access to a wealth of information that can support student well-being. These digital resources offer flexibility and accessibility, allowing tutors to cater to diverse student needs and interests effectively. Additionally, establishing a classroom community using dialogic approaches fosters a supportive learning environment where students feel valued and connected. By promoting open dialogue and collaboration, educators can cultivate a sense of belonging among students, which is essential for their overall well-being and academic success. Integrating these online resources and dialogic approaches empowers tutors to effectively address student well-being concerns and create an inclusive learning environment conducive to growth and development.

Recommendations for Future Research:

In considering recommendations for future research, it is essential to prioritise methodological rigor and breadth of scope. Firstly, expanding sample size is crucial for conducting studies with larger samples to ensure comprehensive comparisons and robust findings. Employing probability sampling techniques further enhances the validity and generalisability of research results by ensuring representative samples. Additionally, exploring broader areas beyond the confines of traditional research allows for a more holistic understanding of the factors influencing student well-being and academic achievement. This expansion could involve extending research to encompass broader subject areas or delving into specific aspects of well-being. Finally, incorporating quantitative analysis methods enables researchers to compare GCSE results over time systematically. By including quantitative studies, researchers can identify trends and patterns in student outcomes, facilitating evidence-based decision-making and the development of effective interventions to support student well-being and academic success.

The overarching objective of these recommendations is to provide thorough guidance to tutors and managers operating within the realm of further education. Their purpose is to assist in the establishment of a nurturing and facilitative learning environment, one that places paramount importance on the well-being of students while concurrently augmenting their overall educational journey. For a more comprehensive understanding of the recommendations outlined here, readers are encouraged to explore Chapter 6.5 for detailed insights and elaborations.

Chapter One- Context and Problem

Lost in thought but found in communication: Exploring the development of literacy skills and readiness to learn in GCSE English learners in the FE sector.

In Chapter One, the foundational elements of the study are outlined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the context and problem within a specific FE practice. Once these are initially outlined, two primary aims of the research study are carefully crafted to address critical issues within the educational landscape. The subsequent sections serve to introduce and contextualise these aims within the broader scope of the study.

1.1 The problem with the cycle in context / Setting the Scene

Imagine a classroom bursting with eager, wide-eyed students who are taking their GCSEs, striving for that grade nine certification at the end of a two-year-long road. They have no apprehensions, and their minds are simply sponges waiting to soak up information from a knowledgeable other; some may say an educational utopia. We are all familiar that this picture is nothing but fictional in a college setting where students are in the monotonous cycle of taking their qualification for the umpteenth time. In England, only 23% of FE learners resitting GCSE English Language achieve a grade 4 or above (Department for Education, 2020). This may be due to factors that can threaten a positive classroom environment: problems that students bring from home, lack of motivation, pressures from testing, and more.

Specifically, within GCSE AQA English language qualification year after year from experience in the academic and professional studies (AAPS) department, we see negative behaviours in students proliferate and, GCSE students not only struggle to pick up the momentum for learning but also lack mental wellness. The term ‘mental wellness’ here can be defined in this thesis as “a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our

individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in” (World Health Organisation, 2022). Just as mental health is a basic human right, learning a language is a human right and students learn from emotional and cognitive perspectives after all, “Education must be increasingly concerned about the fullest development of all children and youth, and it will be the responsibility of the schools to seek learning conditions which will enable each individual to reach the highest level of learning possible.”(Bloom et al, 1971) Without language, we are devoid of a key part of human experience as the primary motive for language is to influence thought and learn from experience (Dewey, 2007). Hence, the problem lies within this as we do not represent the voices of FE learners enough or focus on creating a classroom that ‘fosters health and wellbeing’ and one that ‘enables people to achieve their potential’ (Brookfield 1999). So, priorities continue to build on the improvements in teaching within English so that all students are better able to pass their examinations with high grades. But how can we ameliorate this problem if students are not currently able to break this monotonous cycle?

The following aims have been created to address the overall purpose of this research study:

Aim 1: Fostering Lifelong Learning and Equitable Classroom Communication

The first aim of this study addresses the imperative to empower students not only for academic success but also for active participation in democratic engagement. Within this aim, the focus is on promoting equitable attention to classroom talk. Recognising the influential role of teachers in shaping student thinking, this aim seeks to create an environment where dialogue is not only encouraged but also facilitates enhanced cognition.

Aim 2: Enhancing Communication and Mental Wellbeing Awareness

The second aim broadens the scope, emphasising the need to implement dialogic strategies as a means to improve communication within the classroom. Additionally, there is a concerted effort to increase awareness of mental health issues, recognising their profound impact on students' ability to engage optimally in the learning process. This aim aims to create an educational environment that not only educates but also nurtures the mental wellness of students.

Having illustrated the classroom setting, it is important to now delve into the contemporary escalation of the enduring educational issue at hand. Reflecting on Aim 1, the constraint of empowering students for lifelong learning unfolds as we analyse the evolving challenges. Additionally, Aim 2's emphasis on dialogic strategies and mental well-being awareness lays the foundation for addressing the complexities we are about to explore.

1.2 The current escalation of the problem

Reforms to GCSEs were introduced in 2015, with the first cohorts taking the new exams in 2017 and 2018. Gone were the old-style assessments with their lenient modules, repeat exams, and coursework. Now, in their place are Michael Gove's gold-standard highly academic qualifications. Gove, Secretary of State for Education between 2010 and 2014, believed the old GCSEs' reliance on coursework assessment was open to abuse. He argued that the content of the revised examinations should be pitched at a more sophisticated level, claiming: "By making GCSEs more demanding, more fulfilling, and more stretching we can give our young people the broad, deep and balanced education which will equip them to win in the global race." (Weale, 2018)

Each GCSE has consequently been re-designed to be more challenging, with increased content, which is tested almost exclusively by end-of-course examinations and measured by grades that run from 9 to 1 (rather than the previous A* to G). The 9-1 measure sets a 4 as equivalent to a C, while the top grades, A* and A, are split into three grades, 7, 8, and 9, with 9 awarded to those with marks at the top of the old A* grade. As a result, far fewer students taking GCSE English have ended up achieving the very top grade available, in fact, less than a handful of learners I have known have achieved top marks. This may be due to time restraints; exam access arrangements or preferences of coursework over examinations. "We now have a significant proportion of students who cannot take exams in the exam hall but require smaller rooms and rest breaks to stay calm. Attendance is increasingly affected by students with anxiety" (Weale, 2018). On the other hand, The Department for Education (2020) defends the new GCSEs as its statement says: "For pupils to be successful, rigorous examinations are vital. They are not, however, intended to cause significant anxiety. Good leaders know that positive mental well-being helps pupils fulfil their potential and make that part of their overall school ethos (Weale, 2018). So, drawing this information together, we

can see that although the end-of-year examinations will not change, we have an escalation of the problem that mental health needs are exceeding previous years and attainment levels are far from desirable. Therefore, without nurturing and providing opportunities for enhancing wellbeing, attendance and attainment, levels will continue to decline.

As universal services colleges play a vital role in promoting positive mental health, identifying a need, and providing early intervention in cases of mental ill health. Teachers in further education (FE) are facing a continuous battle to fight against the proliferating safeguarding and welfare results in FE contexts, with data from the Mental Health Foundation (2020) showing that 70% of children and adolescents who experience mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age (Mental Health Foundation 2020). This has a lasting and significant impact on the ability of learners to be mentally and emotionally present in the classroom, and for learners of GCSE English, to acquire and develop the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviours in language comprehension and production that they need. The learning process is then stunted before it has even had a chance to blossom, and it is agonising knowing that “on-site student support services (SSS) in higher education (HE) struggle to cope with demand as universities and colleges face significant budget reductions” (Touloumakos, A. 2016) and “Alongside the economic burden that studies entail, these difficulties may partly explain why more than one in five HE students drop out.” (ibid) But “HE institutions have an obligation to provide wellbeing and academic support to their students, but on-site counselling services also struggle to cope with the increasing demands” (ibid)

More recently, evidence collected from Public Health England reports indicates that self-reported mental health and wellbeing worsened during the first national lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic. Psychological distress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms appeared to peak in April 2020. There is evidence of some recovery by July although weekly data (unanalysed) signals that self-reported mental health and wellbeing may have worsened again between October 2020 and January 2021. Therefore, after the turmoil of teaching during a pandemic, the need to modify English GCSE resources used in the classroom and build student's emotional well-being has become increasingly apparent. For this reason, a unified approach to embedding wellbeing topics into our curriculum might then encourage a culture of discussion/support in the classroom.

During times of a global pandemic, an escalating level of importance needs to be placed on psychological well-being (Public Health England, 2014), and as an English teacher, I have a responsibility to assist my students when progressing within GCSE English language and foster students' well-being. This research assists the PHE Strategic Plan 2020-2025 to protect the mental health of communities. This research helps to promote good health and contributes towards the prevention of mental illness as this has a total annual cost of over £105 billion to society of ill mental health (Public Health England Executive Summary, 2020).

As we navigate through the challenges posed by the reformation of GCSEs and the burgeoning concerns regarding mental health, a focused examination of the context becomes imperative, particularly exploring the concept of 'readiness to learn.'

In this transition, it is paramount to consider how understanding the context aligns with Aim 1, fostering lifelong learning. Furthermore, Aim 2's emphasis on mental well-being awareness becomes increasingly relevant as we study the impact of educational reforms on students' readiness to learn.

[1.3 Homing in on the context and 'readiness to learn'.](#)

As an English practitioner in an FE college that serves over 2,500 learners, it has been noted that there has been an increase of up to three times more safeguarding incidents being reported from 2016/17- 2018-19 (Sims 2020) which is particularly evident in the vocational course of Health and Social Care. A clear resemblance between this data and the Level 1 & 2 HSC students taking GCSE English Language as they appear to have a lack of readiness to learn. But what is meant by 'readiness to learn' in this context?

One way in which we might explore the concept of 'readiness to learn' is to look at the definition provided by the college on which this research is based. The guidance below was distributed amongst teaching staff at the beginning of the 2020-21 academic year and provides six significant barriers to learning when lessons begin. These encourage learners to think about the following as they enter this environment:

2. Are your coats, hats, hoods, and headphones removed?

3. Are you wearing your ID badge?
4. Have you turned off your mobile phone and put it in your bag?
5. Have you put your bags under the table?
6. Are you ready to take notes and complete tasks? (Pen and paper on the desk)
7. Have you put all your food and drink away? (Only bottled water)

These link directly to the code of conduct however it is apparent that they have no direct relation to the well-being of learners. Therefore, in this study 'readiness to learn' is the conundrum connected to learners being emotionally and mentally absent in the room and therefore facing a barrier to learning. Learners are displaying undesirable behaviour and do not seem comfortable or at ease. To put this scenario into a metaphorical perspective: envision riding an elephant and coming to a fork in the track ahead/ The elephant wishes to go one way, but you are trying to pull it the other. This elephant is your emotions, controlling, overpowering, and dominating your decisions which lead to often undesirable actions. We can also interlink this to Abraham Maslow's hierarchical theory of human motivation (1943) as he developed a pyramid that displays the physiological and psychological needs that must be met for someone to progress and excel. Although widely criticised for its fixed nature, Maslow draws upon the importance and relevance of being psychologically stable to 'self-actualise' and therefore having poor emotional wellbeing is not conducive to learning. So, if students are not able to heal or express themselves emotionally then they will not achieve their full potential in education. person-centred teaching.

Having conducted prior research in my practice it is evident that safeguarding needs are proliferating which is shown in the number of welfare information reports (lower-level concerns) in our organisation as they have increased by 48% in the past academic year (Holloway, 2020). Higher levels of emotional wellbeing and mental health continued to increase over the past year, with an increase of 18%. How can we prevent this from continuing to happen? The problem is that poor wellbeing is filtering into GCSE lessons and blocking students' ability to access learning and eventually students withdraw from the course. There is a 7% increase in GCSE learners being withdrawn over the past academic year and, there has been an overall drop in retention rates of 1.2% from last year with those aged between 16-19 who have had mental health and wellbeing needs. So, this project supports the organisation's strategic plan as we wish to 'nurture students' well-being, expand

opportunity, and generate prosperity for this next generation. Recent research in the FE sector indicates that those who are in care, on safeguarding plans, and with anxiety for 20-21 have risen by up to 25% depending on the identified need from 19-20 (Sims 2020). There is an expanding need for wider investment in services because students who declared mental health conditions in 18-19 and 19-20 were the most likely to be withdrawn within the first six weeks compared to any other factor. This alone emphasises the urgent duty of classroom tutors to act fast and help support not only the poor mental wellness but also help untangle the knots inside our students' minds so that learning can be reached.

Having undertaken an analysis of readiness to learn, our attention now shifts towards a comprehensive understanding of the rippling problems that emanate from these challenges and their consequential impact. As we delve into the complexities of rippling problems, it's imperative to connect back to Aim 1, which strives to empower students for lifelong learning amid such challenges. Simultaneously, Aim 2's dialogic strategies can be considered as potential buffers against the adverse effects of these rippling problems.

[1.4 Spark and extension of rippling problems.](#)

Further observations conducted in 2020 with a group of 30 Health and Social Care students show that when entering English lessons over 10% of them explicitly stated they feel 'stressed', 'anxious', or 'depressed' or appeared lost altogether in thought (Holloway, 2020). It is here that the idea of explicitly wanting to address these barriers to learning emerges. These are not the sole problem, however. A further perceived challenge is that there is an absence of interest from students in the GCSE English resources, a challenge which becomes very problematic in what feels like a race to achieve their English Language GCSE. Some believe that there is a negative impact that emotions have on learning, stress, for example, has a significant negative effect on cognitive functioning (Medina, 2008). Unfortunately, "when it comes to learning processes, the power of negative events greatly outweighs the power of positive events." (Baumeister et al 2001) Consequently, we need to provide resources and objectives to tap into the affective domain and release the emotional handbrake.

As briefly mentioned earlier, Maslow's theory focuses on the importance of a person's overall health when learning however, Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) is a classification of behaviour and learning development. It focuses on mental development and levels of learning and understanding. Bloom specifies three main domains of learning when creating objectives which are cognitive, affective, and psychomotor; these are also subdivided into several levels (Bloom, 1972) The affective domain connects to character building, attitude adjustments, and working on learners' emotions to heighten levels of performance. The five levels of the affective domain from the bottom up are: receiving, responding, valuing, organising, and internalising. Therefore, we might be able to tap into the affective domain if the student first attends a lesson, responds to questions posed about a particular chosen topic, and participates in a group. For instance, this could be the spoken language element of the GCSE qualification whereby they can choose a topic to discuss. After this, if the student finds value in the topic of discussion and can strongly associate with it, then the final steps would be for them to prioritise and organise the information, ultimately leading to learning.

This research aims to develop students' emotional (feelings of anxiety, stress, and sadness linking to poor wellness) and cognitive abilities (reading and writing skills) by using resources that are age-appropriate and designed to enhance literacy abilities in the three assessments which make up the English language GCSE qualification in reading, writing, speaking and listening. What lends itself the most to communication is the spoken element as students are asked to discuss and debate topics of their interest. For this reason, the study draws on the work of Robin Alexander (2018) as he developed the technique of dialogic teaching. According to Alexander:

“Dialogic teaching harnesses the power of talk to stimulate and extend pupils' thinking and advance their learning and understanding. It helps the teacher more precisely to diagnose pupils' needs, frame their learning tasks and assess their progress. It empowers the student for lifelong learning” (Alexander, R., 2018).

For this reason, dialogic teaching is essential within the classroom environment as students are positioned as active participants who engage in academically accountable talk. Whilst teaching English language, dialogic teaching presents the possibility of helping to challenge and modify students' undesirable behaviour and promote a sense of wellbeing in the classroom as it requires us to rethink not just the techniques, we use but, also the classroom

relationships we foster, the balance of power between teacher and student, and the way we conceive of knowledge.

Alexander (2018) states that Dialogic teaching combines four repertoires: talk for everyday life; learning talk; teaching talk; and, classroom organisation. The repertoires are used flexibly, based on fitness for purpose, but the principles remain constant. (Alexander, R., 2018) Therefore dialogic teaching is not one set method of teaching but rather an approach and an outlook. It is the principle of understanding students holistically and, to be able to support their mental health needs appropriately we need to scaffold conversations based on reading material that deals with an aspect of wellbeing. By doing just this, we may begin to unpick and address this barrier to learning.

With a deeper understanding of the identified problems, the discourse naturally progresses towards proactive measures; examining how one might effectively act on these multifaceted issues. This prompts reflection on both aims as Aim 1 encourages us to proactively empower students amidst challenges, while Aim 2 comes to the forefront as we explore strategies to address and mitigate the identified problems in the educational context.

[1.5 Acting on problems in the context- Is the GCSE English classroom a positive environment?](#)

Our surroundings play a key role in transforming who we are. If presented with a positive classroom environment our learners can obtain and sustain lifelong learning whereas, some students are submissively partaking in tasks that bare no relevance to them and might as well be invisible. For this reason, we need to push for “creating a positive environment where students feel a sense of belonging, trust others and feel encouraged to tackle challenges, take risks, and ask questions” (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2009). It has been argued that specific factors can threaten a positive classroom environment: ‘problems that students bring from home, lack of motivation among students whose love of learning has been drilled right out of them, pressures from testing and more’ (Young, J. 2014). Thus, we must take a step back and try to see a different perspective as educators. We can change our methods to suit the student’s interests and transform our classrooms into a place where they not only want to be seen but more importantly, heard. This study aims to implement dialogic

strategies to buffer against negative effects and build toward improvements in communication.

Educator and philosopher Paulo Freire would agree that we need to allow students to communicate in this environment and “make it possible for the students to become themselves.” (Freire, 1970) through a problem-posing approach. Dialogical teaching for Freire is where students communicate together to arrive at a mutual view of the world through cooperation and dialogue which is student-centred. Freire believes that a classroom environment should not be teacher or text-orientated but instead one full of discussions and reflections taking place. Therefore, the core of the curriculum needs to be based on questions rather than answers because at present the problem is also the fear of ‘getting it wrong’ or not having the correct answers to fit into the narrow box.

To act upon the problem we can firstly look at the importance of language in the classroom. Instead of the focal point of a lesson being to fit the criteria when writing an answer to a question, the students can discuss topics and verbalise their answers using language as a team. Students can struggle to articulate answers when they feel restricted to the mark scheme although, when asked to verbalise their thoughts in discussion with others, they can often achieve the answer much faster by verbalising language. Functionalist theory, which is based on the work of Michael Halliday (2013), outlines 8 functions of language and how they develop language as it serves a certain purpose and satisfies specific physical, emotional, or social needs. The personal function of language is to talk about oneself and express individuality. So when Halliday is saying ‘When children learn a language, they are not simply engaging in one type of learning among many; rather, they are learning the foundations of learning itself.’(Halliday, 2013). Here Halliday (ibid) argues that language is part of a semiotic process where we make meaning of the world around us. Therefore, by providing resources in GCSE English Language lessons that encompass topics that express learners' individuality or passions, they will not only have the opportunity to practise literacy skills but also the potential to expand their personal development. This way the resources will have more of a meaningful purpose.

Robin Hatfield (2011) agrees with this stating that "the functional model of language teaching is applied when language is used for meaningful purposes and to carry out authentic functions" (Hatfield, 2011). In other words, when adopting the functionalist

perspective we are required to plan situations where language is incorporated as a medium of interaction and communication within the classroom.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) states that in the educational setting, we are “treating students as passive, empty vessels to preserve authority and maintain a culture of silence”(Freire, 1970). This means that if teachers are continuing to take the lead in the students’ journey at college then there is no liberation, democracy, or community in the classroom. Some teachers maintain the thought that they need to be the centre of the room and the beholder of all knowledge. This plays out in how they teach by recycling resources, choosing topics to explore, and making worksheets that have fixed answers instead of learning through discovery, discussing openly with students, or questioning. FE GCSE English teachers are putting in a strenuous effort which does not always have the intended positive outcome for learners. Ultimately, in some instances, students are being herded like sheep and not being given opportunities to explore the curriculum in their own way (promoting independence and responsibility).

Freire (1970) suggests the authoritarian teacher-pupil model can be replaced with student critical thinking so that the student becomes a co-creator of knowledge. Freire (ibid) continues to distinguish two different environments and methods of teaching in the classroom:

Banking method- This is where teachers take on the role of the expert, the one that conveys knowledge and has to be assimilated by the students if they are to succeed. Direct instruction is given and standardised testing is used to measure knowledge taken in. The teacher’s role here is to deposit knowledge into the students' heads and as previously mentioned, the students are taking on a passive role.

Freirian method- The teacher in this case would organise the class based on child-centered and holistic activities and initiate dialogue in a discussion. The students are given more responsibility and the teacher poses questions to ensure learning is happening in open discussions and responses in which they have an interest.

When looking further into these methods that run parallel, Anna Sfard (1998) outlines two metaphors for learning which can relate to Freire’s work as the following metaphors are found to guide our work as learners, teachers, and researchers. In her article ‘*On two Metaphors for Learning and the Dangers of Choosing Just One*’ Sfard distinguishes two

metaphors: the acquisition metaphor and the participation metaphor. According to Sfard, these ‘underlie both our spontaneous everyday conceptions and scientific theorising’ (Sfard, 1998). Firstly, Sfard discusses the root of learning stating that it can be defined in the dictionary as ‘the act of gaining knowledge’ (ibid). Hence this is where the initial metaphor surfaces as it depicts learning as the acquisition and accumulation of knowledge. It underlies not just cognitive models which can see learning as transmission, but also constructivist models emphasising the development of ideas or construction of meaning. For example, the goal of learning is based on the individual and the teacher's role is the provider and mediator. Knowledge here is about possession as ‘the human mind is a container to be filled with certain materials and...the learner as becoming an owner of these materials’ (ibid). Therefore, this represents a monological view of human learning as a mental within-mind process. However, this method has not been seen to be most beneficial at present, as many students within our college group are indicating that they dislike the ‘lecture’ style lessons whereby the students have little interaction with each other.

Secondly, the participation metaphor is a ‘process of becoming a member of a certain community or team. This entails, above all, the ability to communicate in the language of this community and act according to its particular norms.’ this learning process also suggests that the ‘learner should be viewed as a person interested in participating in certain kinds of activities rather than in accumulating private possessions’. As a result, we can see how the learning process has evolved from a passive process to being active and sharing or scaffolding learning together. More recent studies have often been dominated by the participation metaphor such as the Vygotskian (1978) socio-cultural theory. Others who view participation as essential to learning were heralded by Lave and Wenger's (1991) *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*, which emphasised the idea of social practice as important but focused on participation as especially important in learning.

In the learning theories outlined above, there is a clear resemblance between both Sfard's (1998) and Freire's (1970) notions of learning. For instance, the Freirian method and the participation metaphor both share similar themes such as the learner requiring support from others and discussion to gain and build upon knowledge. The need to allow for this interaction is prevalent in the classroom environment as learners need to realise that they are also tutors to one another. Freire continues to note that “Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people--they manipulate them.

They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress.” (1970) So, to act on the problem we must begin by planning for free discussion and anticipate where questioning can take place in the curriculum and every lesson.

Over the past 8 years of working in further education and observing students in GCSE English lessons, it appears that they are not enthused about the topics that have been in previous examination papers so fall silent when encouraged to discuss in groups. Therefore, this study uses Freire’s concepts to reinvent and modernise material in GCSE English language so that we can explore generative themes that will interest the students. Emphasis is placed on student experiences and an acceptance of their cultural and linguistic background. Students should not have to be absent in the learning process as currently, they are subject to uninteresting worksheets and texts that have no relevance to them. Factors such as student motivation, attitudes, perceptions, and values are all connected to the affective domain. Students should not be disempowered but uplifted in the affective domain because according to Bloom (1946), it can significantly enhance, inhibit or even prevent student learning.

To continue, the Department for Education (2020) would echo thoughts on putting the learners first whilst thinking about their emotions but, it is also centred around how much the teacher understands their students:

“You do need to be holistic because if you just educate young people and don't look at anything else about them, you're not fully supporting them (...) you need to know who your adult carers are. You need to know who your children in care are. You need to know those who are in social deprivation so that you can support them adequately with their other needs because they can't learn if those basics are not taken care of.” (DfE Report, 2020)

In reflecting on this, one step towards learning taking place and students feeling ready to learn is to ensure that they know you are up to date with who they are and what their background is. By doing so, we are building that rapport of trust and a mutual understanding about how many emotional barriers they might encounter in the short time we have with them. This is of course damaging as it implies insignificance in the student’s role as a

learner. If someone calls you by your name, the foundation of acceptance and recognition has been formed.

Researchers have suggested that the initial step in empowering students is to increase their self-esteem and reduce their anxiety levels. It is reported that writing and reading about stressful or emotional events have been demonstrated to result in improvements in both physical health and psychological well-being in clinical and non-clinical populations (Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005). By identifying variables in students' behaviour and modernising resources, the study aims to analyse the impact on literacy standards for students taking their English GCSEs in 2021/22.

1.6 Summary of Chapter One

This research in the field of education is centred on a Further Education College in the South East of England. The sample profile will involve a class of students studying GCSE English Language and two staff members (in the role of a progress coach and safeguarding lead) participating in the investigation. The two prominent issues this research is trying to address are students' attitudes toward learning and their experiences when using resources in the classroom to support their study of GCSE English Language.

Chapter Two- Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter explores some of the key themes and concepts that have emerged in Chapter One. In Chapter One we first saw that there is an escalating problem surrounding the lack of engagement with the GCSE English Language examinations and the inability to keep up with the proliferating amount of mental health needs within the further education sector. At present, there are shortcomings with current resources used to practise literacy skills in the classroom. The resources have fallen stagnant for instance, examination boards such as AQA only have a set number of past papers for students to look at and revise from. When a student from college has been studying this GCSE qualification for sometimes 4 years or more, understandably they tire of the same materials. The topics of the exam materials have also been known to trigger vulnerable students which has resulted in complaints such as the 2019 paper which used 'The Mill' by H E Bates.

Additionally, our society and the world around us are changing rapidly so, surely this means we need to evolve and mould our resources to suit this? Non-fictional resources may even be selected from the daily Guardian newspaper as the exam papers have previously used articles taken from here. However, this research does not only seek to look for current relations that students can connect to but also topics that nurture wellness for example 'Road to Resilience' or 'Stamp on the Stress' are two articles from the magazine 'Teen Breathe'.

The current approach to teaching feels less about being a facilitator and more about being a subject expert who creates materials to impart a wealth of knowledge on the subjects. However, the problem with this is that students become passive in the learning process but on the other hand, facilitators can assist students both inside and outside of the classroom giving guidance and supplying resources that bring lessons to life. With students being asked to be more active in the learning process the teachers have an acute sensitivity to the individual needs of the participants because the role of a facilitator draws that commitment out of the group. So, here is where a dialogic approach to pedagogy was outlined with the desire to be less of a dictator and more of a facilitator.

Other key themes and concepts which have been brought to light include examining the idea of 'readiness to learn' in the FE sector, outlining the history and adoption of the English GCSE qualification, and studying the recent implications of reforms in the classroom. Another emergent theme was reflecting on the impact that COVID-19 has had on the wellbeing of students and overall attainment in the college setting, and the effect this has on the former two themes: learners' engagement in studying English as a subject, and their readiness to learn.

This literature review now expands the depth of research by providing a description, summary, and critical evaluation of the following works with the research problem being investigated: Freire and Sford, Robin Alexander (2018) *Developing Dialogic Teaching* and Cassondra M. Faiella, Stephen D. Kroeger · (2020) work on *Inclusive Education a Systematic Perspective*. Lastly, we will unfold ideas from both Bucholz & Sheffler (2009) on creating a classroom climate for inclusivity/community and Dylan Wiliam's (2016) '*The work that words can do*'. In doing this, the aim is to uncover ways in which to support students in the classroom and to explore how to alter negative attitudes toward learning.

2.2 Participatory Education

"The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves." (Horton, 1990)

Horton here reminds us of the need for student liberation, a concept in which everyone has an opportunity to learn and a chance to develop themselves. As artists, the above quote suggests that teachers need to be multidisciplinary when enlightening a subject for students and provide them with options to shape themselves as young adults. A key theorist who connects to these ideas is Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, also a leading advocate of critical pedagogy. It is Freire's (2013) notion that as teachers, we are not responsible for creating knowledgeable students but instead "rather attempt to move forwards a new way of thinking in both educator and educatee, through the dialogical relationships between both" (Freire, 2013; p125). The approaches advanced by participatory education are key in liberating individuals and changing the educational system so that we

can assist students to achieve their potential and succeed in future goals. So, Freire is suggesting here that as teachers we are not responsible for creating knowledgeable students. However, there is a clear challenge in what he is stating as our students are studying a qualification born of a national curriculum and therefore government policy requires us as teachers to be responsible for imparting knowledge and skills.

