An Exploration of the Perceptions of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) of the ELSA-Pupil Relationship.

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Summary

This thesis contains three parts: Part 1, an extended literature review, Part 2, a journal article and Part 3, a reflective summary.

Part One: Literature Review

This review explores the changing role of teaching assistants (TAs) in schools, their role working with pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and the evidence regarding effectiveness of their work. The term "emotional literacy" will be defined and the specific role of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) working with individual children in schools will be discussed and research evidence of their effectiveness will be considered. The current research explores the ELSA-pupil relationship, therefore, Carl Rogers' (1957) necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change and Bordin's (1979) working alliance, will be critically considered and factors which have an impact on the relationship will be explored. In addition to this, the role of immediacy and rapport in relationships will be considered. The relevance and importance of both the role of ELSAs and the development of the ELSA-pupil relationship to the role of the educational psychologist (EP) will be established. Finally the rationale for the current study will be provided and the research questions will be stated.

Part Two: Empirical Study

ELSAs are TAs who work with children with emotional and behavioural difficulties within schools. The current research explores the ELSA-pupil relationship, detailing evidence gathered during semi-structured interviews with ELSAs. Previous research has paid little attention to the work of ELSAs and to the researcher's knowledge there is no previous research into the ELSA-pupil relationship. The current research investigates ELSAs' perceptions of this relationship. It will explore how ELSAs describe their role, what aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship ELSAs perceive to be important and the factors that ELSAs

perceive to be facilitators or barriers to developing and maintaining a relationship with the pupils they work with.

Due to the research literature which suggests that Bordin's (1979) model of the working alliance could be applied to change within educational contexts (Rogers, 2009), and that concepts from therapy could inform education practices (Robertson, 1996, 1999, 2000), the researcher affords attention to whether themes emerge that suggest that ELSA's perceptions of the factors affecting the relationship reflect any components of the working alliance (Bordin, 1979), and explores whether the factors that ELSAs perceive to facilitate or act as barriers to the relationship, are similar to those identified in the literature about the working alliance (Ackerman and Hilsenroth, 2001, 2003).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 ELSAs who worked with Key Stage Two (KS 2) children (aged 7 to 11) on an individual basis within mainstream primary schools. Interview transcripts were analysed for common themes using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The findings are discussed and the limitations of the study are identified. Implications for EP practice and directions for future research are described.

Part Three: Reflective Summary

This reflective summary presents an overview of the processes undertaken by the researcher, with particular reference given to how these processes have affected the contribution to knowledge in the field of educational psychology made by the current research study and the development and learning of the research practitioner during the research process.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
CSPAR	Class Size and Pupil-Audit Ratio Study
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education (2010-present)
DFE	Department for Education (1992-1995)
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DISS	Deployment and Impact of Support Staff
EL	Emotional Literacy
ELSA	Emotional Literacy Support Assistant
EP	Educational Psychologist
KS	Key Stage
LA	Local Authority
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
SEBD	Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TA	Teaching Assistant
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government

Part One

Major Literacy Review

An Exploration of the Perceptions of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) of the ELSA-Pupil Relationship.

Word count = 9996 words (excluding titles and references)

1. Literature review

1.1 Introduction and Overview of the Literature Review

This literature review provides an exploration of the changing number and role of teaching assistants (TAs), that is, school support staff who are not teachers but who assist with the management, education and social and emotional development of pupils (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 2000), within schools.

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) statistics (DCSF, 2009) show that the number of TAs employed in English schools more than doubled during the previous decade. The role of the TA has also changed considerably, from supporting the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) to a particular focus on supporting learning and personal and social development (Groom, 2006).

Having explored the changing role of TAs, the review considers the role of TAs in working with children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD)[1]. TAs are perceived as effectively contributing to the inclusion of pupils with SEBD, as found by Groom and Rose (2005) in their research into effective practice by TAs in supporting the inclusion of pupils with SEBD.

The review then evaluates the research into the impact of TAs on schools, concluding that there are both positive and negative outcomes of TA support (Blatchford et al., 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d; Alborz, Pearson, Farrell & Howes, 2009a, 2009b).

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[1] The term SEBD refers to those children who exhibit disturbing and/or disruptive behaviour that interferes with the social functioning of themselves and their peers (Cooper & Cefai, 2013).

The term emotional literacy (EL) is defined before exploring and critically evaluating the role of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs), that is, TAs who work with pupils with SEBD in schools.

To provide a context for the exploration of the ELSA-pupil relationship, the literature review considers two theoretical approaches of therapist-client interaction, namely Rogers' (1957) necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change and Bordin's (1979) working alliance. Rogers (1957) proposed that six conditions need to be present and persist over time to enable psychotherapeutic change to occur. One such condition is a relationship between client and therapist. As early as 1912, Freud (cited in Strachey, 1958) acknowledged the importance of the relationship between client and therapist, however it was the work of Rogers (1957) which led to a growing interest in the therapy relationship (Horvath, Del Re, Flückiger & Symonds, 2011).

Bordin (1979) proposed a tripartite definition of a therapeutic alliance, made up of bond, task alliance and goal alliance, which he called the working alliance[2]. Rogers (2009) recommended that the concept of the working alliance should be applied to the collaborative process of teaching and learning, therefore, the concept of Bordin's (1979) working alliance within teaching and learning is explored.

Additionally, two further concepts relating to the working relationship between adults and children in schools, that is, the concepts of teacher immediacy and rapport, are considered. The concept of immediacy (Mehrabian, 1971) is used to describe verbal

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[2] Bond refers to the emotional aspect of the alliance, whereas the task and goal alliance refers to the practical aspect of an alliance (Bordin, 1979).

and non-verbal behaviours present during interpersonal communication and was introduced into education by Andersen (1979). Rapport has been defined as a relationship which comprises shared understanding and reasonable communication (Carey, Hamilton & Shanklin, 1986).

The current study focuses on the perceptions ELSAs have of the relationship between themselves and the pupils with whom they work. This focus is introduced and, in light of the fact that EPs are responsible for training and supervising ELSAs, the relevance of the study to the professional practice of educational psychology is considered. The training incorporates psychological theory and together with supervision is considered one way in which EPs aim to build the capacity of schools to work with pupils with SEBD (Shotton & Burton, 2008).

It is important to note that the psychological concepts and theories discussed in this literature review are those the author considered to be most pertinent to relationships between pupils and staff within educational settings. It is beyond the scope of this review to discuss all psychological concepts and theories regarding relationships.

1.2 Literature Search

The literature cited in the present study was found using the PsycINFO 1806-2014 electronic database and Google Scholar. The literature search included the terms "teaching assistant", "learning support assistant", "emotional literacy", "emotional literacy support assistant", "necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change", "working alliance", "therapeutic alliance", "teacher immediacy", "immediacy" and "rapport". Key authors such as "Rogers" and "Bordin" were also used.

Search terms were truncated so as to maximise possible results. Not all results were considered relevant. Other key sources included textbooks regarding the working alliance and EL.

Due to time limitations it was not possible to review all the relevant literature, therefore, the literature that was felt to be most relevant to the current research was selected. A final literature search was conducted in January 2014 to ensure recent research was included.

This process led to the conclusion that, to the researcher's knowledge, no previous research has explored the perceptions of ELSAs regarding the ELSA-pupil relationship.

In order to provide a background for the current research, the author will begin by considering changes that have occurred during the last three decades with regard to the number and role of TAs in UK schools.

1.3 Teaching Assistants

The DfEE (2000) suggests that TA is the UK Government's favoured term to describe school support staff who assist with the management, education and social and emotional development of pupils. For this reason the author will use the term TA to encompass the range of titles given to members of school staff who are not teachers, but support children in schools.

1.3.1 Increase in the numbers of teaching assistants in schools

Collins and Simco (2006) suggested that the development of the role of TAs within UK schools has its origins in The Warnock Report (Department for Education and Science, 1978). The resulting integration of pupils with SEN into mainstream schools caused an increase in staff employed to support these children (Thomas, 1992). Additionally, Lee (2002) identified the first Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Children with SEN (Department for Education (DFE), 1994) as another major factor impacting on the changing role of TAs within schools[3].

From 2003, the number of TAs continued to grow due to the execution of the National Agreement, Raising Standards and Tackling Workload (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2003b). It stipulated a series of actions aimed at reducing the workload of teachers and raising standards of pupil attainment, one of which was to expand roles for TAs (Burgess, 2008).

DCSF statistics (DCSF, 2009) suggest 178,900 full-time equivalent TAs were working in schools in England in 2009. This had risen from 70,300 in 1997 (DfES, 1997). It is suggested however, that the number may be considerably larger due to the range of job titles used by these support staff and the calculation of the number using a full-time equivalent scale despite the fact that the majority of TAs work on a part time basis (Devecchi & Rouse, 2010).

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[3] This document formally recognised the learning needs of those children whose learning difficulties were not considered severe enough to require a Statement of SEN to be issued and stated that they were entitled to support.

Statistics show that, in England, in 2010, TAs made up 24% of those employed in local authority (LA) schools (DfE, 2010). In Wales, in 2009, TAs accounted for 32% of staff employed in maintained schools (Statistics for Wales, 2009).

1.3.2 The changing role of teaching assistants

Alongside the increase in numbers of TAs, their role has been transformed. It is no longer to simply assist in classroom organisation but has developed to directly assist the process of teaching and learning. The provision of support for the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools has led to TAs working to promote learning. as well as personal and social development, through whole class, group and individual work. This, therefore, involves developing positive relationships with pupils (Groom, 2006).

It has been suggested that the skills of TAs are underutilised and that their potential could be developed to support schools in meeting the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2003a) and, in Wales, the agenda outlined in Children and Young People: Rights to action (Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), 2004), which aim to provide integrated services with specialist support embedded to improve children and young people's achievement and well-being. In schools, this has placed emphasis on individualised learning with targeted specialist support enabling teachers to focus on teaching (Burgess & Mayes, 2009).

A key report about the utilisation of TAs in England (Blatchford et al., 2009d), reported that the most commonplace tasks for TAs were working with individual children and listening to the teacher teach and that support staff infrequently took

whole classes. There was little variation between primary and secondary schools when considering the time TAs spent working with pupils[4], however in the secondary sector TAs spent more time working with individuals, whereas those in the primary sector, more frequently worked with groups.

These findings support those of Blatchford et al. (2008) who described the activities undertaken by all types of TAs based on time logs completed by the participants. The study found that classroom-based TAs spent a large proportion of their time directly teaching, supporting and interacting with pupils. It also found that the majority of TA support was for pupils who were not progressing as expected or pupils with a Statement of SEN and teachers delivered less support to these individuals than TAs did. Furthermore, it was discovered that TAs rarely worked with average or high achieving pupils. The study showed that TA interaction with pupils increased, and teacher interaction decreased, with the severity of pupils' SEN (Blatchford et al., 2008).

1.3.3 The effectiveness of teaching assistants in schools

Despite evidence suggesting an increasing number of TAs in schools, there is little research into the effectiveness of their work (Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, & Webster, 2009d). Giangreco and Doyle (2007) declared that, at that time, research offered *"only the most basic descriptive findings … virtually devoid of efficacy data"* (Giangreco & Doyle, 2007, p.432).

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[4] TAs in primary schools spent 62% of their time working with pupils and TAs in secondary schools spent 67% of their time working with pupils.

Government publications acknowledge the impact of TAs within schools (Department for Education (DfE), 2011; DfES, 2000), however, the research literature is inconsistent in its conclusions regarding their effectiveness with studies finding both positive (Alborz et al., 2009a) and negative impacts (Blatchford et al., 2009b).

It has been suggested that the impact of TAs on inclusion and pupils' behaviour is positive (Blatchford et al., 2009c; Groom & Rose, 2005). However, it has also been argued that TA support may be contradictory and form a barrier to inclusion (Ainscow, 2000; Dyson, 2000). Furthermore, the positive effect of TAs on children's learning has been recognised (Lacey, 2001; Farrell & Balshaw, 2003), however, evidence about the effect of TA support on pupil attainment has proved inconclusive (Howes, Farrell, Kaplan & Moss, 2003).

Concern has been raised that TA support, despite having some advantages, may not improve pupil learning (Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), 2006). Giangreco and Broer (2007)[5] list a number of negative consequences of TA support such as *"interference with… peer interactions, decision making by underqualified personnel [and] the development of unnecessary dependence, limitation of access to instruction from highly qualified personnel, stigmatization, and behavior problems"* (Giangreco & Broer, 2007, p.149).

Rubie-Davies, Blatchford, Webster, Koutsoubou and Bassett (2010) found TAs did not always understand the concepts they were supporting pupils to learn. They proposed that TAs may not have had adequate training to enable them to promote

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[5] In their book chapter about over reliance on paraprofessionals within schools.

children's thinking, thus regularly provided pupils with answers, which may prevent pupils from developing self-sufficiency.

Two major reviews have been carried out in the UK collating information about the impact of TAs; the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) project (Blatchford et al., 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d); and a systematic literature review by Alborz et al. (2009a, 2009b).

The DISS project collected longitudinal data in England and Wales from 2003 to 2008, regarding all types of TAs, across the primary, secondary and special school sectors. Information was also collected, through interviews, observations and questionnaires, from TAs, teachers and pupils. It may be suggested that it is likely that the results of this study are generalisable due to the scale of the project and the nationally representative sample.

The DISS project discovered that *"the more support pupils received, the less progress they made"* (Blatchford et al., 2009b, p.2). It also found that individualised attention was given by TAs rather than, and instead of, by teachers. In general, the children with the greatest needs were supported by TAs, enabling the teacher to work with their classmates. These children, therefore, fail to benefit from as much teacher-pupil interaction and it is possible to argue that this may have a negative effect on their academic progress.

The results of the DISS project, suggesting that children miss out on interactions with teachers, are concerning when considered in light of the findings of Rubie-Davies et

al. (2010). They discovered that, when undertaking teaching activities, teachers placed emphasis on learning and understanding thus stimulating pupils cognitively and supporting their learning and thinking skills, while TAs concentrated on ensuring that pupils finished their work.

Despite this, the DISS project found a number of positive effects of TA support. For example, the results indicated that TAs have a positive impact regarding increased individual attention given to pupils by school staff and children showing more engagement and a more active role in interaction with staff. They also discovered that in the secondary sector, more teaching was undertaken when TAs were present. Additionally, the DISS project found teachers consider the presence of TAs within the classroom to have a positive impact on the quality of their teaching (Blatchford *et al.*, 2008; Blatchford et al., 2009d).

It should be noted however, that the results of the DISS project contradict those of the Class Size and Pupil-Adult Ratio study (CSPAR) (Blatchford, Russell, Bassett, Brown & Martin, 2004) in which the presence of TAs was seen to lead to more individual attention given to pupils by teachers. It is possible this contradiction may be due to the fact that the DISS project included participants from both mainstream and special schools across the primary and secondary age ranges, however, the CSPAR study included participants from only KS2[6] in mainstream primary schools. Furthermore, the DISS project involved the completion of questionnaires, observations of, and interviews with, TAs, teachers and pupils. The CSPAR on the other hand involved the completion of questionnaires by TAs, teachers and head

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[6] Years 4 to 6.

teachers, in addition to the assessment of pupil attainments in maths, English and science.

Alborz et al., (2009a) found that TAs had a positive impact on pupil progress when they had received appropriate training to deliver specific interventions. These results differ from those of Blatchford et al., (2009b) and this could be due to the fact that Alborz et al.'s, (2009a) review looked at research from the UK and the USA, whereas Blatchford et al.'s, (2009b) study was undertaken in the UK. Furthermore, Alborz et al., (2009a) studied the impact of TAs on 'underachieving' or disabled children and overlooked their impact on other children. Differences may also result from the researchers examining different forms of support[7]. It may be suggested, therefore, that TAs can have a positive impact when trained and appropriately supported.

1.3.4 The role of teaching assistants in working with pupils with social, emotional and behavioural problems

TAs are employed to support pupils with SEBD and help deal with disruptive classroom behaviour (Groom & Rose, 2005). Groom (2006) recognised 14 key roles for TAs including running self-esteem programmes and assisting in nurture groups, as well as the more common roles of providing one-to-one support and working with small groups. They suggested that working to develop pupils' self-esteem and social skills were vital aspects of the role.

Groom and Rose (2005), in their qualitative study involving 39 semi-structured interviews, 10 of which were with pupils, found that TAs were considered to play a

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[7] Alborz et al., were interested in targeted interventions undertaken by TAs, however, Blatchford et al., focussed on more general daily support.

crucial role in the inclusion of students with SEBD in mainstream settings across one LA, by teachers, governors, parents and the students themselves. They found that many TAs were responsible for developing children's social and emotional learning through supporting or leading a range of activities[8]. TAs were reported to need support and training for this challenging role and it was also reported that TAs needed to develop a positive and trusting relationship with these pupils. The most successful method for including pupils was perceived to be one-to-one support followed by small group work and curriculum support. A number of important factors were also recognised to promote effective practice by TAs, including developing pupils' self-esteem and social skills.

