

Developing oral feedback in history

Following the training in the generic unit *Oral feedback*, it is important to consider how the key messages of the training apply to history. As part of the whole-school focus on this, the following subject development material is intended to help you consider the key messages of the training unit and identify any areas requiring development in your department.

The following is a brief summary of the training unit.

Objectives

- To highlight how effective oral feedback develops pupils' learning.
- To consider a range of strategies for giving effective oral feedback that can be both formal and informal.
- To help teachers plan for giving effective oral feedback.
- To help schools develop a whole-school policy clarifying the relationship between oral and written feedback.

Key messages

- Oral feedback is the most regular and interactive form of feedback. It should be constructive and informative in order to help pupils take the next steps in their learning.
- It is both direct (targeted to individuals or groups) and indirect (others listen and reflect on what has been said). At times it will be spontaneous and at other times it should be planned.
- In offering oral feedback, the teacher is modelling the language that pupils can use in giving feedback to their teacher and peers.
- Oral feedback should be developmental. It should recognise pupils' efforts and achievements, and offer specific details of ways forward in relation to the shared learning objectives.
- Oral feedback about pupils' learning occurs in a range of situations on a continuum from the instant informal reply to more formally planned reviews.
- While focusing on specific areas of a response it is important to say when an answer is wrong to avoid confusion or reinforcing misconceptions.
- 'Wait-time' before and after questions or responses encourages pupils to consider and expand on their responses.

The following material builds on the tasks outlined in the 'Ready for more?' section of the *Oral feedback* training unit and it is intended for all those who teach history.

Reviewing existing practice in oral feedback

The table on page 3 provides a tool for a department to self-review current practice and to help identify an appropriate starting point.

As a department, agree and highlight the statements that best reflect the practice of the whole department. At the bottom of each column is a reference to the tasks that will support your current practice and provide the appropriate material to develop from this point.

Having completed this review you should read 'Making effective use of the subject development material' on page 4.

	Focusing	Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
Teachers	<p>There is no clear school or department policy on oral feedback.</p> <p>The subject leader has identified where teacher oral feedback:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is informal, ad hoc and unplanned • tends to be teacher-led question-and-answer sessions or generalised comments to the class • does not target individual pupils • is unrelated to the learning objectives. <p>Teachers sometimes provide opportunities for pupils to discuss each other's work, but without reference to learning outcomes.</p>	<p>Departmental planning for oral feedback is becoming more focused on learning objectives and outcomes.</p> <p>Teachers are beginning to consider the role of different types of oral feedback.</p> <p>Teachers are beginning to use questions to probe progress against the learning objectives and outcomes to help pupils improve their work.</p> <p>Teachers are beginning to target specific individuals and groups of pupils for feedback in lessons.</p> <p>Teachers provide opportunities in lessons for pupils to provide feedback to their peers and for teachers to provide feedback to the pupils (in relation to learning outcomes).</p>	<p>The school is reviewing its marking policy to include oral feedback and departmental policy reflects this.</p> <p>Oral feedback is a focus of departmental planning and relates directly to the learning objectives and outcomes and helps clarify the next steps for pupils.</p> <p>Oral feedback opportunities are integral to medium- and short-term planning.</p> <p>Teachers use a varied repertoire of types of oral feedback.</p> <p>The teacher structures and models pupil oral feedback in relation to learning outcomes.</p>	<p>The school and department have a fully integrated assessment policy which values equally the importance of written and oral feedback.</p> <p>Planning for oral feedback at all levels, from full reviews to individual teachers' lessons, is an integral feature of departmental work across the school.</p> <p>Departments ensure that oral feedback from pupil to teacher, teacher to pupil and pupil to pupil forms part of a dialogue that relates directly to learning objectives and outcomes. The feedback provided is constructive and informative and enables pupils to take the next steps in their learning.</p>
Pupils	<p>The subject leader has identified lessons in which pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expect teacher feedback in the form of supportive encouragement • do not view oral feedback as an essential part of learning • judge oral feedback to be secondary to written feedback • offer comments on each other's work, but these lack clear focus and are usually unchallenging. 	<p>Most pupils expect feedback to relate to their learning and listen to and respond to what is said.</p> <p>Most pupils know when to expect specific oral feedback as a class, individually or in a small-group setting.</p> <p>Pupils are beginning to see oral feedback as having a distinct value.</p> <p>Most pupils are able to provide useful feedback to other pupils and similarly respond to feedback from their peers.</p>	<p>Pupils recognise fully the value of oral feedback and know it is related to their learning. They listen carefully and respond appropriately.</p> <p>Pupils recognise the strategies for different types of oral feedback.</p> <p>Pupils will readily engage in focused peer feedback, in relation to learning outcomes, and are beginning to develop a vocabulary to do this.</p> <p>Pupil work shows evidence of a response to oral feedback.</p>	<p>All pupils recognise that oral feedback is focused on their learning and is as important as written feedback.</p> <p>Pupils know that feedback is valuable and listen carefully to each other and their teachers. They respond to feedback to engage in dialogue about their learning.</p> <p>Pupils understand well-established strategies for group and guided work that involve feedback.</p> <p>Pupils give regular detailed oral feedback related to learning objectives and outcomes to peers and teachers.</p> <p>Pupils are clear where in their work they have improved in response to feedback.</p>
	Start with Task 4.1A	Start with Task 4.1A	Start with Task 4.1B	Start with Task 4.1B