Freire's underlying philosophy is the idea that theory emanates from practice and that knowledge grows from and is a reflection of social experience. He summarises that "knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry beings pursue with the world and with others." (Freire, 2013; p53) So, it can be argued that the purpose of education is to release human potential and, thus, is much more than a teacher simply depositing information into the mind of a learner.

Freire was also critical of traditional modes of learning and pedagogy and when discussing the 'banking concept of education', he frequently highlights that students are asked to memorise and repeat ideas, phrases, and formulas without understanding the meaning behind them. But do we want our students to be robotic and opinionless? This process turns students into "containers to be filled" by the teacher. As a result, students are treated as objects, as receptacles to receive, file, and store deposits. In turn, this means, that students are being dehumanised and teachers are expected to place deposits in their banks. Moreover, he saw society as a battle between those in authority and those who are powerless, between oppressor and oppressed. "The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world" (Freire, 2013). Therefore, Freire wishes to awaken the thinking process and believes that knowledge and culture are always changing. Hence, without students being able to have liberty and a voice in the classroom, they will not learn to become leaders and have confidence in their voices. It might be argued that John Hattie would agree as he believes that "the greatest effects on student learning occur when the teachers' become learners of their teaching and when students become their teachers." (Hattie, 2009). By students having more ownership and responsibility to explore a topic and skill, they can discover ideas together with their peers as well as enhance literacy skills in speaking and listening.

Freire (2013) wished for students to be able to abolish illiteracy as well as read the world, to be able to analyse social and political events that influenced and in particular, limited people's life prospects. In education today we still strive to open up the curriculum so that students are exposed to a diverse range of educational resources and opportunities to do this. However, this does not always lead to action or transformation. Like German philosopher Karl Marx (1848), Freire (2013) believed that inquiring and understanding the world was insufficient; education should also lead to action. As a result, education is a "praxis" ' It must be a combination of action with "serious reflection" (Freire, 2013). Therefore, "reflective participation," occurs in conversation with people who are in the same situation. By adopting a problem-posing pedagogy based on the learner's present interests and experiences. The aim of education is humanisation and emancipation. It is this notion that this study aims to explore through dialogue and critical inquiry.

What is key to note at this point is the fact that there are several complications and challenges in adopting the approaches espoused by critical pedagogy. For instance, being able to plan and deliver Freire's approach is difficult because naturally, the methods used are different from now because of the changes in time and context. For this reason, there is a natural element of interpretation when applying the approach to students in this day and age.

Another shortcoming of critical pedagogy is that students can be very self-conscious and sometimes avoid speaking about matters linked to their emotional wellbeing. This age group is particularly sensitive because within college many students are either young carers, in care themselves, living independently, or are known to safeguard because they need more support such as seeing a counsellor. The social status of teenagers is of high priority so this could hinder the results if some students do not wish to speak or share their thoughts. This is a challenge in critical pedagogy because we are trying to teach students to think critically, and question information given to them. Students are required to be active participants in the process, but it is not realistic to assume all students will.

Lastly, we must question whether students are going to take this process seriously as they may feel too pressured or uncomfortable when discussing wellness with peers. This research has an element of self-reflection required from students and some students may find this too difficult or feel uncomfortable. Therefore, it is not realistic to suggest that all students participate in a judicious amount of discussion but rather each student will contribute

something, albeit briefly, so that they are heard and are participating. Also, to ensure they are comfortable we must talk about the subject matters with sensitivity and respect.

2.3 Limits of Language

Expressing oneself to others is key to moving forward with learning and solving problems but there is a need for clear understanding from one participant to the other. One leading philosopher who investigates this further is Ludwig Wittgenstein who is one of the most influential German philosophers of the twentieth century. Wittgenstein investigates how the richness of language that we are exposed to is impartial to our self-knowledge. This work culminated in his book *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, 1922 and he expresses here that “The limits of my language are the limits of my world” (Wittgenstein, 1922:P59). This suggests that without words we do not understand our reality. As Wittgenstein (1922) argues, for something to potentially exist in the world, it must be within the range of thought, which he believes to be reflected through the range of language. Therefore, decreasing the scope of language decreases the scope of thought, in turn decreasing the “limits of the world.” The common notion is that language is a means of communication; it enables us to retrieve and convey information about the world.

Wittgenstein questions how much of our self-understanding depends on the words of others. Both Freire and Wittgenstein would agree that a language is a public tool for an understanding of private life and Wittgenstein argued for a representational theory of language. He described this as a 'picture theory' of language: reality ('the world') is a vast collection of facts that we can picture in language, assuming that our language has an adequate logical form. “The way I see the world and the way I use language to describe the world is based on my immediate experience” (Wittgenstein, 1922:P59). This means that our students need to build experiences whereby they are encouraged to enhance their discipline of thinking and speaking through practice. Otherwise, there will be limitations when students wish to express themselves.

2.4 Communication moving forward.

Sfard (1998) stands on the shoulders of Vygotsky (1934) and Wittgenstein (1922) when defining thinking as a form of communication. As previously stated, Sfard's (ibid) ideas interconnect with Freire's (1970) as she believes that the best way to learn a subject is to talk about this subject with others. Sfard (1998) asks us to reimagine thinking as communication, with the hopes this will resolve many of the current dilemmas facing research on thinking in general, and in mathematics education in particular. In doing so, she claims that we should move beyond the metaphor of learning as acquiring knowledge.

For Sfard (ibid), communication should be viewed not as a mere aid to thinking, but as almost identical to the thinking itself. Cognitive psychology equated understanding with perfecting mental representations and defined learning-with-understanding as one that effectively relates new knowledge to knowledge already possessed. Within the acquisition framework, therefore, understanding is a mode of knowledge, whereas knowledge itself is conceptualised as a certain object which a person can either possess or not, and learning is regarded as a process of acquiring this object (Sfard, 1998).

Sfard's research can only be considered a first step towards a more profound understanding of communication as in her later work she coins the term commognition as a "mix of cognition and communication" (Sfard,2008). This is a theory that regards "thinking as a form of internal communication rather than an entirely different operation" (Sfard, 2008). However, this study demonstrates outcomes that cannot be relatable with this study as Sfards' work prioritises mathematics rather than the English language. Despite this, this research uses Sfard's ideas and explores them in an English Language context.

2.5 Discernible imbalance

Recently the above items have become more apparent as the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the need to connect and this has confirmed the central importance of teaching and learning face-to-face. Online learning cannot substitute face-to-face interaction. For instance, according to Sims (2021), "students at our college were at a severe disadvantage in lockdown as they would normally learn many social skills from their peers which are critical for their personal development" (2021). From this, we can identify that this generation

might have gaps in specific areas and this could cause an increase in poor wellbeing. Sims continues to state that during this tough period whereby students are isolated at home, they are “also missing out on opportunities to make mistakes in a safe environment” (ibid). So, even though some students might have siblings or interaction with family, this is not by any means an equal substitution for daily life at college.

Currently, we are striving to give learners as much as possible of what the move to remote and online learning has denied them. Coming out of lockdown means having to rethink new strategies to help ease back into education face-to-face. However, it appears that we have always had to initiate learners into ways of thinking and interacting in which truth, reason, and argument matter- where language is critical. Furthermore, two arguably important questions to be addressed are: in what ways do dialogic strategies impact classroom dynamics toward creating a culture of success for GCSE English language students? And how does the use of well-being resources support students’ wellness and attainment levels?

Dialogic teaching “harnesses the power of talk to engage students’ interest, stimulate their thinking, enhance their understanding, broaden their ideas and construct and evaluate argument” (Alexander, 2020:1). These outcomes then aim to empower them for lifelong learning and social and democratic engagement. Education theorist Robin Alexander, whose work was discussed in Chapter One, has a distinctive approach to dialogic teaching as he presents the case for treating talk as not merely incidental to teaching and learning but as an essential tool of education whose exploitation and development require understanding and skill.

Alexander (2020) first identifies 8 key justifications as to why classroom talk is so important (especially now):

- Talk for **thinking**- we know that language and thought are intimately related and language builds the brain. Specifically, in early and pre-adolescent years spoken language is critical for the development of thinking and understanding but also throughout life.
- **Learning**- This is not only cognitive but also social, we learn through interaction and talk helps to scaffold learners thinking from the given to the new. It also engages attention and motivation. It also secures measurable learning gains.

- **Mastery**- through discussion, pupils can deepen their understanding within the specific curriculum and subject areas they become familiar with and take ownership of the concepts and vocabulary of each subject.
- **Communication**- We used to talk to exchange and negotiate to mean and engage in everyday transactions.
- **Relating**- Talk builds and consolidates relationships and it gives us confidence and competence to handle those relationships.
- **Acculturation**- Talk expresses and helps us to engage with what we have in common with others in our communities and cultures.
- **Democratic engagement**- Talk is vital as democracies need people who argue, challenge, question, make and evaluate cases and those who contest with those in power.
- **Teaching**- well-structured talk gives us access to the way students think and thereby helps teachers to diagnose children's needs, devise appropriate learning tasks, probe pupils understanding, assess their progress, provide useful feedback, and support pupils through the challenges that they encounter. To ultimately teach more effectively.

Alexander's (2020) approach to dialogic teaching is that he believes he might help to correct the still discernible imbalance in the discussion of teaching in general and classroom talk in particular. This approach aims to encourage more equitable attention to the talk used by all parties in classroom exchanges, especially the kinds of talk the teacher might use to open up the talk, and hence the thinking, of the student. Alexander (ibid) states that dialogic teaching is both beneficial for students and teachers "By encouraging students to share their thinking, it enables teachers to diagnose needs, devise learning tasks, enhance understanding, assess progress and assist students through the challenges they encounter" (Alexander, 2020). However, dialogue is still not afforded the same status as it is in other European countries where oracy is valued as highly as reading and writing. Even the spoken language element of the GCSE is undermined by the two assessment papers taken toward the end of the academic year. For example, the spoken language element of the GCSE is not part of the same grade 9-1 result but instead, marked a pass, merit, or distinction. Over the past three years, some examination boards have also discarded the need for evidence from the speaking and listening endorsement. So, one could question whether this is a fair representation of what students can achieve orally. Thus, Alexander continues to note that development is a social process as well as a biological one: a process through which learners construct meaning not only from the interaction between what they newly encounter and

what they already know but from verbal interaction with all others around them. Alexander believes this is critical for the “development of their very identity, their sense of self and worth” (Alexander, 2020:8)

Unlike Sfard (1998), Alexander’s (2020) research does not focus on mathematics instead, he discusses harnessing language as a pedagogical technique. Alexander (ibid) defines dialogue as conversation, discussion deliberation argumentation. For him, talk is essential for mediating the cognitive and cultural gaps between adult and child, among children, between instructor and student of any age, between society and the individual, and between what the learner knows and understands and what he or she has yet to know and comprehend. Language not only expresses but also constructs thought and speech shapes the higher mental processes required for so much of the learning that occurs or should occur, in school. As a result, one of the primary responsibilities of the teacher is to design interactive opportunities and interactions that directly and adequately engineer such mediation.

In his book, ‘The Dialogic Teaching Companion’ Alexander (2020) synthesises evidence from studies undertaken in British and American classrooms. He found that when teachers focus primarily on recitation as a method of learning, interactions tend to be brief rather than sustained, teachers move rapidly from one student to another to maximise participation, or from one question to another to maintain pace, and therefore rarely develop sustained or incremental lines of thinking and understanding. Teachers ask questions about content, but students’ questions, on the rare occasions they ask them, are more likely to be confined to points of procedure. Lastly, students concentrate on providing ‘correct’ answers, and teachers gloss over ‘incorrect’ answers rather than use them as stepping stones to understanding. Is this still familiar in our classroom today? Do teachers give students time to recall but not time to think?

As a result, students may not adequately develop the narrative, explanatory, and questioning abilities required to explain or demonstrate what they know and understand, or do not know and comprehend, and to engage in decisions about how and what they should study. Teachers may be unaware of, and tacitly or outright dismiss, students' outside-of-school knowledge and experience that is relevant to the job at hand as well as their ways of making sense. Teachers may be similarly under-informed about their students' understanding of what is being taught, and on both counts, they are likely to lack the diagnostic purchase that

is required of their teaching and if their assessments are to be precise, reasonable, and useful. When taking the above into account, in our classrooms today some feel that Students do not learn as quickly or as effectively as they could. While some learners will play the game of 'spot the correct answer', others will become alienated or bored by a process that appears to define learning merely as a process of jumping through linguistic hoops towards a non-negotiable end.

Dialogue moves beyond other forms of classroom talk such as rote and recitation and assumes a more conversational manner. This is achieved by adhering to several key principles (Alexander, 2017, pp. 27-28). Indeed, dialogic teaching is:

- Collective
- Supportive
- Reciprocal
- Deliberative
- Cumulative
- Purposeful

Finally, after a two-term (20-week) dialogic teaching intervention grounded in Alexander's framework, pupils in the intervention group were up to two months ahead of their control group peers in standardised tests of English maths and science. When evaluating this intervention they not only found that students were more inclusive when interacting with one another but also, students made improvements in vocabulary and transferring information from oral to written work within English lessons.

Alexander recently found that 'the dialogic process reminds us that the quest never ends and there is always more to be discovered' (Alexander,2017:32), thereby meaning that students would get more out of lessons if they were to collaborate using dialogue. Alexander's study also suggests that dialogic teaching can be particularly beneficial in helping students to develop core skills of listening and responding to others, forming questions, exploring and evaluating ideas, reasoning, and justifying opinions (Fisher, 2007:47). This connects to philosophers Philip Cams (2000) research themes as dialogue has the power to change our thinking and move discussions onto philosophical levels where students can engage in higher and more critical levels of thinking.

Those who are interested and subscribe to dialogic pedagogy move beyond the essentially monologic and teacher-centred dominance of recitation and develop patterns of classroom interaction that open up the talk, and hence the thinking, of the pupil. However, Alexander's work does not consider some of the problems that teachers and students in an FE setting might face. For example, some students refuse to communicate with their peers which would render dialogic talk ineffective for the entire class. One problem of this theory is that the teacher's voice is the guiding source in the lesson however, many teachers lack the skills necessary for planning effective whole-class dialogue.

This research does not simply adopt Alexander's theory of Dialogic talk but instead, evolves key components of it in times of hardship has been through a global pandemic. The study poses a different set of questions linking to students in an FE College as opposed to Alexander's work in primary and secondary schools. Aiming to promote communication through authentic exchanges within GCSE English Language lessons.

One of the main conundrums students currently face is that they do not get the opportunity to discuss and use varied questions to open up emotionally to others in the class. The work of Philip Cam (2014) is valuable here, as he argues that we need to give “more emphasis to collaboration and inquiry rather than putting students against each other and focusing too much attention on ‘teaching that’” (Cam.P. 2014:11). So, as tutors we must intentionally stop rushing to teach the syllabus in GCSE English Language but instead allow more time for students to decipher problems together and evolve with the curriculum being taught in a different way or with resources which are current and inspiring. At present, we must question whether the material and resources we have been recycling for years are appropriate for every new cohort of students.

2.6 Need for adaptation...with caution

Education resources are no doubt important in the development of a conducive teaching-learning environment. The use of these resources could give more valuable and powerful direction to the teacher than any personal efforts without the materials (Yunusa Dangara, 2016:30). However, without reshaping resources and contextualising material used in each class, the information can all too often appear irrelevant which can lead to disengagement.

Any resource has value, which means that it communicates information that goes much beyond what is intended. Cultural norms, identity representation, and stories from one (perhaps biased) perspective are a few examples. If teachers are not critically aware of the potential influence the materials they are employing might have on their pupils, they might choose resources that are not only irrelevant but also possibly damaging to students. For instance, when developing this study, it is crucial to pose questions such as, "How are we reflecting mental well-being and mental health through the resources we utilise in class?" What results is this producing? How can we evaluate our resources critically and consider their potential effects? (Both intended and unintended).

According to Mary Midgley 'None of us can study anything properly unless we do it with our whole being' (Midgley, 2002:51). In which case, we need to look at why students are not able to fully give themselves to the course and how we can support their needs when thinking about the resources we use. Author and associate professor Christina Gkonou (2020) argues that this is because wellbeing needs to be addressed more in the classroom. In the Oxford dictionary, wellbeing is referred to as a state of being healthy and happy, but Gkonou (ibid) argues it is much more complex than that and it stems across several categories. She states and defines four core aspects of wellbeing:

- physical wellbeing – being physically healthy.
- emotional wellbeing – when our mental health is in a good state so we can manage stress and anxiety.
- intellectual wellbeing – this refers to our cognition and the way we think and keep our brain engaged.
- spiritual wellbeing – the process of being in a good mental state by being connected to ourselves and the relationships we have around us.

These four core aspects create a wellbeing system. When they are not all in place at once, the whole wellbeing system can collapse. (Gkonou, 2019)

This indicates that we not only need to contextualise resources towards students' vocational subjects but also link them to an aspect of wellness. Within my experience of teaching GCSE English Language some of the resources and their perceived shortcomings are as follows:

- Textbook example extracts and questions such as GCP books.

CGP is an educational publisher that creates books for learning and revision at all levels.

There are many similar products in the market, but CGP books are also available online and cover all subjects at all levels. However, from the experience of using the resources in the classroom, these books are predominately more suitable for either home-schooling or setting individual homework. Also, the GCSE English Language books do not delve into enough detail to get higher grades. Some reviews of these resources have also noted that the books are not entirely up to date.

- Video tutorials from consultants and other subject specialists such as Mr. Bruff
Mr. Bruff is an English teacher making videos on GCSE and A Level English Language and Literature. These are short videos and cover all exam questions with tips and advice. One downfall is that the videos can be overly used in schools so, when students come to the college, they are dissatisfied with watching the same videos and cannot always connect to the presenter.

- Images used for inspiration when conducting creative writing activities.
For the writing section of the GCSE English exam, 50% of the marks are awarded for creating either a narrative or a description. The exam question is linked to an image so for this reason, teachers can easily select a photo of their choice and explore themes and ideas with the class. The aim is to inspire and help to generate ideas from a given image. The students use this image to plan and write a piece of fictional work. An obvious shortcoming is that this does not support the reading questions of the examination but, from personal experience, I have found that images do help to spark conversation and go alongside a written text.

- Online resources from websites such as BBC Bitesize, Teachit, or Tes.
BBC Bitesize is a free online study support resource designed to help with learning, revision, and homework. Bitesize provides support for learners aged 3 to 16+ across a wide range of school subjects. Bitesize also has hundreds of published lessons to help students across the UK with homeschooling. Students have previously commented that they find the videos on this specific site to be aimed at a lower age range. This then disengages them because they feel patronised. Much like other resources mentioned above, this website is solitary as the tasks require mainly one individual student to answer the questions. Therefore, it is not conducive to communal learning, and using this website is problematic if students have to work from mobile phones.

When delving into the subjects that these materials cover, there is limited evidence if any which explores any elements of emotional wellbeing whereby students are learning about either stress or anxiety along with coping mechanisms. For this reason, within my lessons, I have felt the need to branch out and seek resources that provide more information on these topics.

Within the current market of magazines specifically aimed at teenagers as consumers, two main types of magazines provide a range of resources on the topic of wellness. These magazines are sources from high street shops, and they are used as external material concerning GCSE English exam resources. These magazines are:

‘Planet Mindful’ – This is a magazine that aims to help by encouraging people to ‘take a moment away from the hectic pace of the modern world to discover a slower, more mindful way of living’. It is also packed with expert advice on how to prioritise your self-care, live a more authentic life, find ways to feel more positive, reduce stress and grow your confidence.

‘*Teen Breathe*’ magazine ‘believes wellbeing and mindfulness forms the basis of a happier, healthier, more fulfilled life’. This magazine targets students aged 8-15+ and encourages health, happiness, creativity, and mindfulness. It also explores topics from social media to sports making friends and staying positive to bring out the best in individuals.

However, from the above, it has been decided by the researcher that ‘Teen Breathe’ is more suitable as a change for reading and speaking in the classroom as the content has been created for a younger age range. The articles within this magazine could be used as a stimulus and a springboard to allow students to read about wellness problems. As mentioned earlier, previous resources have often felt outdated and disconnected for students which leads to disengagement with the learning process. So, articles from this magazine could have a multipurpose by linking to both literacy skills and informing or advising students on an aspect of wellness.

If Cam’s (2014) notion is that we need to include philosophy in the curriculum throughout the school years, and teach it through a collaborative inquiry then why not allow this to flood into heightening wellness in English lessons? One way of using the magazine article

resources in a lesson is to adapt Cam's Question Quadrant. A Question Quadrant is a powerful tool developed by Cam in 2006 to draw out and generate questions that can be used to conduct an inquiry. The purpose is to initiate and model the types of questions that can be used to produce in-depth discussion with communities to help vary questioning and collaboration in the class but also, aim to lead to greater awareness about mental health and wellbeing issues that often puzzle students. The aim is also to better prepare students to learn because at present, they enter the classroom, and it feels that their poor wellness is blocking them from learning. So, by addressing wellness issues and allowing a different approach to teaching the syllabus (through the quadrant and with alternative reading material) the research is aiming to break the barriers of this cycle.

Adding to Cam's ideas on free thinking is sociologist Richard Sennett (2013) as he states that "in a world of talk we need to open social space, where discussion can take an unforeseen direction" (Sennett, 2013:23). Therefore, viewing dialogue between one person and another as the basis for empathic cooperation, and holds the potential to expand the limits of participants. So, this research aims to create a space for fruitful dialogue to occur. Hattie (2012) echoes this same required need as he states that "5% of class time is devoted to class discussion" and in lessons, teachers are talking between "70 and 80 per cent of class time" (Hattie, 2012). This clearly shows an unjustified imbalance that requires adjusting and investigating further. Our classroom needs to be inclusive so that students are not alienated or ostracised.

2.7 Inclusive practice

Inclusivity holds great promise as educators work to eliminate the opportunity gap, ensure safety, and empower individuals and groups who have been marginalised. Inclusive practises promise to guide all students and support their development towards engaged citizenship in an informed society. Howley & Kroeger (2020) pose questions in the realm of inclusivity within education such as: what does the implementation of inclusive education require? How do various parts of the education system act on their commitment to inclusive educational practice?

Many professionals within the educational sector would agree with the notion that ‘inclusive practises are at the heart of our commitment to being effective educators, and this deep commitment moves us to consider the challenge extended for every educator to include every child in the educational opportunities’ (Howley & Kroeger, 2020). We are aware that every student is entitled to an individual assessment to gauge his or her academic, social, and behavioural baseline. So, teachers have a responsibility to raise awareness of complex social problems through critical pedagogy, dialogue, experimental learning, reflection, and social critique. This may seem an easy process in principle however, the reality of measuring every single student across all areas is virtually impossible in the first few weeks of the academic year. Hence, this thesis is examining alternative ways to explore and understand the student experience of studying GCSE English Language in a post-16 context.

According to Howley and Kroeger (2020), an inherent barrier to success is not having enough dialogue and open communication in the classroom as “this should be the hallmark for success in a diverse environment” (Howley & Kroeger, 2020: P179). This literature also shows that treating learners as individuals is paramount and tailoring instruction to meet their individual needs are all essential to helping everyone to progress. Howley and Kroeger (ibid) believe that in a differentiated classroom, multiple means of representation can be achieved through multi-sensory approaches to learning, which are used to guide the lesson and reduce barriers, making information approximately equally perceptible to all learners (Howley & Kroeger, ibid). Thus, we need to ensure that this is being addressed in all classrooms so that all individuals can thrive and have equal opportunities to engage in learning.

Another means of addressing inclusivity is by accommodating and increasing student interest. Student interest is used to guide learning and enhance motivation in differentiated classrooms. In these classrooms, educators engage students in a variety of learning activities that differ based on the individual's interests and needs (Howley & Kroeger, ibid). Also, Bucholz & Sheffler, (2009) would agree that this practice fosters students’ sense of ownership facilitates their sustained engagement and contributes to feelings of inclusion in the classroom community (Bucholz & Sheffler, ibid).

When considering inclusive practice in the classroom, it's crucial to be mindful of protected characteristics such as language proficiency, particularly for students who have English as a

second language (ESL). Awareness of ESL students' unique needs allow educators to implement strategies that support their language development and academic success. This may include providing bilingual resources, offering additional language support, or incorporating culturally relevant teaching materials. By recognising and valuing linguistic diversity, educators can create an inclusive learning environment where ESL students feel respected, included, and empowered to participate actively in classroom activities and discussions. Additionally, fostering a culture of acceptance and appreciation for linguistic differences benefits all students by promoting cross-cultural understanding and communication skills essential for success in an increasingly diverse society.

Exploring the power of relationships in the classroom is fundamental when considering inclusive practice. Positive relationships between teachers, students, and peers create an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and supported. These connections foster a sense of belonging and trust, empowering students to engage fully in their learning. Moreover, strong relationships enable teachers to better understand the diverse needs and backgrounds of their students, allowing for more tailored and responsive teaching approaches. By prioritising relationship-building as a cornerstone of inclusive practice, educators can create classrooms that celebrate diversity, promote empathy, and cultivate a sense of community where all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Some theorists believe that there is a physiological need to build relationships in the classroom to support emotional wellbeing. For instance, Bucholz & Sheffler (ibid) note that the classroom climate refers to the "quality of interactions that are shared between students and their teachers" (Bucholz & Sheffler, ibid). Algozzine, Daunic, and Smith (2010) argue that "classroom climates that are cold, hostile, isolative, and stressful are not conducive to the best learning for students". Additionally, a study done by Ladson-Billings (2009) found that the most effective teachers are those who demonstrate caring and warmth in their interactions with students. This research suggests that teachers who employ these approaches in their practice tend to be more successful in helping students achieve their goals.

In summary, we have demonstrated here that numerous elements go into building an inclusive practice. The requirement to engage students to foster a sense of ownership among learners in the classroom follows the focus on differentiation for equal opportunity in the

classroom. Furthermore, anything as simple or seemingly unimportant as a welcoming and inviting setting may be related to inclusion. Last but not least, this research resonates with the idea that inclusivity involves open communication, which demonstrates a true sense of care. This assumption guides this study's desire to choose resources that are interesting and promote conversation.

2.8 How things are taught, rather than what is taught

On the matter of Wiliam (2011) observes that “Every teacher needs to be getting better...better at something that will make a difference to their students” (Wiliam, 2011:36) because students are at the heart of education and their future is in our hands. His work relates to this research as he untangles approaches from teachers which then lead to how students experience learning. Themes of student disengagement and the importance of rapport with the tutor are emphasised in the notes below. He considers a bad curriculum well taught to be invariably a better experience for students than a good curriculum badly taught: pedagogy trumps curriculum. Or more precisely, pedagogy is curriculum, because what matters is how things are taught, rather than what is taught.’ But what are the conditions which are essential for learning? It is here we see a real relevance to this study as we are thinking about the way we deliver, the resources we use, and how this impacts students. We have more evidence now than ever before about what works in the classroom, but how much of that knowledge is in the hands of teachers? Wiliam highlights the main information he wishes he'd had when he first started teaching – information gathered across a range of educational thinkers and researchers.

1. Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care.

When talking to students on a one-to-one basis, often helps to build a rapport of trust and common understanding before they engage in what knowledge you have to pass on. Time compression seems to be everyone's enemy in the 21st century as a lot of content that teenagers are used to receiving is at the click of a button. However, time compression should never force us into a position of shortchanging the most important people and conversations in our lives. And the person/student sitting in front of us should be the most important person to us at that moment. Even our disinterested and distracted tone could reveal our multi-tasking while trying to pretend that we care. So, by endeavouring to listen, build a

relationship, and put the focus on the students and their thoughts/feelings, you will demonstrate a greater sense of genuine sincerity and connection.

Relevance to this research:

Whilst this research is not measuring the rapport built with the teacher and student, it is considering the notion of 'care'. This research is homing in on student success and wellness and the above point clarifies how important it is for teachers to find a grounding with students to move forward and help to support them. Without a foundation of a professional relationship, it becomes more difficult to develop as there may not be any mutual understanding. Achieving the above involves active listening, prioritizing the students' thoughts and feelings, and demonstrating genuine sincerity and connection. In the context of studying GCSE English in Further Education (FE) settings, this approach can significantly influence student experiences. When teachers take the time to build relationships and demonstrate care for individual students, it can enhance student engagement, motivation, and overall academic performance. Students are more likely to feel supported and valued, which can positively impact their confidence in tackling challenging coursework and exams.

2. Learning is a change in long-term memory

Ensuring students retain the information which is taught to them is one of the biggest challenges we face. This is because it is known that many students forget information which means that it is not stored in long-term memory.