It should be noted that O'Brien (1998) raised concerns, as long ago as 1998, regarding the use of TAs in supporting students with SEBD. He recommended that teachers would be more confident and better equipped in managing children with challenging behaviours than TAs, whom he recommended should work with the less challenging pupils.

However, Groom and Rose (2005), as a result of their research to identify factors contributing to effective practice by TAs in supporting the inclusion of pupils with SEBD, have suggested that it is possible that the authority of the teacher might sometimes be perceived negatively by children with behavioural difficulties, and on such occasions the mediator role of a TA could be vital.

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[8] TA activities included Circle Time Sessions, nurture groups, anger management programmes, EL programmes, Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) Programmes, lunchtime support, peer support programmes and self-esteem and social skills programmes.

ELSAs are TAs who work with children with SEBD. One of their main aims is to develop the EL of the pupils with whom they work. Prior to discussing the role of ELSAs the author will consider the term EL.

1.4 Emotional Literacy

EL has been defined as "*…the ability to recognise, understand, handle, and appropriately express emotions."* (Sharp, 2001 p.1)**.** Burton and Shotton (2004) assert that the term EL is better than the term emotional intelligence, as EL does not have associations with the idea of fixed levels of ability.

Weare and Gray (2003)[9] suggested an advantage of the term EL is that it is meaningful in an educational context and is currently used regularly by EPs, schools and LAs in the UK. School staff who are already knowledgeable about the notion of literacy are able to apply the theory to the teaching and development of EL.

Weare and Gray (2003) acknowledged that educational professionals had some concerns about the term EL. For example, concerns were raised that it may centre attention on the individual and his/her capacities, rather than on the context, the underlying causes and the social aspects, that are a central feature of EL.

1.4.1 Emotional literacy in education

The introduction of the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2003a) and, in Wales, Children and Young People: Rights to Action (WAG, 2004), have led to an increasing focus on EL within education. These agendas focus on a holistic approach to

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[9] The study by Weare and Gray (2003) examined how children's emotional and social competence and wellbeing could most effectively be developed.

children's development rather than a purely academic approach. Schools, therefore, are required to support the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of children and it has been suggested that EL programmes can help them in doing so (Burton, 2008).

Sharp (2001) remarked as early as 2001 on the increasing dissatisfaction with the focus on pupils' Intelligence Quotients and cognitive skills. He proposed education should take a more holistic view. Greenberg et al. (2003) supported this when they suggested that it was possible that a good education would support young people to acquire skills that enable them to become socially skilful and respectful, and to develop positive, safe, and healthy behaviours.

Carnwell and Baker (2007) reported that a number of researchers have concluded that EL programmes taught in schools have a positive impact on academic achievement and behaviour, and decrease levels of wrongdoing and violent behaviour . This supports the findings of Wilson, Gottfredson and Najaka's (2001) meta-analysis of 165 studies of school-based prevention programmes based on EL.

Some LAs have begun to develop schemes to enhance EL (Weare & Gray, 2003). In 1998 Southampton Education Service launched a programme to promote EL (Faupel & Sharp, 2003). It led to the development of guidelines for fostering EL intended to give practical advice to schools, support them to develop EL policies and to encompass these policies into their development plans (Weare & Gray, 2003).

This work to promote emotional and social wellbeing is considered to have had a

positive impact on the LA's strategic aims and educational standards (Weare & Gray, 2003). Throughout the LA permanent exclusions decreased by over 60% between 1997 and 2001 with a corresponding increase in attendance. Weare and Gray (2003) proposed that because research has proved there to be a link between improved attendance, reduced exclusions and increased academic standards, it is reasonable to expect that these schools will achieve commendable results.

1.5 The Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Programme

The ELSA programme was first developed in 2003 in Southampton by the Educational Psychology Service, which trained five peripatetic ELSAs to work in primary schools supporting children who had been identified as having various social and emotional needs. The support proved so popular with schools that many of them appointed their own TAs to work in a similar way with pupils. This led the peripatetic ELSAs to take on an advisory and supportive role with the school TAs ("What is ELSA?", 2013).

ELSAs now work in both primary and secondary schools (Burton, Traill & Norgate, 2009) and there are now at least 18 local ELSA networks throughout the UK ("ELSA around the UK", 2013). In these networks, the ELSA programme currently involves training for ELSAs in the form of five one-day training courses led by educational psychologists (EPs) (Shotton & Burton, 2008). The training incorporates psychological theory and practical guidance for ELSAs regarding working within a school context. ELSAs are introduced to the concept of EL (Goleman, 1995) and they are made aware of the fact that the emotional vocabulary of many children is limited. The training proposes that by expanding this vocabulary, self-expression

may be facilitated and, therefore, may decrease the need for pupils to display problematic behaviours as a form of expression (Shotton & Burton, 2008).

ELSAs deliver programmes of support which are specifically designed for individual pupils who have various social and emotional needs (Burton, 2008). Pupils recommended for support usually require help to enhance their feeling of self-worth. For this reason the ELSAs are provided with information about Maslow's hierarchy of need (Maslow, 1970)[10]. It should be noted that this is only one theory of motivation but due to time restraints it is the only theory of motivation included in the ELSA training (Burton, 2011). ELSAs are also taught about social learning theory (Bandura, 1977)[11], thus illustrating the effect social relationships can have on emotional development. It is possible to argue that this highlights the idea that EL is modelled more than it is taught (Shotton & Burton, 2008).

Having completed the training, ELSAs receive twice-termly group supervision sessions, provided by the link EP for the schools involved. These sessions provide an opportunity for problem solving concerning casework, the sharing of ideas and resources, and further exploration of psychological approaches.

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[10] This eight stage model includes eight motivational needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. This model can be divided into basic (or deficiency) needs (e.g. physiological, safety and love) and growth needs (e.g. self-actualization). If the most fundamental and basic needs at the bottom of the pyramid are not met the individual will not strongly desire (or focus upon) the secondary or higher level needs.
[11] Social learning theory is based upon the role of observation and the imitation of behaviours observed in other individuals, usually referred to as 'models'.

1.5.1 The effectiveness of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant Programme

There is currently little research into the effectiveness of the work of ELSAs, however, the small number of studies that have been carried out report encouraging results.

Burton, Osborne and Norgate (2010) examined the impact of the ELSA programme on pupils attending primary and secondary schools within one Welsh LA. Pre- and post-measures of EL and behaviour were examined for an intervention group, that is, pupils who had received ELSA support, and a control group consisting of pupils yet to receive ELSA support. The child's level of EL[12] was measured by completion of the Emotional Literacy Checklist for teachers (Faupel, 2003) and the Emotional Literacy Checklist for pupils (Faupel, 2003). Additionally, the child's strengths and difficulties[13] were measured using the teacher-rated version of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997).

Burton et al. (2010) found that teacher-rated measures on the EL questionnaire revealed significant improvements in empathy, self-awareness and social skills amongst primary and secondary aged children post ELSA intervention. Improvements in motivation and self-regulation were found only in the primary aged pupils, however, it is possible that this was as a result of the low number of secondary aged participants. These improvements, apart from the improvements to motivation and peer problems, were not seen in the control group. Conversely, no significant changes were observed on the pupil-rated EL questionnaire at follow-up,

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[12] As perceived by the pupil and his/her teacher.
[13] As perceived by the pupil's teacher.

for either group. It should be noted that the sample size of pupil-rated measures was smaller than that of teacher-completed measures, therefore, the two sets of data do not relate to exactly the same pupils.

One explanation for the difference may be that pupils considered the home and school contexts whilst completing the questionnaire, whereas, teachers were only able to base their responses on the school context. It is also possible that the effect of ELSA intervention was apparent in school but had not generalised to the home environment, thus pupils had not perceived the changes to the same extent as teachers. Furthermore, teachers may have been conscious of the goals of the ELSA intervention and, therefore, may have been more likely to notice relevant changes. It is worth noting that the number of questionnaires completed varied across each of the measures and a substantial number of 'pre' questionnaires were not followed up by a 'post' questionnaire in each measure. It is possible that teachers were more likely to complete and return the questionnaire if they felt that the pupil had made noticeable improvements than if the child had not made any improvement.

It should also be noted that there did not appear to be a specified amount of time for the intervention. The authors wrote that ELSA intervention usually took place on a weekly basis for at least half a term, however, the length and frequency of the sessions varied according to individual circumstances. Therefore, the authors were not measuring the impact of a uniform intervention programme in which each child received the same amount of input.

The previous year, Burton, Traill and Norgate (2009) investigated the impact of ELSA support on pupils within another LA in the UK. Teachers and parents completed the SDQ, both pre- ELSA intervention[14] and post ELSA intervention[15], for each child participating in the study. A total of 107 matched pre- and post-intervention teacher-rated questionnaires and 52 matched pre- and post-intervention parent-rated questionnaires were received. Burton et al. (2009) found teachers reported that pupils' behaviour improved after ELSA intervention. Teachers perceived a rise in pro-social behaviour and a reduction in emotional problems, conduct disorders and peer problems. It is acknowledged that it cannot be concluded that these improvements in behaviour are directly a result of ELSA intervention, however receiving ELSA intervention was the most substantial change within school for the child, leading the authors to suggest that it is likely to be the case.

Teachers' ratings indicated changes in all categories of the SDQ (Goodman, 1997), however, parents only observed an improvement in the 'Hyperactivity' scale measure[16]. It should be noted that the SDQ measures an individual's perception of the behaviour, therefore, it is possible that participants' perceptions may have been influenced by their awareness that ELSA intervention had taken place. Consequently, it is possible that their perceptions of the behaviour may have changed but not the behaviour itself.

Bravery and Harris (2009) interviewed 21 ELSAs and asked head teachers to complete a questionnaire, 17 of whom responded. They found that the majority of

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[14] During the Autumn term, 2007.

[15] During the Spring term, 2008.

[16] As in the study by Burton, Osborne & Norgate (2010), this may be because the behaviour change may not have been generalised to the home environment, or because the teachers may have been more sensitive to changes in behaviour due to their knowledge of the aims of the ELSA intervention.

head teachers felt that ELSA input was having a positive impact on relationships throughout the school. Most ELSAs and head teachers felt that ELSA intervention was having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and emotional well-being and nearly half of the head teachers perceived that ELSA intervention was having a positive impact on attendance and academic achievement and was reducing bullying. The researchers also reported that ELSAs and head teachers suggested that ELSA work throughout the school could be optimised through good communication, recognition and understanding of ELSA work, provision of a specific quiet place for ELSAs to work and ELSAs having sufficient time for planning and delivery. It should be noted that only ELSAs working within primary schools were invited to participate in the interviews, however the head teacher sample included three secondary head teachers, therefore, the samples do not allow like for like comparison. This means that the results may not easily be generalised to the secondary sector.

1.5.2 The role of the emotional literacy support assistant

Bradley (2010) found, in her research into the work of ELSAs, that on average ELSAs supported individual children in weekly sessions lasting about 30 minutes. There was, however, considerable variation in the number of sessions run by ELSAs and the aim of sessions was also diverse, with the most popular topics being self-esteem, social skills and anger management. Other topics covered were friendship, emotions, behaviour problems, divorce, support for children whose parents were ill, anxiety and fear, bereavement, learning, listening, self-organisation, transition, safety, bullying, hygiene, attendance, self-harm, selective mutism, life skills, sleep problems, body image and gender. It could be argued that a number of these topics

covered during ELSA sessions do not relate to EL, however, it is probable that the ELSAs are supporting pupils to recognise, understand, handle and appropriately express their emotions and the emotions of others with regard to these topics.

ELSAs were given an average of 5.83 hours each week in which to work on ELSA interventions though there was considerable disparity in the time allocated to this. About 50% of the ELSAs carried out other roles or responsibilities within their school, for example, some ran extracurricular clubs and some had lunchtime roles or classroom support roles.

A number of participants also suggested that *"pupils often just needed someone to talk to"* (Bradley, 2010, p.19). Furthermore, a number of ELSAs commented that there was not enough time for their ELSA work.

The questionnaire study had a response rate of 46.3%[17], therefore, it could be considered to show a reasonably accurate picture of what was taking place within the LA concerned during that academic year.

It should be noted that this research was carried out within one LA, therefore, it may not be representative of what was happening throughout the UK. Additionally it should be acknowledged that an "average ELSA" does not exist. Wide variation in role and responsibilities was found across ELSAs depending on the needs of the children they work with and the structure of the school within which they work.

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[17] Richardson (2005) cited Kidder (1981) when stating that 50% is regarded as an acceptable response rate in social research postal surveys.

1.6 The Importance of the Relationship in Bringing About Change

Psychologists have long been aware of the impact of the relationship between a professional and a client in bringing about change. Beaver (2003) proposed that, despite the large number of models and theories which offer frameworks for counselling and therapeutic work, the major factor influencing whether or not therapeutic change is accomplished appears to be the quality of the relationship between the professional and client. *"This suggests that the most important element that the psychologist can bring to a situation is not their models for understanding problems and achieving solutions but their ability to develop a rapport with those they work with."* (Beaver, 2003, p.8).

The importance of this relationship in supporting individuals in bringing about change is acknowledged by Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis and Carroll (2003) in their paper focussing on the application of psychology *"to practice within the 'helping' professions."* (Gameson et al., 2003, p.96). They designed the Constructionist Model of Informed, Reasoned Action which they defined as:

> *"A model of professional practice that is explicitly informed by psychology and theories from other relevant disciplines. It aims to provide a flexible, integrated conceptual framework for applying psychology and for promoting and managing a dynamic process of change at different levels and in different contexts"* (Gameson et al., 2003, p.99).

Gameson et al. (2003) proposed that there were four core concepts of the model, one of which they defined as 'Enabling Dialogue'. They argued that *"all professional*

practice occurs within an interactive social context, which involves relationships between people” (Gameson et al., 2003, p.102). The model is based on the concept that the probability of lasting change is greater if the service user is empowered and supported to comprehend his/her own change issues, therefore, it encourages self-efficacy. It is considered essential to both create and maintain an appropriate relationship so as to facilitate change in an individual's thoughts, feelings or actions. This core aspect of the model takes inspiration from the work of Rogers (1957) which will be described in the next section.

1.7 The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for Therapeutic Change

Rogers (1957) proposed that six conditions were required to enable psychotherapeutic change to take place and that these conditions must persist over time. Rogers' first condition was that a relationship between the therapist and client was essential. He termed this *"psychological contact"* (Rogers, 1957, p.96). He stated that change will only take place if a relationship is present.

Rogers' second condition was that the client must be in a state of 'incongruence'. Rogers suggested that the discrepancies experienced by the client between the real and ideal-self may cause feelings of vulnerability and anxiety and these feelings allow change to take place. Research has not offered much evidence for the concept of incongruence (Hill, 2007), however it has suggested considerable support for the part the client plays throughout the process of change. Some research indicates that 40% of improvement in outcome is caused by client variables (Asay & Lambert, 1999).

Rogers' third condition was the therapist ought to be genuine, that is, congruent, open and freely and deeply him/herself. Klein, Kolden, Michels and Chisholm-Stockard (2002) remarked that congruence was an obligatory requirement of both regard and empathy.

Fourthly, Rogers' stated that the therapist should communicate acceptance or unconditional positive regard[18]. Unconditional positive regard has been criticised by Hill (2007) who argued that it was an ambiguous construct that proved difficult to determine. Hill (2007) also stated that unconditional positive regard appears to coincide greatly with empathy. Farber and Lane (2002) referred to this overlap stating, *"Rogers seems to be suggesting here that positive regard (including the component of acceptance) can best-and perhaps only-be achieved through empathic identification with one's client."* (Farber & Lane, 2002, p.177).

Fifthly Rogers proposed that the therapist must have empathy. He said that therapists should be able to sense clients' feelings. He appears to imply cognitive empathy rather than emotional empathy or attunement[19] (Duan & Hill, 1996).

Finally, Rogers stated that the client needs to be aware of the therapist's acceptance and empathy. Should the therapist fail to communicate these attitudes in a way that the client perceives and recognises them, in the client's view they will not exist.

Rogers proposed that change takes place when all six conditions are present and the greater the number of conditions present, the greater the amount of change that

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[18] Unconditional positive regard is the opposite of taking an expert, distant, neutral, dispassionate stance.
[19] Attunement refers to detecting and reacting to another individual's moods and emotions and reflecting those emotions back in facial expressions, voices, and other behaviours, to the client.

takes place. However, it should be noted that research results such as those of

Norcross (2000), which suggest that the majority of changes made by individuals are

made independently, cast doubt on the notion that a relationship is essential for

change to occur. Despite this, a positive relationship between therapeutic

relationship and outcome remains a robust discovery (Lambert & Ogles, 2004),

therefore, it could be suggested that although these conditions are not necessary or

sufficient, they may facilitate change (Hill, 2007).