Making effective use of the subject development material

The tasks you have been referred to are intended to support the development or extension of oral feedback in history and provide guidance on how to embed this into regular practice in history lessons.

The results of the self-review will have suggested the appropriate task(s) that will support your department's development needs.

To make best use of the supporting material the following sequence will be helpful.

1 Read the task and the supporting exemplification.

This describes how a department has approached the task and worked through each of its stages. It is given as an *example* of how the task might be addressed. It is not intended that you follow this approach, which is given as a guide to the process that will support improvements in your subject.

2 Identify what the department did and the impact it had on pupils.

Discuss as a team the example provided and establish the key areas that helped to develop this practice and the impact it had on pupils. It will be helpful to identify the changes in teachers' practice and how these impacted on pupils' learning.

3 Agree and plan the actions that will develop your practice.

As a department, agree how you intend to approach this task. Clarify what you are focusing on and why. The example given will act as a guide, but be specific about which classes, which lessons and which aspects of the curriculum will be your points of focus.

4 Identify when and how you will evaluate its impact on pupils.

The purpose of focusing on this is to improve pupils' achievement and attainment in history. You will need to be clear on what has helped pupils to learn more effectively in your subject. Part of this will be how your practice has adapted to allow this. You should jointly identify what has worked well and which areas require further attention.

5 Having evaluated these strategies, consider what steps are required to embed this practice.

You will need to undertake an honest evaluation of what you have tried and the impact it has had on your teaching and on pupils' learning. One outcome might be that you need to spend longer on improving this area or you may be in a position to consider the next task.

Other departments in the school will have been focusing on this area and you should find out about the progress they have made.

You may find that some teachers in the department will require further time to develop and consolidate new practice, while others will be ready to progress further through the tasks in this area (while continuing to support their colleagues). Practice across a department will need to be consolidated before focusing on a new area of Assessment for learning.

The subject development tasks

Task 4.1A

With a colleague, observe each other teaching and, ideally, record (video/audio) the lessons. Use **handout 4.1.4** and **slide 4.1.5** in the generic unit (see **appendix 4.1A.1**) to record how specific and positive individual pieces of feedback are perceived to be. You should mark a cross in the relevant quadrant to record how positive/negative and specific/non-specific each example of oral feedback is during the lessons.

The scatter of the plotted points will give an overall impression of the nature of the oral feedback and highlight particular development needs for the teacher observed.

Capture specific examples of oral feedback recorded in each quadrant to inform your joint review of the lesson. It is important to focus on the effective practice of the teacher observed before agreeing areas for improvement and how to go about doing this.

Task 4.1B

Refer to **handout 4.1.4** in the generic unit (see **appendix 4.1A.1**) and, as a department, 'traffic light' the types of oral feedback described, e.g.:

- green = frequently used across the department
- amber = occasionally used by individuals
- red = rarely used.

Select an area highlighted amber or red that the department agrees is most likely to impact on learning outcomes.

As a department, plan and teach lessons that incorporate the selected type of oral feedback.

Jointly review the impact of this on pupils' learning.

The following pages provide exemplification of each task.

Task 4.1A

With a colleague, observe each other teaching and, ideally, record (video/ audio) the lessons. Use handout 4.1.4 and slide 4.1.5 in the generic unit (see appendix 4.1A.1) to record how specific and positive individual pieces of feedback are perceived to be. You should mark a cross in the relevant quadrant to record how positive/negative and specific/non-specific each example of oral feedback is during the lessons.