Relevance to this research:

Here we have a stark contrast to Sfard's participation metaphor (1998) as this involves students learning through community building and participating. Although, there is nothing to suggest that a combination of these two strategies is not needed. The findings of this research may show otherwise. To enhance retention of information, I can utilise strategies like spaced repetition, active learning, and multisensory approaches. In FE settings, these techniques significantly impact student experiences of studying GCSE English. By employing effective memory retention strategies, educators empower students to engage more deeply with the material, leading to improved comprehension, recall, and overall academic performance. This fosters a positive learning environment, motivating students to actively participate in their studies and pursue academic success.

3. Memory is the residue of thought.

Researchers have suggested that unless students are struggling to make sense of what they are learning, little knowledge is likely to be retained in the long term. The more students think about something, the more likely they will remember it later on.

Relevance to this research:

This is the purpose of experimenting with resources in this study because students could have a connection to them and they might relate to them. Therefore, this will be analysed when coding and looking for themes in participant responses. To promote long-term retention of knowledge, I can encourage students to engage in active learning and critical thinking processes. This can be achieved through techniques such as problem-solving activities, discussions, and application of concepts to real-world scenarios. By challenging students to think deeply about the subject matter, educators facilitate the encoding of information into long-term memory. In the context of studying GCSE English in Further Education (FE) settings, this approach profoundly influences student experiences. By promoting active engagement and critical thinking in English lessons and exam preparation, educators empower students to develop a deeper understanding of literary texts, linguistic concepts, and analytical skills. This not only enhances academic performance but also fosters a lifelong appreciation for literature and language.

4. Learning requires forgetting.

Students are confident restudying material when it is fresh in their minds because it is familiar. Although, this can be misleading as the reason it seems familiar is because of its recency, not how well it has been learnt. Distributed practice (learning in short bursts) is known to be far more effective rather than mass practice (where students learn a lot of information at once in a block).

Relevance to this research:

In reflection, this study does look at learning that is potentially taking place in a set time frame. This research does not measure how well something has been learned but, there will be a note of common themes that are re-occurring. Effective learning through distributed practice involves breaking study sessions into shorter intervals over time, rather than cramming information at once. In FE settings, educators can encourage regular study sessions for GCSE English, allowing students to review material multiple times. This promotes deeper encoding of information into long-term memory, leading to improved academic performance and reducing stress associated with last-minute studying.

5. If you don't know where you're going, you might wind up someplace else

Students need to have an understanding of where each lesson is going as the learning objectives help to map a clear learning journey. However, this must give room for incidental learning and flexibility to take place so that learners feel a part of the process when exploring topics and skills.

Relevance to this study

This research shall discover whether dialogical teaching methods perhaps lead themselves to incidental learning as discussions develop and students are given more space to discover new insights in their dialogue. This does not mean that learning objectives will be disregarded or absent as it is important to always have a purpose in a lesson and come back to objectives to stay focused. Achieving a balance between structured objectives and flexibility is key in the classroom. As a teacher, I can outline clear learning goals while allowing for incidental learning and flexibility. This approach fosters student engagement, critical thinking, and creativity in studying GCSE English in FE settings. It also creates a dynamic learning environment that adapts to students' diverse needs and interests.

6. The answer of confident students is a bad guide to what the rest of the class is thinking.

After teaching a skill the teacher's decisions about what to do next should be based on the learning needs of all the students in the group, rather than the most confident and able suspects in the class. As one teacher said of his practice, "a small discussion group surrounded by many sleepy onlookers" (Black et al, 2003). This paints a strong picture of how unbalanced group dynamics can be and how important differentiation is when planning activities.

Relevance to this study

The above quotation is interesting within this study as it highlights the dangers surrounding group work and discussion. As a tutor, it is my responsibility to monitor and probe students who do not seem to be contributing as much as others and who are simply 'sleepy onlookers' trying to hide within the group. An emphasis will be placed on sharing and collaborating so that students are aware they need to input their thoughts. Ensuring balanced group dynamics and effective differentiation involves prioritizing all students' needs over those who may be more confident. Educators can accomplish this through differentiated instruction, small group discussions, and personalised tasks. In FE settings, this approach influences student experiences by empowering them to engage with GCSE English material at their own pace and level, fostering a positive learning environment where every student can thrive.

7. The only thing that matters with feedback is what students do with it.

When giving feedback to students they tend to read a grade and disregard the distinctive areas that they need to build upon. For this reason, it is far more important to let the students take more ownership when assessing their work. I often get learners to annotate and highlight aspects of their work so that they can critique it themselves. This way, when receiving feedback, they can understand and acknowledge where they can improve.

Relevance to this study

This study aims to develop learner autonomy so that when considering feedback, dialogic talk can allow immediate feedback to those who are talking and sharing ideas. This can then be followed with a written note on action points and areas for development. Encouraging students to take ownership of their assessments and self-critique their work can be achieved by providing rubrics or criteria, guiding them to annotate their work, and facilitating peer feedback sessions. In FE settings, this approach influences student experiences of studying GCSE English by fostering a deeper understanding of their learning process, enhancing metacognitive skills, and increasing motivation and autonomy in academic pursuits.

8. Effective group work requires individual accountability.

The research of psychology professor Robert Slavin and brothers Roger and David Johnson (1994), both education professors, has revealed that there are two key conditions for effective cooperative learning. The first is that group goals should be established: students should work as a group rather than just in a group. The second – and far more difficult – requirement is that each member is held accountable to the group for the quality of their contributions. In other words, one student's failure to put out their best learning efforts must have a detrimental impact on the group's chances of meeting its objectives.

Relevance to this study

Key principles of the dialogic talk include the need for students to be reciprocal: where students listen, share, and consider the view of others in the group, cumulative: to build on their own and others' contributions and chain them into a coherent line of thinking. Students will use these principles to increase their understanding of their prior knowledge. However, as Wiliam (2011) notes above, all students are accountable and this study will also note the challenges and outcomes when analysing group discussions. Effective cooperative learning involves establishing group goals and ensuring individual accountability for contributions. I feel as a teacher I can achieve this by defining tasks, encouraging collaboration, and

implementing peer evaluations. In FE settings, this approach influences student experiences by fostering teamwork, responsibility, and mutual support in studying GCSE English.

9. Students have deep insights into their learning.

In the majority of further education colleges, there are student representatives who are responsible for giving a voice and making decisions on behalf of students. For this reason, we must treat students as an essential part of the learning process. Without their input, we cannot evaluate and gain feedback from the lessons delivered. Therefore, as teachers, we must express a real concern and interest in students' success and will not stop trying or give up on them. If we demonstrate a persistent belief that our students can succeed hopefully, this enthusiasm for the subject and tenacity will rub off on the students, who will recognise the value of long-term success in the subject and strive harder as a result.

Relevance to this study

The role of the teacher in this study is a facilitator who encourages students. This means that the intention when conducting dialogic methods in the classroom is not to probe for set answers but to allow students space for their voice and exploration. Promoting student representation and involvement in decision-making is crucial in FE colleges. As a teacher I can achieve this by actively seeking student input and creating opportunities for feedback. By demonstrating genuine concern for students' success, educators inspire confidence and motivation in studying GCSE English. This enthusiasm and belief in students' potential positively influence their learning experiences, fostering a sense of value and empowerment. Students are motivated to strive harder and take ownership of their academic achievements.

When teachers start from the basic assumption that “the pupils in their class are people with all the human rights that we accord to adults – then good things tend to follow”. This idea was encapsulated by American sociologist Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot, who, when asked to define good teaching, said it was “ideas as conveyed through relationships” (Moyers, 1989). This links to the first point that Wiliam makes in the above list because a learning environment has to be centred around having a foundation of mutual understanding and equality.

Wiliam (2011) also strongly believes that if you are serious about raising student achievement, you have to change what happens in the classroom. Wiliam noted that:

‘The teacher's job is not to transmit knowledge, nor to facilitate learning. It is to engineer effective learning environments for the students. The key features of effective learning environments are that they create student engagement and allow teachers, learners, and their peers to ensure that the learning is proceeding in the intended direction.’ (Wiliam, 2011)

So, the quality of the learning is going to be dictated by what’s going on in that classroom. If we wish to be serious about raising student achievement, we have to change what happens in the classroom. Teachers can help pupils learn by making the educational process easy for them. This does not imply decreasing standards or diluting the curriculum. Facilitating learning, on the other hand, entails encouraging pupils to think critically and comprehend how the learning process works. Wiliam continues to add that “Teachers do not create learning, learners create learning, teachers create the conditions in which students learn”. His theoretical ideas and perspectives demonstrate how we have to take responsibility in planning for learning. But can this personal rapport be built in a large class of students? Classrooms can be impersonal places if there are many students together and at present, even though the government requirement for learning hours is 4 per week, half of those hours are used for independent study. This means that we only have the opportunity to assess and support an average of 20 learners for 2 hours a week. This means that there is limited time available for one-to-one although no matter how short, words and ideas can change the world. As teachers, we can change students' world by helping them and showing we care. This is why it is key to build a conducive learning environment where there is a platform devoid of both physical intimidation and emotional frustration, which allows for a free exchange of ideas.

Wiliam (2011) points out that surprisingly, by the time they reach 16-18 years old, ‘Most of what our students need to know hasn’t been discovered yet, learning how to learn used to be an optional extra in education; today, it is a survival skill.’ What’s going wrong is that the jobs that people need to do these days require much higher levels of numeracy, literacy, and critical thinking than the jobs that were available 50 years ago. Fifty years ago, the average working man or woman was required neither to read nor to write during the working day; the kinds of jobs you could do without those high-level skills, unfortunately, do not exist anymore. However, what we can do now is to help our students discover learning by

formulating resources that prepare them for work and support both their academic and emotional needs. We need to show we care about the next generation.

Caring can be defined as ‘displaying kindness and concern for others’, and this ideal is extended across many professions. More specifically, within the educational setting caring can have a very impactful and positive effect on individuals, overall ages, and mental and physical capabilities. Care is especially essential to individuals who may be operating from a deficit perspective. Caring includes respect, understanding, dignity, worth, and partnership; providing choices; understanding values; Guiding in moral decision-making; and empowering healing capabilities (Smerke, 1990). For this reason, we must provide an array of extended opportunities to show that we care in the classroom.

Thus far, we have explored areas of Dylan Wiliam’s work and how it relates to this particular research study. Wiliam is widely recognised for his work in assessment for learning and educational leadership. His research focuses on how formative assessment practices can enhance teaching and improve student learning outcomes. Vicky Duckworth, on the other hand, is known for her expertise in further education and vocational education. So, her research on adult literacy, lifelong learning, and inclusive teaching practices aligns more closely with this study. Duckworth's work offers valuable insights and perspectives that are directly relevant and therefore, her expertise provides a valuable foundation for understanding and addressing the specific challenges and considerations within the scope of this study. For example, Duckworth's work emphasises the importance of learner-centered approaches and addresses the diverse needs of students.

Duckworth’s (2017) report seeks to fill the gap in understanding effective teaching methods for English and mathematics among students without GCSE A*–C grades, especially in non-selective Further Education (FE) settings. The study investigates variances in institutional approaches and outcomes, explore reasons for pass rate discrepancies, and uncover strategies for teaching students with subpar GCSE performance. The report also presents the study's findings to assist institutions in enhancing their teaching and outcomes in English and mathematics for 16 to 18-year-old students who haven't yet attained at least a Grade C at GCSE or Grade 4 in the updated examination system.

The primary findings underscore the significance of contextual factors influencing teaching and learning. One key aspect is the cultivation of positive student attitudes, crucial for enhancing motivation and attendance. Teachers employ diverse strategies, including dialogic approaches, albeit with varying degrees of effectiveness. Moreover, educational providers often emphasise the importance of fostering a positive mental attitude among students, particularly in encouraging them to retake English and mathematics qualifications. Additionally, there's a notable prevalence of students with additional support needs, such as learning difficulties like dyslexia or autism, alongside mental health issues. Consequently, schools require supplementary resources and support systems, although there's a perceived tendency for underreporting of these challenges by educational institutions. So, for this research we can see that more is required to help maintain a positive attitude from students and to alter our approach (teaching style or resources) to help those who have additional support needs. We are trying to create the supplementary resources and use dialogic strategies to encourage motivation.

Other insightful findings from this report are those regarding teaching practices and their impact on learning reveal that motivation plays a central role in further education, with colleges emphasising a shift towards adult-to-adult relationships between teachers and students to encourage critical thinking and boost confidence. Contextualising learning, such as offering courses like 'mathematics for plumbers,' enhances relevance, with some viewing Functional Skills as superior due to its practical focus. Personalisation and differentiation are prioritised in smaller classes to address individual needs, ensuring all students are appropriately challenged. In terms of leadership and management practices, colleges operate more effectively when curriculum leaders support English and mathematics teaching policies, correlating with higher pass rates. Conversely, reluctance from staff in other subjects to acknowledge the importance of these subjects can pose barriers to effective teaching and learning. Therefore, the insights gleaned from this research suggest that all staff need to be willing to promote the benefits of English language GCSE and if the progress coach and safeguarding team can show the value in studying this subject then students may maintain a healthier attitude towards them. By contextualising learning and linking resources to personal matters such as stress or anxiety, this study aims to enhance the relevance of wellness and through doing so, enhance our literacy skills.

Research in Dialogic teaching in the classroom

In this section, we will explore three previous studies which link closely with the topics discussed in this thesis. Looking specifically at what has already been achieved in prior studies which connect to dialogic teaching and English Language, and begin to draw out key learnings, benefits and limitations. Secondly, we will then explain how this study not only builds on this existing work to advance the knowledge in the field but also highlights the perceived gap in research.

The first study explores the use of Dialogic teaching in a different context. This study was conducted by T'Sas (2018). This explored this technique in Flemish education, at primary school level. It draws from social constructivist theory and asserts that the emphasis on speaking and listening skills has gradually diminished in classroom practice and educational research, particularly concerning Dutch as a school subject. The aim of the study was to consider what is exploratory talk, how is it measured and which effects does it have?

It was found that exploratory talk can be taught/learned, and consistent use improves language skills, group reasoning, and problem-solving abilities at both individual and group levels. Individual improvement in exploratory talk, particularly regarding reasoning skills, is influenced by mathematics skills, indicating that social interaction plays a significant role in individual problem-solving abilities. So, what does this mean for us and this study at hand?

When reflecting on this study, for us it identifies notable disparities and variances when compared to Jan T'Sas' study. Specifically, this investigation centres on primary education, with a focus on the Flemish/Dutch educational context and the implementation of exploratory talk methodologies within the domain of mathematics instruction. However, it does recognise several benefits of exploratory talk, so Furthermore, it is imperative to note that this study predates the global pandemic and does not address any aspects related to student wellness.

In the next study titled "Dialogic Teaching during Cooperative Inquiry-Based Science: A Case Study of a Year 6 Classroom" by Robyn M. Gillies (2020), the focus lies on investigating the pedagogical approach of an adept teacher within the context of two inquiry-

based science units for Year 6 students. The primary objective of this case study was to delve into the methods employed by the teacher to cultivate dialogue and enhance scientific literacy among the students. By examining the intricacies of dialogic teaching within cooperative inquiry-based science, the research sheds light on effective strategies for engaging students in meaningful scientific exploration and discourse.

The study observed a teacher's strategies in teaching science units, particularly the utilization of various communication methods to engage students' curiosity, provide hands-on activities, and cultivate scientific understanding. Data collection involved monitoring student engagement, language use, and cognitive practices during six inquiry-based lessons.

The findings from this study indicate that students actively participate in group tasks, effectively use scientific language, and enhance their ability to articulate opinions and justifications. The study underscored the significance of integrating authoritative and dialogic discourse to enrich student learning and promote reasoned argumentation during inquiry-based science instruction. Moreover, it addressed a gap in the literature by showcasing effective communication approaches for enhancing student engagement and learning in such units.

While this study has demonstrated the significance and influence of dialogic discourse, disparities persist between this research and that of Gillies (2020). For instance, Gillies' (ibid) investigation centred on the domain of science, differing from the subject focus of the present study. Similar to prior research endeavours, the participants in this study were of a youthful demographic, given that the research was conducted within the context of primary education.

Thirdly, Lawrence Jun Zhang and Donglan Zhang (2020) conducted a study titled "Dialogic Discussion as a Platform for Constructing Knowledge: Student-Teachers Interaction Patterns and Strategies in Learning to Teach English,". This delves into the multifaceted challenges encountered by novice teachers as they endeavor to translate their theoretical knowledge and skills acquired from teacher training programs into real-world teaching scenarios. The study aims to explore the intricate process of merging theoretical understanding with practical application, with a specific focus on the discourse among student teachers.

The action research discussed is part of Pupil Experience (PE), a teacher-training program at the National Institute of Education (NIE). Replacing "micro-teaching," PE includes six 2-hour preparation sessions at NIE and corresponding teaching sessions in schools. It precedes full engagement in the module, covering topics like classroom management and language lesson delivery. Trainers facilitate learning within a constructivist framework, aiding student teachers in understanding session preparation and conduct rationale. PE is flexible but typically covers pupil engagement, teaching language skills, and session closure. See Skuja-Steele's work from 2004 for more details.

The findings indicate that student teachers prioritized their ability to navigate through their initial teaching experience over focusing on facilitating pupil learning and developing a deeper understanding of language teaching. The evident dominance of certain peers in discussions was accepted as a norm, implying that learning occurred through mutual collaboration and constructive engagement. The willingness of student teachers to cooperate and actively participate suggested their commitment to maintaining a cohesive and dynamic group environment. These factors are deemed essential for student teachers to evolve into collaborative and reflective professionals.

Overall, the study emphasises the importance of balancing concerns about surviving initial teaching experiences with a focus on promoting pupil learning and developing collaborative and reflective teaching practices. It highlights the potential benefits of incorporating real classroom experiences into teacher education programmes. Although Jun Zhang and Zhang's research pertains to English language instruction and endeavours to promote learning through collaborative efforts, it does not, however, bear relevance to the present study concerning dialogic teaching as a pedagogical approach and the incorporation of specific reading materials addressing wellness. Therefore, this underscores how little research there is into dialogic teaching there is.

The three studies examined provide valuable insights into dialogic teaching, though each has its limitations and unique context. Jan T'Sas' (2018) research in Flemish primary schools highlighted the benefits of exploratory talk in mathematics but is limited to a younger demographic and a specific subject, lacking insights into student wellness. Robyn M. Gillies' (2020) study demonstrated effective dialogic strategies in Year 6 science classes, showing improved scientific discourse among students, but is again restricted to a younger age group

and a non-English subject. Lawrence Jun Zhang and Donglan Zhang's (2020) research focused on novice teachers' collaborative practices during training, emphasising real classroom experiences but not directly addressing dialogic teaching or student wellness in English language instruction. Collectively, these studies reveal a significant gap in applying dialogic teaching to GCSE English language, particularly concerning older students and their wellness, which this study aims to address by exploring the impact of dialogic methods on both academic performance and well-being in further education.

2.9 Summary

Having explored the beliefs of Freire (2013) and Marx (1848) within chapter two, these theorists have influenced the research design and advanced our thinking by adopting a problem-posing pedagogy based on the learner's present interests and experiences. The aim of education is humanisation and emancipation. Within this research, it is key to build a conducive learning environment where there is a platform devoid of both physical intimidation and emotional frustration, which allows for a free exchange of ideas.

It is this notion that this study aims to explore through dialogue and critical inquiry. Within chapter two, we posed the question of whether the material and resources we have been recycling for years are appropriate for every new cohort of students. The decision has now been made by the researcher that 'Teen Breathe' is more suitable as a resource to use in this research as the content has been created for a younger age range. What's more, this chapter has covered the need to address inclusivity in the study and this could be achieved by accommodating and increasing student interest.

Specific challenges have been put forward such as the reality of measuring every single student across all areas is virtually impossible in the first few weeks of the academic year. Hence, this thesis examines alternative ways to explore and understand the student experience of studying GCSE English Language in a post-16 context because measuring attainment levels would not be appropriate for this research as we look at the methodology in the following chapter.

Chapter Two has outlined that it is also difficult as there is a visible imbalance in the classroom Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the need to connect, and this has confirmed the central importance of teaching and learning face-to-face. Our students need to build

experiences whereby they are encouraged to enhance their discipline of thinking and speaking through practice. However, during the process of this study, it may be apparent that learners may not wish to contribute or discuss wellness.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Within this chapter, there will be an outline of the methodological approach that informs this investigation. It first presents the research questions, followed by a focus on ontological and epistemological concerns concerning the research problem. This introduction also offers a justification that explains how the topic of this research emerged in practice. After presenting my methodological approach I describe the methods used to collect data. Finally, this chapter concludes by evaluating and justifying methodological choices and considers the ethical issues that have arisen.

Changes in Practice- Dialogic Strategies and Principles Used

This research was conducted with twenty students studying a Health and Social Care Level 2 vocational course. These students were also studying English Language GCSE as part of their study programme. The changes took place within this GCSE English lesson and were trialled for 6 weeks, for one hour per week. Using Bloom's Taxonomy of objectives (1956) which was later revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) by the end of the lessons the students would then know how to:

- Understand the term resilience and motivation when discussing the nature of this at college.
- Interpret information in a given text- discuss this after reading.
- Analyse the language used in a given text.

Throughout the 6 weeks, higher expectations were set for learners to be able to comfortably achieve the above objectives (such as extending the effect of language upon the reader and getting students to interpret for deeper implicit meaning). It was also important to assess if students were managing to complete these tasks in a set time (specifically the latter two objectives) so that we were replicating conditions linked to the final exam. Below is a short profile of what took place each week when making changes in the classroom and a short reflection on my impressions of the session.

Before the 6 weeks- A discussion was held with the Progress Coach based on the icon grid (located in appendix 7.6). It was at this point that we decided that the topics of resilience and motivation were the two core areas that students felt they needed improvement on. For this reason, the resources were identified in Teen Breathe magazine before the first lesson.

Week 1

- The initial questionnaire was conducted whereby students were asked questions without any prior knowledge or changes being made (this is located in appendix 7.7)
- The students then came together as a collective to discuss the word 'Resilience' which was noted on the board. The students came up with questions such as 'what makes someone resilient?', 'what does it mean to be resilient?', 'how can someone be more resilient?'. Students were able to then listen to each other's ideas and were invited to consider others' views on this topic.
- The 'Road to Resilience' article was then introduced (see appendix 7.1) starting with thinking about the images used in the articles. This led to a short discussion of the language used in the title and what it meant by the noun 'road'.
- After then reading the text, students were given time to further discuss the questions raised above. This discussion was then semi-structured by giving the students a question quadrant to use. In this first lesson, the students were able to complete the two boxes to the left.

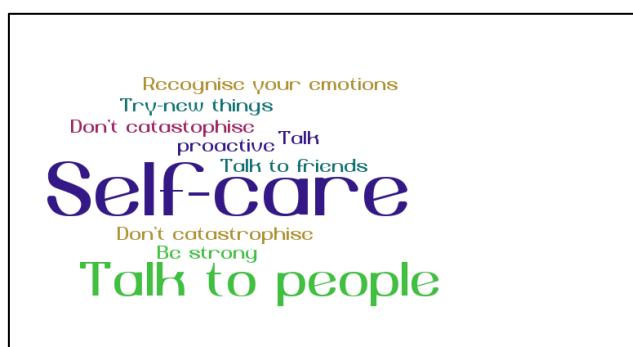
<p><u>Retrieval Questions</u></p> <p>1. Read the first two paragraphs and identify 4 true statements from the list below:</p> <p>A) Being resilient means to be strong enough to withstand with life’s blows. B) When things go wrong, it can sometimes be frightening. C) It is impossible to shake off a bad situation. D) You can concur even minute problems with resilience. E) The ability to adapt does not matter. F) Being physically strong does not make you more resilient.</p>	<p><u>Inference Questions</u></p> <p>1. In what ways does the writer use language to tell you about resilience? – Any features found?</p>
<p><u>Research Questions</u></p> <p>1. Define the term Resilience</p> <p>2. What famous people have been known to be resilient?</p> <p>3. List 3 ways you can improve your resilience (either from the internet or the article).</p>	<p><u>Thinking/ discussion Questions</u></p> <p>1. How can you be more resilient both in and outside of college?</p> <p>2. Are challenges in life necessary?</p> <p>3. Is it impossible for some people to be resilient?</p>

Week 2-

- This lesson grew with the previous one as students were re-introduced to the topic of resilience. Initially, as a starter activity, they had to share with a partner a time when they thought you were resilient.
- Students were then given a matching task connected to language features such as alliteration, lists, metaphor, rhetorical questions, and repetition. This was to identify what prior knowledge existed so that we could build on this together.
- Once clarifying terms, they then went back to the quadrant and began to depict features individually. This was then shared in groups and with the entire class.
- We then selected some of the features within the quotes to discuss the language in further detail such as the metaphor ‘those being able to weather the storm and deal with life’s curveballs and the list ‘resilience can be nurtured, developed and strengthened’.
- The end of this lesson was centred around forming a paragraph collectively and verbally about how the writer has used language to tell the reader about resilience. Some students were then able to independently write their own by choosing another quote.

Week 3

- This lesson was the final lesson on the specific chosen topic of resilience. The starter activity was to write down their definition of resilience on a post it notes and share it with the class.
- Students then peer-assessed the paragraphs from the previous lesson based on the criteria for the exam. For example, has the student shown some understanding of language by:
 1. Attempting to comment on the effect of language.
 2. Selecting some appropriate textual detail.
 3. Making some use of subject terminology appropriately.
- Lastly, the students were asked to complete the final green box in the question quadrant. Students discussed their answers and then for the first question I got them to place their answers on a wordle. The responses are shown in the image below:



- Method 4 (The focus group interview) was conducted at the end of this lesson to obtain the students' thoughts on the resources and their learning.
- Method 2 & 3 (Semi-structured staff interviews with the Safeguarding Lead and Progress Coach) were also taken during this week.

Week 4

- As a starter activity the students were given several different additions to the *Teen Breathe* magazine to read for 10 minutes, this meant that they could choose a topic and then discuss what they had learned. The more able students were able to also give some language features that they had identified in their chosen article.
- Following on from this, this week was replicating the first week as students then came together as a collective to discuss a word written on the board although, this time it

was on the topic of 'Motivation'. The students discussed the following questions: 'what makes someone motivated?', 'what does it mean to be motivated?', 'how can someone be more motivated?'. Students were able to then listen to each other's ideas and consider others' views on this topic.

- The article titled 'From Sofa to Success' was then introduced (see appendix 7.3) starting with thinking about the images used in the article such as a clock and two clouds showing the words 'now' and 'later'. This led to a short discussion of the language used in the title and by this point the students were able to identify alliteration.
- When reading the text, the students were asked to underline any words/vocabulary they were not certain about for example 'procrastinator'. They then discussed possible definitions with a partner and clarified this with me.
- Students were given time to further discuss the questions raised at the beginning of the lesson to see if any additional comments could be made as a collective. This discussion was then built on by using another semi-structured question quadrant.

Week 5

- Students were again re-introduced to the topic of motivation. Initially, as a starter activity, they had to list things that motivated them on the board.
- We then talked about why these motivated us or why they might motivate others for example 'money' motivates the students as they wish to save for a variety of future desires.
- Instead of looking at language feature definitions, the students were asked to annotate them in the text and answer the question 'how has the writer used language to describe going from procrastination to motivation?'. This was a timed exercise as once again the restriction to do this in the exam is approximately 15 minutes.
- Students then read their answers to peers and an example was shown on the board of the difference between the score of 3/8, 5/8, and 8/8. Students were able to cumulatively build reasoning as to why the responses scored that specific result.

Week 6

- In the final session, the students started by reviewing/revising features by playing a game of bingo. Examples of features were shown and then in pairs, they had to discuss which feature they thought it was and then cross it off their bingo sheet.

- Students then finished the question quadrant and reflected on how they can be more motivated to succeed both inside and outside of college.
- Method 5 of data collected was gathered at this point in the process whereby students were asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire relating to the changes made in class.

Each of the lessons above incorporated dialogic questions because they are questions that promote discussion, questions that are open, philosophical, and challenging. Dialogic inquiries encourage critical thinking in addition to just provoking thought. Here are some examples of the questions used:

Conceptual clarification questions-

Can you give me an example?

Could you explain further?

What exactly does that mean?

Probing assumptions or implications questions-

Please can you explain why...?

Do you agree or disagree with...?

Why do you say that?

Why is ... important?

How does ... affect ...?

Questioning viewpoint-

How is that thought different/similar to...?

Can anyone else see this another way?

What is the counter-argument here?