Lazarus (2007) criticised Rogers' model by arguing that it was unlikely to be possible

to stipulate conditions of necessity and sufficiency that could be applied to the

complete range of difficulties experienced, in addition to, the differing personalities of

the clients. A flexible and resourceful therapist is aware that necessity and

sufficiency are determined by the expectations and personal requirements of

individual clients (Lazarus, 2007).

1.8 The Therapeutic or Working Alliance

The current research investigates the relationship between ELSAs and the pupils

they support and it could be suggested that this relationship is an educational,

helping relationship, therefore, a further concept of therapist-client interaction,

namely Bordin's (1979) working alliance, will be discussed.

1.8.1 History and definitions

The notion of the therapeutic or working alliance has its roots in psychotherapy

theory and research. Freud (1912, cited in Strachey, 1958) became aware that

therapy triggers the client's defences and, therefore, it would be expected that the

client absconds from therapy. However, he noted that, during effective therapy, clients continue working with the therapist to uncover distressing information. He put forward the concept of a positive transference which connects the client to the therapist and supports him/her to continue with therapy regardless of his/her heightened anxiety.

The term "alliance" was created by Zetzel (1956) following which the conscious aspects of the alliance were highlighted and further developed by Greenson (1967). Greenson suggested that the relationship between therapist and client was made up of three separate parts: the working alliance, the transference relationship[20] and the real relationship[21] (Gelso & Carter, 1985).

Bordin (1979, 1994) developed a further alliance concept which he based on Greenson's (1965) beliefs. He called it the "working alliance". Bordin (1979) proposed that the working alliance is made up of three parts: goal agreement, task agreement and bond. Firstly, goal agreement refers to the client and therapist having an agreement of, and shared understanding of, the goals for change. Secondly, task agreement involves an agreement between the client and therapist and a shared understanding of, and confidence in, the tasks or techniques to be used to achieve these goals. Thirdly, bond consists of the development of an emotional attachment between the therapist and client which is created as a result of their collaborative work and refers to the feelings that the participants have towards each other. This bond is described as *"a warm trusting bond"* and *"a bond of trust and respect"* (Greenberg, 2007, p.51).

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[20] The transference relationship refers to the 'unreal' aspects of relating to another person in a relationship (Gelso & Carter, 1985).
[21] The real relationship refers to the real aspects of relating to another person (Gelso & Carter, 1985).

Bordin's (1979) definition of the working alliance is possibly the most common definition of the alliance and pays attention to the extent to which client and therapist are involved in collaborative, purposive work (Hatcher & Barends, 2006). Bordin (1979) considered alliance to be the attainment of collaboration during therapy. Bordin's working alliance concept stressed the importance of the conscious aspects of the relationship in addition to the collaborative aspects (Horvath, Del Re, Flückiger & Symonds, 2011).

It is possible to argue that the robustness of Bordin's work is partially due to his endeavour to present a pantheoretical model. He proposed that specific therapy techniques were not as significant as the elements shared by all types of psychotherapy. Therefore, it is suggested that Bordin's (1979) model of the working alliance delivers a widely applicable approach to organizing information concerning the change processes that take place during interaction between two people. Bordin (1979) proposed that a working alliance develops whenever a person pursues change and another person operates as the agent of that change.

Additionally, Bordin (1994) suggested that, as therapy proceeds, the strength of the working alliance rises and falls. He proposed that strains in the alliance appeared when clients were assigned tasks that stimulated the difficult behaviours which led them to seek treatment. Bordin claimed that these instances presented challenges not only for the strength of the bond but also for task and goal agreement. Maintenance of the working alliance involves work to repair these unavoidable strains and their repair may directly influence clients' change (Horvath, et al., 2011).

There are three significant implications of Bordin's (1979) alliance concept (Hatcher & Barends, 2006). Firstly, any feature of intervention that promotes or enables engagement in purposive work, including the use of specific techniques, contributes to the alliance. As Hatcher and Barends (2006) acknowledged, *"alliance and technique occupy different conceptual levels and cannot be considered to be two different types of activity in therapy. Technique is an activity, alliance is a way to characterize activity"* (Hatcher & Barends, 2006, p. 294). Secondly, the working alliance is not the same as the therapeutic relationship, however the relationship may influence the alliance. Thirdly, the alliance is not reducible to the experience of patients, however their experience may provide a decent estimate of the alliance.

It should be noted, though, that the working alliance concept has lacked a specific and clear-cut consensual definition, which has enabled clinicians of many theoretical frameworks to adopt the term and use it in their particular form of therapy. This has led to a number of problematic advances in the research literature. For example, a number of alliance measures that were created in parallel during the late 1970s and 1980s did not have a clear common point of reference. Without a clear cut and communal definition it is these alliance measures that explain what a researcher means when using the term "alliance". It is acknowledged that there are numerous disparities among authors about the definition of the alliance (Horvath, 2006), however it should be noted that by 1990 there did seem to be some overlap between the definitions utilised and this appears to relate to the quality of the collective endeavour (Kokotovic & Tracey, 1990).

1.8.2 Developing the bond

Developing the bond is considered to be important, not only in developing the alliance but also throughout treatment, and it is considered that the emotional climate set by the therapist during the first few sessions will have a strong impact on the alliance throughout the duration of treatment (Greenberg, 2007).

It is considered important to create an emotion-friendly environment to enable a client to access his/her painful feelings, therefore, therapists initially accept the experiences the client reports without challenging them. In doing so, they express understanding and concern for the client and start to develop their understanding of the client's functioning (Greenberg, 2007).

The therapist should support clients to feel validated, thus enabling them to disclose their feelings without concern regarding being criticised or shamed. Genuine acceptance makes sure that the therapist does not shame the client and it is suggested that empathy and compassion are both antidotes to shame (Gilbert, 2007). Therefore, the therapist aims to make the client feel safe and understood and to enable him or her to self-disclose. It is the trust and support that develop between them which enable the client to talk about his/her painful experiences (Greenberg, 2007).

1.8.3 Alliance and outcome

Evidence suggests that alliance is positively related to treatment outcome for a comprehensive range of clients, treatments, and problems. This relationship is modest, however it has been demonstrated to be robust throughout a number of meta-analyses carried out during the last 25 years (Horvath & Symonds,1991; Horvath et al. 2011).

Horvath and Symonds (1991), in a meta-analysis of 24 studies, estimated the average effect size of alliance and outcome to be moderate, however it may be suggested that this may be an underestimation due to the fact that the authors considered the correlation value to be equal to 0.0 in every study which yielded a non-significant correlation and in which the value was not stated by the authors.

Horvath et al. (2011) in a more recent meta-analysis discovered approximately 200 studies exploring the alliance-outcome relationship. They identified a correlation between alliance and outcome with a moderate-to-large effect and, therefore, proposed the alliance may be one aspect that has a positive effect on symptom improvement.

These correlations are larger than those observed for other treatment variables such as therapist adherence to treatment manual, and competence (Webb, DeRubeis, & Barber, 2010). Additionally, research has shown that the alliance appears to be responsible for a greater amount of variation in treatment outcome than individual interventions (Krupnick et al., 1996), thus supporting the claim that the positive

influence of the alliance on treatment outcome is greater than that of the features of specific treatments (Lambert & Bergin, 1994).

It should be noted that Bordin (1979) suggested that the alliance is separate from technique. He felt the goals and tasks utilised within a collaborative venture will have an impact on the strength of the working alliance, however, it arises independently of the techniques employed by the therapist.

An important, although perhaps controversial issue, considers how the outcome of therapy is affected by common factors as opposed to specific factors[22]. Harwood, Beutler, Castillo and Karno (2006) proposed that a substantial quantity of research indicates that common factors, particularly the alliance, are perhaps some of the most crucial elements in treatment outcome, therefore, overlooking these factors may have a detrimental effect on the effectiveness of psychotherapy.

In spite of its robust relationship with outcome, the value of the alliance as a therapeutic factor remains unproven. DeRubeis, Brotman and Gibbons (2005) in their critique of nonspecific aspects of psychotherapy, found that that the alliance-outcome relationship could be caused by factors, such as, the therapist's ability to form the alliance, the patient's qualities that enable a relationship to develop, the matching of therapist and patient characteristics and earlier symptom change prior to the alliance being measured.

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[22] Black (1952) was conceivably the first to use the term common factors, that is, those aspects present in all methods of psychotherapy. Specific factors, on the other hand, are those techniques characteristic of individual methods of psychotherapy (Chatoor & Krupnick, 2001).

Baldwin, Wampold and Imel (2007) explored these options by dividing the alliance-outcome correlation into within and between therapist elements. They found that therapists differ in their ability to develop alliances with clients, which could explain the correlation between alliance and outcome of therapy, and discovered that therapists who were more capable of developing alliances with clients produced improved outcomes over those less capable. Additionally, it seemed the client's contribution to the alliance had little impact on outcome.

DeRubeis and Feeley (1990) also suggested that, in the early stages of cognitive therapy for depression, the alliance was not related to outcome. However, therapist actions, such as, establishing and following an agenda, giving homework, reviewing homework, soliciting examples of beliefs and getting patients to record their thoughts, were linked to outcome.

1.8.4 Therapist factors associated with the alliance

It seems, therefore, the therapist is vital in developing the alliance, consequently consideration should be given to what the therapist does to develop this (Ulvenes et al., 2012).

Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003) observed that little consideration had been given to this question, when they undertook a comprehensive review of the therapist's personal attributes and activities that positively influence the therapeutic alliance, from a broad range of psychotherapy perspectives.

The 25 studies they identified as reporting therapist variables positively contributing to the alliance, indicate that the personal characteristics of therapists positively influence the development and maintenance of the alliance. Eleven personal attributes of therapists were identified as important in the development and maintenance of the alliance. These are being trustworthy, confident, honest, flexible, experienced, alert, friendly, respectful, warm, interested and open. Furthermore, eleven therapist techniques were also found to contribute positively to the alliance. Namely, exploration, depth, reflection, noting past therapy success, accurate interpretation, facilitating expression of affect, attending to patients' experience, being supportive, active, affirming and understanding (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003).

Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003) also found that the following therapist factors were linked to the therapist's capacity to maintain the alliance: the ability to recognise when strains in the alliance threaten progress, the ability to use appropriate interventions in response to disagreements about tasks or goals, and an ability to use appropriate interventions in response to strains in the bond between therapist and client. The main components of therapist empathy were found to include affirming, helping, warmth, friendliness and understanding.

Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003) observed very little difference among the various theoretical orientations with regard to the therapist's positive influence on the alliance, possibly because a considerable number of the therapist techniques reported focus on the therapeutic interactions that take place between the client and therapist. Furthermore, Frank (1974) suggested that there must be common

therapeutic components when a range of treatments produce similar results. Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003) suggested that a possible core of these components is a connection or alliance between two individuals that creates the prospect of relief from suffering.

Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003) also acknowledged that the therapist's important contributions to the development and maintenance of the alliance, as identified in their research, are not unlike those recognised to be useful in the identification and repair of ruptures in the alliance. Research in this area suggests that such ruptures comprise a normal aspect of the treatment process. It proposes that ruptures should be seen as endorsing patient change and, therefore, provide opportunities for strengthening the alliance (Safran & Muran, 2000). To resolve ruptures in the alliance effectively, Safran and Muran (1996, 2000) advocate that the therapist communicates an affirming, understanding, and nurturing attitude, in addition to validating the client by exploring his/her experience, so as to acquire a more profound understanding of it.

Ackerman and Hilsenroth's (2003) review can be criticised for its limited critical evaluation of the methodological issues within the studies included. A number of the research studies reviewed used correlational analyses that may be influenced by confounds and rater bias[23]. Furthermore, a large proportion of the research on this topic measured the relationship between alliance and therapist activity at only one point in time during treatment. Bachelor and Salame (2000), suggested that a one-

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[23] For example, direction of causality errors are very important because feeling positive about the alliance may affect therapist's judgments regarding clients, in addition to clients' judgments regarding the therapist.

off assessment may not illustrate the relationship for the duration of treatment and may compromise the external validity of the results.

Prior to this, Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2001) reviewed the therapist characteristics and techniques negatively impacting upon the therapeutic alliance, from a broad range of psychotherapy perspectives. They found that the therapeutic alliance was negatively influenced across a number of different psychotherapy perspectives by the following personal attributes of therapists: being rigid, uncertain, critical, distant, tense, aloof, self-focussed and distracted. They also found that therapist techniques such as over-structuring the therapy, inappropriate self-disclosure, unyielding use of transference interpretation, failure to develop a therapeutic frame and inappropriate use of silence, also had a negative impact on the alliance.

The studies reviewed by Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2001) showed ruptures in the alliance arose from a client's negative reaction to the therapist, or the therapy process. One study stated it was important for the client to begin the expression of his/her negative thoughts and feelings (Rhodes et al., 1994) although others stressed the importance of the therapist drawing attention to these thoughts and feelings (Safran & Muran, 1996, 2000; Watson & Greenberg, 2000). However, it does seem that the issue of who brings the client's negative thoughts and feelings into the room is not as significant as ensuring they are acknowledged and openly explored (Safran & Muran, 2000; Watson & Greenberg, 2000).

If a therapist does not pay attention to a client's experience, he/she may fail to notice a rupture in the alliance, or may incorrectly believe that he/she has not played a part

in the formation of this rupture. These mistakes may be considered to be due to a lack of empathy and can result in the breakdown of the alliance (Horowitz, Rosenbaum & Wilner, 1988).

1.8.5 The working alliance in education

Rogers (2009) recommended that the concept of the working alliance should be applied to the teaching and learning process. He suggested that this process is a collaborative endeavour. He stated that:

> "S*tudents enrol in courses based on some need − ideally a quest for new knowledge and skills. Teachers assume responsibility for courses based on some ability − ideally a capacity to meet student learning needs…they each engage in behaviours designed to help the student progress towards these goals. Purposeful work forms the core of this interaction. In turn, this work gives rise to a working alliance between student and teacher".* (Rogers, 2009, p.1).

Rogers (2009) suggested that over the last two decades a small number of researchers have expressed interest in the potential applications of the working alliance concept to educational contexts. For example, Robertson (1996, 1999, 2000) acknowledged the potential for concepts from counselling and therapy to augment teaching research and practice. He claimed that it may be beneficial for educational professionals to regard teacher-pupil interaction to be an educational helping relationship. Robertson proclaimed that educators who assist and enable

their pupils to learn, instead of merely communicating information, promote the value of the interpersonal relationship.

Koch (2004) applied Bordin's working alliance to teaching and learning and in doing so suggested that teachers may develop a strong working alliance with pupils by promoting good bonds, establishing meaningful goals, explaining tasks clearly and encouraging pupil involvement.

Additionally, Ursano, Kartheiser and Ursano (2007) proposed that the application of the working alliance in educational settings may inform professionals about ways of improving interactions between teachers and pupils, since psychotherapy is a kind of teaching venture. They specified that teaching involves a learning focus and the use of interventions to achieve the goal. They also reasoned that pupil-teacher interactions and patient-therapist interactions have a number of core features in common and, therefore, the working alliance concept may be helpful in school settings.

Furthermore, Myers (2008) proposed that social relationships were an important feature of classrooms, therefore, the pupil and teacher behaviours which impact on these relationships have an effect on the learning process. Myers encouraged teachers to use Bordin's (1979) working alliance concept to develop awareness of the ways in which their actions affect the alliance, to develop an understanding of how pupils' past educational experiences influence alliance at the present time, and to assume an approach to conflict between teacher and pupil that concentrates on repairing strains in the alliance.

Bordin's model, therefore, may be applied to change processes in educational settings. Bordin suggested that teacher-pupil interactions may improve with the use of a concept that *"can be defined and elaborated in terms which make it universally applicable, and can be shown to be valuable for integrating knowledge − particularly for pointing to new research directions"* (Bordin, 1979, p. 252).

Rogers (2009) argued that:

> *"Following Bordin's model, all teaching and learning activities can be assumed to have embedded working alliances. This occurs solely as a result of a student seeking some type of change (e.g., learning, skill acquisition) and a teacher serving as the agent of that change (e.g., crafting learning outcomes, designing tasks to foster learning). Certainly students differ in the type of change they seek, but the nature of the collaboration remains the same. It will involve negotiation with varying levels of clarity and agreement about the goals of the interaction and the tasks that will be used to achieve those goals. In addition, some type of emotional bond will be created in the process".* (Rogers, 2009, p. 4).