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Context

In the following case study, the history department identified the quality of oral feedback as an area for development. Observations by senior managers had previously highlighted the need for improvements in the use of oral feedback across the curriculum, in particular to address how teachers planned their use of formal and informal feedback to develop pupils' learning.

Process

The head of history felt that before observing each other teach, the department needed to have a preparatory discussion in order to clarify their thinking about good practice in oral feedback. In a departmental meeting, the head of department provided a set of fictitious oral responses in order to stimulate discussion. In the examples, a range of different types of oral feedback were included. The teachers were asked to work in pairs to discuss each of the statements and then to place the statements in the appropriate quadrant of **handout 4.1.4** in the generic unit, which had been enlarged on A3-sized paper. The whole department then discussed the placing of the statements (see **appendix 4.1A.1**).

The department found the activity very useful, as it fostered group discussion and raised their understanding of the specific use of language within each of the quadrants while they accepted that there were no simple, correct answers.

They then went on to use the chart in **appendix 4.1A.2** to turn some of the original feedback into specific, positive statements. In order to focus on how oral feedback can be positive specific, they completed the chart, rewriting the statements for the three quadrants given. The first one from each section was completed as a model.

These activities gave staff the confidence to move on to carrying out some paired observations. During these observations, they continued to use the grid given in **handout 4.1.4** to capture specific examples of oral feedback in each quadrant. This informed the joint review of the lesson. It was agreed that they would focus on the effective practice of the teacher observed before agreeing areas for improvement and how to go about doing this.

Evaluation

The initial activity generated a lot of discussion and was useful in preparing teachers for the paired observations. The teachers found the observations helpful and stimulating, and they agreed that it led to improved practice in oral feedback.

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Jointly review the impact of this on pupils' learning.

Context

The history department at School A had spent some time in the previous term developing and improving the quality of oral feedback in lessons. They had completed paired observations. The observations helped them to identify the areas of priority in relation to oral feedback, using the 'traffic light' system. Although this showed that individual teachers used particular strategies for oral feedback, the department had all identified whole-class feedback as a strategy that was used but had the potential to be used more effectively. Whole-class oral feedback was also identified as a key strategy for improving pupils' writing – one of the points in the department development plan.

Process

The whole department worked in pairs to examine their short-term lesson plans for a specific year group in order to input opportunities for planned oral feedback for the following two weeks' teaching. It had been given green by most colleagues, but through discussion it emerged that feedback was largely ad hoc and unplanned for. The department had given mainly amber to small-group feedback, but exponents of this found it to be highly effective and felt comfortable in sharing their practice.

Two teachers in Year 9 worked as a pair and were able to observe each other teaching. At the next departmental meeting, they shared their plans and experiences of teaching to those plans with the rest of the department. They had taken the departmental focus on whole-class feedback as their main priority but had also built in opportunities for specific positive feedback to individuals.

One teacher explained the context of the lessons. This Year 9 class was a mixed-ability group. The pupils had been studying the Great War. They had already discussed and written about the causes of the war – the trends and triggers and how they combined together.

The teacher wanted the pupils to understand the different types of warfare (e.g. cavalry versus machines). In pairs the pupils studied a range of written and pictorial sources to help them build a picture of the different types of warfare, 1914–18. The teacher set a written task requiring pupils to test the validity of the statement: 'Machines were more effective than animals in the Great War.'

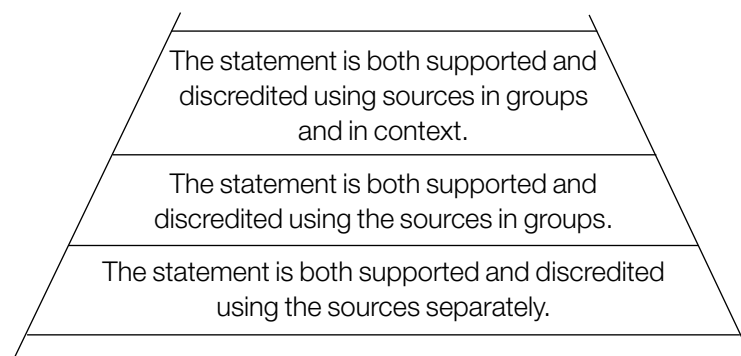
In the first lesson, the teacher had chosen to do some shared reading of a sample essay from a different topic to establish the success criteria for the task. During the activity, the teacher provided planned whole-class oral feedback about the sample essay. During the next stage of the writing process, the teacher chose to do a shared writing activity to create the opening paragraph, before moving the pupils on to continue the writing in their response pairs. The teacher then did some guided work with a small group, giving instant feedback to pupils related to their personal targets and the success features of the task as they worked on the task.