According to Robin Alexander (2010) in dialogic classrooms, students do not just provide brief factual answers to ‘test’ or ‘recall’ questions, or merely spot the answer which they think the teacher wants to hear. Instead, they learn to:

- narrate
- speculate
- explore
- justify
- evaluate
- explain
- analyse
- discuss
- argue
- imagine

- and they ask questions of their own

Alexander (ibid) continues to note that when learning in life, all these forms of talk are necessary. To facilitate the different kinds of learning talk, learners in dialogic classrooms also:

- listen
- think about what they hear
- give others time to think
- respect alternative viewpoints

In dialogic classrooms, teachers may use familiar kinds of teaching talk such as:

- rote (drilling ideas, facts, and routines through repetition)
- recitation (using short question/answer sequences to recall or test what is expected to be known already)
- instruction (telling children what to do and how to do it)
- exposition (imparting information and explaining things)

But in dialogic classrooms and this research, teachers do not limit themselves to these. In this research (conducted in the 6-week timeline above) we also use:

- Discussion

We discussed the topic of resilience and within this, there were many exchanges of ideas and experiences whereby students were sharing, and the discussion involved the class as a group. There were both open and closed questions posed for example, what does resilience mean? And how is someone resilient? There was also an opportunity to talk about the denotation and connotation of the topic. The resource from the Magazine 'Teen Breathe' titled 'Road to Resilience'.

- Scaffolded dialogue.

Students in this experiment are learning new skills in GCSE English language such as identifying language features and listing explicit information from a text. Therefore, the change in the classroom involves stepping stones to help support both dialogue and understanding the text about resilience and motivation. To scaffold the dialogue, it was important to build on comments that students made rather than merely receiving them.

When exchanges were made, it was crucial to deepen the lines of inquiry so that the topic

could be fully understood. In addition, this also coincided with the students speaking and listening assessment so, the skills demonstrated in this research were of high importance for the assessment criteria of this element of the qualification. For instance, the students need to use spoken standard English, listen to others, and respond well to questions/feedback. A full outline of the criteria for the speaking and listening assessment can be found in appendix 7.3.

As seen within the breakdown of the 6 weeks above. Within those lessons Alexanders (ibid) Five key principles of the dialogic talk were applied:

- **Collective** - Students came together in joint learning and inquiry.
- **Reciprocal** - Students listened, shared, and considered the view of others.
- **Supportive** - Students were able to express themselves clearly and safely.
- **Cumulative** – Students build on their own and others’ contributions and chained them into a coherent line of thinking.
- **Purpose** - The discussion was semi-structured with specific learning outcomes as stated above.

3.2 Research Questions

This research obtains accurate and illuminative information about the problems that face the Further Education community. Research in education uses two basic types of reasoning: inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning is often referred to as a “bottom-up” approach to knowing, in which the researcher uses observations to build an abstraction or to describe a picture of the phenomenon that is being studied. Inductive research is needed to advance knowledge (Harriman, 2010: 6) and to develop new theories (Eisenhardt, Graebner & Sonenshein, 2016; Locke, 2007). I have chosen to use inductive reasoning and inductive methods of data collection as I wish to observe the nature of interactions, looking for themes and discovering resemblances and regularities in experience (premises) to reach conclusions.

This is not the only way of framing research, however. Research can be deductive when it has a “top-down” approach to knowing. In this tradition, educational research does not make

a general statement or prediction and does not seek evidence that would support or challenge a prevailing viewpoint or premise. Some define this approach as the “hypothetic-deductive method, which begins by formulating a hypothesis” (Lodico, Marguerite G., et al., 2010). To summarise, the deductive approach begins with a theory, develops a hypothesis from that theory, and then collects and analyses the data to test those hypotheses. However, deductive reasoning relies heavily upon the initial premises being correct. If one or more premises are incorrect, the argument is invalid and necessarily unsound. Some critics such as Hammond (2016) would also argue that this approach does not encourage divergent thinking so it may also limit the scope of creativities. Therefore, there are risks to being deductive in this research as it does not wish to make presumptions or risk ignoring other themes/outcomes.

This research has two main questions it is pursuing to address by concluding evidence:

1. How do dialogic strategies in GCSE English language classrooms affect students’ attitudes to learning?

This question has been derived from having observed students taking their GCSEs and often seeming very disengaged with the process of repeating the qualification year after year. For instance, students would display explicit behaviour such as verbalising their dissatisfaction or implicitly placing their heads on the desks therefore, the construction of this question has been designed to invite a critical examination of students’ behaviour towards learning English Language skills and to encourage positive behaviours. Unfortunately, students who are struggling with their well-being and mental health feel a sense of disenfranchisement and a mixture of disbelief or unwillingness to learn which is why they may find themselves in the same position retaking this qualification for the umptieth time. As a result, these individuals express undesirable behaviour which is not necessarily the root problem but a cause and output of the problem.

Whilst observing students as they re-enter the classroom environment (after being in lockdown for many months on end), it has also been noted that the need for classroom discussion and dialogue was paramount. During the past two years, students have been robbed of their social interaction and expression because online learning did not give them face-to-face communication. So, as teachers “Our job is to create rooms filled with students’ voices. Not be the main voice.” (Ripp, 2015:12). This question has been formulated having witnessed students being mute or otherwise not present in the learning process and by

allowing for more dialogue, there is interest in exploring how dialogic approaches to teaching might engage learners.

As outlined in chapters one and two, the work of Robin Alexander will influence this research when answering this research question as it explores the notion of ongoing talk between the teacher and students, not just teacher presentation. Students will be able to openly express and exchange their perspectives and thoughts. It will be largely through the teacher's talk (as the researcher) that the students' "talk is encouraged, facilitated, mediated, probed and extended - or, in too many classrooms, inhibited" (Cazden, 1988:16). Hence the interest and reason for undergoing further research into dialogic pedagogy are to develop classroom interaction patterns that facilitate discussion by moving beyond the recitation's fundamentally monologist and teacher-centered hegemony and therefore the thinking/attitude of the student.

2. What are the student experiences of using well-being resources to support their study of GCSE English Language?

As previously noted, it has been apparent that well-being and academic excellence are intertwined so, this question initially arose when realising that the resources in GCSE English are historically not linked to wellness. The topics and content of the GCSE English (both fictional and non-fictional) materials are simply not directly linked to an aspect of wellness. Colleges should, therefore, not only be a place for students to learn but they should also a place where students' wellbeing is prioritised. According to Spark (2022) 'students experience fewer disciplinary incidents, can concentrate better on academics, and develop stronger communication skills, when schools foster emotional well-being. This can lead to greater academic performance and lifelong health.' (Spark, 2022:14). This question poses further lines of enquiry such as: does the lack of readiness to learn link to resources used in English GCSE? Is wellness a key driver for breaking this barrier?

[3.3 Practitioner-led research](#)

Educational research is a type of systematic investigation that applies empirical methods to solving challenges in education. The primary purpose of educational research is to expand the existing body of knowledge by providing solutions to different problems in pedagogy

while improving teaching and learning practices. Consequently, practitioner research makes a ‘vital contribution to the collective, collaborative endeavour of enquiring about and improving teaching and learning practices.’ (Burton & Bartlett 2005: p2). So, the aim of this research is also to look at an area within further education under a microscope and place a light on something that is so far undiscovered.

With the practice of Education, educator Stephen Kemmis (1995) foregrounds the unique, oral, and democratic position of teachers in developing educational practice as a force for continuity or change in society.

‘Educational practice is a form of power—a dynamic force for social continuity and social change which, though shared with and constrained by others, rests largely in the hand of teachers. Through the power of educational practice, teachers play a vital role in changing the world we live in’ (Kemmis, in Carr 1995, as cited in Gregson et al:9, 1995)

This suggests that practitioner-led research is vital because the interventions and research that take place today, will alter how people see tomorrow. We are responsible for adapting educational practices so that they can be improved for generations to come. However, the aim of this research is not to ‘prove’ or ‘disprove’ the success of a hypothesis but to investigate and present an authentic account of experiences of action taken in context.

The researcher must recognise their positionality (as outlined earlier with respect to the context and subject of the investigation when doing practice-focused research). This is especially crucial in a study like this when I am the researcher as well as not only a teacher to the participants but also a colleague to the staff taking part. The nature of the relationships established between the researcher and the study participants before the start of this investigation influences the way the changes in the classroom are delivered as well as the data obtained from the observations and questionnaires. For instance, at the beginning of the academic year, I have always endeavoured to form a good rapport with students by getting to know them individually and finding out their likes/dislikes I believe my personality lends itself to openly communicating with them. By doing this, I hope to form a solid foundation of trust and respect so that the classroom is a safe/enjoyable environment. However, just as this appears positive, this could mean that the students may act or respond differently to

resources given as opposed to a teacher who they did not have a good rapport with. Therefore, to avoid bias this research not only obtains information from students but also from other staff members so that a holistic set of results can be identified and observed.

Navigating Bias, Power Dynamics, and Assumptions in this Research

When conducting research at a college, it's crucial to critically engage with the inherent biases, power dynamics, and preconceived notions that may influence members of the staff involved. These individuals bring with them a multitude of perspectives shaped by their personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and professional roles within the institution. These factors can significantly impact the research process, from the formulation of research questions to the interpretation of findings. For instance, faculty members may hold implicit biases that unconsciously influence their interactions with students or their perceptions of certain educational practices. Additionally, power dynamics within the institution, such as hierarchies between administrators, faculty, and staff, can shape research agendas and decision-making processes. Moreover, prior assumptions and beliefs held by members of the staff may influence the direction of research inquiries and the interpretation of results, potentially leading to confirmation bias or overlooking alternative perspectives. Therefore, conducting research at a college necessitates a critical reflection on these factors to ensure the integrity and validity of the research outcomes. This entails acknowledging and interrogating biases, power dynamics, and prior assumptions, while striving for objectivity, inclusivity, and transparency throughout the research process.

Additionally, before conducting research, it is crucial for me as a researcher to reflect on my own biases and assumptions to ensure that my personal perspectives, such as beliefs in a particular wellness practice or their assumptions about the efficacy of certain treatments, do not unduly influence the design, implementation, or interpretation of the study's findings. Acknowledging and addressing personal biases through self-awareness and ongoing education are essential steps for researchers and professionals.

3.4 Research Paradigm

This involves a basic set of beliefs that guides the researcher regarding the way of performing the research. A paradigm is a particular way of looking at the world. It is based on the work of the philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn (1970) and is used to explain the evolution of new ideas in science in terms of shared understandings or 'paradigms' within the social community of scientists. There are known discrepancies at any time, but they are normally viewed as puzzles to be solved within the parameters of 'regular science.

Periodically, anomalies occur that are so perplexing that they precipitate a scientific revolution, in which the dominant paradigm is replaced by a new one, typically as an older generation of scientists is replaced by a younger one. So, scientists accept the dominant paradigm until anomalies emerge. For example, in recent times paradigm shifts can refer to unexpected political outcomes or new artistic expressions just as easily as they can to the arrival of a new underlying premise and approach in chemistry or astronomy. Therefore, this shows that scientists then begin to question the basis of the paradigm itself, new theories emerge which challenge the dominant paradigm and eventually one of these new theories becomes accepted as the new paradigm.

There are various types of research paradigms, including positivism, and social-constructionist. Below is an outline of the main differences when summarising basic beliefs of what researchers should focus on and the preferred methods within them.

	<i>Positivist paradigm</i>	<i>Social-constructionist paradigm</i>
Basic beliefs	World is external and objective	World socially constructed and subjective
	Observer is independent	Observer is part of what is observed
	Science is value-free	Science is driven by human interests
Researcher should	Focus on facts	Focus on meanings
	Look for causality and fundamental laws	Try to understand what is happening
	Reduce phenomena to simplest elements	Look at the totality of each situation
	Formulate hypotheses and then test them	Develop ideas through induction from data
Preferred methods include	Operationalising concepts so that they can be measured	Using multiple methods to establish different views of phenomena
	Take large samples	Small samples investigated in-depth or over time

Source: Easterby-Smith et al. (1991)

A very important relationship exists between paradigm and methodology because the methodological implications of paradigm choice permeate the research question/s, participants' selection, data collection instruments, and collection procedures, as well as data analysis. For example, in respect of data analysis, the choice of the positivist paradigm means, in general terms, that the data to be gathered will often be quantitative and are most likely to be analysed using quantitative procedures. In contrast, the choice of an interpretivist paradigm aligns with research methodologies and methods that will gather and analyse data that is typically qualitative.

The assumptions which underlie each of the different research traditions have an order and can be framed around four key questions:

1. Ontology: what is the form and nature of the social world? (particular versions of the world - the nature of reality what is taken to be real)
2. Epistemology: how can what is assumed to exist be known (how we can know about the world - ways of knowing the world)
3. Methodology: what procedure or logic should be followed

4. Methods: what techniques of data collection should be used? No method is self-validating, separable from epistemology and an ontology (Coe et. al., 2021 p.16)

3.5 Ontological Considerations

Ontology derives from the Greek, as does its meaning as investigations that the ancients Greeks, above all, Aristotle engaged in. For Aristotle (date needed), ontology is anything other than merely the study of "what kinds of things exist" (ref needed). This is its degenerate meaning in today's analytic philosophy. For Aristotle, ontology is the study of beings and investigates modes of beings.

Ontology refers to the kind of things that exist in the social world, as well as beliefs about the shape and nature of that social reality. It is concerned with whether social reality exists independently of human understanding and interpretation; for example, whether there is a shared social reality or 'multiple context-specific realities.' Slevitch (2011) states that ontology can be defined as the study of reality or things that comprise reality. The view of Guba & Lincoln, (1994) is that the ontological consideration is what is the form and nature of reality, and therefore, what can be known about it is "how things are" and "how things work".

Furthermore, ontology assists researchers in determining how definite they can be about the nature and existence of items under investigation. For example, what 'truth claims' about reality can a researcher make? It is also significant because ontological viewpoints influence the nature of the interaction between the subject and the object, or the knower and the known.

There are three distinct ontological positions identified: realism, idealism, and materialism (Snape & Spencer 2003). Realism claims that there is an external reality that is independent of what people consider or interpret it to be, whereas idealism maintains the belief that reality can only be comprehended through the human mind and socially formed meanings. Materialism, like realism, maintains that there is a real world, but only the material or

physical world is believed to be real. Other phenomena, such as beliefs, values, or experiences, emerge from but do not shape the material world.

This research subscribes to the view that reality is multiple. As a researcher, I am entering the field with some prior insight into the research context but realise that this is insufficient in developing a fixed research design due to the complex, multiple, and unpredictable nature of what is perceived as reality (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Throughout the study, I am remaining open to new knowledge and allowed it to evolve with the support of participants. The use of an emergent and collective strategy is congruent with the interpretivist notion that humans can adapt and that no one can have prior knowledge about time and context-constrained social realities (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

3.6 Considerations of epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge as well as the numerous ways in which people know and learn about social reality. The two significant ways of knowing are positivism and interpretivism. Constructivism and 'naturalistic' are terms that are widely used to refer to interpretivism in the literature, and they are sometimes used interchangeably (Guba & Lincoln 1994). The term constructivism is significant because it identifies the underlying idea that reality is socially produced; a relativist perspective that maintains that there is no external reality apart from human consciousness (Robson 2002).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Morgan, (2007), research conducted under the interpretivism paradigm usually exhibits the following characteristics:

- The admission that the social world cannot be understood from the standpoint of an individual.
- The belief is that realities are multiple and socially constructed.
- The acceptance that there is inevitable interaction between the researcher and his or her research participants.
- The acceptance that context is vital for knowledge and knowing.
- The belief that knowledge is created by the findings can be valued laden and the values need to be made explicit.

- The need to understand the individual rather than universal laws.
- The belief is that causes and effects are mutually interdependent.
- The belief is that contextual factors need to be taken into consideration in any systematic pursuit of understanding.

Epistemology matters as it is crucial not only for assessing the dependability of knowledge acquired in the field but also for comprehending how knowledge plays an active role in society. Reflecting on epistemological issues can help educators be more intentional in their teaching, allowing students to become more conscious of their learning process and personal development.

One understanding of epistemology is to adopt a positivist stance: a subscription to the idea that knowledge is constant and objective. The nature of knowledge in relation to positivism is that truth is identical given any scenario. For example, if a researcher did a teaching technique in an experiment and repeated that same technique in a different environment then, the outcome would be the same regardless of any external variables. In educational research terms, this means that if we teach students in a specific way, it will always lead to a known and consistent output – the same cause and effect.

German philosopher Max Horkheimer Max criticized positivism and explored new ideologies. “Like Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno reject positivism universal worldviews, because they argued that positivist suggestions claim to explain the world only as a perceptible phenomenon” (Kalelioğlu, 2020, p.65). Moreover, they would also argue that the positivist paradigm is a risk and is problematic as every individual is different and will therefore respond in a variety of ways. Hence, this research does not suit this theory because all students respond differently, and the study does not want to miss other possible outcomes when analysing the findings. On the other hand, some research is more suited to this paradigm, for example, medical research needs to know what effect something has so that it is replicable. Here, a positivist paradigm is required so that medical science can move forward with knowing.

This research uses a constructivist, interpretivism approach with an intention of understanding “the world of human experience” (Cohen & Manion, 2017, p. 36), suggesting

that “reality is socially constructed” (Mertens, 2005, p. 12). An interpretive paradigm ‘does not view society as having a fixed structure, hidden or otherwise because the social world is created by the interaction of individuals (Burton & Bartlett 2005: p22). Therefore, this research will try to show how choices are made by participants in social situations within the process of interaction. As a researcher, I shall try to seek to understand the actions that the participants make and gather data in a naturalistic and organic manner whereby open questionnaires are held and observations which allow the situation to be as ‘normal’ as possible. This also means the research is a small scale that aims for detail and understanding rather than statistical representativeness.

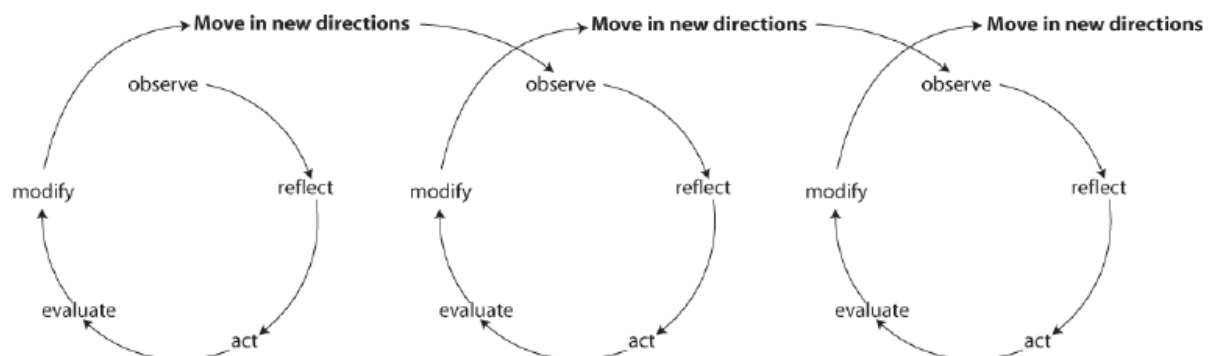
Woods (1999) suggests that qualitative research focuses on natural settings and is ‘concerned with life as it is lived, things as they happen, situations as they are constructed in the day-to-day, moment-to-moment course of events. For instance, when the resource and dialogic strategies are taking place and the students are discussing what they have read, I shall look to understand and portray the participant's perceptions and note responses that occur at that moment.

[3.7 Adopting Action Research](#)

This study is best suited to action research due to its focus on addressing practical challenges and fostering positive change within a specific context. By engaging in collaboration and a cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, action research allows me to actively intervene and improve practices relevant to the field of education. This methodology aligns with the objective of implementing and evaluating an intervention to enhance teaching methods and student engagement in the classroom. While narrative inquiry may offer insights into individual experiences and perspectives, action research is better equipped to drive tangible outcomes and promote meaningful change within the educational setting.

Action research is also known as practitioner research in which practitioners’ study and solve real-world problems in their respective contexts. This approach is the most appropriate for this study as it enables educators to tackle real-world challenges, refine teaching practices, and improve student learning outcomes collaboratively. By fostering a culture of reflection and empowerment, it allows teachers to drive positive change within their schools and

communities. Action research follows a circular pattern of planning, doing, observing, and reflecting as seen in the table below:



The Action Research Cycles (based on McNiff and Whitehead 2006)

Participants actively participate throughout, seeking practical solutions and insights. Reflection is essential for promoting greater understanding and strengthening people engaged. It is recognised for its relevancy, collective nature, and potential for positive change. Jean McNiff (2013), emphasises its importance by saying, "Action research is always to do with improving learning...it is a powerful form of education research as it is about the transformation of people's lives through their own efforts." (McNiff, 2013:24). Her work highlights the collaborative and transformative aspect of action research, as well as its significance in solving everyday problems and bringing about progressive change.

McNiff highlights the significance of reflection in action research, stating, "Reflection is central to the processes of action research, both for the participants and the researcher." (ibid:23) This reflective technique enables the critical investigation of assumptions and beliefs, resulting in deeper insights and more meaningful outcomes.

McNiff's strategy is around the democratisation of knowledge production. She goes on to say, "Action research is a way for people to become aware of their own power in the world."(McNiff, 2017:18) Individuals and communities are given the ability to construct their narratives and actively engage in the generation of information that is relevant to their lives via action research.

Overall, McNiff's work emphasises the value of action research as an instrument for

promoting social justice and empowerment. It is a way of making sure that knowledge serves people, rather than people serving knowledge. It will enable this study to form a framework for cooperation, intervention, and knowledge development that is both academically rigorous and socially meaningful.

3.8 Considerations around Action Research

As a researcher, I must ensure this research is carried out reliably. Reliability is the reproducibility of study results across time, across multiple places and populations, and with different researchers. For example, the resources used, and the questionnaires can be duplicated without any alteration. This also ensures consistency because there is no requirement to adapt for a different audience. So, the reliability of a method can be studied in several ways. One technique is to follow the method over a set amount of time and to reach a conclusion about the reliability of a posteriori—in particular, from experience.

This approach suits this type of research because the purpose of action research is not simply to illuminate a phenomenon or to add knowledge to the world, but it is about how to change the world and make it a better place. It is about opening up spaces of conversation that might otherwise be shut down. Moreover, action research can lend itself to educational research because it draws on the skills that teachers do naturally such as thinking reflexively. As a teacher, I constantly reflect on my practice. I often think about why lessons were successful or perhaps why they did not go as intended. Using action research will allow me to suitably and comprehensively answer the research questions I have set out above.

Furthermore, by using this method it legitimises what a teacher is already doing in the classroom space. For example, by understanding homes and communities better, teachers can make informed curricular decisions that connect new materials with students' life experiences. Thus, this approach is relevant for this research as it aims to collect information from focus group interviews. This will also be beneficial as it can deepen and inform my practice. Fundamentally action research is very practical, where the researcher gathers data authentically by listening to students and having open-ended questions.

However, as a researcher, it is important to be aware that this method can be affected by experimental bias and this can have an impact on the research outcomes, and it can come from a variety of sources, including researcher biases, participant traits, contextual factors, and implementation challenges. To reduce prejudice, researchers should maintain transparency, use triangulation, conduct peer debriefing, follow ethical guidelines, and examine alternate hypotheses. By implementing these techniques, the validity and reliability of action research findings can be improved.

3.9 The Research Methods

The research paradigm and the type of research have guided the choice of research method. This is exploratory research and uses a qualitative research design, and the choice of research method and sampling strategy has been carefully considered. The study conducted is framed by an interpretive approach aiming to represent the voices of FE learners focusing on creating a classroom that ‘fosters health and wellbeing’ and one that ‘enables people to achieve their potential’ (Brookfield 1999). Three methods of collecting data have been used: An initial open questionnaire obtaining students' thoughts, two interviews from specific colleagues, and a focus group with students. These methods have been triangulated by looking at what the students say compared with what the teacher says to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena.

The methodologies employed in this investigation are summarised in Table 1 and outlined in further detail following this. It introduces the participants, describes how each method corresponds to the study objectives posed, and the form and type of the data being collected. Below this table is a more in-depth overview of each method.

<u>Method & Research</u> <u>Question link</u>	<u>Method description</u>	<u>Participants</u>
Method 1 RQ1 & 2	Initial Student Questionnaire	Twenty GCSE English students

Method 2 RQ1	Semi-structured interview	One staff member- a lead of safeguarding and welfare.
Method 3 RQ1	Semi-structured interview	One staff member – Progress Coach
Method 4 RQ2	Student focus group interview	Five GCSE English students
Method 5 RQ2	Student open-ended Questionnaire	Twenty GCSE students

Prior to conducting individual and group discussions as well as administering questionnaires, clear ground rules were established to ensure a respectful and productive environment.

Examples of these ground rules included maintaining confidentiality, encouraging active listening, allowing each participant to speak without interruption, and respecting differing viewpoints. All participants were fully briefed on the research, procedures, and their rights, including the voluntary nature of their involvement and the option to withdraw at any time without consequence. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, ensuring they understood the purpose of the study, how their data would be used, and their right to privacy.

Method 1 – Initial Student questionnaire

This method was conducted in a classroom where an English GCSE lesson was taking place with 20 participants, all of whom are currently studying Health and Social Care level 2. These students all consented to collect their data by signing an agreement at the top of the questionnaire (this form is located in appendix 7.8 and 7.8)

It is important to gather initial information from the participants before the changes being made in the classroom so that the researcher can obtain a foundation of knowledge before delving deeper.

This questionnaire had a combination of questions as the aim was to gauge their attitude to learning and thoughts around wellness and English. Although, before giving the questionnaire to the students to complete, it is necessary to consider the following (a selected few from the work of Louis Cohen et al. (2011):

- Review the purpose of the questionnaire.
- Decide on the most appropriate style & formation of the question for example- multiple choice, rank orderings, rating scales, ratio, open, or closed.
- Ensure that the data acquired will answer the research questions.
- Balance comprehensiveness and exhaustive coverage of issues with the demotivating factor of having respondents complete several pages of a questionnaire.
- Ask only one thing at a time in a question and use single sentences per item wherever possible.
- Strive to be unambiguous and clear in the wording.
- Avoid making leading questions or making the questions too hard (in connection to vocabulary)
- Consider the readability levels of the questionnaire and the reading and writing of the respondents.

The questions formulated and asked are as follows:

1. *How would you describe your first 6 weeks at college and why?*

2. *How do you feel the college handles the wellbeing and mental health of students?*

*Very dissatisfied
satisfied.*

Not satisfied

Very satisfied

Extremely

3. *What do you do when needing help with mental health?*

Talk to friends

Use the internet for answers

Talk to parents/guardian/s

Discuss with a tutor at college.

Talk to student services at college.

Other _____

4. *What could we be using in English to help with your wellbeing/ Mental Health*

Reading resources

Writing tasks

Speaking and listening activities

Jessica Holloway

5. Does your mental health affect your learning when in English GCSE lessons?

All the time *Quite frequently* *Sometimes* *Hardly ever*
Never

6. How do you normally feel emotionally when coming into English? RTL = Ready to learn

Never RTL *Not usually RTL* *Somewhat RTL* *Completely RTL*

7. Would you be willing to talk about wellbeing generally in a small group?

Yes *No*

8. Do you have any other suggestions about how we can improve your wellbeing in college or English?

This method is aligned with both research questions as the questionnaire intends to obtain a foundation of data about both the students' attitudes and a wider view of wellbeing.

For example, questions 1 & 6 are seeking to gather the students' views of attitude and readiness to learn. Whereas question 2 is asking for a wider perspective of the college approach to wellness and question 8 holms in on GCSE English and wellness.

The rationale behind this questionnaire is to gather comprehensive data on the wellbeing and mental health of students during their initial weeks at college, with a specific focus on how these factors impact their learning experience, particularly in English GCSE lessons. By understanding students' perceptions and needs, we can enhance our support systems and educational strategies to foster a healthier and more supportive learning environment.

Transitioning to college can be a challenging period for students, often impacting their mental health and overall wellbeing. These challenges can, in turn, affect their academic performance, especially in critical subjects like English GCSE. However, there is currently a lack of detailed, specific feedback on how students feel about the support provided for their wellbeing and how it intersects with their academic experience. This questionnaire aims to fill this gap by collecting targeted information directly from the students. The questionnaire includes a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions. While the research is qualitative, this variety ensures comprehensive data collection. Open-ended questions allow for detailed,

personal responses, capturing the nuance of student experiences. Closed-ended questions provide structured, comparable data to identify patterns and trends.

Method 2- Semi-structured interview with Safeguarding Lead

When considering staff members to interview within the college setting, it is clear that this research pinpoints a specific role: The Safeguarding Lead. Having asked their permission to interview and collect data and they agreed as they also wish to investigate and enhance the wellness of students in this environment. Therefore, this research has a wider perspective and view of wellness which comes from the core department trying to help learners who are in need.