1.9 Immediacy and Rapport

Given that ELSAs support children in schools, the author will discuss two further concepts that relate to the working relationship between adults and children in schools, that is, the concepts of teacher immediacy and rapport.

1.9.1 Immediacy behaviours

A substantial amount of literature has been published about teacher immediacy behaviours that affect the relationship with pupils (Christophel, 1990). It is thought that teachers display immediacy through their verbal and non-verbal communications, and research has linked it to a number of pupil outcomes (Allen, Witt, & Wheeles, 2006).

The concept of immediacy was introduced by Mehrabian (1971) to describe verbal and non-verbal behaviours[24] used during interpersonal communication. Mehrabian (1971) suggested that immediacy behaviours give rise to physical and psychological closeness between individuals when utilised in their communication. Andersen (1979) introduced this concept into education suggesting that the concept of immediacy may be employed to describe a teacher's verbal and non-verbal behaviours, which take place throughout pupil-teacher interaction and generate physical and psychological closeness between teachers and pupils.

Teachers' immediacy behaviours are believed to have a positive impact on students' sense of approval and contentment concerning the teacher and the environment (Andersen, 1979). Research evidence (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997) points to a positive correlation between immediacy and social presence, and students' satisfaction. Additionally, Neill (1991) suggested that immediacy behaviours

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[24] Mehrabian (1971) suggested that non-verbal immediacy behaviour comprises smiling, using vocal variety, adopting a relaxed body position, facing toward another person, leaning forward, standing close to another person, and touching. He also suggested that verbal immediacy behaviour involves the use of verb tense that focuses on behaviours rather than characteristics, inclusiveness, that is using "we" instead of "you" or "I", referring to individuals by name and using humour.

decrease psychological distance and enhance pupil achievement[25]. Furthermore, a meta-analysis undertaken by Allen et al. (2006) found that immediacy appears to have a direct effect on motivation of learners, which then contributes to better learning.

Andersen and Andersen (2005) suggested that nearly all immediacy behaviours that generate strong teacher-pupil relationships seem to be non-verbal. For example, using open and forward facing body positions, expressive gesturing, eye contact, vocal variety, smiling, and regular interactions (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001).

1.9.2 Rapport

Carey, Hamilton and Shanklin (1986) defined rapport as a relationship with shared understanding and reasonable communication. Altman (1990) further suggested that rapport is felt only in interaction between people. Bernieri (1988) applied the concept of rapport to the context of teaching and learning and defined rapport as harmonious interactions between teachers and pupils.

Benson, Cohen, and Buskist (2005) found that the pupils of educators who developed rapport tended to have better attendance, paid greater attention and gained more enjoyment from the topics taught.

Buskist and Saville (2004) also found that pupils who sensed rapport spoke of greater enjoyment of their courses and displayed increased attentiveness and higher attendance. However, it should be noted that the researchers did not collect

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[25] Psychological distance can be described as *"the degree of awareness between persons usually expressed as a statement about the amount of difficulty experienced when interactions occur"* (Reber & Reber, 2001, p.209).

measureable data but based their findings on qualitative pupil accounts. Frisby and Martin (2010) also discovered that teacher rapport predicted cognitive and affective learning.

Kyriacou (2009) maintained that successful classrooms are environments of mutual respect and rapport. Rapport necessitates caring for the growth and development of pupils and showing mutual respect for pupils as learners, for example, by praising, adapting educational tasks to pupils, monitoring progress, providing constructive and patient assistance and expressing concern about pupils' poor progress. Kyriacou (2009) also suggested that showing respect by treating pupils as individuals further promotes rapport and that social conversation and comments, such as asking if anyone watched a certain television programme last night, are indicators of rapport.

Granitz, Koernig and Harich (2009) recognised three categories of antecedents of rapport. They named these; approach, personality, and homophily. Approach encompasses being available to answer questions, being responsive, being open, giving guidance, providing feedback, supporting, helping and praising students. It embraces the freedom to speak freely, understanding the learner as an individual and acknowledging the differences between educator and student. It comprises development of trust by fulfilling promises and behaving consistently. It also involves showing respect and courtesy to students, not talking down to them, listening, paying attention, being patient, taking time with learners, expressing interest in their success, helping and encouraging them . Additionally, transparency and honesty,

showing one's human side, admitting one's faults and exerting an effort are important.

They also proposed a number of personality factors were linked to rapport. For example, empathy, being caring, bonding, expressing concern and not displaying favouritism. Rapport comprises generating a friendly, positive, cooperative environment, using humour, displaying empathy and understanding pupils' needs (Granitz et al., 2009).

Furthermore, they proposed that homophily is linked to sharing values, attitudes and beliefs. It includes self-disclosure and posture sharing (Granitz et al., 2009).

1.9.3 Immediacy behaviours, rapport and the working alliance

As the working alliance is considered to occur as a result of purposive, collaborative endeavours, it is possible to suggest that immediacy and rapport may promote the working alliance. Thus, teachers who utilise immediacy behaviours and rapport during interactions with pupils may realise a strong working alliance (Rogers, 2012).

1.10 The Current Study

This research study aims to explore ELSAs' perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship. It will explore what aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship ELSAs perceive to be important and the factors that ELSAs perceive to be facilitators or barriers to developing and maintaining a relationship with the pupils they work with.

Due to the literature, which suggests that Bordin's (1979) model of the working alliance could be applied to change within educational contexts (Rogers, 2009) and that concepts from therapy could inform education practices (Robertson, 1996, 1999, 2000), the researcher will afford attention in the discussion as to whether themes emerge that suggest that ELSA's perceptions of the factors affecting the relationship reflect, to some extent, the components of the working alliance (Bordin, 1979). The researcher will also explore whether the factors that ELSAs perceive to facilitate or act as barriers to the relationship, are similar to those identified in the literature about the working alliance (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2001, 2003).

1.11 Relevance to the Role of the Educational Psychologist

The ELSA project is aimed at building the capacity of schools to provide for children who have social and emotional difficulties. Research shows that relationship factors influence outcomes (Hovarth et al., 2011), therefore, it is important that EPs understand ELSA's perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship and the ways in which ELSAs can promote this relationship.

As previously mentioned, ELSAs receive training from EPs and once trained, they receive group supervision sessions led by EPs (Shotton & Burton, 2008). The author suggests that that the research will improve EPs' understanding of the factors which ELSAs perceive to facilitate the development and maintenance of the ELSA-pupil relationship and, therefore, promote good outcomes for children. It is envisaged that this knowledge will help to inform the future training and supervision of ELSAs.

1.12 Research Questions

1) How do ELSAs describe their role?

2) What aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship do ELSAs perceive to be important?

3) What factors do ELSAs perceive to be facilitators to developing a relationship with the pupils they work with?

4) What factors do ELSAs perceive to be facilitators to maintaining a relationship with the pupils they work with?

5) What factors do ELSAs perceive to be barriers to developing a relationship with the pupils they work with?

6) What factors do ELSAs perceive to be barriers to maintaining a relationship with the pupils they work with?

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Part Two

Major Research Journal Article

An Exploration of the Perceptions of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) of the ELSA-Pupil Relationship.

Word Count: 5999 words (excluding tables, figures, titles and references)

Abstract

Research indicates that the number of teaching assistants (TAs) employed in schools throughout England and Wales has increased dramatically since the 1980s as a result of the integration and inclusion of children with special educational needs (SEN) within mainstream schools ,and workforce reforms aimed at reducing the excessive workload of teachers. This has led to a change in the role of TAs, from that of assisting teachers, to directly supporting the teaching and learning process.

Emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs) are TAs who are trained by educational psychologists (EPs) to support children with social and emotional difficulties within schools, through delivering programmes of support which are specifically designed for individual pupils. Since being developed in 2003 in Southampton, the ELSA programme has spread to many areas of the UK and the number of ELSAs working in schools has increased.

There is currently very little research into the role and effectiveness of ELSAs in schools and, to the researcher's knowledge, there is no previous research into the relationship between ELSAs and the pupils they work with.

The current research explores ELSA's perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship, that is, the aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship they perceive to be important and the factors they perceive to be facilitators or barriers to developing and maintaining the ELSA-pupil relationship. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve

ELSAs in one local authority (LA). Through thematic analysis of the data, themes emerged that reflected the bond, task agreement and goal agreement aspects of Bordin's (1979) working alliance. In addition to this, themes resembled a number of the personal characteristics and therapist techniques proposed by Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003) as helping to develop and maintain the alliance. Themes also reflected a number of Rogers' (1957) necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic change, in addition to the concept of solution focussed brief therapy (de Shazer, 1988; de Shazer et al,. 2007). Furthermore, the themes resembled a number of the approaches and personality factors identified by Granitz, Koernig and Harich (2009) as being linked to rapport.

Interpretations of the themes are discussed with respect to the research literature and implications for the practice of educational psychology are considered.

1. Introduction

1.1 The changing Role of Teaching Assistants in Schools

Government policies and legislation have caused the role of teaching assistants (TAs)[26] within schools to change considerably (Thomas, 1992; Lee, 2002; Burgess, 2008). TAs now directly assist teaching and learning, personal and social development (Groom, 2006), and support the inclusion of students with SEBD (Groom & Rose, 2005).

1.2 Emotional Literacy Support Assistants

Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) are TAs who support children with social and emotional needs (Burton, Traill & Norgate, 2009). They are trained and supervised by EPs[27] (Shotton & Burton, 2008).

1.2.1 The effectiveness of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme

There is currently little research into the impact of ELSAs, however, the studies undertaken report favourably (Bravery & Harris, 2009; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010).

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[26] TAs are support staff who assist with the management, education and social and emotional development of pupils (DfEE, (2000).
[27] Their training incorporates psychological theory. Half termly supervision sessions provide an opportunity for problem solving concerning casework, sharing of ideas and resources, and further exploration of psychological approaches (Shotton & Burton, 2008).

Burton et al. (2010) found teachers perceived significant improvements in empathy, self-awareness and social skills amongst primary and secondary aged children, and improvements in motivation and self-regulation amongst primary aged children, post ELSA intervention. In contrast, pupils themselves did not perceive significant changes, however, it should be noted that the number of pupil responses was smaller than teacher responses, therefore, the two data sets are not directly comparable. It could be suggested that teachers were aware of the goals of ELSA intervention, therefore, may have been more likely to notice relevant changes, however, it is also possible that teachers were more inclined to return the questionnaire if they felt the child had made noticeable improvements than if he/she had not.

Bravery and Harris (2009) found most head teachers felt ELSA input impacted positively on behaviour, emotional well-being and relationships within school, and nearly half perceived a positive impact on attendance, academic achievement and reducing bullying. ELSAs and head teachers also suggested that ELSA work could be optimised through good staff communication and provision of a quiet place for ELSAs to work. It should be noted that, although three secondary head teachers participated, only ELSAs working in primary schools took part, therefore, the results may not easily generalise to the secondary sector.

1.2.2 The role of the emotional literacy support assistant

Bradley (2010) found a wide variation in ELSAs' roles and responsibilities. The most

popular topics covered were self-esteem, social skills and anger management[28].

ELSAs also commented on lacking time for ELSA work[29] and about half of them

carried out other roles within school. It should be noted that this study, like the

previous two studies discussed, was carried out within one LA, therefore, may not be

representative of what is happening throughout the UK.

1.3 The Importance of the Relationship in Bringing About Change

Beaver (2003) proposed the major factor influencing therapeutic change to be the

quality of the professional-client relationship. The importance of this in bringing about

change is acknowledged by Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis and Carroll (2003). They

designed the Constructionist Model of Informed, Reasoned Action and argued that

"all professional practice occurs within an interactive social context, which involves

relationships between people" (Gameson et al., 2003, p.102). This model takes

inspiration from Rogers (1957).

1.4 The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions for Therapeutic Change

Rogers (1957) proposed six conditions which enable psychotherapeutic change to

take place:

- A relationship between the therapist.

- The client being in a state of 'incongruence'.

- The therapist being congruent and open.

- The therapist communicating unconditional positive regard.

- The therapist having empathy.

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[28] Other topics covered were friendship, emotions, behaviour problems, divorce, support for children whose parents were ill, anxiety and fear, bereavement, learning, listening, self-organisation, transition, safety, bullying, hygiene, attendance, self-harm, selective mutism, life skills, sleep problems, body image and gender.
[29] ELSAs were given an average of 5.83 hours each week in which to work on ELSA interventions.

- The client being aware of the therapist's acceptance and empathy.

Rogers proposed change takes place when all six are present and that the greater the number of conditions present, the greater the change. Lazarus (2007), however, argued it was unlikely a set of conditions could be applied to the complete range of clients' personalities and difficulties experienced.

1.5 The Working Alliance

Bordin (1979) proposed that the working alliance is the result of collaboration and suggested a working alliance develops whenever a person pursues change and another person operates as the agent of that change. He proposed it consists of three parts: goal agreement, task agreement and bond[30].

As acknowledged by Hatcher and Barends (2006), Bordin (1979) suggested that alliance is separate from technique. Therefore, goals and tasks impact on the working alliance, however it arises independently of the techniques employed.

1.5.1 Therapist factors associated with the alliance

Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003) observed personal characteristics of therapists which positively influence the development and maintenance of the alliance. Eleven personal attributes of therapists and eleven therapist techniques were identified[31] in

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[30] Firstly, goal agreement refers to the client and therapist having an agreement of and shared understanding of the goals for change. Secondly, task agreement involves an agreement between the client and therapist and a shared understanding of, and confidence in, the tasks or techniques to be used to achieve these goals. Thirdly, bond consists of the development of an emotional attachment between the therapist and client which is created as a result of their collaborative work and refers to the feelings that the participants have towards each other. This bond is described as *"a warm trusting bond"* and *"a bond of trust and respect"* (Greenberg, 2007, p.51).

[31] The personal attributes of therapists are being trustworthy, confident, honest, flexible, experienced, alert, friendly, respectful, warm, interested and open. The therapist techniques are, exploration, depth, reflection, noting past therapy success, accurate interpretation, facilitating expression of affect, attending to patients' experience, being supportive, active, affirming and understanding.

addition to therapist factors which helped maintain the alliance[32]. This review however, may be criticised for its limited critical evaluation of the methodological issues within the studies included. Additionally, many of the studies only measured the relationship between alliance and therapist activity once during treatment and, therefore, may not illustrate the relationship for the treatment duration (Batchelor & Salame, 2000).

Previously, Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2001) found that the alliance was negatively influenced by numerous personal attributes and techniques of therapists[33].

1.5.2 The working alliance in education

Rogers (2009) recommended the working alliance concept, which he suggested is a collaborative endeavour, be applied to teaching and learning. He argued *"all teaching and learning activities can be assumed to have embedded working alliances. This occurs solely as a result of a student seeking some type of change … and a teacher serving as the agent of that change"* (Rogers, 2009, p. 4).

Additionally, Robertson (1996, 1999, 2000) acknowledged the potential for concepts from therapy to augment teaching practice. He claimed that educators who assist and enable their pupils to learn[34] promote the interpersonal relationship.

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[32] For example, the ability to recognise when strains in the alliance threaten the progress of therapy, the ability to use appropriate interventions in response to disagreements about tasks or goals, and an ability to use appropriate interventions in response to strains in the bond between therapist and client. The main components of therapist empathy were found to include affirming, helping, warmth, friendliness and understanding.

[33] The personal attributes of therapists were being rigid, uncertain, critical, distant, tense, aloof, self-focussed and distracted and the therapists techniques were over structuring the therapy, inappropriate self-disclosure, unyielding use of transference interpretation, failure to develop a therapeutic frame and inappropriate use of silence.

[34] Rather than merely communicating information.

1.6 Immediacy and Rapport

As ELSAs are school staff, two concepts regarding teacher-pupil relationships will be discussed.

1.6.1 Immediacy behaviours

Mehrabian (1971) introduced the immediacy concept to describe verbal and non-verbal behaviours[35] used during interpersonal communication. He suggested these behaviours foster physical and psychological closeness between individuals. Andersen (1979) proposed this concept may be used to describe teacher behaviours during pupil-teacher interaction.

Research implies a positive correlation between immediacy and pupil satisfaction (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997), achievement (Neill, 1991) and motivation (Allen, Witt & Wheeles, 2006).

1.6.2 Rapport

Carey, Hamilton and Shanklin (1986) defined rapport as a relationship with shared understanding and reasonable communication. Altman (1990) further suggested rapport is felt only in interaction between people.

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[35] Mehrabian (1971) suggested that non-verbal immediacy behaviour comprises smiling, using vocal variety, adopting a relaxed body position, facing toward another person, leaning forward, standing close to another person, and touching. He also suggested that verbal immediacy behaviour involves the use of verb tense that focuses on behaviours rather than characteristics, inclusiveness, that is using "we" instead of "you" or "I", referring to individuals by name and using humour.