In the next lesson, the starter activity was based on the pupils' work from the previous lesson. Again, there were planned opportunities for whole-class feedback based on the work of individuals. Having heard the language modelled, pupils assessed each other's work during the paired work activity. Finally, the teacher planned time for individual feedback while the group were working on independent writing. The plenary then gave opportunities for whole-class feedback relating back to the learning objectives and success features.

The teacher who had been observing these lessons had used the grid to identify the specific points during the lesson when oral feedback was used, with some examples.

Lesson objective	To be able to test a statement about the different types of warfare during the Great War.
Task	To use your knowledge and the sources of evidence to test the accuracy of this statement: 'Machines were more effective than animals in the Great War.' Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give reasons to support your answer.
Lesson context and purpose of oral feedback	Examples of teacher's oral feedback
Lesson 1: Whole-class oral feedback based on shared reading of a sample essay, in order to establish success criteria for the writing task.	Teacher comments during shared-reading: 'This piece of writing is very well structured because I can clearly see the topic sentences come at the start of each paragraph, signalling to the reader the content of each section, e.g.: <i>There is some evidence that suggests that machines were ...</i> This shows us how important topic sentences are in helping to structure our thinking and writing. To improve this even further, I'd like to see the writer support their claim by cross-referencing between the sources, e.g. <i>sources B and D both suggest that animals were very effective when the weather was awful and the ground became too boggy for motor vehicles to get through to the front.</i> '
Lesson 1: Oral feedback for a small group. As the class continues the first paragraph, the teacher does some guided work with particular pairs of pupils.	'That's a really effective second sentence because you are setting the scene about the different types of warfare using what you've learned so far. Let's turn to the statement itself. Which of the picture sources seem to support the statement? Tell me how they do that. 'Now look at the written sources. Can you see any links with the picture sources you've already selected? 'Looking at the sources you have selected, how strong is the evidence in support of the statement?'
Lesson 2: Peer assessment in groups of four. The teacher listens to the comments one pupil has made about the other's work and provides oral feedback on the pupil's work and the feedback that has been provided.	'Your comments are really helpful because they focus on the specific things that can be improved. For example, I heard you mention that instead of using the sources separately, Tony should have tried to cross-reference them and then draw a conclusion about the statement. Remember our "success ladder"*? Cross-referencing of sources was right near the top, so we know it's a difficult skill. We need to use a sentence stem that helps us to do this, e.g. <i>sources E and G used together suggest that ...</i> '

*A 'success ladder' was one means of sharing success criteria with the class, allowing for differentiation and peer and self assessment. The criteria were written onto each rung of the ladder, becoming progressively more difficult as they were higher up the ladder.



Evaluation

The members of the history department were positive about the process and were convinced there was an improvement in the standard of the work pupils produced as a result of the specific and positive feedback they received. Paired observations had been extremely valuable, and the teachers felt they had benefited from the mutual support and critical reflection. The following questions were used to focus discussion at a subsequent department meeting.

- How has teaching been adapted to the key messages of effective oral feedback?
- How has providing oral feedback related to learning objectives impacted on pupils' learning?
- What more do we need to do to be more effective with oral feedback?
- How do pupils respond to this approach to oral feedback?
- How has it impacted on pupils' standards?