The questions formulated and asked are as follows:

1. *Tell me about how the first six weeks have been in comparison to the last couple of years at the start of term.*
2. *Are there any clear improvements this year?*
3. *What are the recognisable themes of concern this year?*
4. *What impact do you think this has on students learning in the classroom?*
5. *What are your thoughts on ways to improve these moving forward?*
6. *Is there anything you believe course tutors can do to help?*

Both methods two and three are aligned with research question one as it will allow me, as a researcher, to have a two-way conversation about how dialogic strategies in the GCSE English language classroom might affect students' attitudes to learning. It also provides me with the opportunity to gather reasoning behind different attitudes to learning from an alternative staff member's perspective. Talking to the Safeguarding Lead and Progress Coach will provide an ample amount of time for them to open up and share their experiences of students' attitudes to learning.

This questionnaire aims to gather insights into staff experiences during the first six weeks of the term compared to the students' perspectives and thoughts from previous years. The focus

is on identifying improvements, concerns, and their impact on learning, as well as suggestions for future enhancements. This questionnaire is crucial for understanding the early term experiences from the Safeguarding Lead at the college, particularly in terms of their reflective thoughts linking to student wellbeing. By addressing their feedback, we can create a more supportive and effective learning environment. Staff participation is essential for gaining valuable insights and driving meaningful improvements within GCSE English classrooms.

Method 3- Semi-structured interview with Progress Coach

In a semi-structured interview, there is room for new ideas to be raised because of what the interviewee says but crucially, questions have not been worded in such a way as to suggest to respondents that there is only one acceptable answer.

Firstly, the role of a progress coach entails working to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and attributes required to overcome barriers to learning and reach their full potential. In this role, a progress coach will facilitate personal development tutorials, 1-1, and group coaching to provide individualised support and targeted interventions to a caseload of students relating to their personal development, their learning, and their careers to enable them to progress to the next level of learning or employment whilst keeping them engaged to achieve. A fundamental part of this role is to work closely with students who are experiencing difficulties in managing their behaviour and therefore may require behavioural coaching.

When interviewing the Progress Coach there is a framework of research questions to examine. The questions within this interview were all carefully planned and to make the process thorough I have to consider the following:

- It is important to make the interviewee comfortable and for them to digest the information easily. So, the use of unambiguous and simple language was necessary for the interviewee to understand.
- The interview avoided complex questions and made the length of the interview adequate but not too lengthy.

- Avoiding bias – the researcher must be impartial as this could affect the outcomes. For this reason, the questions were objective instead of presenting a personal view.
- Ensure only one topic is being questioned at one time to prevent confusion.

The questions formulated and asked are as follows:

1. *Tell me about your job role in the College setting & the FE environment.*
2. *What has your experience been like as a Progress Coach from the last academic year till now?*
3. *Can you think of a time where you have encountered a challenge in your role as a Progress Coach, would be able to elaborate on this?*
4. *How do you think other tutors could support your job role in their lessons?*
5. *From your experience, what English skills do students need to improve on?*
6. *What are your thoughts on dialogic teaching in the classroom?*

This questionnaire, completed by a progress coach staff member, aims to gather detailed insights into the role and experiences of progress coaches within the college setting. The focus is on understanding their challenges, identifying support needs, and gathering opinions on student skills and teaching methods. The questionnaire includes open-ended questions to capture detailed, personal experiences and nuanced feedback from progress coaches. Some questions that appear closed help identify specific patterns and trends, providing structured data that is easy to analyse. Understanding the experiences and challenges of progress coaches is essential for improving their support systems and the overall educational environment. By addressing their feedback, we can create a more supportive and effective educational environment.

The interview questions were crafted with the research inquiries in consideration, yet utmost care was taken to avoid any leading phrasing, as preserving objectivity and safeguarding the validity and reliability of the collected data are paramount. Through the utilisation of neutral, open-ended inquiries, participant autonomy is respected, thereby facilitating the elicitation of

richer, more authentic responses, thereby enhancing the overall quality of the research outcomes. For instance, Question 3 tacitly suggests that progress coaches may encounter challenges within their role. However, this construct was deliberately designed to ascertain the extent to which their daily responsibilities intersect with issues pertaining to student well-being. This framework affords progress coaches the flexibility to either acknowledge the absence of challenges or elaborate on any topic of their choosing, whether related to attendance, attitude, productivity, or otherwise.

Method 4- Student Focus group interview

To gain further insight into the experiences of the students and their perspectives, it was necessary to conduct a focus group discussion. However, unlike the original 20 students who took part in the questionnaires, it became apparent that five students were willing to voice their opinions if they were being orally recorded. As a result, the data gathered was not as substantial and broad as one would have hoped for. Nevertheless, there is enough data to analyse and dissect to form themes.

The questions formulated and asked are as follows:

1. *Tell me about the resource we've used from team breeze magazines”.*
2. *How would you describe the resource in comparison to other resources we have used?”*
3. *What English skills have you practised when using these resources?”*
4. *What have you learned from reading the articles?”*
5. *From your experience, how do you learn best?”*

This method is aligned to research question two because the focus group allows me to have an in-depth understanding of the participants (students) and their experiences after reading about ‘resilience’ in *Teen Breathe*. This may expose specific attitudes and beliefs about the changes that are being made in the lesson and reveal if the students think it has supported their study of GCSE England Language.

This questionnaire, conducted by students, aims to gather feedback on the use of Team Breeze magazines as a learning resource. Students' perspectives on the effectiveness of the resource and their learning experiences will be valuable in improving teaching methods and resource selection. Understanding students' perceptions of the Team Breeze magazines is essential for evaluating their effectiveness as a learning resource. This questionnaire seeks to address this gap by collecting targeted feedback from students who have used these resources.

Method 5 – Student open-ended questionnaire

Open-ended questions have been selected to use as a method of collecting data as they are inquiries that do not offer participants a predetermined list of response options, but rather allow them to respond in their own words. Open-ended questions are frequently employed in exploratory investigations and qualitative research such as this to gauge participants' attitudes to learning.

The questions formulated and asked are as follows:

1. *Tell me about the resources we have used from the Breathe magazine.*
2. *How would you describe the resource in comparison to other resources we have used?*
3. *What English skills have you practised when using these resources?*
4. *What have you learned from reading the articles?*
5. *From your experience, how do you learn best?*

This method is aligned with research question two because it enables students to express their thoughts which includes more information rather than purely closed questions. For instance, I am more likely to receive a broader and richer range of answers when asking an open question. As a researcher, I then hope to gather more useful, contextual feedback.

This final questionnaire, given to students, aims to gather feedback on the use of resources from Breathe magazine. Understanding students' perspectives on the effectiveness of these resources and their learning experiences will provide valuable insights for enhancing teaching methods, student wellness and resource selection. By comprehending students'

viewpoints, I can make informed decisions to optimise teaching and learning experiences. Active student participation is indispensable for acquiring valuable insights and refining educational practices.

Chapter Three has outlined the methodological approach that informs this investigation and the five methods used in data collection. This chapter has provided a detailed week-by-week description of the changes in practice that have taken place with specific reference to the dialogic strategies and principles used.

3.10 Ethics

This research has a responsibility to follow the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA). Following paragraph one of these regulations which outlines that ‘educational researchers should operate within an ethic of respect for any persons – including themselves – involved in or touched by the research they are undertaking’ (BERA, 2018:6). My project is ensuring that all research is carried out ethically to respect any persons involved and that all individuals are being treated fairly, sensitively, and with dignity and freedom from prejudice. As a researcher, I am being honest and open to the participants taking part and all partaking in the project have given both verbal and written consent. I also have approval from my line manager in relation to conducting this project for educational purposes. Therefore, transparency is of utmost importance and if I did not think the participants were suitable or fit to take part, I would advise them of this to prevent harm. I understand there is a duty of care and that I have a responsibility to ensure there are no risks at any stage of this project. There are no conflicts of interest or commercial gain in this project which would compromise the objectivity of the research. Neither are there any intended incentives that might have had an impact on the decision to participate.

Participants are actively involved in the process and have the option to give consent when initiating the research open questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews. The participants have the opportunity at all stages of the process to withdraw their consent if they wish. Consequently, participants are aware of their rights to withdraw at any stage and have my work contact details if they need to get in contact with any concerns.

When conducting research connected to well-being, understanding and effectively dealing with vulnerability and safeguarding issues are paramount. Participants in such research may be in vulnerable situations, sharing sensitive information or experiences related to their mental or physical health. It's essential for me to establish a trusting and supportive environment, ensuring participants feel safe and empowered throughout the research process. This involves obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and providing appropriate support resources. I am aware that I must also be vigilant in identifying and addressing any safeguarding concerns that may arise, such as instances of abuse or neglect. By prioritising ethical considerations and adopting a compassionate approach, I can uphold the well-being and dignity of participants while producing valuable insights to enhance their overall health.

Whilst conducting this research I was conscious of power imbalances in a classroom between teacher and learner where students are aware they are being examined. So, there is a need to implement several strategies to prevent this for example, fostering a supportive environment through transparent discourse and active listening promotes equality and shared ownership in learning. Secondly, engaging students by including them in decision-making processes and encouraging student-led activities increases autonomy and agency. Clear explanation of assessment expectations and standards, combined with diverse assessment techniques, promotes fairness. Furthermore, fostering introspection and self-assessment, as well as addressing power relations through discussions of privilege and equality, promotes a more inclusive and empowering learning environment. These tactics help to reduce power disparities and develop a sense of equality and mutual respect among pupils.

Fortunately, I do not believe that participants supplied dishonest answers or said what they felt I wanted to hear during data collection since, as a researcher, I seek to establish a secure and supportive environment that encourages honest and authentic responses. This was accomplished by instilling trust in participants, emphasising secrecy, and informing them that there are no right or wrong answers.

It is essential to maintain confidentiality and all data collected is stored privately by locking it away in a safe place. By adhering to the GDPR legislation the study can remain secure and trusted by all participants taking part. When writing up my results, I will choose

pseudonyms for all concerned so that they remain anonymous, and their personal information is kept private.

Although this research is funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), the Foundation has in no way influenced the conduct of the research or its outcomes. (2018 BERA).

It is the policy of the University of Sunderland that all research must be conducted in accordance with the University's Research Ethics Principles, Professional Codes of Practice and the law. Therefore, all research proposals at the university of Sunderland have to be submitted to the Online Ethics Review System to be assessed by the Office of the University Registrar (UREG). So, as part of this research, I had to tell an ethics committee what this research was about, the participants it included, the focus and the topic. At this early stage, I fully declared all elements of the research and filled out an ethical form which was then approved.

3.11 Participant Selection

This section involves specifying the population in an overview of the participants who took part in this research and sample size along with how they were originally involved in the process. Overall, there have been three adult staff members partaking in separate open-ended interviews, twenty students for the questionnaires, and five students for the focus group.

The twenty students who participated in the study were aged 16-18 and all of which were Level 2 Health and Social Care students studying their GCSE English Language qualification. This group of participants was selected for two specific reasons: firstly, they are my cohort of learners who I have been teaching for two hours on a weekly basis so, this means that I can implement the changes in the classroom with no disruption. Secondly, having interviewed the safeguarding and welfare lead, this subject area and level coincidentally score high when looking at the number of students who need additional mental health support and are connected to safeguarding.

The participating students have come from a range of secondary feeder schools within the local area and all face various barriers to learning, including socioeconomic challenges associated with lower working-class backgrounds, which can impact both their health and educational outcomes. For example, five students in the group of twenty have income support so are receiving help from the college. Another student is also a young carer and faces a number of obstacles to academic progress as a result of their caring duties. Additionally, a significant portion of the student population consists of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) learners, there are specifically seven students within this group for whom English is a second language, presenting another layer of complexity. 40% of participants were White. 30% were Asian. 25% had Mixed ethnicity. 5% were Black. Only 3/20 students are male although, this is a common occurrence with students studying Level 2 Health and Social Care. Furthermore, eight students have learning difficulties such as Dyslexia, dyscalculia or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Consequently, the presence of neurodivergent students places them at a disadvantage compared to their peers, as they must exert additional personal effort to attain equivalent qualifications.

The staff members were selected due to the nature of their role within the college for example, the safeguarding and welfare lead manager was interviewed because they were knowledgeable and experienced when discussing wellness and the overall perspective of students' needs at the college. They were also selected as a non-teaching staff member so that the research questions could be investigated from three different perspectives (students, teaching staff, and non-teaching staff).

A specific progress coach was targeted to interview for this research because of their suitability. For example, the progress coach selected has been teaching the same Health and Social Care Level two students that are also participating in the study. The role of a Progress Coach is to support individual students under their care, providing help with a range of academic, social, and emotional issues which may be of significance to the progress of the student. Therefore, it is crucial to have this individual as a participant so that their views are evaluated to assist the questions and so that a holistic perspective is taken within the research.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis and Emerging Themes

‘Not everything that counts can be counted, not everything that can be counted counts’.
(Jackson, 2006)

4.1 Introduction

Good research, regardless of the mode or methodology, presents rationally compelling conclusions that are supported by evidence (Richard, A Swanson, Elwood F Holton, 2005). It is the researcher who must first consider the form of data analysis which shapes the path and leads to these findings. This chapter outlines the process of considering what the data gathered from participants tells us about the predominant concerns of this research and making tentative steps toward drawing insights from these. Firstly, it discusses how this research aims to create sensitive, insightful, rich, and trustworthy research findings having conducted the theoretical and methodological thematic analysis. After defining thematic analysis and the trustworthiness criteria created by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the chapter outlines the practical process for conducting thematic analysis in connection to this research that aims to meet the trustworthiness criteria. Emerging codes and themes are also highlighted in this chapter, and are discussed in greater depth in chapter 5, including the wider meaning and implications of these findings.

4.2 Qualitative Research

As qualitative research becomes more widely acknowledged and valued, it must be carried out rigorously and thoroughly to produce meaningful and valuable results. To be considered trustworthy, this research must demonstrate that data analysis was done precisely, consistently, and exhaustively by recording, systematising, and revealing the techniques of analysis in sufficient detail to allow the reader to evaluate whether the process is reliable. When conducting data analysis, it is the researcher who is responsible for making decisions regarding coding, theming, decontextualising, and recontextualising the data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Within this research each qualitative approach has its techniques for

undertaking, documenting, and evaluating data analysis processes, however, it is our responsibility as researchers to ensure accuracy and reliability.

Qualitative research is a respected paradigm of inquiry, and the complexities that surround it necessitate rigorous and methodical approaches to provide relevant results. Thematic analysis is one of the most frequently adopted forms of analysis within qualitative research. It emphasises identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. Thematic analysis is a process used by many qualitative methods. It is not a separate method, but rather something to be used to assist researchers in analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Holloway & Todres, 2003; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). The thematic analysis provides a highly flexible approach that can be modified for the needs of many studies, providing a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). Braun and Clarke (2006) and King (2004) discussed that thematic analysis is a valuable method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights. For this reason, these elements will be examined when analysing the data collected.

4.3 Trustworthiness in Qualitative

Lincoln and Guba (1985) expanded the idea of trustworthiness by providing the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to complement the traditional quantitative assessment criteria of validity and reliability. These trustworthiness criteria are briefly defined and then explained in relation to this research and how the research attempted to conduct a trustworthy thematic analysis.

Credibility

To place confidence in the truth of the research findings, it must first have credibility. This research has strived to be credible as it has established findings that are represented as plausible information drawn from original data and display a correct interpretation of the participants' views. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), the validity of a study is recognised when readers or coresearchers are exposed to the experience and can identify it. For this reason, sharing the research and noting the wider impact of this has been a key factor when paving a road to credibility. Within appendix 7.4 is an impact grid where all progress and wider impact have been noted throughout the process. There has also been

prolonged engagement with data and persistent observation so that themes can be identified, and the findings are accurate.

Transferability

Transferability assesses how well the study's findings can be applied in different situations, conditions, and places. This research involves a rich and detailed description, which entails providing sufficient details on the location, participants, and methods or procedures used to collect data during this study. The aim of doing so is that other researchers can determine if the findings are transferable to different contexts.

Dependability

We can define dependability in qualitative research as the constancy and reliability of data over time and conditions. When evaluating a qualitative study's dependability, it will be reviewed to determine if the researcher was careless or if there are inaccuracies during the conceptualization of the study, data collection, interpretation of the findings, and reporting of the results. This research will establish dependability by an outside supervisor reviewing the research process and the data analysis to ensure that the findings are consistent.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the extent to which additional researchers could validate the research study's conclusions. The purpose of confirmability is to show that the data and interpretations of the findings are generated from the data, and not from the inquirer's perspective. This research is neutral and not influenced by the assumptions or biases of my own experience. Confirmability is frequently shown by offering an audit trail that describes every data analysis stage and demonstrates that the conclusions are not skewed by conscious or unconscious bias but truly reflect the responses of the participants.

If readers are not clear about how researchers analysed their data or what assumptions informed their analysis, evaluating the trustworthiness of the research process is difficult.

Nowell et al. (2017) note that:

‘To be accepted as trustworthy, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematizing, and disclosing the methods of analysis with

enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible' (2017:1).

In 2007, Justine Mercer (Associate Professor of Educational Leadership, Warwick University) referred to "delicate problems" such as "informant prejudice, interview reciprocity, and research ethics" (ibid., p.7). When undertaking insider research in a setting that is known to the researcher, "preconceptions may colour testimonies, because so much more is already known (or assumed to be known) about the interviewer's ideas" (ibid., p.8). Therefore, it is crucial to give careful thought to these issues when scheduling and interacting with participants. Doing so will help assure the validity and reliability of the data used in this thesis (Atkins and Wallace,2012).

4.4 Analysis Methods

Braun & Clarke (2006) distinguish between a top-down or theoretical thematic analysis, which is driven by the specific research question(s) and/or the analyst's focus, and a bottom-up or inductive one that is more driven by the data itself. Analysis of data in this research is going to be driven by the research questions when analysing data. This is a systematic procedure for analysing qualitative data in which the analysis is guided by specific evaluation objectives. To prepare the data for evaluation a process of content analysis is conducted whereby patterns are identified such as words and phrases. These are located across multiple pieces of information and the frequency with which an idea is spoken about is identified. This, therefore, means the method has a quantitative dimension.

4.5 Thematic analysis approach: phases of the research process

Thematic analysis is a method rather than a methodology, which is especially advantageous from the perspective of learning and teaching (Braun & Clarke 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). This indicates that it is independent of any specific theoretical or epistemological viewpoint, in contrast to many qualitative methods. Given the variety of activities in learning and teaching, this makes it a very versatile method, which is a significant asset to this research.

This part of the process involves looking through data collection to locate, examine, and report recurring themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). It is a technique for summarising data, but when choosing codes and creating themes, it also involves interpretation. This approach will use codes to identify and summarise important concepts within the set of data collected, for example, the interview transcripts. Data will be categorised and then from this, we can begin to derive patterns and themes.

Nowell et al. (2017) outline a procedure for conducting a thematic analysis that aims to meet the trustworthiness criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This comprises:

- Phase 1: familiarising yourself with your data
- Phase 2: generating initial codes
- Phase 3: Searching for themes
- Phase 4: reviewing themes
- Phase 5: defining and naming themes
- Phase 6: producing the report

(Adapted from Nowell et al., 2017)

The following section provides further details of each phase in this process and explains how this research aligns with each phase.

Phase 1: familiarise yourself with your data.

Before coding and deeper analysis of qualitative data can take place, it is recommended that researchers read through their entire data set at least once (Nowell et al, 2017) What's more, regardless of who collected the data, it is vital that a researcher, I immerse myself with the data to familiarize myself with the depth and breadth of the content ([Braun & Clarke, 2006](#)). Therefore, I am repeatedly reading through all sets of data searching for meaning and any patterns that naturally have occurred.

Data overview:

- Initial student questionnaire
- Semi-structured interviews with the safeguarding lead and progress coach

- Semi-structured interview with students (both written and verbal accounts)

Having conducted the first set of data collection methods thoughts are abundant about how this research could potentially impact the wider college. For instance, when reflecting on some of the comments made by the Safeguarding lead at this college, it was evident that not enough is currently being done to support students in a holistic and unified manner

“The need for a change in the culture of an organisation where everyone is a piece of the support network”.

When re-reading and listening to the interviews, both the safeguarding lead and the progress coach comment on the lack of time and pressure on teaching staff in this environment. So, although this does surprise me, it does make me reflect on how teachers need more training to manage this within their working schedule and be able to sometimes manage wellness without the need to refer to safeguarding. Another item of information that stood out from the initial data is that staff do not have the confidence to have these conversations and general awareness of mental health is poor.

“We want to upskill the entire staff body to feel confident in knowing mental health conditions and how to support them. This is so that is it a consistent approach as the student will know if they go up to any tutor then they will get the same experience but now that is not the case.”

On the other hand, both the interviews here did highlight how contrasting some approaches are and I was surprised to hear that some students are penalised before they have even stepped into the classroom and are referred to another course if they have declared a difficulty with their mental health on their enrolment form.

At a first glance, what is not surprising to me is that it is challenging for students when returning to college after studying and working from home during the lockdown over the period of 2020-2022. I feel saddened that at this time the process felt rushed with the absence of a gradual reintegration for those who had struggled.

Phase 2: generating initial codes.

This phase in data analysis is connected to having ideas about what is in the data and thinking carefully about and identifying what is interesting about these ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006) Coding breaks down large amounts of data into manageable meaning units. There are various coding techniques, and the approach chosen will depend on the researcher's viewpoint and research objectives. During this stage, I carefully and systematically organised the data.

Each segment of data coded relates to or captures an intriguing aspect of the research issue within the research questions. Line-by-line inductive coding is being used as a ground-up approach. This means that there are no preconceived notions of what the codes are before analysing the data.

4.6 Coding Qualitative Data

'Coding' is the process of identifying themes in accounts and attaching labels (codes), 'Themes' on the other hand are particular perceptions and/or experiences that are relevant to the two research questions shown below:

1. How do **dialogic strategies** in GCSE English language classrooms affect **students' attitudes to learning**?
2. What are the **student experiences** of using well-being resources to **support their study** of GCSE English Language?

This research uses inductive coding and starts from scratch to create codes based on the qualitative data itself. Researchers don't have a set codebook; all codes arise directly from the responses from participants. Inductive coding is a data analysis process that involves reading and interpreting raw contextual data to develop themes, concepts, or a process model via interpretations based on data. A descriptive method (also called topic coding) has then been applied. This is a method of coding that involves reading through qualitative data, and coding passages according to topic. Descriptive codes are often in the form of a noun and summarises the focus of the data.

Johnny Saldana is a well-known qualitative research theorist who made significant contributions to descriptive coding. Saldana's work (2021) on coding methodologies, particularly his book "The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers," is now considered a major reference in the discipline. He provides in-depth guidance on several coding approaches, including descriptive coding, which "is a fundamental approach in qualitative data processing" (Saldana, 2021:134).

According to Saldana, descriptive coding is "providing labels to data that encapsulate the main topic of a qualitative data passage in a word or brief phrase" (Saldana, 2021:136). This strategy is frequently used in the early phases of data analysis to organize and categorise data, making it easier to uncover patterns and themes for subsequent more extensive research. Therefore, when looking at the data collected from this research, each change of topic when coding has a different colour. Every colour corresponds to the concept or emotion/topic I have summarised in the second column of the tables. The tables of coded data can be found in Appendix 7.9 and within this the findings reported in the left column are representative of what was discussed but not an absolute account. The entire transcript can also be found in appendix 7.5.

Phase 3: Generating themes.

Next, I looked over the codes created to identify patterns among them and start forming the themes. Themes are generally broader than codes. For this reason, it is suitable to combine several codes into a single theme as they form a pattern when linking specific subject matter. The themes here are significant and interesting as they have also organically interlinked with the research questions initially formed. For instance, within the student focus group above one student stated, 'I missed everyone and talking' (connecting to home learning) and another stated 'talking about it made me not feel alone'. Therefore, highlighting a positive response from a dialogic teaching activity- leads to this as an overall theme. However, it is important to reiterate here that there were no predefined themes because the data naturally lends itself to the original aim. What's more, to predetermine a theme would be deductive theming which is by no means the intention of this study.

The themes in the tables above are descriptive and capture several important aspects of the aim of this research. For instance, when reading the initial questionnaire data, students were commenting on a resource used in a lesson and when interpreting what was said, it made sense to place the codes underneath the theme of 'student experience'.

Some believe that while thematic analysis is flexible, this flexibility can lead to inconsistency and a lack of coherence when developing themes derived from the research data (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Although, within my research data above there are very distinctive links in the themes which have surfaced.

Phase 4: reviewing themes.

Having re-read the data once more, it is necessary to check, modify and improve the themes that were formulated in the previous phase. “Checking if the themes work concerning the coded extracts at the first level and then the entire data set at the second level, generating a thematic map of the analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). Another advantage of this phase 4 is not only about the positive aspect of increasing familiarity with the data but also, there are still new aspects of the coding that are reshaping my themes. One example of this is when reviewing the themes in the first set of data, I altered a theme from ‘support of study’ to ‘Students attitude/reflection and method of study’ because this is more appropriate when interpreting what was said.

Phase 5: defining and naming themes.

In this phase, the process of defining themes entails articulating precisely what we mean by each theme and determining how it aids in our comprehension of the facts.

1. Dialogic Strategies

This theme was formulated by having analysed the content from all data collected and then condensing the codes into an amalgamated subject. Dialogic strategies are connected to building an understanding and development in the classroom using discussion and questioning. It is apparent that both the students and staff members require more dialogue in the classroom and positive responses are made to changes in the classroom connecting to this mode of teaching.

“That real dialogue at times during the session I think helps the student take a little bit of control of the session” – Progress Coach

2. Support their study.

The aim of this research was focused on developing students' English Language skills and throughout the process, it had become more apparent that to support their study (English GCSE), we first need to connect and foster wellness. This theme was made clear in the responses made for example, in one interview the safeguarding lead stated that "It takes a lot of positive reinforcement and encouragement from tutors" and students said that support is about tutors "reaching out". Therefore, the word 'support' connects to various ways to help and there were several points seen linking to this when coding the data.

Another way in which the theme of supporting students to help them study is from the progress coach who declares that "staff members do not have the confidence to have those personal conversations to see if they can support in any other ways.". This is one pitfall that is interesting as it makes one question the role of a tutor when facilitating a classroom full of students.

3. Student experiences

After creating codes, it was evident that a lot of the data connected to how students felt when they were experiencing new resources in the classroom. They comment on both the old experiences of English resources and new experiences of resources and dialogic strategies. As a result, we have authentic information from the people directly concerned with this research which will enable us to move forward when discussing the findings. One student mentioned that they "learn best by sharing things" and another stated that "other resources do not connect to what we are going through like with stress and stuff and this one felt easier to read". So, here this theme is generated from positive and negative comments made about how they feel about what they are going through in the classroom.

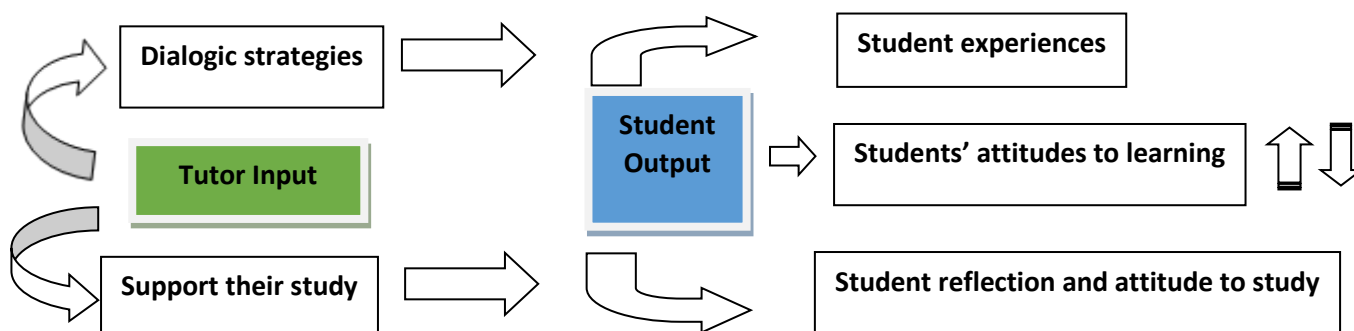
4. Students' attitudes to learning.

The response of student behaviour was detected when analysing the data and forming codes. For this reason, this theme emerged as a factor that described student response. One comment on the resource used was that they "found it more interesting because it seems relevant to us" it was rewarding when another student stated that "it was fun as we also got to read an article of our choice as well".