Kyriacou (2009) suggested social conversation is an indicator of rapport and Granitz, Koernig and Harich (2009) recognised three categories of antecedents of rapport, that is, approach[36], personality[37], and homophily[38]. Research suggests rapport impacts positively on pupil attendance, attention (Benson, Cohen & Buskist, 2005) and learning (Frisby & Martin, 2010).

1.7 The Current Study

This study explores ELSAs' perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship. It investigates the aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship ELSAs perceive to be important, and the factors that ELSAs perceive to be facilitators and barriers to developing and maintaining the ELSA-pupil relationship. Due to the research literature, which suggests that Bordin's (1979) model of the working alliance could be applied to change within educational contexts (Rogers, 2009) and concepts from therapy could inform education practices (Robertson, 1996, 1999, 2000), the researcher affords attention to whether themes emerge which suggest ELSA's perceptions of the factors affecting the relationship reflect components of the working alliance (Bordin, 1979). The researcher will also explore whether the factors ELSAs perceive to facilitate or act as barriers to the relationship resemble those identified in the working alliance literature (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2001, 2003). Additionally, the researcher will afford attention to whether themes emerge that reflect the concepts of teacher immediacy and rapport.

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[36] For example, approach contains being available, responsive and open, praising students, understanding the learner as an individual, developing trust, showing respect, listening, honesty, taking time with learners and expressing interest in their success. It embraces the freedom to speak freely (Granitz et al., 2009).

[37] For example, personality factors to be linked to rapport include empathy, being caring, bonding, expressing concern and not displaying favouritism (Granitz et al., 2009).

[38] Furthermore, they proposed that homophily is linked to sharing values, attitudes and beliefs. It includes self-disclosure and posture sharing (Granitz et al., 2009).

1.8 Research Questions

1. How do ELSAs describe their role?

2. What aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship do ELSAs perceive to be important?

3. What factors do ELSAs perceive to be facilitators to developing a relationship with the pupils they work with?

4. What factors do ELSAs perceive to be facilitators to maintaining a relationship with the pupils they work with?

5. What factors do ELSAs perceive to be barriers to developing a relationship with the pupils they work with?

6. What factors do ELSAs perceive to be barriers to maintaining a relationship with the pupils they work with?

2. Methodology

2.1 Epistemology and Study Design

In order to explore the experiences and perceptions of the participants from a social constructionist perspective, an interpretive paradigm was used. The social constructionist perspective suggests that meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced (Burr, 2010). Thus a qualitative, social constructionist research paradigm was utilised to encapsulate the perceptions and experiences of participants with regard to the social contexts within which they function. Social constructionist methodology was considered pertinent when exploring participants' constructions of their perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. This can be described as a constructionist method which observes the ways in which events, realities, meanings and experiences are the result of a range of discourses and narratives functioning in society. Therefore, thematic analysis can be a method which works both to reflect reality and to expound individuals' constructs of reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis, conducted within a constructionist framework, seeks to theorise the socio-cultural contexts that enable the individual accounts that are provided (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

2.2 Procedure

2.2.1 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was gained from the Cardiff University School of Psychology Ethics Committee. The research was conducted in line with the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (2010). Participants were informed that all information collected would be held confidentially and then anonymised. They were also informed of their right to

withdraw from the study at any time prior to the anonymisation of data and that they were not obliged to answer the questions. Participants were advised of the aims of the research and fully debriefed at the end of the interview.

2.2.2 Participants and recruitment

ELSAs who work on a one-to-one basis with Key Stage Two (KS 2) pupils within mainstream primary schools in one local authority (LA), acted as participants in the study. Only ELSAs who had been fulfilling the role for at least one year were invited to participate. A gatekeeper letter (Appendix A1) was sent to the principal educational psychologist in the LA concerned, requesting contact details for mainstream primary schools employing ELSAs who met the inclusion requirements. Only the school name, address and name of the head teacher were requested. Gatekeeper letters (Appendix A2) were subsequently sent to the head teachers of relevant schools. If interested in participating in the study, head teachers were asked to forward information sheets (Appendix A3) to ELSAs who met the inclusion criteria.

Twelve ELSAs, from nine primary schools, gave consent to participate in the study. All worked with KS 2 pupils on an individual basis, five of these also worked with KS1 pupils. All the ELSAs also undertook small group work with pupils.

All the participants were female and had worked as ELSAs in their current primary schools for at least one year. Six of the participants had been working as ELSAs for over five years, three for four years and the others had worked as ELSAs for just over a year.

2.2.3 Collection of data

In order to explore the experiences and perceptions of the participants from a social constructionist perspective, the researcher tried to ensure that participants were able to express their views fully thus, enabling the researcher to understand the participants and to explore their constructions fully. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data.

Semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes were conducted at participants' schools. Prior to starting the interview, confidentiality and withdrawal procedures were discussed, participants were given an opportunity to ask questions and they were asked to complete the consent form (Appendix A4). Interviews were recorded using an electronic device and stored confidentially. No names or other information about any individual ELSA's performance, or any information about individual pupils that the ELSAs may work with, was solicited or recorded.

Participants received a debriefing sheet (Appendix A5) on completion of the interview and questions were answered. Data were transcribed two weeks after interviews and anonymised using a number to refer to each participant.

2.2.4 Pilot study

The researcher held pilot interviews with two participants from this sample (Gillham, 2004) so as to ensure that the questions were understandable and obtained relevant information. As no changes were made to the interview schedule (Appendix A6) the researcher was able to include, with consent, the two pilot interviews within the final sample.

2.3 Reliability and Validity

The interview schedule (Appendix A6) was designed to investigate participants' perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship. Its development was influenced by the work of Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2003).

3. Results

Twelve ELSAs, who worked with KS2 pupils on an individual basis, within one LA in the UK, participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews were transcribed and direct quotes have been used to support the themes.

Seven main themes and six minor themes emerged from the data. Two of the main themes ('Giving time to pupils' and 'Having a two-way relationship'), emerged across all six key questions and one ('Respect and understand the child as an individual') emerged across the five key questions refering to the ELSA-pupil relationship.

Two themes ('Trust' and 'Confidentiality') emerged across four key questions, that is all the key questions which refer to the most important aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship, the factors which facilitate and maintain the ELSA-pupil relationship and the factors which act as barriers to maintaining the relationship.

Two themes ('Pupil talks and ELSA listens' and 'Flexibility') emerged across three key questions and the more minor themes were present across one or two of the key questions.

Themes were chosen based on their frequency within the data and their relevance to the research literature. The themes and subthemes that emerged through thematic analysis are discussed below.

3.1 Main Themes

3.1.1 Theme 1: Giving time to pupils

This theme occurred across all six key questions, therefore, 'Giving time' was perceived to be an important aspect of the work of ELSA's, an important aspect of the ELSA-pupil relationship and a factor which facilitates the development and maintenance of the relationship. Not giving time was considered to be a barrier to developing and maintaining the relationship.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 1: Description of theme 1: Giving time.

Title of Theme: Giving Time	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
Participants perceived it to be important that: • ELSAs are always available and always have time for pupils. • Pupils are aware that they can come and find the ELSA at any time. • ELSAs do not turn pupils away. • ELSAs make time to see a pupil the day the pupil approaches her. • ELSAs should informally check on their pupils by asking them how they are each day. • ELSAs build the relationship slowly over time and do not rush pupils to talk. • Pupils receive regular sessions. • Sessions should not have a specific finish time which would mean the ELSA has to rush the child.	*"…It's all the time you know, it's not just when they come out with us for their twenty minutes or half an hour…"* [ELSA 9] *"…you got to be prepared to be there at any point, at any time."* [ELSA 11] *"…it's continuous…"* [ELSA 6] *"…we do a check in system with them so in the playground we'll do thumbs up, the middle or down you know just informal,…"* [ELSA 6] *"…it's really important that they don't feel…they must finish the session at a set time…"* [ELSA 4]

3.1.2 Theme 2: Having a two-way relationship

This theme was also present across all six key questions. Therefore, 'Having a two-way relationship' was perceived to be an important aspect of the work of ELSAs, an important aspect of the ELSA-pupil relationship and a factor which facilitates the development and maintenance of the relationship. Not giving time was considered to be a barrier to developing and maintaining the relationship.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 2: Description of theme 2: Having a two-way relationship.

Title of Theme: Having a two-way relationship	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
Participants perceived it to be important that: • The ELSA and pupil have a two-way, open conversation. • ELSAs get to know pupils personally. • ELSAs remember information about children. • ELSAs share personal experiences and information about themselves. • ELSAs find common ground with pupils. • ELSAs get on the same level as pupils. • ELSAs are warm, welcoming and friendly. • ELSAs make the child feel relaxed. • ELSAs are approachable. • ELSAs develop a good bond and rapport with pupils. • ELSAs are honest with pupils. • ELSAs let pupils be themselves. • ELSAs let pupils develop their own solutions.	*"…it has to be a two way conversation sort of thing otherwise you don't get back what you want …that is you know open conversation."* [ELSA 5] *"…You get to know them more personally…so the relationship just gets a little bit more personal and they know more about you as well…"* [ELSA 5] *"I'll always share and say well I've had this experience myself…"* [ELSA 1] *"You just sort of try and find something that is a bit of common ground…"* [ELSA 3] *"…you've got to have that bond…"* [ELSA 11] *"…I think it's important that you develop a sort of relationship with a child. I suppose you would call it rapport …"* [ELSA 4]

3.1.3 Theme 3: Respect and understand the child as an individual

This theme was present in all the key questions which explored the relationship, however, it did not appear to be perceived to be an important part of the ELSA role.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 3: Description of theme 3: Respect and understand the child as an individual.

Title of Theme: Respect and understand the child as an individual	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
Participants reported that it was important that ELSAs: • Don't judge pupils but respect them and value them and their opinions. • Empathise with pupils and be understanding. • Must not show pupils that they don't approve of what they are saying or what they have done. • Need to remain calm and not shout. • Be positive and look at the positives. • Praise pupils and help pupils to see their strengths. • Should not correct pupils. • Make pupils feel special.	*"…you have respect for them no matter what they say and do. You might not always like what they say…"* [ELSA 4] *"…You think, oh why have they done that?...but you just try and put yourself in their shoes, you just empathise…"* [ELSA 3] *"…we respect what they feel, and what they feel is unique …"* [ELSA 7] *"…Never judge them you know, because what he's done he knows he done wrong. It's just how we move forward from that…"* [ELSA 12] *"…It's not speaking down to them…they need to know, that I'm not going to judge them…"* [ELSA 8] *"…Always positive, thinking positive and saying… 'Lets move on now let's see what we can do so that, you know, you can move on and be happier'…"* [ELSA 12] *"…I think also the more positive you are the more the relationship will flourish. Lots of praise…"* [ELSA 4] *"…Making more of a big deal of the things they do right rather than making a big deal of the things they do wrong…"* [ELSA 2]

3.1.4 Theme 4: Trust

The theme 'Trust' emerged within key questions 2, 3, 4 and 6. Therefore, trust was perceived to be an important aspect of the ELSA-pupil relationship and a factor which facilitates the development and maintenance of the relationship. Lack of trust was perceived to be a barrier to maintaining the ELSA-pupil relationship but not a barrier to developing the relationship.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 4: Description of theme 4: Trust.

Title of Theme: Trust	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
Participants said that it is important that: • Pupils trust the ELSA. • Pupils can depend on the ELSA and have confidence in her. • The ELSA and pupil trust each other. • ELSAs keep their word and do not let pupils down. • ELSAs gain pupils' trust by sharing personal possessions with pupils, lending resources or games, setting clear boundaries and giving pupils responsibility.	*"…They need to have trust in me, but I need to have trust in them…"* [ELSA 2] *"…You've got to build trust I think. It is always down to trust isn't it? Because if you haven't got trust you haven't got anything you know…"* [ELSA 10] *"…An ELSA needs to build trust by never letting a child down. So you must keep to your word…You can't let them down or they won't trust you…It's important that they learn to trust you if you're going to have a successful working relationship…"* [ELSA 4] *"…I also share things I own. For example I let children use my special pen... This shows them again that I trust them..."* [ELSA 4] *"…I brought him over to help another little boy in our class who needed some confidence building and it's been really good with that…yes he's been a bit of a role model there and it's given him some responsibility…."* [ELSA 12]

3.1.5 Theme 5: Confidentiality

The theme confidentiality was also present within key questions 2, 3, 4 and 6. Therefore, confidentiality was perceived to be an important aspect of the ELSA-pupil relationship and a factor which facilitates the development and maintenance of the relationship. Breaking the confidentiality was perceived to be a barrier to maintaining the ELSA-pupil relationship but not a barrier to developing the relationship.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 5: Description of theme 5: Confidentiality.

Title of Theme: Confidentiality	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
Participants said that ELSAs should: • Keep the content of the discussion between ELSA and pupil confidential. • Ask pupils permission to share information with others. • Tell a pupil that she will have to share information due to child protection issues and explain why she has to share it. • Not ask questions in front of other pupils.	*"…What's said in the room stays in the room, unless obviously if it needs to be reported for whatever reason umm, but it's all confidentiality you know that's really important…"* [ELSA 2]. *"…he knows that I won't go talking to other children and that, because that's really important…"* [ELSA 12]. *"…If something does come up that I need to go and share… then I will tell them first…"* [ELSA 5]. *"…Obviously you have to keep things confidential and not share unless they have given permission…"* [ELSA 4] *"… it's important not to gossip about what they say in sessions. And you have to keep that up to keep the relationship going. I always ask if I can share something they have said with someone and I never ask personal questions when they are playing with their friends cos they'd get embarrassed."* [ELSA 6]

3.1.6 Theme 6: The pupil talks while the ELSA listens

This theme was present within key questions 2, 3 and 4. Therefore, participants felt that allowing pupils to talk and listening to them, was an important aspect of the relationship and was a factor which facilitated the development and maintenance of the relationship.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 6: Description of theme 6: The pupil talks while the ELSA listens.

Title of Theme: The pupil talks while the ELSA listens	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
ELSAs talked about the importance of: • Listening to pupils and letting them talk. • Allowing pupils to express their feelings. • Letting pupils know that they can talk to the ELSA about anything. • Listening to the pupil's side of the story.	*"…they like to have a conversation with you and tell you all their problems…"* [ELSA 9]. *"… someone that they know that they can come and talk to that's what I feel as if my job is…"* [ELSA 8] *"…you are basically somebody that the child can have listen to them so…you are there as a pair of ears…"* [ELSA 6]. *"…You have to just listen. Give the child the chance to get things off his chest and say what he thinks…Listening to them helps them feel valued…"* [ELSA 4]. *"…. She did a lot of the talking, what she needed is me to listen…"* [ELSA 9] *"…you need to be a good listener…"* [ELSA 5]. *"…When he's talking I listen. It's important he knows that I'll listen to him. Hear his side of the story I suppose …"* [ELSA 12]. *"…if I'm not paying attention for a moment…then that child's going to think 'oh well I'm talking to a brick wall here. It's no good, this relationship…'"* [ELSA 1]

3.1.7 Theme 7: Flexibility

This theme was present across three key questions. Participants perceived 'flexibility' to be a factor which facilitates the development and maintenance of the relationship and lack of flexibility was considered to be a barrier to maintaining the relationship but not a barrier to developing the relationship.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 7: Description of theme 7: Flexibility.

Title of Theme: Flexibility	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
Participants spoke about the importance of: • Being flexible • Changing and adapting sessions when necessary. • Letting the pupil take the lead. • Letting pupils start sessions off. • Letting pupils chose what to do. • Realising when something is not working and changing it accordingly. • Not being rigid. • Not forcing children to do activities.	*"…very rarely we stick to the plan, because if there's an incident where they didn't want to work and they're coming to me anyway, it's pointless trying to get them to work. They're better off… trying to talk about issues…"* [ELSA 8] *"…I just have to be very flexible to deal with the moment… whatever might be the pressing issue at that time which might be different to what it was an hour before as well…"* [ELSA 5] *"…So you've got to go with the child although as an ELSA you're supposed to have a plan… but you have to be able to deviate from that plan…"* [ELSA 10] *"…giving them a choice of what they want to do…"* [ELSA 9].*

3.2 Minor Themes

3.2.1 Theme 8: Setting tasks and goals

Setting tasks and goals only emerged from the data when participants considered

the factors they perceived to facilitate the development of the relationship.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 8: Description of theme 8: Setting Tasks and Goals.