Subject-specific references

The Cambridge History Project

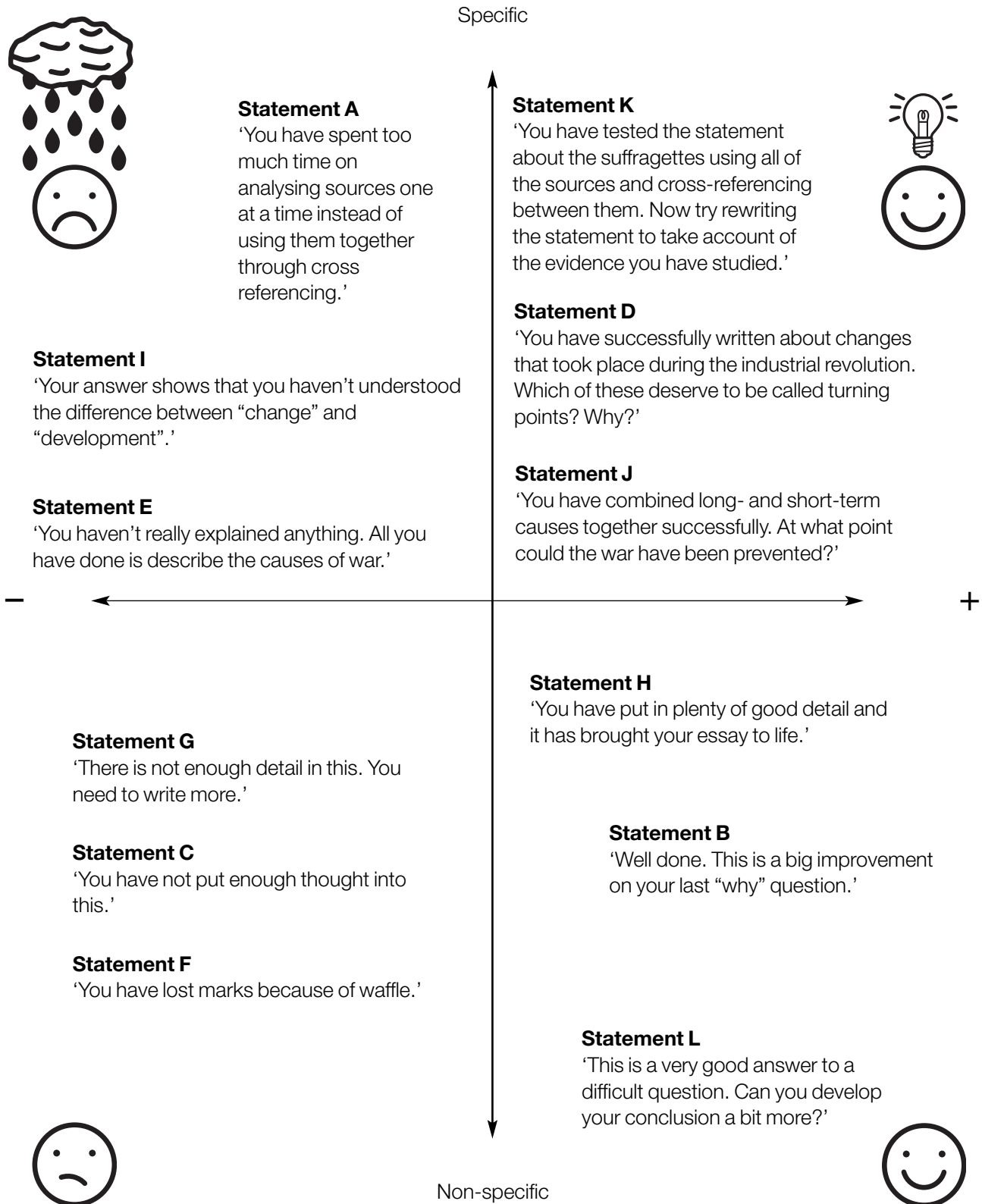
Teaching history, 2003

Foundation subjects training folder and video for module on Challenge

The CHATA Project, Institute of Education, London University

History-specific example of handout 4.1.4

Oral feedback



Original feedback	Rewritten as specific positive
<p>Specific negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You have spent too much time analysing sources instead of using them together through cross-referencing. <input type="checkbox"/> Your answer shows that you understood the difference between a 'change' and a 'development'. <input type="checkbox"/> You haven't really explained anything. All you have done is describe the causes of the war. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You have read each source carefully one at a time. The next step is to cross-reference the sources and assess the historian's statement about attitudes towards the peace treaty.
<p>Non-specific negative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> There is not enough detail in this. You need to write more. <input type="checkbox"/> You have lost marks because of waffle. <input type="checkbox"/> You have not put enough thought into this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You have written generally about the impact of the war on the home front. One or two clear examples would help to make specific the evidence you have for the general statements.
<p>Non-specific positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You have put in plenty of good detail and it has brought your essay to life. <input type="checkbox"/> This is a very good answer to a very difficult question. Can you develop your conclusion a bit more? <input type="checkbox"/> Well done. This is a big improvement on your last 'why' question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You have used your knowledge to good effect in describing the attitudes, beliefs and values of the time. This has helped you to make sense of the politicians' actions that otherwise would be puzzling.