5. Student reflection

This theme aids our comprehension of the fact that students went through a difficult period when working from home and when coming back to college they were able to express their thought processes and look back on previous experiences both inside and outside of college. For instance, one student said, “Working together to put your mind off of the things that were making you unhappy”.

Thematic map



In the diagram shown above, some areas do appear to overlap and interlink as some comments analysed in the data can be seen to merge into two themes. For instance, a student can comment on their experience in the classroom which also displays their attitude to learning that subject. Although, two of these themes that have surfaced can be seen as input from tutors and output from students.

- Phase 6: producing the report

Finally, this phase is centered around translating the data by going over further extract examples that relate to the themes, research question, and literature. This report is relaying the results of the analysis in a way that shows the merit and validity of the analysis.

Data collection 1- Initial Student Questionnaire

Students were asked “how would you describe your first six weeks at college?” to understand student experiences of their induction period. There was an array of responses and interestingly were more adverse emotions expressed than positive ones.

“I wasn't ready as were lots going on at home” Student x.

“Was hard but then Covid was harder when it changed” Student Y

These both connect to the second research question as students are giving an insight into their own experience; however, it is important to note that these were not connected to a wellness resource as this was later in the study. Nonetheless, it was important to grasp students' opinions when they first came into College to study because the first comment above coincides with the notion of students struggling because of external influences impacting their studies. One question that could be posed by this comment is what makes a student 'ready' for the first 6 weeks at college? This data also connects to data gathered from method 5 as students said that the resource covered “the types of struggles that we go through”.

The second comment outlines the link to Covid and how students are now comparing their experience inside the college to studying at home. The concept of 'change' appears to be difficult and one as drastic as a lockdown may have altered students' perceptions of what it means to have a difficult time in education.

Further on we can see a clear majority of students (90%) would like support with wellbeing from either speaking and listening or reading resources. This confirms the need to introduce this within GCSE English lessons and place more focus on wellness resources.

When asked if students “have any other suggestions about how we can improve your wellbeing in college or English?” some responses included:

“Give us information or tell us where we can go for help”.

“Invite guest speakers into the lessons”.

“Allow us to talk to our friends at points in the lesson”.

These specifically connect to the theme of student support and their views both link to a need for external and internal adjustment. For instance, students wish to be informed about when and where they can ask for advice on the subject matter of wellness. Students also requested to talk more to peers in the classroom as this might be one strategy to heighten wellness. A key phrase of “Allow us to talk” is interesting here because it feels as if the students do not have the freedom or voice in the classroom. By “allowing” students to talk, would we be

changing their attitude to learning? It seems it would certainly assist with wellness from the above data.

Data collection 2- Semi-structured Interview with Safeguarding Lead

*“Any trauma is going to bring out difficulties in accessing education”
-Safeguarding Lead*

“If students are not able to open up about it then they will voice it through their behaviour. This is where you might get disruptive/ inapt behaviour that challenges which is quite often a cry for help or a defence mechanism.” – Safeguarding Lead

The statements made above are both invaluable as they are connected to the first research question homing in on attitudes expressed in the classroom towards learning. What is vivid here is that the student’s mental health does act as a barrier to learning. Therefore, we need to create more opportunities to ‘open up’ whilst teaching the set curriculum and a new approach is necessary.

Data collection 3- Semi-structured Interview with Progress Coach -

“I don't think the students sometimes feel enough support from just a teacher-student relationship.” – Progress Coach

When examining the statement above, we can relate to comments previously made linking to a requirement for a holistic cross-college approach when supporting students. This comment tells us that students are not satisfied with the current level of support although, one difficulty here is the term support. The type of support is not specified, and this term is multifaceted.

“It has been a real struggle for the students to be resilient and join in class when it gets hard or to keep going in class when it gets hard rather than opting out.” – Progress Coach

“I think dialogic teaching methods will increase the resilience of students where they have to answer, and they have to be part of the session so they can't choose to opt-out.” – Progress Coach

The two quotations above interestingly link to student participation and willingness to speak or interact. One reason for this could be due to students feeling disconnected from the discussion or topic at hand. Alternatively, students have also spent a long time studying online in lockdown so, as data suggests their confidence and social skills have decreased. It has also been noted that the phrase ‘opt out’ is a reoccurring phrase when analysing the data. I do agree that more students responded when a dialogic approach was used and there is an emphasis on less teacher talking time. For example, on several occasions, different interaction patterns occurred, and students were asked at random to answer questions. This meant that there were more opportunities for students to voice their thoughts.

Data collection 4 Focus Group Interview-

“I learned about features but also about all the things we go through as teenagers. I normally feel anxious and stressed out, but it was good to share ideas and thoughts on stuff like resilience. Talking about it made me feel not alone” – Student X

“Aesthetically it was nice to look at which helps us because we can be drawn into the reading. I wanted to read” – Student X

The second research question links to the above comments which are valuable because they describe a positive experience when students are reflecting on their learning. These statements also link to the college's learning philosophy as we aim to foster the relationship between the brain, motivation, and emotions of students. The short sentence stating ‘I wanted to read’ is the catalyst for future learning and development.

Data collection 5 Student open-ended Questionnaire-

“It was interesting to read about our generation and the resources are relatable” - Student X

This response above was particularly insightful as it educates us about using reading resources that students can engage with on a personal level. Not only does this say the information was ‘relatable’ but also the student was learning about issues connected to wellness and how to manage emotions or be more resilient. This takes us to the next comment-

“I like it a lot as it gave lots of examples of what people go through and how to clear our minds.” - Student X

Here we can see a direct link between the data and one of the research questions because the use of wellbeing resources has allowed the student to progress. By them clearing out their minds perhaps they are then better able to access the GCSE English curriculum.

Summary

In this Chapter, we have started to develop a picture of what has emerged from the findings of this research. In particular, the themes of student experience relating to dialogic strategies, attitudes to learning, and support of the study. These have all been identified having analysed five sets of data. These are examined further in Chapter Five and held alongside some of the key theoretical concepts that are central to this research and that have already been explored and critiqued in Chapter Two.

Chapter 5- Discussion of Themes and Findings

5.1 Preamble

In this chapter, the findings and core themes that have arisen during this research are discussed in more detail to present a more comprehensive account of what has been found. Throughout this chapter, there are multiple references to significant theoretical works and research that were cited in Chapter Two, in which the foundation for this investigation is established. Notably, this includes Robin Alexander's (2004) dialogic teaching and Paulo Freire's (2013) notion of education being a means to building a "critical consciousness" that would enable people to create change in their lives. Furthermore, references are made to previously unreported work that has been judged pertinent in light of the information our investigation has surfaced. References of this kind can be viewed as indicative of new, unexpected, or merging tendencies that were not initially anticipated, but are nonetheless helpful in attempting to answer this inquiry's research questions.

5.2 Research positioning in the discussion of findings

The sections that follow offer a more thorough analysis of several of the important findings covered in Chapter Four. To give a clear and accurate description of the new knowledge this research has unearthed, it identifies and discusses underlying themes that are linked to theoretical insights. The nature of the analysis that follows may be influenced by my beliefs, values, and experiences as a practitioner throughout this stage of the research. But more importantly, it is important to recognize that the investigator is an insider researcher in this process. An insider researcher is part of a company, organization, or community where they are conducting the study. According to researcher, Pat Sikes (2008) "insider research is undertaken by members of the same group, who supposedly share one or several characteristics (cultural, biological, linguistic, political, occupational and so on)" (Sikes, 2008:16). As I work for the same company and department as some of the participants means that I have a lot of access to the participants. However, this also means that I have had to ensure that the research design in chapter four has rigor and transparency in the methods of data collection. Some argue that becoming an insider researcher could lead to a

loss of objectivity and bias but, these concerns are reduced by outlining a more comprehensive picture of what the emerging findings from this research represent.

5.3 Reflecting on the research questions

It is essential to examine in greater depth the findings that accord with the two research questions and themes from chapter four. Having analysed and formed codes from the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups we were able to see connections drawing together.

1. How do **dialogic strategies** in GCSE English language classrooms affect **students' attitudes to learning**?

When reflecting on the concept of dialogic teaching with the students, we have found that it highlights the value of discourse and conversation in the learning process. It entails interactive and reciprocal communication between teachers and students, with both parties actively participating in conversations, asking questions, and expanding on each other's ideas. This method encourages critical thinking, greater comprehension, and active participation, shifting away from traditional teacher-led instruction and toward a more collaborative learning environment.

We can also recognise that it is the process involving not just 'teacher talk' but rather ongoing talk between the teacher and students or from student to student. Robin Alexander (2020) broadens this definition below:

“Dialogic teaching is about relishing language in all its forms and rejoicing in expression, articulation, communication, discussion, and argumentation. And, in so doing, dialogue takes us beyond classroom transactions into the realm of ideas and values, for dialogue is as much a stance or outlook – on human relationships, knowledge, education, culture, and society- as it is a pedagogical technique”

(Alexander, R:2020)

The notion of language being multifunctional and purposeful is interesting here. For instance, even though the research question stated above has focused on one area of interest-attitudes to learning, it does not mean that the findings will be narrow. What is more, there are indications that some of the data gathered coincides with Alexander's (2020) definition. For instance, when asking students about what they have learned from the resource and dialogic teaching in the classroom, they came up with a variety of responses:

- *"They are very colourful, and it makes me want to read them.*
- *I find the topics interesting, and the pictures draw you in*
- *They are understanding and the articles are organised so more pleasurable to read.*
- *They taught us about resilience and how to persevere.*
- *Interesting to read about our generation and the resources are relatable.*
- *I like it a lot as it gave lots of examples of what people go through and how to clear our minds. "*

(Responses gathered from various students in focus groups)

Student E

"I think I learn best by sharing things as a group and not just reading or writing all the time but talking about how to do something. I do also like reading together or with a partner".

Student C

"I like activities that have games in them or a competition, so we get to have fun whilst learning something new. Like when we play 'stop the bus' or a race to find features"

Student D

"I do like that, but I like learning at home on my laptop".

Student C

"I prefer in class as I missed everyone and talking".

These findings show that the combined use of dialogic strategies and the chosen resource has perked student interest because students are discussing concepts/skills that they can relate to and build upon in an everyday context such as resilience, stress, and motivation. In the data above the students have also used several positive adjectives such as 'new' and 'fun' which indicates that their experience has changed their perspective towards reading

and learning in the classroom. One student emphasises their confident reaction by not only saying “I missed talking to everyone” but also “we get to have fun whilst learning something new”. The data here suggests that their experience of online learning before coming out of lockdown was challenging because of limited oral interaction. It might also suggest that by having more dialogue in the classroom, the student’s attitude is altering. For instance, this can be seen in the *“I have learned that we can all be stronger mentally and emotionally because if we are resilient then this means we keep going despite bad things happening. I mean, we all go through bad times. We can be more resilient by spending time doing things we love and reaching out to our friends or tutors”* another quote that supports this is when a student states that “Talking about it made me not feel alone like I did before”. The word “alone” is interesting here as we may question why they felt this way- perhaps the classroom was more authoritarian and rigid when it came to just teaching the syllabus without linking skills to relatable texts. This could then act as a catalyst to further interest in learning. As a result, we have discovered that heightening oral interaction with a dialogic approach and employing a resource that students can relate to personally in the classroom, fosters interest and increases proactiveness to continue learning.

On the other hand, another student comments ‘I liked learning on my laptop’ (when referring to lockdown) so there are opposing views to the one above but, this might have come from a place of requiring more technology in the classroom. This generation is surrounded by advancements in technology and most assignments are now online or typed on laptops. For this reason, some students are more comfortable working behind a screen. However, looking at the data as a whole entity we can see that positive comments outweigh negative ones. So, it is argued, we need to “harnesses the power of talk to engage students’ interest, stimulate their thinking, enhance their understanding, broaden their ideas and construct and evaluate argument” (Alexander, 2020:1).

Alexander (2001:8) presents the case for treating talk as not merely incidental to teaching and learning but as an essential tool of education. When analysing the data in more detail this transpires in the following statements made by the safeguarding lead:

“Teachers could show more understanding to help students instead of simply referring them straight away. It is best to build a relationship as a professional with them and give them a little bit of leeway but the right support and direction – explain why we are doing what we

do. Framing conversations to come across as supportive and informative – from a place of concern”.

“Essentially the students have had two years of social deprivation 13-18 when young people become adolescence, the brain develops key social skills. ...So, they have missed out on an opportunity to develop socially.” - Safeguarding Lead

The individual comments underlined carry significance to not only Alexander’s theory where “Dialogue is purposive social action, it is a vital ingredient of effective teaching” (Alexander, 2020: p198) but also how Paulo Freire’s belief in education as a way of liberating people who are a disadvantage. For instance, we have an opportunity in the classroom to change how students see both themselves and the world around them. Students at this age are still building on social skills such as cooperating, collaborating, respecting boundaries, and asking questions.

Findings from Progress coach

“I think getting that real dialogue at times during the session I think helps the student take a little bit of control of the session as well and students have been finding that they have a lack of control in their life is a big problem at the moment that I’ve spotted. Progress coaches in my position as well as supported so allowing them to take control a little bit of the direction of the lesson through their answers I think is important” -Progress Coach

The use of the word ‘real’ when discussing the form and usefulness of dialogue is thought-provoking here. Is real dialogue something that organically occurs without a stimulus, without premeditating and dictating what is or isn’t said? Is real dialogue unplanned, exploratory, and philosophical yet undesired if not linked to the lesson topic? Perhaps there are times whereby dialogue seems too structured and restricted in lessons which could demotivate and suppress ideas evolving naturally. One cause or reason for this could be time restraints and fixed structures to lessons. For example, starter activities often have a set time of 5-10 minutes during the lesson. If ‘real dialogue’ were to begin to expand and infringe this time limit, then the opinion in the data above suggests that students would feel

powerless, ultimately leading to poor attitude to learning and disengagement within the classroom.

With the above in mind, it is interesting when analysing the comments and attitudes expressed from students' about how they developed when talking to one another (with dialogic strategies such as questioning techniques being used by the teacher). For instance, one student who is commonly quite reluctant to speak said that that the lesson "was interesting because it made me think about my emotions and listen to other peoples' opinions" and "I learned about language features like rhetorical questions". So, they were able to positively voice how both the resource and dialogic strategies had supported both personal and academic learning. Another student commented "time to talk as a group was refreshing". This could then suggest that 'real dialogue' is where students are being candid, and this may only occur if the teacher is more lenient with the timings for activities.

Looking further into the initial quote from the progress coach, the phrase 'lack of control' alludes to failure and feelings of weakness coming from students. From personal observations in the classroom, students have commented on the fact that they have 'never passed' and that they are 'unable' to do it. Even before they attempt an activity, students will refuse to try. This might be due to continuously having a lack of control or fear that if they do act then they might get it wrong. By giving them opportunities to take control when searching for meaning and openly discussing, it could be argued that their attitude has shifted because their perspective of themselves or lesson activities has changed.

Creating a space where students can speak and be heard in class, and listen and learn from one another, is invaluable for fostering a collaborative and inclusive learning environment. This approach encourages active participation, enhances critical thinking, and nurtures empathy and respect among peers. By voicing their ideas and hearing diverse perspectives, students develop communication skills and gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Additionally, this dynamic exchange cultivates a sense of belonging and confidence, empowering students to take ownership of their learning and contribute meaningfully to the classroom community.

Alexander supports and expands upon the value and importance of creating a space where students can speak, be heard, listen, and learn from one another. Alexander emphasises the

power of dialogue in the classroom, advocating for teaching methods that prioritise open-ended discussion, critical questioning, and active listening. He believes that such dialogic interactions are essential for deep learning, as they help students to articulate their understanding, challenge assumptions, and construct knowledge collaboratively.

Robin Alexander has articulated his views on the importance of dialogue in education. One of his remarks that highlights the importance of creating a space for student discourse is:

“Dialogue takes us beyond classroom transactions into the realm of ideas and values, for dialogue is as much a stance or outlook- on human relationships, knowledge, education, culture and society- as it is a pedagogical technique.” (Alexander, 2020: 42)

This quotation reinforces Alexander's idea that dialogue is essential for deeper knowledge and more successful learning and teaching, as well as the significance of providing a space for students to participate in meaningful conversations.

2. What are the **student experiences** of using well-being resources to **support their study** of GCSE English Language?

The reading materials from Teen Breathe were useful in facilitating dialogic instruction. In particular, the texts/articles selected can serve as a framework for discussions in which students' study and critique content to gain a better understanding of wellness and GCSE English Language. As a teacher, I was able to model successful questioning skills and encourage students to examine texts by asking open-ended inquiries. In future it might be beneficial to supplement this with other tasks such as role-playing, debates, and reading circles to all improve dialogic interactions by helping students to engage with other ideas and express themselves clearly. So, the resources were naturally complementary when using dialogic strategies because they provided us with topics which were relatable for this age group and students' were expanding their learning experience through interaction.

“Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality and thereby coming to know it critically but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common

reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators.” (Freire, 2020)

Freire (2020) did not exclude teachers or teaching, but it did reposition teachers as facilitators rather than authorities, helping the oppressed to understand the structures and powers that shape their lives. This relates to the findings of this research as the data has shown that students “*enjoy working together to put your mind off of the things that were making you unhappy*” (Student in the initial questionnaire). The progress coach interview aligns with these findings by adding that “*having someone that is more in my way of explaining it ‘on a level’ or speaking to students without necessarily being judgmental and actively listening to them I think is helpful for them.*” (Progress Coach). Therefore, there is a justification and requirement for using this approach in the classroom.

What Freire (ibid) is suggesting here is that the classroom is a mutual learning and collaborative space whereby we experience the discovery of knowledge together. However, what the data is also showing us is that it is not true that students can learn everything when the teacher takes the role of facilitator as opposed to a leader. For instance, at times there is a greater requirement for an authoritative talk where the teacher is leading the delivery of new content instead of discovering or practicing English Language skills.

Authoritative talk is the opposite of dialogic talk. It can be understood as teacher-centred knowledge telling, evaluation, and the presentation of unquestioned findings. Within earlier chapters, we have previously discovered that dialogic teaching focuses on improving students’ understanding and raising their engagement by considering their interests and concerns (Calcagni & Lago, 2018; Matusov, 2009; Scott et al., 2006). Although, despite the assertion that dialogic education can spark students' engagement, this effect has not been covered in the body of research. Additionally, there haven't been many instances where dialogic education has been used (using a wellness resource) to solicit students’ thoughts such as the following:

DATA Student questionnaire

“I learned about”:

- *Different ways to be resilient.*

- *Working together to put your mind off of the things that were making you unhappy.*
- *How to stay safe online*
- *Dealing with gossip*
- *Learn to focus on myself and not other people*
- *How to deal with my feelings and how to express them*
- *How to pick out language features to analyse*
- *The meaning of resilience and how to adapt and respond to life's difficulties*
- *The types of struggles that we go through*
- *How to be both mentally and emotionally strong*
- *How to be more comfortable when asking for help*
- *Self-care*

The theme of supporting students' study is evident here because the data has captured responses that match the mark scheme requirements for the AQA English Language GCSE qualification. For instance, one learning objective is to identify language features and another is reading for both explicit and implicit detail. Both of these were identified in the findings above. Also, we have found that from analysing the data above, the student experiences are ones of a positive nature and a mixture of emotional and academic development. This would suggest that the methods and resources used were supporting their study of GCSE English Language.

One interesting response from a student saying they were learning “to focus on myself and not other people” presents a nuanced challenge in the context of dialogic teaching. This statement can be interpreted in two distinct ways. On one hand, focusing on the needs of others is a crucial aspect of dialogic teaching, as it fosters empathy, collaborative learning, and mutual respect within the classroom. It encourages students to engage with and understand diverse perspectives, enhancing their own learning and contributing to a supportive educational environment. On the other hand, focusing on others' attainment and negative comments can be detrimental, leading to unnecessary comparisons, competition, and a decrease in self-esteem. Dialogic teaching aims to balance these interpretations by creating a space where students prioritise their personal growth and learning journey while remaining considerate and supportive of their peers. This balance helps maintain a positive and inclusive classroom dynamic, essential for effective and meaningful learning.

Additionally, teachers play a vital role in fostering these kinds of interactions and responses, recognising and valuing the student's honesty. The learner might not yet be fully comfortable with talking with peers in this manner, and it is the teacher's responsibility to nurture a classroom atmosphere where students feel safe and encouraged to express themselves while being considerate and supportive of their peers.

Previously in chapter Two, we outlined Wiliam's (2011) eight conditions which he believed are essential for learning. To fully answer this question we need to think about what the teacher is doing because the teacher is responsible for organising activities and lesson plans and students form an output that should align with the lesson objectives. When making alterations in the classroom, it has become apparent that these ideas of Wiliam's have arisen and are further justified. For example, students have been able to flourish when using the magazine resource as it shows an element of care (point 1) between the teacher and student. The articles have moved from the standard GCSE resources containing topics on transport or sport to more mindful and nurturing topics in the magazine on resilience and motivation. So, a varied approach seems to be helping to build a good rapport with students as there were several positive comments made. Even in the initial data collected from the questionnaire, over half of the students asked said that they wished for more speaking and listening activities to "tell us where we can go for help" (Student, 2022). As a tutor, I have also been more aware of listening carefully when using dialogic questioning so that the students feel heard and cared for. This has additional benefits because the role of a tutor can be merged to support both subject skills and pastoral care.

Secondly, the idea that memory is a residue of thought (point 3), connects to how students have achieved the learning outcomes over the six weeks which might be due to them being able to make sense of the information which has been repeated using two different resources. The students had separate blocks of time in the six hours to think about how language has been used. Even if they might have forgotten some knowledge (point 4) they have had several opportunities to clarify and query gaps in knowledge and have shown the ability to identify and comment on the effect of language by the end of the process, albeit in varying amounts.

Additionally, there have been elements of Wiliam's (2011) incidental learning (point 5). One student said *“it was fun as we also got to read an article of our choice as well and I learned about mindfulness”*- Student. This highlights how at times we may allow for flexibility in the classroom by veering away from the learning objectives. This allows time for student exploration within the discussion but it is essential to then go back to the learning objectives of the lesson. However, there is also been challenges that have appeared from encouraging group work and discussion. For instance (point 6) it is true how confident learners can often dominate the discussion and create an imbalance when contributing to sharing of knowledge/thoughts. This can be seen in method 4 of the data collection when conducting the focus group interview. The transcripts show how some students have said more than others. This has become a limitation of the study because it has been challenging to measure, encourage and uphold individual accountability (point 7) when looking at equal contribution in group discussion.

Students who have deep insights into their learning (point 7) Wiliam (ibid) and throughout the changes that were made in research, students had space for their voice and exploration but also had time to reflect and give me feedback. Method 4 of the data collection was taken after week 3 as it was useful to get feedback from the students to then move forward onto a different topic. When students reflected on the previous three lessons, they were able to express their experiences having used the resource and more discussion within the classroom. On the other hand, learning appears to often be in the moment and although it can be a change in long-term memory (point 2), within this research, what is interesting to acknowledge is that learning is an interactive process and that understanding builds through joint activity between teacher and pupil and among pupils in collaboration, and thereby to develop pupils' increasing sense of responsibility for what and how they learn. Expertise is not only transmitted but also negotiated and re-created; and each of us in the end makes sense out of the meeting of knowledge both personal and collective (Alexander 2010, 399). This promotes a pedagogy that emphasises dialogue between individuals and collective knowledge, between the present and the past, and between various modes of understanding.

Having analysed the findings further, we can now see the resemblance between the results and Sfards (1998) participation metaphor for learning. The following particularly resonates with what we have discovered and can highlight:

“The vocabulary of participation brings the message of togetherness, solidarity, and collaboration. The participation metaphor language does not allow for talk about the permanence of either human possessions or human traits. The new metaphor promotes an interest in people in action rather than in people “as such”. Being “in action” means being in constant flux. The awareness of the change that never stops means refraining from permanent labelling. Actions can be clever or unsuccessful, but these adjectives do not apply to the actors. For the learner, all options are always open, even if he or she carries a history of failure. Thus, quite unlike the acquisition metaphor, the participation metaphor seems to bring a message of everlasting hope: Today you act one way; tomorrow you may act differently.” (Sfard 1998:8)

From this, we can see in the data that students do enjoy working together on a common goal and the ‘aim within this learning is community building’ (Sfard, *ibid*). Even at the start of this research process, students noted how they were eager to ‘speak more in lessons’ and participate in class discussions. It is disheartening to think that these students may see themselves as failures when first entering college so, by bringing students together for inquiry and discovery they have been able to practice skills together. Ultimately, they have felt confident to then exercise these skills independently at a later date (observation in week 6 of the process).

When connecting the findings to Sfard’s participation metaphor, knowledge has been about practice in this research, and we acquire it when communicating and sharing. Contrary to earlier discussions, within this research, the role of a tutor was a combination between both expert and facilitator because it was necessary to both ask questions and provide the right answer when discussing terms. However, this was not the case in all discussions because there was not always a clear ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer when interpreting.

Our findings also suggest that even a short-term exchange can be dialogic when the teacher asks information-seeking questions. Students then respond in an attempt to solve a shared problem, and the responses become collaborative. The value of the dialogic approach can be

seen in its power to reveal thinking and meaning-making processes and have them further elaborated on to generate a shared understanding (Scott et al., 2006).

Previous studies such as ‘Dialogic teaching: talk in service of a dialogic stance’ written by Maureen Patricia Boyd & William C. Markarian have demonstrated that dialogic teacher talks both enhance students' enthusiasm and support their learning. The relationship between dialogic conversation and students' attitudes toward learning and experiences while studying for the GCSE in English Language, however, has received little to no research, if any.

According to a study conducted by Ainley and Hidi (2014), interest motivates exploration and information-seeking. These results above indicate that dialogic teacher talk is associated with an increase in positive attitudes when hearing and seeing students' learning. So, this study contributes to the field of English education research by revealing that dialogic talk may trigger or support students not only within the GCSE English Language qualification but also with students' own wellness. In summary, dialogic teaching takes into account students' interests and concerns, involves students personally in the situation, and presents content in a more complex manner.

Method 4 findings connect to the student experience when using the resource. For instance, one student said “*It is bright and colourful to read*” - *Student X*. Whilst at first glance this might point to a simple and surface-level response to the use of the resource, what it also conveys is this student's active engagement in the lesson and positive response towards a learning resource being shared with them in the context of a GCSE English classroom. In this context, where student disengagement, disenfranchisement, and lack of motivation can be significant barriers to learning, the ability to learn resources to present themselves as vibrant and attractive is important.

This theme is also apparent in other responses. Another learner commented that “*The pictures were nice to look at and I think we found it more interesting because it seems relevant to us*” *Student X*. From these two comments alone, we can see that their experience is one of enjoyment and positivity. The phrase ‘relevant to us’ is a running theme as it highlights that for students to enjoy the lesson material, it helps to have a resource that they can relate to. The visual aesthetics were also popular with the students as they mention the articles are ‘*bright and colourful*’- *Student X*.

5.4 Recurring themes

Student reflection and personal growth became a theme that kept returning when speaking to the students and analysing the data. This is closely associated with Robin Alexander's (2008) work, which emphasises the crucial role that conversation plays in promoting effective learning. Alexander (2006) writes: "The new approach demands both pupil participation and teacher intervention." And talking is the main way that students actively participate, and teachers constructively intervene is through talk". Alexander continues with another fascinating revelation drawn from the neuroscientific study. In his words, "Talk is required not just for learning but also for the development of the brain itself as a physical creature." However, if students in further education have not had any early intervention or opportunities to learn in this manner then their academic results might reflect this problem.

Another common theme when discussing the role that teachers play in the classroom was that '*lack of time*' was problematic. On the other hand, "...although the student's talk manifests and drives his/her thinking and understanding and is, therefore, our ultimate concern, it is through the teacher's talk that the students' talk is mainly prompted, accelerated and enriched- or not, as the case may be." Alexander (2006)

So here we have a dilemma as this research suggests that there is mutual dialogue, and teachers need time to be able to trigger more conversation. This dilemma and the implications it holds for teachers are explored in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six

Discussion of Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This Chapter commences by providing an overview of the research problem, followed by a discussion of the sample profile and each research question. Based on the conclusions pertaining to the respective research questions, recommendations are then made for future research are presented. The research questions are linked to the findings obtained in Chapter Five, followed by the limitations of the study.

The research topics that the study set out to address served as a guide for the development of the conclusions. Based on these findings, recommendations for improving student wellness and GCSE English Language skills are made possible for consideration and implementation by education stakeholders.