Title of Theme: Setting Tasks and Goals	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
Participants reported that ELSAs should: • Set goals and targets for pupils. • Inform pupils what they will be doing in ELSA sessions. • Ask pupils whether they would like to improve anything.	*"…You need to let them know…what you are going to do [in ELSA sessions]…Because children need to know that to set it in their minds, in order to be able to do that task…."* [ELSA 6] *"…we'll look at little targets…"* [ELSA 7]

3.2.2 Theme 9: Having a room or place to work

Having a room or place to work, only emerged from the data when participants were discussing the factors they perceived to facilitate the development of the relationship. Although this theme emerged in only one key question it should be noted that it was discussed by eleven of the twelve participants.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 9: Description of theme 9: Having a room or place to work.

Title of Theme: Having a room or place to work	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
Participants reported that it is important to: • Have a consistent place to undertake ELSA sessions. • Have a quiet, private place. • Have a relaxing, comfy and warm, welcoming environment. • Allow the pupils to have ownership of the environment, with photos of themselves and work they have completed, being displayed on the wall.	*"…the ideal environment for an ELSA is somewhere safe and quiet and sort of, you know, cut off slightly from everywhere else, so that they feel quite at home and relaxed …so the environment is a very key issue in you know, supporting that relationship…"* [ELSA 1] *"…somewhere…comfortable…where you can shut the door…they think 'oh I can say what I want now everybody's not walking past and listening…"* [ELSA 11]

3.2.3 Theme 10: The pupil's behaviours

This theme emerged when participants were discussing the factors they perceive to act as barriers to developing the ELSA-pupil relationship.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 10: Description of theme 10: The pupil's behaviours.

Title of Theme: The pupil's behaviours	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
Participants reported that pupils' behaviour can act as a barrier to developing the relationship. For example the pupil: • Exhibits aggressive behaviour. • Exhibits attention seeking behaviour. • Exhibits impulsive behaviour, • Exhibits guarded or withdrawn behaviour. • Does not engage. • Is tired. • Has negative thoughts.	*"…sometimes if a pupil's been sent by the teacher because they've had a tantrum behaviour, big burst or whatever and then they automatically think that I'm going to tell them off. Even though they know that's not what's going to happen they've automatically got their barrier up so they don't want to listen…"* [ELSA 2] *"…children who are very withdrawn. …Uh those children, those relationships, can be quite hard to build because they have a lot more umm (pause) they are a lot more suspicious of the situation…"* [ELSA 1] *"I have had children who are very guarded with their responses to questions and conversations that we try to have and sort of suggestions I might make."* [ELSA 1] *"…children with behaviour difficulties and then that's hard…"* [ELSA 8]

3.2.4 Theme 11: Children experiencing difficulties

This theme emerged when participants discussed the work of the ELSA. Although it emerged in only one key question it should be noted that it was discussed by all twelve participants.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 11: Description of theme 11: Children experiencing difficulties.

Title of Theme: Children experiencing difficulties	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
Participants reported that they worked with pupils: • Experiencing behaviour problems. • Experiencing emotional problems. • Experiencing anger issues. • Experiencing social difficulties. • Experiencing attachment difficulties. • Experiencing communication difficulties. • Experiencing anxiety. • Children who were affected by bereavement. • Children affected by divorce. • Children affected by illness in the family. • Children who self-harm. • Children who are reluctant to attend school.	*"…Some children umm, struggle to umm, show their emotions effectively …So ELSAs are then called in to help work with the children and talk to them about emotions…"* [ELSA 1] *"…self-esteem or anxiety or anger or whatever sort of road I want to go down…"* [ELSA 3] *"…If a child has issues with anger I might also help him to recognise and understand his feelings and thus learn to control these feelings rather than explode with violent behaviour…"* [ELSA 4] *"…children with attachment difficulties and hopefully be a stable and caring person for the child to build an attachment with…"* [ELSA 4]

3.2.5 Theme 12: Undertaking a range of enjoyable activities

This theme emerged in two key questions, that is, when discussing the work of the ELSA and the factors which facilitate the development of the relationship.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 12: Description of theme 12: Undertaking a range of enjoyable activities.

Title of Theme: Undertaking a range of enjoyable activities	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
Participants spoke about using a range of resources such as: • Games. • Books. • Puppets. • Undertaking craft activities. • Cooking. • Drawing pictures. • They also talked about doing activities the pupil enjoys.	*"…play games …. we can do some sheets…yes different things really…"* [ELSA 10] *"…We incorporate puppets, and playdoh is a wonderful thing…"* [ELSA 7] *"…you play games or you know they can draw or they can do what they want really …"* [ELSA 10]

3.2.6 Theme 13: Having multiple roles within school

This theme emerged in two key questions, that is, when discussing the barriers to developing and maintaining the relationship.

The theme is described in the table below:

Table 13: Description of theme 13: Having multiple roles within school.

Title of Theme: Having multiple roles within school	
Description of Theme	**Supporting Quotes**
Participants felt that having a number of roles within the school acted as a barrier to the relationship. They spoke about there being a conflict between the roles, for example, they felt that it was detrimental to have to discipline a child to whom they deliver an ELSA programme, when they are on playground duty or supporting pupils in the classroom. They also suggested that the ELSA-pupil relationship can be affected if pupils don't know where to find the ELSA because she moves around the school in a number of different roles.	*"…the fact of being two people. It's being somebody who has to deal with sanctions and rewards but certainly more behavioural sanctions and then having them to come and chat and work with you. It's doesn't work very well."* [ELSA 7] *"…it is hard because obviously we're disciplining the children in the classroom or out in the playground, umm, so sometimes it can be difficult if you've had to deal with a specific behaviour like misbehaving in the classroom. You've just told them off and then two minutes later you're walking in 'Oh come with me.'"* [ELSA 6]

4. Discussion

4.1 Factors Impacting on the Development of the ELSA-Pupil Relationship

The researcher suggests that it may be interpreted that the results may indicate that ELSAs may have perceived there to be ten factors which facilitate the development of the relationship, however, only three of these factors, that is, 'Giving time', Having a two-way relationship' and 'Respecting and understanding the child as an individual', may have been considered to be barriers to developing and maintaining the relationship should they not occur. This may suggest that ELSAs may have perceived these three factors to be essential to the development of the relationship, whereas, they may have considered the others to be advantageous.

With regard to 'Giving time', Granitz et al. (2009) identified taking time with pupils to be positively linked to building rapport. As ELSAs and pupils attend school for five days each week, ELSA sessions are one of many activities they partake in. It may be suggested that this is very different to the role of therapists who offer clients weekly appointments of a specified duration and do not see them between appointments. It is possible that ELSAs feel they should always have time for pupils, as they want pupils to know that they are interested in them and care for them.

With regard to the need to form a 'two-way relationship' and to 'respect and understand the child', the researcher proposes that it is possible that it could be suggested that these themes reflect the bond part of Bordin's (1979) working

alliance[39]. Therefore, it may be suggested that ELSAs may be supporting the development of the bond aspect of the working alliance when developing rapport and when getting to know pupils. It should be noted that a number of participants used the word 'bond' when discussing this theme.

The author proposes that these themes may also reflect Rogers' (1957) third and fourth necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change. That is, being congruent and communicating unconditional positive regard[40]. It could also be suggested that, through sharing personal information, ELSAs may be considered to be using social conversation which is an indicator of rapport (Kyriacou, 2009).

The researcher suggests that it may be interpreted that the theme 'Having a two-way relationship' may be considered to reflect Rogers' (1957) fifth necessary and sufficient condition for therapeutic change; that is, empathising. It is possible that empathy may be used by ELSAs to help pupils feel safe and understood and, therefore, might be used to develop the bond part of the working alliance (Greenberg, 2007).

Additionally, the researcher suggests that the theme 'Respecting and understanding children as individuals', may be considered to resemble some of the ways

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[39] Greenberg (2007, p.51) called this bond *"a bond of trust and respect"*.

[40] Participants stated that ELSAs should be honest, open and approachable, value pupils' opinions and show respect, not judge pupils, share personal information and find common ground with pupils. They should also be understanding of pupils and let them be themselves.

Greenberg (2007) proposed therapists may help develop the bond[41]. He suggested therapists initially accept the clients' experiences without challenging them. ELSAs are school staff, not therapists, however they may be expressing understanding and concern for pupils and may develop their understanding of pupils (Greenberg, 2007).

When discussing this theme, the importance of being positive arose[42]. The author suggests that this may be considered to reflect some concepts of solution focused brief therapy (SFBT). SFBT focuses on an individual's strengths and qualities as well as solutions and preferred futures (O'Connell, 2003). The therapist empowers the client to change through the construction of solutions, therefore, the client is not considered to be "inadequate or dysfunctional" (O'Connell, 2003, p. 2). De Shazer (1985) claims therapists and clients can work together focussing on positive features which may develop into solutions[43]. The researcher suggests that it could be suggested that being positive might enable school staff, such as ELSAs, to show an interest in the child as an individual (George, Iveson & Ratner, 1990).

Three other factors perceived to facilitate the development of the relationship, that is, 'Trust', 'Confidentiality' and 'Flexibility' were however, considered to be barriers to maintaining the relationship should they not occur. Participants possibly considered it to be difficult to develop a relationship without spending time doing so, without partaking in open, two-way conversation and without showing respect and

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[41] Such as showing acceptance, compassion and understanding and being respectful.

[42] For example, praising pupils, helping them see their strengths rather than focusing on their weaknesses and problems and not correcting pupils.

[43] De Shazer observed that by strengthening 'solution' behaviours, they began to overshadow 'problem' behaviours (George, Iverson, & Ratner, 1990).

understanding. They may have considered factors such as 'trust', 'confidentiality' and 'flexibility' to have a less immediate effect on the relationship, therefore, may have perceived their absence to have a negative impact on maintaining, but not on developing, the relationship.

Regarding 'Trust', it may be interpreted that this resembles some aspects of Bordin's (1979) working alliance bond which has been described as *"a warm trusting bond"* (Greenberg, 2007, p.51) and consists of an emotional attachment between therapist and client which is created as a result of their work together (Andrusyna, Tang, DeRubeis & Luborsky, 2001). Granitz et al. (2009) also suggested that trust developed rapport.

Although 'confidentiality' does not feature in the theories or models cited in the literature review, the researcher suggests that it may be an important aspect of the work of ELSAs. Currently there is no national code of conduct for TAs, however, TAs are expected to adhere to the code of conduct of the school in which they work. The researcher suggests that confidentiality may form an important part of this code of conduct.

Furthermore, the researcher suggests that it could be considered that flexibility may be perceived to resemble some aspects of two key principles of SFBT, that is, *"If it's not working, do something different"* and *"If it works, do more of it"* (de Shazer et al., 2007, p.2).

Interestingly, the researcher suggests that four of the themes which may possibly be perceived to facilitate the development of the relationship, that is, 'Pupil talks and ELSA listens', 'Undertake enjoyable activities', 'Tasks and goals, and a 'Room or place to work', may not be considered to be barriers to either developing or maintaining the relationship. It may be interpreted that perhaps ELSAs may feel that, although these factors may help develop the relationship, in their absence it may still be possible to form a strong relationship. For example, it could be suggested that taking part in enjoyable activities together and having a quiet and private place to work, may not be considered to be essential to developing a relationship within school settings[44].

As regards the theme 'Pupil talks and ELSA listens', Granitz et al. (2009) recognised that allowing clients to talk freely, listening to clients and paying attention, were approaches which developed rapport. Bradley (2010) also reported that ELSAs mentioned that some pupils just need to talk to someone.

Regarding 'setting tasks and goals' for pupils[45], the author suggests that this theme appears to relate to the task agreement and goal agreement parts of Bordin's (1979) working alliance. It may also be suggested that, if pupils are able to say what they

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[44] It could be suggested that many pupils and teachers build strong relationships despite the fact that they will usually spend their time together in a noisy classroom where they will have to complete tasks such as spelling tests that would not usually be considered to be enjoyable.

[45] For example, informing pupils what they will be doing during ELSA sessions, asking pupils if they want to improve anything and working together with pupils to form a strategy.

would like to improve, they may be in a state of incongruence, which is Rogers'
(1957) second necessary and sufficient condition for therapeutic change.

In addition to this, clients' goals are a fundamental component of SFBT, therefore,
clients are supported to develop a picture of 'life without the problem', and realistic
and achievable tasks are set (de Shazer, 1988). The researcher suggests that it
might be interpreted that ELSAs may give compliments which may help children set
goals and support children to develop suggestions on how they could change in
order to achieve longer term goals.

Additionally, participants mentioned the importance of 'having a room or place to go'
during ELSA sessions and perceived this to facilitate the development of the
relationship[46]. The need for a place to work is pertinent to staff working with
individuals or groups of pupils in schools.

4.2 Factors Impacting on the Maintenance of the ELSA-Pupil Relationship

The researcher suggests that it may be interpreted that the participants identified
seven factors which may facilitate the maintenance of the ELSA-pupil relationship.
That is, 'Giving time', 'Having a two-way relationship', 'Respecting and
understanding the child as an individual', 'Trust', 'Confidentiality', 'Flexibility' and
'Pupil talks while ELSA listens'. The researcher suggests that all these factors may
also be considered to facilitate the development of the relationship. This may

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[46] They suggested that this should be a consistent, private, quiet and welcoming place that is relaxing and safe.

suggest that ELSAs should continue many of the things they do when developing a relationship otherwise the strength of the relationship may not be maintained[47].

The researcher suggests that it may be possible that a number of aspects of the therapist variables, personality factors and techniques which positively influence the development and maintenance of the alliance, as identified by Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003), may be considered to be reflected in these themes. For example, being trustworthy, flexible, interested and alert, attending to patients' experience, and facilitation of expression of affect.

4.3 Factors Which Act as Barriers to the Relationship

The author suggests that it may be interpreted that seven factors may have been considered to act as barriers to maintaining the relationship, that is, 'Not giving time', Not having a two-way relationship', 'Not respecting and understanding the child as an individual', 'Not showing trust', 'Breaching confidentiality', 'Being inflexible' and 'Having multiple roles in school'. It is interesting to note that, doing the opposite of all of these, except 'having multiple roles in school', may be interpreted to be perceived to both facilitate the development and maintenance of the relationship, further suggesting that these factors may play a major role in facilitating the ELSA-pupil relationship.

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[47] It is interesting to note that the three factors considered to help develop the relationship are also not perceived to be a barrier to the developing relationship if they do not occur. This may suggest that, although they have a positive impact on developing the relationship, they perhaps play a more minor role.

Interestingly, it could be interpreted that only four of the factors ELSAs considered may act as barriers to maintaining the relationship may be perceived to act as barriers to developing the relationship[48]. It is possible therefore, that it could be suggested that ELSAs may perceive the number of factors which can have a negative impact on the relationship to increase once the relationship is established.

With regard to 'Giving time', research suggests that time plays an important role in both establishing and strengthening the alliance (Klee, Albeson & Muller, 1990). This may imply that time constraints might possibly act as a barrier to maintaining the bond between ELSA and pupil.

Regarding 'Not having a two-way relationship' and 'Not respecting and understanding the child as an individual', it is possible that it may be suggested that these themes reflect the therapist attributes and techniques proposed by Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2001) to negatively impact the therapeutic alliance[49].

Regarding ELSAs' 'multiple roles within school', the researcher suggests that participants may have perceived these to act as a barrier to developing and maintaining the relationship. They suggested that this may have been because they sometimes had to discipline pupils when they were teaching a class or when on playground duty and that this had a negative impact on the relationship between themselves and the pupil concerned. This is once again very specific to the work of school staff.

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[48] Namely, 'Not giving time', 'Not having a two-way relationship', 'Not respecting and understanding the child as an individual' and 'Having multiple roles in school'.
[49] For example, being critical, being rigid and over-structuring.

It could be interpreted that the factors 'trust', 'confidentiality' and 'flexibility' were considered to be barriers to maintaining, but not to developing the relationship. Therefore, it may be possible that they have a less immediate effect on the relationship. This may be due to the fact that pupils develop trust in ELSAs over time, therefore, confidentiality may not be important in the early stages of the relationship before the child feels safe enough to divulge personal information. Furthermore, it may also be suggested that it is possible pupils may not be aware of the activities and games available during sessions, therefore, may only begin to choose activities when they have experienced a variety of them. This may suggest that flexibility may gradually become more important.

Additionally, the author suggests that it could be interpreted that the 'child's behaviour' may be perceived to be a barrier to developing, but not maintaining the relationship. This may suggest that 'difficult' behaviours exhibited by pupils may make it problematic for the ELSA to engage pupils and begin to build a relationship with them. However, it is possible that once they have succeeded in doing this, the behaviour may not impact on the relationship. It is interesting to note that this theme is related to within-child factors. It may be interpreted that participants perceived only ELSA actions and qualities, and factors relating to the school setting to be facilitators of the development and maintenance of the relationship. However, they identified some pupil behaviours to be a barrier to developing the relationship. It is possible that participants may have felt it was the responsibility of the ELSA to develop and maintain the ELSA-pupil relationship and that challenging behaviours exhibited by pupils can make this task difficult.