6.4 Overview

The fundamental problem that was outlined in Chapter One is that, inside the GCSE AQA English language certification, we repeatedly witness students' negative views propagating. GCSE students not only find it difficult to get their learning underway, but they also struggle with their mental health. Therefore, this is where the problem lies since we do not adequately represent the perspectives of FE learners or concentrate on designing a classroom that "fosters health and wellbeing" and "enables people to achieve their potential" (Brookfield 1999).

Following the initial problem, other rippling problems also stemmed from the above such as:

- Each GCSE has been re-designed to be more challenging, with increased content, which is tested almost entirely by end-of-course examinations and measured by grades that run from 9 to 1. So, far fewer students taking GCSE English have ended up achieving the

very top grade available, in fact, less than a handful of learners I have known have achieved top marks.

- There is an absence of interest from students in the GCSE English resources, a challenge that becomes very problematic in what feels like a race to achieve their English Language GCSE.
- During times of the global pandemic, Students were expected to work from home which brought several difficulties and deprived students of social interaction. Therefore, an escalating level of importance needs to be placed on psychological well-being.

Significance of the Study

This research study had two main aims, which are further explained below:

Aim 1: Fostering Lifelong Learning and Equitable Classroom Communication

Aim 2: Enhancing Communication and Mental Wellbeing Awareness

- empower students for lifelong learning and social and democratic engagement
- encourage more equitable attention to the talk used by all parties in classroom exchanges, and especially the kinds of talk the teacher might use to open up the talk, and hence the thinking, of the student.
- Implement dialogic strategies to buffer against negative effects and build toward improvements in communication.
- Increase greater awareness about mental health and wellbeing issues that often puzzle students. The aim is also to better prepare students to learn because at present, they enter the classroom, and it feels that their poor wellness is blocking them from learning.
- Create a space for fruitful dialogue to occur.

6.3 Summarising the sample profile.

From the main findings (see section 5.3) it is evident participants were separated into three groups:

1. The respondents who participated in the questionnaire and focus group discussion came from the Academic and Professional Studies (AAPS) department in an FE College. These students were from a level 2 Health and Social Care group who were studying for the GCSE English Language retake qualification.

2. The second participant is the progress coach who was interviewed and is responsible for coaching the entirety of the APPS department every week. The progress coach supports individual students under their care, providing help with a range of financial, academic, social, and emotional issues which may be of significance to the progress of the student. It was for this reason that they were selected to gain their perspective on the problems outlined.

3. Finally, the safeguarding lead at the college was part of the sample profile as he was interviewed. The safeguarding lead is responsible for making sure that safeguarding records are kept securely according to the organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures. They also report to the organisation's board or management committee about safeguarding issues.

6.4 Conclusions related to the research questions.

This section presents the major findings and conclusions reached during the study, based on the main findings presented in chapter five. Also, recommendations will be made to colleges concerning each main finding.

6.4.1 Research question 1:

How do **dialogic strategies** in GCSE English language classrooms affect **students' attitudes to learning**?

Having analysed the data collected, we can now conclude that there is a mostly positive response from the participants within both the questionnaire and focus group discussion. When conducting the GCSE English lesson with the sample profile a combination of dialogic strategies was used such as open-ended questioning, a balance of talking between teacher and student and allowing time for students to share ideas in groups. Therefore, what this research indicates is that dialogic strategies can contribute towards an attitude of willingness, change in perspective, and acceptance which could lead to growth both personally and academically. One finding, in particular, is that a student said, *"I have learned that we can all be stronger mentally and emotionally"*. The word 'stronger' here demonstrates that they want to improve, and they were also speaking on behalf of their peers, who neither disagreed nor commented on this statement at the time). With this in

mind, if a duplicate study was conducted it would be necessary to gather further data to clarify this.

We have previously stated that “A teacher assists students in dialogic speaking by comparing, contrasting, and debating their ideas” (c.f. Scott et al., 2006). What we have found from this research is that dialogic strategies help teachers not just provide the student with one right answer; instead, they present them with a variety of viewpoints and justifications to consider. If the students are accustomed to the teacher speaking with more authority, this method may first be confusing for them. It requires dedication to shift perspectives, and it could be difficult for students to acknowledge that there might be other perspectives on a phenomenon—and that those perspectives might even be very different from one another.

One unexpected concern from the findings is where the progress coach states that we need to be “*Encouraging an ethos where we want staff to feel like they’ve got a valid and valuable contribution*”. The phrase *‘feel like’* is interesting here because it connotes that there is no genuine empathy or certainty about how we can help support the whole cohort of students in one way or another. So, there is an adjustment that is required here because the role of a teacher is naturally multifaceted.

“Students come to college from different kinds of homes and may have different perspectives on what their new home at college should be like... their new home may be more supportive than their family home” (Cuba, L et al, 2016:86)

The notion of college being home is very telling as it then places the teacher with more responsibility and duty. Undeniably, all teachers have different intentions as to why they enter the profession but, as Freire (2014) states “The teacher is no longer merely the one who teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow”.

So, teachers do need to feel valued, but they also need to be aware of the entirety of what it means to be a teacher and the need for dialogue in the classroom. Just like home, a classroom is a place to feel liberated to speak and contribute, it is a place to grow socially, emotionally, and academically.

The primary objective is to determine whether a dialogic approach to teaching would lead to an adjustment in attitudes to learning in the classroom. Looking closer into these findings, it is evident that a collection of results indicates that this is the case. However, what is more, this then leads to the second objective focusing on the student experience of GCSE English and study support.

6.4.2 Research question 2:

What are the **student experiences** of using well-being resources to **support their study** of GCSE English Language?

Several comments were made about the appearance of the resource stating that *“Aesthetically it was nice to look at”* and *“it was bright and colourful”*. Both of these remarks are significant because if the resources have captured their interest and attention from the beginning, then does this mean that the students are more likely to continue reading due to the visual stimulation? The students continue to say that the resources supported their study because *“it was easier to read”* and they have managed to *“identify language features and explicit/implicit information”*. As these comments were made several times by different students in the group, findings suggest that this resource on wellness helped to advance their English skills.

This gives us insight into how to advance the study because perhaps the adult version of the articles might have had a more complex vocabulary to challenge students' reading skills. Although, perhaps these resources have worked as a scaffold when supporting their study. This type of student requires additional steps and support because the students in these lessons have already failed their GCSE once.

Another student experience is that they *“get to have fun whilst learning”* and the adjective *“fun”* had more than one occurrence in the findings. This demonstrates how pleasant they found the resources and they also *“learned to find features like a simile”*. But these were not the only references made, the themes that derived from the data were ‘student experiences and attitude to learning’ and when coding the information a further theme of ‘supporting

their study through dialogue' occurred. Therefore, the resource distinctively made a difference in the motivation they encountered within GCSE English.

Within chapter one a discussion was made on the many challenges that learners face when expressing their poor experience/attitudes in lessons. Students were open about admitting that there was 'too much to take in as was lots going on at home' or 'some teachers were boring'. But, when analysing the findings of this research, they seem to point to a potential way of engaging students in the study of English. Therefore, if students are enjoying GCSE English more than previously, it may be one of two things: either a change in the type of resources used or, more time made and a plan to incorporate dialogue in the classroom.

One additional observation and unexpected outcome of the research was when students were later asked to conduct their speaking and listening assessments. Interestingly, many students chose subjects around wellness and mental health for example, 'social media and the impact on mental health', 'tackling anxiety and stress', or 'improving wellness in health and social care settings. It's noteworthy that based on safeguarding records and feedback from the progress coach, there has been a notable increase in the proportion of students studying level 2 Health and Social Care expressing interest in discussing topics related to mental health compared to previous years. This increase could be attributed to various factors; perhaps exposure to resources like Teen Breathe positively influenced their experiences, or it could be linked to the requirement for these students to deliver spoken presentations on health-related topics as part of their level 2 course. Regardless of the cause, it is promising to see this positive trend emerging.

Students also seemed like they were wanting to raise awareness and bring light to discussing topics that potentially all of us might face at one point in the future. This sheds light and connects to the first point made previously from the eight conditions for learning that Wiliam (2011) considered to be necessary within the classroom. The deliberate choice I made as their teacher to focus on topics that focused on wellness and mental health might have communicated to the learners, implicitly or otherwise, that their wellness and mental health was something that I cared about and was important to me. This in turn might have resulted in them being more interested in not only the topic but also in one another's experiences and opinions on this.

6.5 Recommendations for future practice

After completing the study and in view of its limitations, the following practical recommendations can be made so that other tutors and managers in the sector can implement them in the future:

What could tutors do to ensure students are ready to learn when entering the classroom?

- Plan for resources specifically centred on wellness which immediately engage and attract students into learning.
- Use dialogic strategies where possible so that students feel part of the lesson and can share and learn from one another.
- Involve more of the employability skills linked to well-being set out by the college group (seen in the Icon grid appendix 7.6)
- Address concerns linking to well-being more frequently by using therapeutic reading material instead of recycling reading material from the exam board based on 19th/20th-century texts.

What could tutors do to make TL&A and well-being the priority?

- Consult students regularly on T&L and respond to their constructive criticism.
- Ensure students are involved in collaborating as a community to enquire about a problem and allow more time for discussion in classes.
- Discuss teaching methods frequently and the types of resources and topics covered in the reading material.

How might tutors be better equipped to enhance students' well-being in FE?

- Apply for access to the online version of the magazine.
- Branching out to other formats or therapeutic materials.
- Build a community of inquiry in the classroom, and how to use questioning techniques (such as Alexander's dialogic approach), group discussion, and other activities to develop thinking skills and concepts that can be applied across the curriculum.

Other recommendations linking to limitations:

- A similar study can be conducted with a larger sample size, so that one may be able to use the diverse demographic information of students and colleges when comparing the results.
- It is recommended that a probability sampling method should be used for future research to collect results that are representative of the entire population.
- Similar studies can be conducted by exploring a broader spectrum of subject areas, or by focusing on another specific aspect of wellbeing such as anxiety.
- A quantitative study can be conducted so that one may compare GCSE results from one year to the next.

6.6 Limitations of the study

This study shares the limitations of qualitative studies that concentrate on the in-depth analysis of a limited cohort of participants' experiences at a single FE institution. Thus, it is possible that the results of this study cannot be applied generally. Although similar experiences might indeed be known to other FE teachers, they offer chances to apply the findings of this study to other FE teachers' working environments. Since all research studies are confronted by several limitations, the limitations of this study will now be presented:

Firstly, time limitations and a lack of financial resources presented difficulties in the execution of the study. Data collection was limited to two months of distribution using two questionnaires, two interviews, and one focus group. This constraint contributed to the fact that a limited number of completed questionnaires were received.

Additionally, since the data collection was obtained from one particular group of Health and Social Care students and two staff members, the data is not representative of the total population, only of the respondents of the study. Only one vocational course has been chosen to take part in this research, other courses missed the opportunity. So having a small-scale project does narrow the findings and data but, this could be an opportunity to extend the research further.

Due to the scope of this study and the sudden disruption of the pandemic, there was no opportunity to gather data from the GCSE results. If we were able to compare student

results, then this would have aided the findings for the second research question. Although, this research was qualitative and inductive in its entirety so it would not have been appropriate to do this.

Other challenges of this research connect to the implementation of dialogic strategies and the response from students. For example, when asking open questions to students, it sometimes took a while for students to 'warm up' and it would often need one confident student to answer for the rest of the students to feel comfortable to share their views. Additionally, not all students wanted to engage in all conversations because some say that they were 'tired' or 'not sure'. So, this required more encouragement and a one-to-one approach rather than in a community of inquiry. These difficulties might be managed better in the future by having a range of ways where students can express their thoughts e.g. on an anonymous form or a post-it note. On the other hand, certain challenges are harder to avoid such as if a student has been working long hours outside of their studies and therefore, they are tired when they come into college. But sometimes a task whereby they have to move around does tend to help 'wake them up' because they are physically active when contributing.

A further thought into limitations is that this study could also have captured a live class discussion to show dialogic strategies in action. This would have allowed me to understand the first research problem in greater depth because observations of interactions and responses could have been analysed to look further into attitudes to learning. However, in this research, we have not used this because there may have been a risk that some students may have frozen, and the data would not be as valid or authentic. This was not a live account of using the strategies but more of a reflective account of students' experiences of using the resources and using dialogue.

Even though many valuable experiences have been acquired and are presented in this thesis, faculty management's perspectives on student experience and wellness are also absent. Despite receiving their approval and consent to involve students and staff in this study, managers were not invited to contribute to this research. This was a conscious decision I made as the researcher in view of the intentions and scope of this work. As a form of practitioner research, I wanted to prioritise the voices and experiences of students and staff, voices that are often underrepresented in educational research, to anchor the findings and

conclusions in real-world experiences. As a result, it is proposed that this research provides a meaningful and authentic account of the research problem and how dialogic learning can be used as an effective pedagogic strategy in Further Education classrooms.

Finally, although there is still a desire to lift literacy standards from their current plateau so, this is an implication for further research in the future amongst others such as using further resources to enhance engagement and develop literacy in further education.

6.7 Final Reflections

This research stems from witnessing countless students struggle to focus when studying at college for GCSE English. They were demonstrating poor attitudes to learning and suffering from wellness due to external difficulties. In a previous role as an advanced practitioner (working on developing teaching and learning), I began to realise that “it is not enough that teachers' work should be studied: they need to study it themselves.” (Stenhouse, 1975, p.143). For this reason, my inner search for meanings in my work was sparked by my contemplation on the experience of observing other teachers and reflecting/ studying to enhance my practice.

This research project began in 2021 as this study builds upon preliminary findings from a pilot study, conducted on the ETF-sponsored SUNCETT MA short course. This study has continued for four years, yet this thesis must come to an end. While challenging, this research study has been useful, for me, the two lines of inquiry have enabled me to see not only more dialogue transpire but also the attitude to learning and English skills develop. What's more, I have had the opportunity to learn about topics related to professional growth and learning through my thesis, which has informed my professional work. This programme has given me the chance to advance and broaden my research knowledge and abilities. More significantly, the study process has informed my practice for the better and I understand that “The development of our minds is part of what it means to be educated because it is part of what it means to be human.” (Fisher, 1998, p. 6).

Education is about expanding the human mind and within this research, we have established that the classroom is not just about teaching the subject we know. Rather, the classroom is a space to explore ideas, share knowledge and grow both academically, socially, and emotionally. Teachers should not necessarily take on the role of imparting knowledge instead, they should allow for discussion to develop students understanding.

A central part of this thesis has been reflected in the work of Freire (1970) who believes that a classroom environment should not be teacher or text orientated but instead one full of discussions and reflections taking place. Therefore, the core of pedagogy needs to be based on questions rather than answers because at present the problem is also the fear of 'getting it wrong' or not having the correct answers to fit into the narrow box.

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Appendix

Jessica Holloway

7.1 TEEN BREATHE ARTICLE – *‘ROAD TO RESILIENCE’*

7.2 TEEN BREATHE ANNOTATED ARTICLE – *‘FROM SOFA TO SUCCESS’*

7.3 SPEAKING AND LISTENING ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

7.4 IMPACT GRID

7.5 INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS – METHODS 2 & 3

7.6 ICON GRID

7.7 STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE – METHODS 1 & 5

7.8 CONSENT FORM

7.9 DATA COLLECTION CODING

Appendix 7.1- Teen Breathe Article – *‘Road to Resilience’*

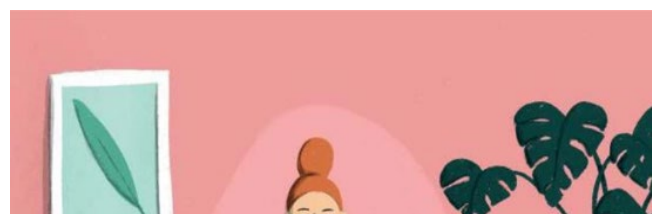


FIVE WAYS TO INCREASE INNER STRENGTH

Take care of yourself

To be able to cope well when life takes a nosedive, you need to be mentally and emotionally strong – which means self-care.

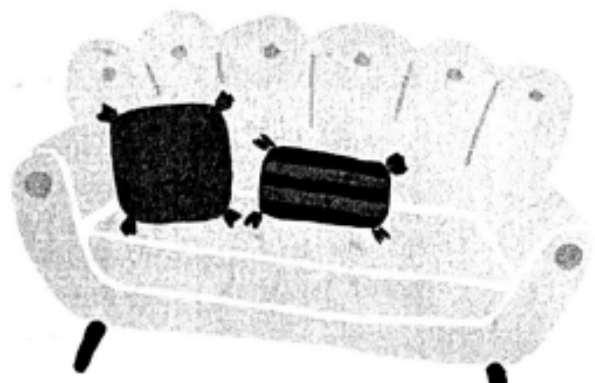
Make sleep a priority, eat a well-balanced diet comprising a



[Appendix 7.2- Teen Breathe Annotated Article 'From Sofa to Success'](#)



**HOW CAN I INCREASE
MY MOTIVATION?**



[Appendix 7.3- Speaking and Listening Assessment Criteria](#)



Date of reflection	Examples of changes in your (or others') practice/ learners/organisation	Any planned next steps
<p>17th-19th Novem ber 2021</p>	<p><i>Changes to me and my practise</i></p> <p><i>Several personal changes are occurring whilst studying on this MPhil programme as it is expanding the way I think about my practice at work and how I can make a difference to better student experience. What's more It has helped me to have a clear understanding of theory in a further educational setting and how to apply this to my own research ideas. The SUNCETT residentials are invaluable as I have been tracking and planning for the further development in my academic writing, scholarship and research skills.</i></p> <p><i>Having continuous communication with likeminded professionals at the workshops is allowing me to build confidence when implementing new strategies in the classroom. I certainly have a greater sense of teacher self-worth and possibilities for the future when helping students reach their potential.</i></p> <p><i>Changes to Organisational Improvement</i></p> <p><i>This research is having an impact on changes in approaches to educational improvement and CPD in my institution. For example, having met with both the director of studies and faculty manager, there are now intentions of implementing more resources in the curriculum to help students better their mental health. Also, the college library has made the decision to subscribe to a well-being resource which will allow students to independently access further help in their own time</i></p>	<p><i>Continue to log reading journey and set up a meeting with faculty manager to discuss research. Aim to promote the research in weekly meetings and CPD days.</i></p>

<p>17th January 2022</p>	<p>Changes in Learners</p> <p><i>One of my objectives for undertaking my research project was to get to allow students to access learning GCSE English language by helping them with their well-being and mental health needs. Part of this was also to encourage dialogue in the classroom so that we could work together building English skills and targeting the affective domain. By introducing a new resource into the classroom the students have been very receptive and I have started to make notes on observations in the classroom whereby students are talking about how to tackle specific difficulties with their well-being. There has been a clear change in students interacting with one another because the resource is relevant and current to them.</i></p>	<p><i>Conduct open questionnaires and hold a discussion group with learners both before and after the intervention to see if the resource we have used overtime has had any impact on their attitudes to learning and personal experiences when dealing with difficult emotional circumstances.</i></p>
<p>2nd-4th March 2022</p>	<p>Changes to me in my practise</p> <p><i>Supervision and workshop content has been helping me to develop my abstract for submission to the ETF Annual Research Conference 2022. It has been providing me with detailed feedback and tutorial support to enable me to prepare a well-developed draft of chapters 1 - 4 in order to begin preparation for Annual Monitoring Review (AMR). Also, I am personally extending my understanding of key issues and debates in research methodology, and I am starting to align my research methodology and my research methods. I have a greater awareness of processes, stages and issues involved in putting an idea from research and theory into practice.</i></p>	<p><i>Formulate an outline for the methodological chapter and begin to interpret/analyse data collected.</i></p>

1) Events from 29/11/21- 02/06/22

Use the table below to record any events where you have been able to share your emerging research findings with colleagues (internally or externally).

Description of event (What did you do at the event?)	Audience	Number s present	Date	Direct or indirect impact?	Comments: What impact has there been following the event? (on you and on others)
Meeting with line Manager (EC) to discuss research ideas which incorporate therapeutic and academic development in students progression at college.	Senior leader	1	29/11/21	Direct	Circulation of research ideas and initial gathering of data. Tutors sharing best practise and initial thoughts on reading material in meetings and CPD events.
Discussed my research project in detail with small group of peers and shared my research abstract.	Practitioners from my curriculum area	15	07.2.21	Direct	Some staff were encouraged to explore possibilities of undertaking their own research project. I now feel more confident talking about my research and feel able to answer questions about it.
MPhil Residential 1 – sharing of research ideas with fellow practitioners on the MPhil programme.	Senior, middle leaders, practitioners from the FE sector	20+	17.11.21 18.11.21	Direct	More awareness of current research and how my ideas connect to others in the FE sector. Growth of ideas and strategies to develop my research and theoretical underpinning of it. Shared resources.
Online interview and email conversation with Group Student Support Delivery Manager, Berkshire Colleges. Information was obtained regarding the College data	Manager of department	1	18/01/22	Direct	Awareness of the project in safeguarding. Promoting the use of resources which encourage positive mental health. Initial data and progress shared from previous interventions in class.

connecting to support and welfare.					
Video recorded and produced online to promote mental health. video for mental health awareness week	Multiple	College wide and on YouTube	24/01/22	Indirect	The video was shared with all staff and students and incorporated both myself and others talking about mental health and ways to improve wellness.
Discussion with Progress Coach in learning support Reading College and Student Engagement Team Leader on student behaviour and lack of readiness to learn in the GCSE English lessons.	Fellow practitioner	1	11/02/22	Direct	Shared video for mental health awareness week. This involved discussion of the magazine and was placed onto youtube.
CPD Reading College with Faculty Manager sharing and circulation of research ideas.	Senior, middle leaders, practitioners from the FE sector	40+	16/02/22	Direct	Research displayed to 40 members of Activate Learning staff. Ideas shared in relation to increasing wellness.
Met with Director of Curriculum to Discuss relevance of this research in connection to the curriculum and implementation of the resources.	Leader	1	23/02/22	Direct	Discussion of how this research could fit into the curriculum as a long- term project.
Sharing of resources to a variety of staff at Activate Learning and students over half term	Practitioners from the FE sector	12	21/02/22	Indirect	Wider awareness of the resource to increase wellness in the pandemic.
MPhil Residential 2 – sharing of research ideas with fellow practitioners on the MPhil programe.	Senior, middle leaders, practitioners from the FE sector	20+	02/06/22	Direct	More awareness of current research and how my ideas connect to others in the FE sector. Growth of ideas and strategies to develop my research and theoretical underpinning of it. Shared resources.

[Appendix 7.5 Interview Transcripts \(Method 2 & 3\)](#)

Transcript from interview with Safeguarding Lead

How have the first six weeks been in comparison to the last couple of years at the start of term?

- What is really noticeable is the challenge with returning or transition back into education
- Even with transition support there have been students who have not been able to cope
- Bespoke provision
- It takes a lot of positive reinforcement and encouragement to make sure they are actually coping with their education and the requirement of them on the programme

Are there any clear improvements this year?

- Last year they could not all access education
- To be able to provide **consistency has been really, really important**. The more stability we have from day 1 of term, the better as they can have that routine
- Giving them an accurate representation of industry is really important
- For some students, the classroom and college environment is completely overwhelming and they might struggle to engage with the programme. This may then spill out into their behaviours showing frustration, anxiety or aggression to name a few.

What are the recognisable themes of concern this year?

- Number 1 would be a diverse range of mental health – anxiety and the worry about accessing mainstream education
- The challenges that working from home brings
- Over the past year we've gone from 14 children in care to over 100 just at this college alone
- Child protection cases have gone from about 4/1200 in the whole academic year to about 26/1200 just in the first 6 weeks. 70 students with lower level cases of concern

where they have been really worried about something but have not met the level of need to have ongoing support from children's social care or youth workers.

- County lines

What impact do you think this has on students learning in the classroom?

- The biggest impact seems to be demonstrated in behaviours. Students will not be able to focus or engage as actively as they have in the past. Practitioners need to take this into account as you are likely to see students who struggle to focus for a long period.
- Students are trying to get back into learning through an auditory or kinaesthetic way as they are used to looking at a screen.
- Any trauma is going to bring out difficulties in accessing education.
- If students are not able to open up about it, then they will voice it through their behaviour. This is where you might get disruptive/ inapt behaviour that challenges which is quite often a cry for help or a defence mechanism.
- Teachers could show more understanding to help students instead of simply referring them straight away.
- Best to build a relationship as professional with them and give them a little bit of leeway but the right support and direction – explain why we are doing what we do. Framing conversations to come across as supportive and informative – from a place of concern.
- Essentially the students have had two years of social deprivation 13-18 when young people become adolescence, the brain develops key social skills. Our brains are designed to be involved in our peer group, things like risk-taking and managing really challenging relationships or arguing and they have been without that. So, they have missed out on an opportunity to develop socially.
- An element of isolation, social deprivation, and loneliness

Transcript interview with progress coach

Tell me about your job role at the college.

So, I've been working for Activate learning for about 20 months now, I started as an intervention progress coach and then change to just progress coach. My role consists of 16 or 17 tutorials which are an hour long and I work with everyone - level one, level two and T level groups. The tutorials are based around attributes based around goal setting and any other bits of admin an induction that the college asked me to do and then the rest of my time is made up through one to ones or small group coaching sessions adopting a coaching methodology. And again, the funding and kind of the job spec is around using those one-to-one coaching sessions to work on attributes and goal setting and supporting students. Sometimes people think a study coach not a study coach but sometimes people think we are mental health therapists- I'm not mental health therapist but more of general coach. Where I guess the line will be drawn is maybe if there's a student that is struggling with a little bit of anxiety because they are not very organised I might be there to support them and I have some questions to help them improve their organisation to maybes ease that anxiety but I wouldn't be there to offer mental health therapy sessions and in terms of study skills for students struggling with English and they have given up or something of that nature and it might be that I help them to increase their growth mindset but I wouldn't be helping sitting down and helping them write the English assessments but yeah that's the main part of my job.

Why do you think your job role is needed in the College setting in the FE environment?

I think, I think it helps bridge the gap between secondary school and college as there are massive differences and the mentality, independence and motivation that students need in college that they wouldn't necessarily need in school - that is I think probably the reason why the role is mostly needed. I don't think the students sometimes feel enough support from just a teacher student relationship. I think having someone that's more in my way of explaining it 'on a level' or speaking to them without necessarily being judgmental and actively listening to them I think is really helpful for them. I know the teachers don't always have time to flip between the mentality of being at teacher to mentality of listening and coaching and actually finding out a little bit more about the students, so I think it just gives them more manpower to

do that. But the main reason and kind of what I would put in my mission statement is to help the students do the right thing when no one is watching. If the teachers are telling students what to do then who is there to help the students do the right thing when no one is watching or to build habits that are going to help them for the rest of their life when they don't have the support and I think it is definitely important there's someone there that does a role either similarly to me or does a role where there's not quaters and they don't get judged based on just the grades of the students so I won't get judged if the students pass or fail which means I can hopefully do the right thing for the students and don't have that to worry about.

What has your experience been like as a Progress Coach from the last academic year till now?

So both years have been during covid so as you can imagine there's been big differences and lots of changes I think the cohort this year slightly probably got more problems than the year before and this is probably what I've started to notice is getting worse and still getting worse which is there's a decline in self-motivation. A lot of students needing help in order to motivate themselves probably a little bit more anxiety shown students seem to want to opt out of more things and because of that they are either missing out and having lower attendance or they're not turning up to exams and important things not doing things at home and yeah I think teachers and myself are struggling to get students to motivate themselves massive increasing the reliance on mobile phones this of what we did we looked at the screen time as students and never students multiple students have up to 16 hours a day average screen time and yeah in classes students find it really hard to put the phone down and so not look at the phone. I think it is sort of links in which they find it hard to choose the hard option now so they are choosing something that easy maybe not as important over something that's harder and more important for example they choose to swipe on Instagram instead of revise or scroll through tick tock instead of starting their assignment early and it is generally there leaving it so late because they are finding it hard to choose that hard option leaving it so late that the anxieties then building up and that's where a lot of the issues that I'm dealing with coming from and again I think they are not they are not motivated by the longer term goals and that short term enjoyment seems to trump it when they're making their decision do I go on tick tock or do I start my assignment earlier maybe get a better mark they find it really hard to choose that harder option and yeah that don't seem to have as much of a vision and not motivated as much by those longer term goals so yeah difficult I think it has been difficult.

Can you explain some of the challenges you've faced as a Progress Coach?