Furthermore, it may be interpreted that the participants mentioned that pupils not accepting their problems and blaming others, may act as a barrier to developing the relationship. It could be suggested that this could possibly imply that these children may not be in a state of incongruence, therefore, they may not be experiencing a discrepancy between their real and ideal-selves (Rogers, 1957).

4.4 Aspects of the Relationship Considered to be Important

The researcher suggests that it could be interpreted that the participants may have considered there to be six important aspects of the relationship, that is, 'Giving time', Having a two-way relationship', 'Respecting and understanding the child as an individual', 'Trust', 'Confidentiality' and 'Pupil talks while ELSA listens'. It is interesting to note that these are six of the seven themes which the researcher suggests may have been perceived to facilitate the development of the relationship[50].

4.5 The role of the ELSA

The author suggests that it is possible that participants may have considered the work of the ELSA to involve 'Giving time' and 'Having a two-way relationship'. These are the only two themes to have emerged under every key question, which may

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[50] The only major theme considered to facilitate development of the relationship but not to be an important aspect of the relationship is 'Flexibility'. This may be because although participants considered it to be important to be flexible they did not perceive it to be an aspect of the relationship when answering the relevant questions during the interview process.

suggest that ELSAs may perceive them to be the two most important factors with regard to building strong relationships with pupils.

It may also be interpreted that participants reported that the ELSA role had to be undertaken all day every day and spoke about the need to always be there for pupils. Bradley (2010) also raised concerns regarding time constraints for ELSAs.

Furthermore, it may be suggested that participants might have perceived the work of ELSAs to include 'working with children experiencing difficulties'. Although the researcher interpreted that this theme only emerged when discussing the ELSA's role, it should be noted that it was mentioned by all twelve participants, therefore, may be considered a major aspect of their work. Many of the difficulties the participants spoke about were also identified by Bradley (2010) in her research exploring the ELSA role[51].

It may also be possible that participants also perceived the ELSA's role to include 'undertaking enjoyable activities' and may have considered it important that sessions were fun[52]. It could be suggested that through these activities they may be engaging in purposive work which Hatcher and Barends (2006) suggested will contribute to the alliance. Hatcher and Barends (2006) proposed that any feature of an intervention that promotes and supports engagement in purposive work will contribute to the alliance.

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[51] . For example, participants mentioned supporting children with their emotions, self-esteem, anger problems, behaviour problems, communication difficulties, as well as helping children to deal with bereavement, transition, illness in the family and divorce.

[52] Participants spoke about activities such as playing games, making things, cooking and using puppets.

4.6 Summary

It is suggested that the themes which emerged may reflect some aspects of some theories of client-therapist interaction, for example, Rogers' necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic change (Rogers, 1957) and the working alliance (Bordin, 1979), in addition to the therapist variables identified by Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2001, 2003) as influencing the alliance. Therefore, it may be suggested that some aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship resemble a small number of aspects of the relationship between therapists and clients and that some of the characteristics and actions of successful ELSAs may be similar to a small number of the characteristics and actions of successful therapists.

The researcher also suggests that some of the themes may reflect aspects of the concept of SFBT (de Shazer, 1988; de Shazer et al., 2007; O' Connell, 2005) and some of the approaches Granitz et al., (2009) recognised developed rapport.

Futhermore, 'time' may impact on the alliance between ELSA and pupil, in addition to a number of factors which are not related to the research literature about therapeutic relationships but are pertinent to the school environment, for example, 'having a room or place to work' and 'having multiple roles within school.

4.7 Limitations and implications for Future Research

The study was undertaken within one LA in the UK and involved a small number of participants. Consequently it is recognised that the results may not generalise to the work of ELSAs throughout the UK. The data received from ELSAs is also qualitative, therefore, relates primarily to their perceptions of working within one primary school within one LA. Further research may determine whether similar results are found in larger or similar samples.

The study recruited ELSAs working with KS 2 pupils on an individual basis, therefore, the results may not generalise to working with younger or older pupils or groups. Future research involving ELSAs who work with pupils of differing ages or groups of pupils, could be undertaken to improve knowledge in this field.

The results relate only to ELSAs perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship. Pupil perceptions of the relationship, and the impact of the relationship on outcomes for children, are not explored. Future research could study the impact of the relationship on outcomes and could also involve a triangulation approach exploring the pupils' perceptions of the relationship as well as ELSAs' perceptions.

The experience of the ELSAs in the study ranged from just over one year to over five years. No attempt was made to explore whether their perceptions of the important aspects of the relationship changed with experience, therefore, future research may investigate this.

Furthermore, it could be suggested that only the most enthusiastic ELSAs volunteered to take part. This may have impacted on the results as it is possible that, due to their enthusiasm for the role, they considered factors such as the need to give time to pupils as more important than less enthusiastic ELSAs might.

4.8 Implications for the professional practice of EPs

Given that ELSAs are trained and supervised by EPs, the results may be used by EPs to inform the future training and supervision of ELSAs. For example, it could be suggested that the themes that emerged may reflect some key features of Bordin's (1979) working alliance and some aspects of Rogers' (1957) necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change. It may be suggested that it could be beneficial to include these psychological concepts within the ELSA training or to discuss them during supervision sessions. It is possible that this would further equip ELSAs with psychological knowledge about developing and maintaining relationships and would further increase the capacity of schools to support children with social and emotional difficulties.

It may also be interpreted that the themes might also reflect the therapist characteristics and techniques Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2001; 2003) identified to impact negatively or positively on the alliance and the personality factors linked to rapport by Granitz et al. (2009). It may, therefore, be suggested that it may also be beneficial for EPs to discuss these studies with ELSAs within supervision sessions,

as this information may support ELSAs to build stronger relationships with pupils and thus might possibly improve outcomes for children receiving ELSA support.

It may be also suggested that a small number of the themes which emerged in this study reflected some of the basic concepts of SFBT. Research evidence has acknowledged the positive impact that SFBT can have when used in schools (Kim, 2008; George, Iveson & Ratner, 1999) and Colley (1999) suggested that SFBT is suitable for use by teachers *as "it does not presume psychological training, and doesn't delve dangerously into children's psyche"* (Colley, 1999, p. 1). Furthermore, Cameron (2006) suggested that EPs may assist teachers in using solution focused (SF) techniques. It may be suggested that EPs could perhaps assist ELSAs to use SF techniques and that SFBT may be suitable for use by ELSAs for similar reasons.

Additionally, EPs may wish to discuss with ELSAs the importance of giving time to pupils as this emerged as a major theme. The idea that time may impact on the relationship which develops between two individuals is not new. Farrell et al (2006) reviewed the role and function of the EP and found that the limited frequency of EP contact with service users was perceived as a barrier. They reported that time-constraints and the use of time allocation systems may impact on EPs' ability to develop a bond. It may be suggested that EPs should remain conscious of the importance of time in developing a bond with the ELSAs whom they supervise. The relationship between ELSAs and their supervising EPs might be considered to be very important as it may be suggested that a strong relationship could perhaps support the ELSAs' ability to learn psychological theories and concepts, and may

enable ELSAs to speak more openly during supervision sessions about any problems regarding their work.

Additionally, it may be suggested that it would be beneficial for EPs to support schools to develop a whole school approach to the ELSA programme. A number of the themes which emerged reflected managerial issues within schools, for example, having a room or place to work, having multiple roles within school and giving time to pupils. It is possible, therefore, that EPs could work with schools and help them to develop a whole school approach to ELSA support.

4.9 Conclusion

It may be suggested that some of the factors which ELSAs perceive to be facilitators or barriers to developing and maintaining the ELSA-pupil relationship may reflect some aspects of Rogers' (1957) necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change. It may also be suggested they may reflect aspects of Bordin's (1979) working alliance and a few of the therapist characteristics and techniques Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2001; 2003) identified to impact on the alliance. Additionally, it could be interpreted that aspects of some of the themes might reflect some aspects of SFBT (de Shazer, 1998) as well as a number of antecedents of rapport (Granitz et al., 2009). Therefore, it is possible that it would be beneficial for EPs to teach ELSAs about these concepts and theories during training and supervision.

Additionally, it may be suggested that a number of factors emerged which are pertinent to school environments and may reflect whole school issues regarding successful employment of the ELSA programme within schools. It may therefore, be suggested that it could be beneficial for EPs to work systemically with schools to ensure the optimum success of the ELSA programme.

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Part One

Reflective summary

An Exploration of the Perceptions of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) of the ELSA-Pupil Relationship.

Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) Reflective Summary

Part One: 2734 words (excluding titles and references)

Part Two: 2935 words (excluding titles and references)

Part 1: Contribution to Knowledge

The following critical review presents an overview of the processes undertaken by the researcher, with particular reference given to how these processes have affected the contribution to knowledge in the field of educational psychology made by the current research study.

1.1 The Researcher's Background and Current Position

Prior to embarking on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology course at Cardiff University, the researcher worked as a class teacher in a primary school for over a decade. During this time the researcher worked with a number of TAs, many of whom, she felt, had a positive impact on the quality of her teaching and enabled her to give increased individual attention to the pupils in her class.

More recently the researcher has worked as a trainee educational psychologist (EP) during which time she has been involved in the training and supervision of emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs). She perceives the ELSA programme to have a positive impact on schools and the staff and pupils within these schools.

The researcher acknowledges that she has many positive experiences with regard to the role and impact of TAs within schools. It is possible, therefore, that these may have had an impact on the design of the study and on her interpretation of the data presented within this thesis.

1.2 Development of the Research Problem

The introduction of the Every Child Matters (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2003) agenda in England and, in Wales, Children and Young People: Rights to action (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004), has placed considerable importance on emotional literacy (EL) within education. These agendas place emphasis on a holistic approach to supporting children in their development and as a result schools are required to support pupils' physical, mental and emotional well-being. Burton (2008) suggested that EL programmes may assist schools in doing so.

As a trainee EP, the researcher has worked with ELSAs. It appeared to the researcher that having a trained ELSA within a school meant that there was a member of staff available to work with vulnerable children.

Reviews of the components of school-wide programmes aimed at enhancing pupil wellbeing have shown that programmes which focus on developing a broad range of social-emotional skills, and that are embedded in the curriculum, have a higher incidence of success than programmes that address only one set of skills (Devaney, O'Brien, Resnik, Keister & Weissberg, 2006). ELSAs are trained to develop a range of social-emotional skills, therefore, this may increase the likelihood of success of the ELSA programme.

The ELSA programme is a topic which has attracted only a small amount of research. However, this meant that the researcher felt overwhelmed by the endless possible topics that could be studied.

1.3 Development of the Research Question

As a trainee EP the researcher used the Constructionist Model of Informed Reasoned Action (Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis & Carroll, 2003), with its concept of enabling dialogue placed at its core, to guide and support her thinking. In addition to this, the use of techniques such as Motivational Interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002) raised her awareness of the importance of the client-therapist relationship. The researcher began to question whether the relationship between ELSAs and pupils was different to that between pupils and teachers.

Burton (2004; 2006) suggested that a number of pupils who can be disruptive in class continue to be disruptive in a group setting. These pupils usually require individual support before they are ready to work in a group. For this reason the ELSA initiative is intended primarily to be an individualised intervention and may be suited to these pupils (Burton, 2008). Therefore, the researcher chose to explore the ELSA-pupil relationship when ELSAs work with individual pupils.

The researcher began with a broad research question but after reading about theories of therapist-client interaction, particularly Bordin's (1979) working alliance and the suggestion by researchers such as Robertson (1996, 1999, 2000) that this could inform education practices, the researcher developed six research questions about the role of the ELSA, the aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship perceived to be important and the factors perceived to be facilitators or barriers to developing and maintaining the ELSA-pupil relationship.

1.4 Development of the Research Paradigm

Due to the fact that the researcher was interested in the perceptions that ELSAs held of the ELSA-pupil relationship it was decided that a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm with relativist ontology would be the most appropriate paradigm to employ during the study as there is currently little research data about the ELSA-pupil relationship. Relativist ontology suggests that there is no absolute reality, therefore, individuals interpret and understand the world around them in terms of their own perspectives. It is consistent with a social constructionist perspective (see Burr, 2010) within which research aims to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge, and participants are considered to support researchers to construct 'reality' (Robson, 2011).

The researcher felt it important that she undertake the research using an interpretivism paradigm, therefore, ensuring that she remained independent of the research whilst at the same time exploring the perceptions, experiences and reported behaviour of the participants in the context of the social environments within which they operate (Burr, 2010). This constructivist/interpretivist paradigm was considered pertinent as the research aimed to understand the participants' constructions of their roles as ELSAs and their perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship, particularly the aspects they perceive to be important and the factors which they perceive to be facilitators and barriers to that relationship.

This is in contrast to positivism which proposes there to be an absolute observable reality (Willig, 2001). Research within a positivist ontology sees the researcher and participant as totally independent persons, and through the use of experiments and statistical analysis (Frankel and Devers, 2000) endeavours to control variables and provide objective knowledge, and considers social relationships to be facts which can be examined in *"an object like manner"* (Sciarra, 1998, p.38). A positivist epistemology was rejected for the purpose of the current research as it did not suit the aims of the study in exploring the perceptions of ELSAs regarding the ELSA-pupil relationship.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that researchers using qualitative methods should make clear the knowledge and assumptions they bring to the research and acknowledge the active part they play. This helps to ensure validity and reliability within the research (Holloway & Todres, 2003). The researcher in the current study has previously worked as a primary school class teacher within a neighbouring local authority (LA), and, therefore, brought this experience to the research. She tried to remain as objective as possible when collecting and analysing the data.

It became apparent that, of the little research available into the ELSA programme, much appeared to use quantitative measures, that is pre- and post- intervention ratings made by teachers and parents, to explore the progress made by pupils receiving ELSA intervention (Burton, Traill & Norgate, 2009; Burton, Osborne & Norgate, 2010).

The researcher felt that semi-structured interviews, designed to explore ELSAs'
perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship, would produce an original piece of
research and generate data regarding a topic that had not previously been studied.
Semi-structured interviews, rather than structured interviews, were used so as to
provide flexibility and enable the constructs of ELSAs to be elicited.

Thematic analysis was selected to analyse the data. Braun and Clarke (2006)
produced a six step guide to conducting thematic analysis. The researcher followed
this guide to analysis so as to ensure that the methodology would be transparent and
robust.

As the current research aimed to explore the perceptions of ELSAs, the researcher
felt it important that the participants guided the research and the themes that
emerged. Therefore, the researcher adopted an inductive approach. This is a
'bottom up' process (Frith & Gleeson, 2004) ensuring that the themes are strongly
linked to the data, thus producing a rich description of the whole data. This is in
contrast to the 'top down' approach of theoretical thematic analysis which codes the
data into pre-existing categories (Boyatzis, 1998).

Thematic analysis was chosen due to it being a flexible tool that is not closely linked
to a particular epistemology. It can be used within existing psychological theories
and epistemological positions. Other approaches are theoretically bound. For
example, interpretative phenomenological analysis has a phenomenological
epistemology which strongly emphasises the lived experience of the participants and
gives this experience primacy (Smith & Osborne, 2003). Grounded theory however,

attempts to impose theory upon the interpreted data and develop a model to explain the phenomena (Robson, 2011).

1.5 Contribution of the Research Findings

The research findings contribute to knowledge in the field of educational psychology as the study explores questions that have not previously been explored. Previous research into the ELSA programme has looked at the impact of ELSA support on the pupils receiving it and the nature of ELSA work. To the researcher's knowledge, no research has previously considered the ELSA-pupil relationship, therefore, the current research contributes to understanding of this relationship with regard to the factors which ELSAs perceive to facilitate or act as barriers to the relationship. It improves understanding of what ELSAs do to develop relationships with pupils and the ways in which the school setting can support ELSAs to build these relationships.

It may be suggested that a number of the themes which emerged from the data may suggest that the factors which ELSAs may perceive to be facilitators or barriers to developing and maintaining the ELSA-pupil relationship may reflect some aspects of some theories of client-therapist interaction, for example, Rogers' (1957) necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change and Bordin's (1979) working alliance. Therefore, it may be suggested that some aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship may resemble aspects of the therapist-client relationship.

Furthermore, it may be suggested that some of the themes resemble a number of

the therapist characteristics and techniques Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2001; 2003) identified to impact on the alliance. Therefore, it may be suggested that some of the characteristics and actions of successful ELSAs may be similar to some of those of successful therapists.

The importance of being positive also emerged. The researcher suggests that this idea of focussing on the positive may be considered to reflect some aspects of the concept of solution focused brief therapy (SFBT) (De Shazer, 1988). SFBT focuses on an individual's strengths and qualities as well as solutions and preferred futures (O'Connell, 2003). De Shazer (1985) claims therapists and clients can work together, focussing on positive features which may develop into solutions.