So my role is quite unique because of the fact that it doesn't count towards their grade so like I was saying before about finding it hard choosing the harder option they can't see an immediate consequence of not engaging in my lesson unless I manufacture that consequence and say well if you don't engage in my lesson then I'm going to do this I'm going to put you on a stage one or you're going to stay behind and I've had to adapt and do things like okay where you can leave 5 minutes early if you do this or you can use your phone if you do this and I've had to create those short term goals and objectives for them just to motivate them to do something because it doesn't count towards their grade they don't necessarily they can't necessarily visualise the fact that what I'm doing could help them in their life after college and that's definitely a bit of an issue that myself and speaking to the other progress coaches are finding at the moment and have been talking a lot about and then also students knowing that they can get away with opting out so if a student does not turn up and isn't removed from the course or doesn't have some sort of disciplinary procedure then the other students will see can see that and keep and follow suit and carry on by not attending or not doing the work so it is been really difficult for me to maintain that coach student relationship which is supposed to be non-judgement or non-teaching relationship active listening asking students to make their own decisions it is been hard to do that when there's been students that have been making the wrong decisions and other students seeing them get away with that and seeing that they may they may not be getting told off or there might be consequences for those actions so it has been hard stop that spiralling but yeah that's probably been the two biggest difficulties.

How do you think other tutors could support your job role in their lessons?

I think in terms of what I'm looking for in my key performance indicators which in the roll that I do is very difficult to quantify. I want the students to do the right thing when no one's watching, and I want the students to be set up so that they can be successful and have personal growth outside of college and that's my biggest sort of concern. That's my biggest KPI even though it is very hard to quantify so to do with that I think getting teachers to link the topic with how it could help the student in real life not saying things like you just need to do this to pass or do it because I said so actually this could help you in this way in the future

and it is something that is necessary. If you don't do this then you're going to struggle in life because of this but if you do this then you may have the ability to do this this and this and life and trying to get them to think more optimistically about how a bit of work they doing could help them in life. Aiming to ease off regulating the students motivation and behaviour so even though we all understand I think that there's going to be a lot of behaviour management a lot of things like removing phones making sure students are doing the work and are on task, aiming that by the end of the year as much as possible to be easing off though that regulator actually the end goal being the students to be independently working independently regulating their mobile phone use independently motivating themselves and actually it not be the teachers job to do that because I want him to be set up for life outside of college and I think I guess the way that I would suggest doing that and I'm still trying to get my head around myself from practise myself is more activities with real life consequences rather than manufactured consequences so I'd call a manufactured consequence if I see you using your phone I'm going to take it away where is a real life consequences might be OK use your phone as much as you want or we've got a test in 15 minutes so if they use their phone for that 15 minutes and then because of that they fail the test due to lack of revision it is a real life consequence rather than someone just telling them don't do this because this is a roller I've said that it being real life and them getting lots of chances specially earlier in the academic year to make those mistakes and them having reflections which is just important reflections with the students afterwards about what their decision and the consequences of that decision but not in a judgmental way so that's something that I'm doing and I think that if that was done across the board where possible that would hopefully actually save the teachers having to do so much motivation was really low not many students shows we independence which I was really surprised about cause I massively disagree that she I see one of the independence is one of the things that they really struggle with maybe that's one of the reasons why because they can't foresee the need for that level of independence yet they can't picture life where they going to need independence in the future and yeah that was probably the biggest themes a lot were looking at wanted to improve confidence and communication was another one that came quite with confidence but independence was really low and then also sort of the findings was that there's a real lack of vision an optimism for the future however at the same time there's sort of a sense maybe a deluded sense of life being handed to them and I think up until this point the students have been told 'you do this course then you get you do primary school, then you just automatically go secondary school you do secondary school you automatically go to college' and actually them thinking that they're just

automatically going to fall into over an apprenticeship or a job or a university despite how hard they work which would make sense because however hard you work in primary school you still move to secondary school from secondary school you generally still move to sixth form or college so yeah that probably the sort of the main results.

Were there any other attributes that you think students Particularly lacked in?

Yeah, linking into earlier before motivation was a massive one, self-motivation for the things that they can't see having a consequent straight away it was really difficult so yeah I'd say motivations well confidence motivation scored relatively low on the self-assessment tests as when I say low I mean they didn't put it as a need in the same way they did independence which I think again showed that they maybe can't they don't even see that as a gap as a skill gap which makes it even more difficult to work on with.

From your experience, what English skills do students need to improve on?

So I've put down just from what I've seen a bit of professional writing emails but I put in capital letters on my notes and things they will actually use because it is I can imagine it is hard enough to sell English to a student here all the time what's the point of English I don't need English so then understanding the importance of English and then us also remembering that it might not be important to them so if someone sends them an email and it is informal or there's lots of spelling or grammar errors it might not bother them so then trying to put themselves in the shoes of someone they might apply to a job with or a colleague that an older colleague that they might work with so they can understand how why it would be important to others even if it is not important to them in the same way that we have to understand that it might not be important for them when they receive a text if it is without gamma it might not bother them something that's quite important yes I mean that the yeah just that professional writing an email system is a big one.

What are your thoughts on dialogic teaching in the classroom?

Dialogic is real dialogue between student and teacher so more of a conversation than a command or a lecture a real conversation between the two is that how you see it? Yes, it is interesting to know whether or not you perhaps ever use it in your classrooms or not? yes so the nature of coaching is a little of dialogic methods and there's a lot of dialogue and it has to be real dialogue one of the issues that I see one of the issues I tried to avoid for myself is

leading questions for a desired response to asking students questions and I have the correct answer in mind and I think students see through that and it becomes really monologist it really becomes them almost finishing my sentence so at the end of the sentence we have to put a.... and the student says full stop and there's that closed question there's a right or wrong answer and I'm waiting for them to give that answer or that students actually thinking what does it teach you want to hear now I think it is really important for us to find out what the student thinks and that's why being non-judgemental acting intrigued or being intrigued even better in the answer and interested in the answer that the student gives back and exploring their answer rather than trying to push them back on track to what you wanted them to say exploring their answers so if we go really simple now and I ask a student what do you put at the end of a sentence and they say, rather than me saying no. It might be okay why do you think it is a comma? okay what my what might sound like then if you write that next sentence with common than ever sense what might sound like are you able to do in exploring what they what they answer and being genuine with that with that and then open questions where students can't just answer yes or no and they've got to have got to think a little bit more deeper and there's divergent questions and you've put it again here at interested by the students response I think is really important we don't necessarily want to ask him a question where they know we know the answer and we're saying that's right or that's wrong I think getting that that real dialogue at times during the session I think helps the student take a little bit of control of the session as well and students have finding that there that they have a lack of control in their life is a big problem at the moment that I've spotted an unsolved progress coaches in my position as well as supported so allowing them to control a little bit of the direction of the lesson through their answers I think is really important and should keep them engaged. I think there's times where the students can be in a lesson and can get away with sitting at the back and saying answer the question yes or no or I don't know but I think this dialogic teaching method will increase the resilience of students where they have to answer they have to answer and they have to be part of the session they can't choose to opt out and I think when you've got these one to one conversations going on they won't they won't be able to opt out there a big part of it and yeah I think it kind of reminds me that that resilience is another sort of it is not the attributes we worked on so far but it has been a real struggle for the students to be resilient and joining in class when it gets hard or to keep going in class when it gets hard rather than opting out.

[Appendix 7.6 Activate Learning Icon Grid](#)

Digital	Motivated	Problem solver	Adaptable	Empathic
Numerate	Independent	Business minded	Self-reliant	Self-aware
Communicative	Inquisitive	Resourceful	Commitment	Reflective
Customer focused	Positive	Risk taker	Capability	Respectful
Team player	Proactive	Leader	Perseverance	Mindful

Appendix 7.7 Student Questionnaire (Method 1 &5)

**6. How do you normally feel emotionally when coming into English? RTL =
Ready to learn**

Never RTL

Not usually RTL

Somewhat RTL

Completely RTL

7. Would you be willing to talk about wellbeing generally in a small group?

Yes

No

**8. Do you have any other suggestions about how we can improve your
wellbeing in college or English?**

Data collection from Questionnaire

1. Tell me about the resources we have used from the Breathe magazine.

General

- We discussed our mental health and wellbeing
- It is different to what we normally use
- It talks about anxiety and periods
- It was **colourful**

Positive

- They are very colourful, and it makes me want to read them
- I find the topics **interesting**, and the **pictures** draw you in
- They are understanding
- They **taught us about resilience** and how to persevere
- Interesting to read about our generation and the resources are **relatable**
- There was a lot of information to choose from
- There were a lot of language features to analyse
- I learned how to tackle different situations that make us feel stressed
- It was helpful as it tells you not to give up and to keep going
- I like it a lot as it gave **lots of examples** of what people go through and how to clear our minds.

2. How would you describe the resource in comparison to other resource is we have used?

- More interesting
- The articles are a lot easier to read as we want to know about the topics
- **More fun** to read understand
- They are more relatable to teenagers
- Very helpful as it **relates** to teens struggling with mental health
- Talks about **current** things happening and factual information
- The features in the magazine articles were easier to pick out and spot
- Much more attractive and appealing
- It talks to me as a teen
- Intriguing to read
- It helped me be more resilient
- Its more relatable so it makes me want to learn more
- They are useful articles as they **help** to understand about ourselves
- These resources are better as they break situations down to get yourself more mentally strong.
- **It is up to date and has good aesthetics**
- Not boring

3. What English skills have you practised when using these resources?

- Language **features**
- Reading for explicit and implicit information
- Discussing the **format**
- Social skills
- Lots of **discussing** as a group
- Critical thinking skills
- **Speaking** and listening to others in the group
- **Listening** to everyone's opinions
- Identifying information

4. What have you learned from reading the articles?

- I need to be more **resilient** and how to do this.
- Different ways to be resilient
- Working together to put your mind off of the things that were making you unhappy
- How to stay safe online
- Dealing with gossip
- Learn to focus on myself and not other people
- How to deal with my feelings and how to express them
- How to pick out **language features** to analyse
- The meaning of resilience and how to adapt and respond to life's difficulties.
- The types of struggles that we go through.
- How to be both **mentally** and **emotionally strong**
- How to be more comfortable when asking for help
- Self-care

5. From your experience, how do you learn best?

- **Visually** with images and pictures connected to the topic.
- Watching
- Practical activities and **discussing**
- Reading quietly
- Being in groups and discussing/ working together and giving different opinions
- When shown examples
- **Sharing things** together and listening to others' opinions
- Listening to **music**
- **In my home** environment with a laptop
- Having a choice of resources
- Looking at other students work
- Engaging with my classmates
- After discussing your feelings and allowing people to help you
- Flashcards

Transcript from questionnaire in a discussion forum

Tutor:

“OK this is a recording of the questions for the discussion the open forum the first question was:

1. Tell me about the resources we've used from team breeze magazines”.

Student A

“Yes, we looked at the magazine and read about resilience together and shared our thoughts on this topic. Like what resilience is.”

Student B

“It was the whole class reading an article and the magazine has lots of different things in it, so it was fun as we also got to read an article of our choice as well”.

Student C

“Mmm, I agree”

Student D

“Same”

Student E

“The main article about resilience was colourful and had lots of images that we discussed”

Student A

“We talked about how it can help us and the format”.

Student E

“and we shared opinions and stories about how to be resilient”

Tutor:

“Ok, thank you.

2. How would you describe the resource is in comparison to other resource is we have used?”

Student B

“they're really bright and colourful to read”.

Student D

“Yeah, that's what I thought”.

Student E

Jessica Holloway

“The pictures were nice to look at and I think we found it more interesting because it seems relevant to us”

Student A

“Aesthetically it was nice to look at which helps us because we can be drawn into the reading. I wanted to read”.

Student C

“I thought it was interesting and relatable”

Student A

“Yeah, so did I”

Student C

“Like, it wasn't boring, and we actually felt like we wanted to read it”.

Student A

“Other resources don't really connect to what we are going through like with stress and stuff and this one felt easier to read”

Tutor:

“So,

3. What English skills have you practised when using these resources?”

Student D

“I'm not sure...”

Student B

“Mainly stuff like language features”.

Student A

“Yeah, spotting language features like repetition and direct address”

Student B

“And lots of lists and facts”

Student C

“We shared and discussed lots about how to be resilient and stronger”.

Student A

"I think speaking and listening skills"

Student E

"Yeah, we did do a lot of talking about resilience and we shared other things that we had read about. At the beginning of the lessons, I read about gossip and how to overcome people who are inconsiderate and bully. This was interesting because it made me think about my emotions and listen to other peoples' opinions on gossip in the class. It helped"

Tutor:

"Thank you for sharing. The next question I am wondering is:

4. What have you learned from reading the articles?"

Student A

"I have learned that we can all be stronger mentally and emotionally because if we are resilient then this means we keep going despite bad things happening. I mean we all go through bad times. We can be more resilient by spending time doing things we love and reaching out to our friends".

Student C

"I didn't realise what resilience was but now I know that I need to come out of my comfort zone more. I think from what I remember, resilience is overcoming the big and little things".

Student A

"It is"

Student D

"It is important to take care of yourself, like taking time out and not to get too stressed about assignments and deadlines"

Students A

"Yeah, we talked about that".

Student D

"We also looked at features in the article as they used lots of direct address"

Student C

"I learned about features but also about all the things we go through as teenagers. I normally feel anxious and stressed out, but it was good to share ideas and thoughts on stuff like resilience. It made me feel not alone".

Student A

"I didn't know that this magazine was in the library as well"

Tutor:

“Right ok. Thank you. The last question I wanted to ask was:

5. From your experience, how do you learn best?”

Student A

“I think reading and talking about things together as a group”.

Student B

“Definitely agree. We sometimes listen to the radio at the beginning of the lesson when we do work which helps to relax”

Student C

“Music is good!”

Student E

“I think I learn best by sharing things as a group and not just reading or writing all the time but talking about how to do something. I do also like reading together or with a partner”.

Student A

“Yeah, and we do have a lot of that in English”

Student C

“I like activities that have games in them or a competition, so we get to have fun whilst learning something new. Like when we play ‘stop the bus’ or a race to find features and stuff”

Student D

“I do like that, but I actually like learning at home on my laptop”

Student C

“I prefer in class as I missed everyone and talking, time to talk in lessons has been refreshing”.

Student A

“Same”

Tutor

“Ok, well that is the end of questions. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and ideas. We will stop the recording there”.

[Appendix 7.8 Consent Form](#)



Consent Form

Study title:

Participant code: _____

I am aged 16-18	
I have read and understood the attached study information and, by signing below, I consent to participate in this <u>study</u>	
I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time during the study itself.	
I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about participating in the study for a short period after the study has concluded.	

Signed: _____

Print name: _____

(Your name, along with your participant code is important to help match your data from two questionnaires. It will not be used for any purpose other than this.)

Date: _____

Witnessed by: _____

Print name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 7.9 Data collection coding

Method 1- Initial student Questionnaire	Codes	Themes
<p>Q1</p> <p>“Ok” x2</p> <p>“Welcoming but busy”.</p> <p>“Mad- because there was so much to take in”.</p> <p>“Whirlwind- Just was”</p> <p>“Got lost but managed to find my classes on time”.</p> <p>“Up and down- a lot was happening, and I missed my old friends”</p> <p>“Tough getting used to stuff”.</p> <p>“Rubbish, my timetable changed about 10 times”</p> <p>“Harder than expected as I thought it would be more like school but it was less formal”</p> <p>“Difficult” x3</p> <p>“My course was not right”.</p> <p>“I wasn’t ready as was lots going on at home”.</p> <p>“Was hard but then Covid was harder when it changed”</p> <p>“Alright but some teachers were boring”</p> <p>“Annoying as there were so many rooms changes so this made me annoyed”</p>	<p>Mixed emotions</p> <p>Negative emotions</p> <p>Positive emotions</p>	<p>Student experiences</p>

<p>“Enjoyable- I made friends, got to know tutors, and started my course”.</p> <p>“It went fast, and college is much better than my old school. The tutors are friendly”.</p>		
<p>Q3-</p> <p>Talk to friends 2/20</p> <p>Use the internet for answers 1/20</p> <p>Talk to parents/guardian 4/20</p> <p>Discuss with a tutor at college 4/20</p> <p>Talk to student services at college 5/20</p> <p>Other =</p> <p>Boyfriend 1/20</p> <p>Don’t talk to anyone 1/20</p> <p>Nothing 1/20</p> <p>(Unanswered 1/20)</p>	<p>Majority seek support from professionals within the college environment.</p>	<p>Student response connecting to support</p>
<p>Q4-</p> <p>Reading resources 6/20</p> <p>Writing tasks 2/20</p> <p>Speaking and listening activities 12/20</p>	<p>30%</p> <p>10%</p> <p>60%</p>	<p>Support their study</p>
<p>Q8</p> <p>“Invite guest speakers into the lessons”.</p> <p>“Let us listen to music in the classroom”.</p>	<p>External support</p> <p>Independent & shared support</p>	<p>Support their study</p>

<p>“Allow us to talk to our friends at points in the lesson”.</p> <p>“Give us information or tell us where we can go for help”</p>		
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Method 2- Interview with safeguarding lead	Codes	Themes
<p>What is noticeable is the challenge of returning or transitioning back into education.</p> <p>Even with transition support, there have been students who have not been able to cope</p> <p>Bespoke provision</p> <p>It takes a lot of positive reinforcement and encouragement to make sure they are coping with their education and the requirement of them the programme</p>	<p>Repercussions of lockdown</p> <p>Tutor's attitude</p>	<p>Student attitude to learning.</p> <p>Support their study.</p>
<p>Last year they could not all access education</p> <p>To be able to provide consistency has been really, really important. The more stability we have from day 1 of term, the better as they can have that routine</p> <p>For some students, the classroom and college environment is completely overwhelming and they might struggle to engage with the programme. This may then spill out into their</p>	<p>Student challenges</p> <p>Negative behaviour</p>	<p>Student experience</p>

<p>behaviours showing frustration through swearing, rudeness, or aggression to name a few.</p>	<p>Drastic increase in children in care and child protection services</p>	
<p>The challenges that working from home brings. Over the past year, we've gone from 14 children in care to over 100 just at this college alone</p> <p>Child protection cases have gone from about 4/1200 in the whole academic year to about 26/1200 just in the first 6 weeks. 70 students with lower level cases of concern where they have been really worried about something but have not met the level of need to have ongoing support from children's social care or youth workers.</p>		<p>Support their study</p>
<p>The biggest impact seems to be demonstrated in behaviours. Students will not be able to focus or engage as actively as they have in the past. Practitioners need to take this into account as you are likely to see a student who struggles to focus for a long period.</p> <p>Any trauma is going to bring out difficulties in accessing education.</p> <p>If students are not able to open up about it then they will voice it through their behaviour. This is where you might get disruptive/ inapt behaviour that challenges which is quite often a cry for help or a defence mechanism.</p>	<p>Impact on students learning. Negative</p> <p>Tutor requirement</p>	<p>Students' attitudes to learning</p>

<p>Teachers could show more understanding to help students instead of simply referring them straight away</p> <p>Best to build a relationship as professional with them and give them a little bit of leeway but the right support and direction – explain why we are doing what we do. Framing conversations to come across as supportive and informative – from a place of concern</p> <p>Essentially the students have had two years of social deprivation 13-18 when young people become adolescence, the brain develops key social skills. Our brains are designed to be involved in our peer group, things like risk-taking and managing challenging relationships or arguing and they have been without that. So, they have missed out on an opportunity to develop socially.</p> <p>An element of isolation, social deprivation, and loneliness</p>	<p>Tutor – student rapport and conversation</p> <p>Impact of lockdown on students</p>	<p>Dialogic strategies</p>
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Method 3 - Interview with progress coach	Codes	Themes
<p>There is a gap between secondary school and college as there are massive differences. For instance, the independence and motivation that students need in college that they wouldn't necessarily need in school. I don't think the students sometimes feel enough support from just a teacher-student relationship. I think having someone more in my way of explaining it 'on a</p>	<p>Collaborative working</p>	<p>Support their student.</p>

<p>level' or speaking to students without necessarily being judgmental and actively listening to them I think is really helpful for them. I know the teachers don't always have time to flip between the mentality of being a teacher to the mentality of listening and coaching and finding out a little bit more about the students so I think it just gives them more manpower to do that. But the main reason and kind of what I would put in my mission statement are to help the students do the right thing when no one is watching.</p>	<p>Active and passive listening Challenges</p> <p>Purpose/goal</p> <p>Motivation</p>	
<p>I think the cohort this year has probably got more problems than the year before and this is probably what I've started to notice is getting worse and still getting worse which is there's a decline in self-motivation. A lot of students needing help to motivate themselves probably have a little bit more anxiety shown. Students seem to want to opt out of more things and because of that they are either missing out and having lower attendance or they're not turning up to exams and important things not doing things at home yeah, I think teachers and myself are struggling to get students to motivate themselves.</p>	<p>The decline in student mental health (anxiety) and knock-on effects.</p> <p>Anxiety</p>	<p>Attitudes to learning.</p> <p>Student experience</p>
<p>Instead of the students starting their assignment early and it is generally there leaving it so late because they're finding it hard to choose that hard option leaving it so late that the anxieties then build-up</p>		<p>Support their study through dialogue.</p>
<p>I think getting that real dialogue at times during the session I think helps the student take a little bit of control of the session as well and students have</p>	<p>The power of student's voice</p>	

<p>been finding that they have a lack of control in their life is a big problem at the moment that I've spotted. Progress coaches in my position as well as supported so allowing them to take control a little bit of the direction of the lesson through their answers I think is really important</p>		
<p>I think dialogic teaching methods will increase the resilience of students when they have to answer, and they have to be part of the session they can't choose to opt out of. I think when you've got these one-to-one conversations going on they won't be able to opt-out there a big part of it. I think it kind of reminds me that resilience is another core of it, not the attributes we worked on so far but it has been a real, real struggle for the students to be resilient and join in class when it gets hard or to keep going in class when it gets hard rather than opting out.</p>	<p>Benefits of talking and having students share thoughts about a topic.</p> <p>The resilience of students is poor</p>	<p>Dialogic strategies</p> <p>Student experience</p>
<p>We need social reintegration for students and it is about building up those softer skills and communication skills</p> <p>An hour away from the curriculum gives a completely different aspect of fun and interaction where they have to openly talk is going to be far more valuable because you get more value-added over time. Where the students start to engage more and voice more over time. We need to think more holistically about the educational experience that is being offered.</p> <p>When it comes to safeguarding, the culture of an organisation where everyone is a piece of the support network and realising those course tutors</p>	<p>Requirement of communications skills</p> <p>Value added for students by the encouragement of discussion</p> <p>Holistic approach</p>	<p>Dialogic teaching</p> <p>Support their student.</p>

<p>(although there are pressures with time and consciousness of your role and not blurring the lines between what is your role and the safeguarding team’s responsibility). We need to understand that when a young person speaks to someone, it is because they have built up a rapport and that trust in a relationship. Encouraging an ethos where we want staff to feel like they’ve got a valid and valuable contribution to that young person to be able to open up and have a really good conversation without worrying about what is said. Sometimes time is wasted as a lot of problems could be solved with tutors asking students specific questions involving support. Students come to us with stress or anxiety deadlines or academic needs. Therefore, our time is often wasted as they could have been referred to a different support network and meanwhile we could be triaging and dealing with things specifically in our remit.</p> <p>Some staff members do not have the confidence to have those conversations to see if they can support in any other ways. If they did then the student would appreciate that as students genuinely don’t appreciate being brought down to us without explanation unless it is clearly safeguarding.</p>	<p>Tutor challenges with time</p> <p>Tutor confidence</p> <p>Inapt referrals</p> <p>Tutor responsibility</p> <p>Students’ dissatisfaction</p>	<p>Dialogic strategies</p> <p>Support their study</p>
<p>I think general awareness of mental health is what is needed as a whole college approach where everyone works together. You can put people loads of people as mental health first aiders but then you are segmenting the support. I think</p>	<p>Training requirement</p> <p>Collaborative approach</p>	

<p>everyone has a part to play. We want to upskill the entire staff body to feel confident in knowing mental health conditions and how to support them. This is so that is it a consistent approach as the student will know if they go up to any tutor then they will get the same experience but at the moment that is not the case. For example, some facilities might not even take on a student who has declared that they struggle with their mental health as they feel they might not succeed. So, some tutors are writing the student off before they have even had a chance to get the right support put in place from day one. This has encouraged a stigma in opening up and talking about mental health when applying for courses. Equally here, we have done ourselves a disservice by not giving young people an opportunity to access something that they potentially could.</p>	<p>Equality and understanding inconsistency</p>	<p>Student experience</p>
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Method 4- Focus group Interview with students	Codes	Themes
<p>“It was the whole class reading an article and the magazine has lots of different things in it, so it was fun as we also got to read an article of our choice as well and I learned about mindfulness”.</p> <p>“It is really bright and colourful to read”</p> <p>Student E</p> <p>“The pictures were nice to look at and I think we found it more interesting because it seems relevant to us”</p>	<p>Positive activity</p> <p>Resources aesthetically pleasing</p> <p>Connection to resource</p>	<p>Attitude and experience of learning</p>

<p>Student A</p> <p>“Aesthetically it was nice to look at which helps us because we can be drawn into the reading. I wanted to read”</p> <p>Student A</p> <p>“Other resources don’t really connect to what we are going through like with stress and stuff and this one felt easier to read”</p>	<p>Relieved – positive</p>	
<p>Student E</p> <p>“Yeah, we did do a lot of talking about resilience and I liked that we shared other things that we had read about. At the beginning of the lessons, I read about gossip and how to overcome people who are inconsiderate and bully. This was interesting because it made me think about my emotions and listen to other people’s opinions on gossip in class. It helped”</p> <p>Student A</p> <p>“I have learned that we can all be stronger mentally and emotionally because if we are resilient then this means we keep going despite bad things happening. I mean, we all go through bad times. We can be more resilient by spending time doing things we love and reaching out to our friends or tutors”</p> <p>Student C</p>	<p>Collaboration</p> <p>Student self-reflection</p> <p>Determined</p> <p>Positive</p> <p>Reflective</p> <p>Willingness</p> <p>Moving forward</p> <p>Self-awareness</p>	<p>Support their study</p>

<p>“I didn’t realise what resilience was but now I know that I need to come out of my comfort zone more. I think from what I remember, resilience is overcoming the big and little things”</p> <p>Student A</p> <p>“It is”</p> <p>Student D</p> <p>“Its important to take care of yourself, like taking time out and not getting too stressed about assignments and deadlines”</p> <p>Student C</p> <p>“I learned about features but also about all the things we go through as teenagers. I normally feel anxious and stressed out but it was good to share ideas and thoughts on stuff like resilience. Talking about it made me feel not alone like I did before”</p>	<p>Learning and development</p> <p>Difficulty with studies and reflection</p> <p>Comfort and positivity in sharing-link to dialogue in the classroom</p>	<p>Student experience</p> <p>Dialogic strategies</p> <p>Student experience and dialogic teaching</p>
<p>Student E</p> <p>“I think I learn best by sharing things as a group and not just reading or writing all the time but talking about how to do something. I do also like reading together or with a partner”</p> <p>Student C</p> <p>“I like activities that have games in them or a competition, so we get to have fun whilst learning something new. Like when we play ‘stop the bus’ or a race to find features like a simile”</p> <p>Student D</p>	<p>Positive sharing</p> <p>Resources being interactive</p>	

<p>“I do like that but I like learning at home on my laptop”</p> <p>Student C</p> <p>“I prefer in class as I missed everyone and talking”</p>	<p>Preferred mode of learning</p> <p>Dialogue and sharing</p>	
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<p>Method 5 – Student open-ended Questionnaire</p>	<p>Codes</p>	<p>Theme</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They are very colourful, and it makes me want to read them - I find the topics interesting and the pictures draw you in - They are understanding and the articles are organised so more pleasurable to read. - They taught us about resilience and how to persevere - Interesting to read about our generation and the resources are relatable - I like it a lot as it gave lots of examples of what people go through and how to clear our minds. 	<p>Positive</p> <p>Resilience/topic</p> <p>Connection to resource</p> <p>Aesthetics of resource</p> <p>Connection to resource</p>	<p>Student experiences and reflection</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finding Language features - Reading for explicit and implicit information - Discussing the format - Social skills - Lots of discussing as a group - Critical thinking skills 	<p>Speaking</p> <p>Listening</p> <p>Personal growth</p> <p>Reading</p> <p>Writing</p>	<p>Students' attitude/reflection and method of study</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Speaking and listening to others in the group and hearing their views on the topic.- Listening to everyone's opinions- Identifying information- I need to be more resilient and how to do this.- Different ways to be resilient and motivated- Working together to put your mind off of the things that were making you unhappy- How to stay safe online- Dealing with gossip- Learn to focus on myself and not other people- How to deal with my feelings and how to express them- How to pick out language features to analyse- The meaning of resilience and how to adapt and respond to life's difficulties- The types of struggles that we go through- How to be both mentally and emotionally strong- How to be more comfortable when asking for help- Self-care		
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