The themes may also be interpreted to reflect a number of antecedents of rapport (Granitz et al., 2009). This suggests that many of the actions undertaken by ELSAs, when they are building and maintaining a relationship with pupils, may be similar to those found in the research literature to impact on rapport in the classroom.

In addition to this, the researcher suggests that a number of factors emerged which are pertinent to school environments and may reflect whole school issues regarding successful employment of the ELSA programme within schools. For example, participants mentioned the importance of 'having a room or a place to go' when undertaking ELSA sessions. They suggested that this should be a consistent, private, quiet and welcoming place that is relaxing and safe.

It may also be interpreted that participants may have perceived that 'having multiple roles within school' acts as a barrier to developing and maintaining the relationship due to the fact that they sometimes had to discipline pupils who were receiving ELSA support, for example, when they were on playground duty.

It is also worth noting that it may be suggested that the themes which emerged suggested that only some of the factors ELSAs perceived to facilitate the development of the relationship, that is, 'Giving time', Having a two-way relationship' and 'Respecting and understanding the child as an individual', were perceived to be barriers to the relationship should they be absent. This may suggest that ELSAs perceived these three factors to be essential to the development of the relationship, whereas they may have considered the other factors to be advantageous, but not essential, when developing the relationship. 'Giving time' and 'Having a two-way relationship' were the only two themes to emerge across all six key questions suggesting that they may be the most important factors with regard to facilitating the ELSA-pupil relationship.

When considering the barriers to the relationship, it may be interpreted that it emerged that seven factors were considered to act as barriers to maintaining the relationship, that is, 'Not giving time', Not having a two-way relationship', 'Not respecting and understanding the child as an individual', 'Having multiple roles in school', 'Not showing trust', 'Breaching confidentiality' and 'Being inflexible'. The researcher suggests that interestingly only the first four of these were perceived to act as barriers to developing the relationship. It could, therefore, be suggested that

ELSAs perceive the number of factors which can have a negative impact on the relationship to increase once the relationship is established.

Furthermore, it may be interpreted that ELSAs did not perceive any pupil behaviours to facilitate the relationship, however, they perceived a number of pupil behaviours to be a barrier to developing the relationship. This may suggest that ELSAs may perceive it to be the ELSAs responsibility to develop and maintain the relationship but may consider a number of 'difficult' behaviours exhibited by pupils to make this problematic.

1.6 Application of the Findings to the Practice of Educational Psychology

As applied psychologists, EPs seek answers to theoretical questions which are grounded in informed and reasoned action (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008). Equipped with this knowledge, EPs would be able to include the teaching of aspects of the theories of therapist-client interaction discussed, in the training and supervision of ELSAs. It might be suggested that, should ELSAs develop an understanding of these theories, they may be more successful in developing and maintaining the ELSA-pupil relationship. The new knowledge may, therefore, enable EPs to offer strategies to empower these professionals in their role working with children and to build the capacity of schools to deal with children's difficulties.

As the themes also reflect aspects of SFBT (De Shazer, 1988) it is suggested that EPs may wish to develop training in SFBT for ELSAs. Research evidence has shown that SFBT has proved to be beneficial when used in educational settings. For example, Kim (2008) found, when undertaking a meta-analysis of research involving the use of SFBT focusing on behaviour problems and relationship difficulties, that studies involving children within schools displayed a medium effect size. Kim (2008) concluded that SFBT has a positive effect when used with school children.

In addition to this, Franklin, Biever, Moore, Clemons, and Scamardo (2001) studied the outcome of SFBT undertaken with seven primary school pupils with behavioural and learning difficulties. The children received five to ten therapy sessions and their teachers received a weekly consultation. The results were found to be positive for five of the children. The methodology of this study can, however, be questioned as only two teachers were asked to rate the impact of the intervention and these ratings were subjective. Furthermore, Franklin et al. (2001) found that the teachers who participated in consultations tended to observe the greatest amount of pupil progress. This suggests that the knowledge they had about the intervention may have affected the results.

Colley (1999) feels SFBT is suitable for use by teachers as "it does not presume psychological training, and doesn't delve dangerously into children's psyche" (p. 1). SFBT does not study the cause of the difficulties, therefore, all that is needed is for the pupil and the school to want aspects of the pupil's life to be different (George, Iverson & Ratner, 2006).

Further to this, 'Focusing on Solutions: A Positive approach to improving behaviour' (DfES, 2005) suggests that SF methods can be successful in improving behaviour in schools and states that SF methods assist *"teachers, and others involved in developing effective approaches to behavioural issues"* (p. 5).

The results also suggest that it might be beneficial for EPs to work systemically with schools to ensure the optimum success of the ELSA programme. At the systemic level EPs play a role in empowering school staff to support children. The ELSA initiative illustrates one way in which a psychological service is able to make a large-scale contribution to increasing the awareness of school staff regarding the importance of EL to the success of their pupils (Burton, 2008).

EL, it has been suggested, is a concept that promotes the knowledge, understanding and skills that form the basis of emotional wellbeing for both individuals and whole school communities. Roffey (2008) stated that *"in a school community everyone is affected by issues of connectedness and trust and the quality of relationships at every level."* (Roffey, 2008, p.30). Despite the evidence for working across the whole school to address social and emotional issues being strong (Weare & Gray, 2002), the main focus is often on pupils rather than generating wellbeing through building positive relationships with all members of the school (Roffey, 2008).

A number of the themes that emerged, such as, 'having a room or a place to go' and 'having multiple roles within school', may be suggested to reflect whole school issues that could have an impact on the successful implementation of the ELSA programme. Therefore, EPs could support schools to develop school systems which provide optimum conditions for the success of the ELSA programme.

Part 2: Critical Account of Research Practitioner

During the research process researchers aim to contribute to the general knowledge and understanding of the specific topic into which the research is being conducted. In addition to this, the researcher him/herself gains experience from the process. Throughout this study the researcher was aware that her knowledge and understanding of research processes was improving and on reflection feels that she has gained personally and professionally from the experience.

The following critical account discusses the development and learning of the research practitioner during the research process.

2.1 Research Rationale

Prior to the researcher deciding on a topic for the current thesis research, numerous colleagues had suggested that the researcher should choose a topic in which she had a keen interest due to the many hours that would be spent working on it. The researcher was also aware of the importance of the relevance of the research to the practice of educational psychology and the importance of contributing new knowledge to the research literature (Roberts, 2007).

The researcher was concerned that it might be considered inappropriate to use personal interest and experience of the topic, however, through undertaking further reading she became aware that this was not the case, and that it was an acceptable place to begin (Etherington, 2005; Lowe, 2007; Roberts, 2007).

Research demonstrates a positive correlation between alliance and treatment outcome (Hovarth, Del Re, Flückiger & Symonds, 2011) and that a number of therapist variables impact on the development and maintenance of the alliance (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2001, 2003). Rogers (2009) recommended that the concept of the working alliance should be applied to the teaching and learning process. In the light of the research, the researcher developed a desire to explore the ELSA-pupil relationship.

2.2 Epistemology and Methodology

The researcher feels that undertaking qualitative research, despite the fact that this may sometimes be sensitive, is necessary if researchers are to develop their understanding of many aspects of today's society (Dickson-Swift et al., 2006). Such qualitative methods often position researchers close to the real life of the participants.

The researcher used a qualitative, social constructionist methodology to enable her to *"expand on the; 'what' questions of human existence asked by positivism to include the 'why' and the 'how' questions asked by constructionism"* (Darlaston-Jones, 2001, p.25).

It is also acknowledged the theories of client-therapist interaction and the constructs of immediacy and rapport are themselves socially constructed. Therefore it could be argued that the researcher is applying theoretical constructions to participants' perceptions. A criticism of this methodology is that the data consists of the

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researcher's constructions of the participants' perceptions and constructions, therefore, the data may be interpreted differently by different people. Additionally, the participants did not refer to the theories of client interaction due to the fact that they did not have any knowledge of these theories. This means that it is possible that inaccuracies have occurred in the researcher's interpretation of the data.

2.3 Research Design

Time constraints played a part in the design of the study. The researcher was aware of the need to complete a robust piece of research within a twelve month period during which the researcher was on placement for four days each week. For this reason the researcher was aware of the fact that the study needed to be manageable, whilst at the same time unique and in-depth.

Due to the limited time available to carry out the research, the researcher continued to read further literature during the research process. At times, the acquisition of new knowledge led the researcher to question the appropriateness of the interview schedule and research design, and to lack confidence in her ability to carry out the research accurately. The researcher was, however, aware that these thoughts could also be perceived positively as they indicated that the researcher was continuously reflecting on the research process.

The researcher also reflected on the fact that the research design was influenced greatly by what the researcher perceived to be important and of significance. The researcher often wondered whether or not other researchers and applied psychologists would have perceived the same things to be important, therefore,

would have designed a similar, or different, piece of research. This caused the researcher to be very aware of the need to maintain a reflexive stance throughout the research process (Darlaston-Jones, 2001; Henn, Weinstein & Foard, 2006).

2.4 Data Collection

The researcher had some difficulties recruiting participants at the start of the research process. Despite being aware of the difficulties frequently experienced by researchers in recruiting participants for research studies, it was not initially considered that recruitment would be difficult due to the fact that the researcher had been involved in supervising ELSAs during her placement within the LA concerned. The researcher was under the impression that being a familiar face would make the recruitment process easier. This, however, proved not to be the case. The researcher found the recruitment of participants an extremely difficult and time consuming process despite offering to undertake interviews at a time and place that was convenient for participants. This led to the researcher having to alter the recruitment criteria. Having initially specified that participants must have been working as an ELSA for three years, the researcher relaxed the criteria to include ELSAs who had been working as an ELSA for at least one year. This enabled the researcher to recruit from a much larger pool of potential participants, and to include the two interviews undertaken for the pilot study in the data as no significant changes were made to the interview questions. On reflection the researcher became aware that recruiting staff in schools during the final weeks of the academic year was the main barrier to the recruitment process because staff were under pressure to complete all their tasks prior to the Summer break.

The difficulty in recruitment may have been exacerbated by the fact that the information for participants had been sent to head teachers along with the gate keeper letter. It is possible that head teachers had not had time to read the information, therefore, many ELSAs who may have been interested in participating may not have even seen the information and, therefore, been given the option to participate. On reflection the researcher considered whether it would have been possible to contact the ELSAs directly, however, the ethical implications of this would need to be deliberated.

Semi structured interviews were conducted to enable participants to respond in depth and to allow unexpected issues and topics to emerge. The researcher was conscious of the impact she personally had on the interview process and, having had little experience of conducting semi-structured interviews, felt anxious about clarifying information and probing for further information. There has been some debate about how active or passive the researcher should remain during semi-structured interviews (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2004).

The researcher feels that, despite her best efforts not to influence the interview, it is possible that, whilst trying to explore the research questions fully, the researcher may have taken control of the interview. Henn et al. (2006) suggested that power imbalances such as this may cause participants to adjust their answers to interview questions, either consciously or unconsciously. The researcher tried to overcome this by conducting interviews at a time and place convenient to the participant and beginning with an informal rapport building phase, trying to make the participants feel as comfortable as possible.

Furthermore, the researcher was aware that she became more confident in conducting interviews during the process. Initially the researcher used her active listening skills to acknowledge the participants' answers, however as the interview process progressed, the researcher became more comfortable with being able to prompt participants so as to gain further information, without influencing the data given. Had the researcher not needed to adhere to such tight time constraints, she would have considered continuing the recruitment of participants during the following school term. This would have enabled the researcher to conduct further interviews, which due to her increased confidence in conducting these interviews, may have led to more thorough data being collected.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The ELSAs participating in the study work with some of the most vulnerable pupils within the mainstream school system. Although ELSAs were told prior to interviews that names of individuals would neither be solicited nor recorded, participants did on occasions give names during interviews. This raised ethical issues and the researcher overcame this by ensuring that names were not included in the interview transcripts.

Ethical issues were also encountered with regard to asking adults to discuss their personal views and experiences. During the interviews ELSAs were asked to consider facilitators and barriers to the relationship, thus it was important that participants were aware that their work or ability was not being judged. The fact that the researcher had been involved in supervising ELSAs may have had an influence

on the data because ELSAs may have felt that they needed to impress. Additionally, participants were asked to think of pupils with whom they had developed relationships and the researcher was aware that these questions might stir up emotions as the pupils they were working with were often vulnerable children. It was therefore important to be rigorous when gaining informed consent and to ensure that participants fully understood the process and were happy to take part.

It was also very important to remain conscious of the issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were made aware that the data was to be stored anonymously and their attention was drawn to the fact that it would not be possible to identify any participant, any school or any case study they spoke about, in the final report. This was important when interviewing ELSAs who worked in schools in which the researcher had undertaken consultations as it is possible that she would remember who had given certain pieces of information, even after anonymising the data. It was also important that participants were assured that it would not be possible to identify any participants in the final report. This meant that the researcher had to ensure that all quotes chosen to illustrate themes were chosen carefully and would not identify any individuals, thus ensuring deep anonymity.

In addition to this, it was very important for the researcher to clarify her role as a researcher to the participants in the research study. This was due to the fact that the researcher had worked as a trainee EP in the LA where the research took place. It was important that participants understood that the role of the researcher is very different to that of the applied psychologist, therefore, advice or support would not be offered during the interview process.

2.6 Becoming a Researcher Using Qualitative Methods

Researchers should engage in constant self-appraisal and consider carefully the way in which their actions and experiences may impact on various stages of the research process (Dowling, 2006). Part way through the process the researcher discovered that writing a research journal was a valuable approach to undertaking this self-appraisal. She realised the importance of recording her thoughts as some thoughts were not immediately relevant, however, they were relevant later in the research process. The researcher feels that this is one aspect of the research process that she would do differently when embarking on her next piece of research. Therefore, in future research a notebook containing all thoughts about the research process would be an important tool from the start. This method is acknowledged in the literature, which suggests journals may support researchers to recognise their views and emotions, and the impact that these may have on their research (Darra, 2008).

The researcher was inexperienced in using the methodology utilised in this study, therefore, this has helped to develop her understanding of research methods as a whole. The researcher feels that she has developed her research skills and knowledge throughout the process and now feels that she is more able to consider research studies in a critical way.

The researcher invested effort in learning about the qualitative research process and in improving her knowledge and skills in this area. The researcher feels that seeking advice from her supervisor, colleagues and fellow trainees was very helpful.

Throughout the process, the researcher remained aware of the impact which she has on the research process, from developing and shaping the research, to conducting the interviews and analysing the data. The researcher used an inductive method of thematic analysis, therefore, looked at the data with an open mind without giving consideration to the models and theories discussed during the literature review. This ensured that the data was not biased in picking out themes linked to the theories and models discussed. The researcher acknowledges, however, that the fact that she had knowledge of these models and theories may still have impacted on the data. The researcher also acknowledges the fact that the themes which emerge from the data are her personal constructions of the data and, therefore, may be viewed differently by another researcher. To minimise this effect the researcher asked a colleague to look at and pass comment on her analysis and themes.

2.7 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen to analyse the data as the researcher felt that this enabled her to explore the perceptions of participants without being bound by particular theories. Thematic analysis is a research method in its own right and is *"not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework, and therefore, it can be used within different theoretical frameworks"* (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.81). Thematic analysis was chosen over content analysis as the researcher was not intending to turn the qualitative data into quantitative data (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

The researcher did her utmost to remain reflective throughout the process of data analysis and found that it was necessary to refer back to the raw data consistently whilst refining the themes. The process of refining the themes took a considerable amount of time as the data was quite fragmented. The researcher remained aware of

her own subjective opinions and tried not to let previous research findings influence her interpretations.

2.8 Interpreting Findings

The researcher found it very difficult to achieve a balance between presenting the most commonly occurring themes and those themes which were most relevant to the research questions and the research literature. At the same time the researcher was aware of the need to present the results within the word limit of the research paper. It was stated by Braun and Clarke (2006) that *"there is no right or wrong method for determining prevalence"* (p.83).

2.9 The Writing Process

The researcher found it difficult to begin the final writing process, as due to the large quantity of information it proved a daunting task. Pallant (2010) when referring to quantitative research methods stated that all aspects of research take longer than is first anticipated. The researcher was surprised about the amount of time taken to get started on this writing process and was not aware of the complexity of the task in committing the information to paper. On reflection, the fact that the researcher was on placement for four days each week and focused on her research for one day each week had an impact on the writing process. The researcher feels that a block of time, such as a few weeks, would have been beneficial enabling the researcher to immerse herself more fully in the process.

2.10 Organisation

The researcher initially found it quite difficult to organise the huge amount of information that she had accessed during the process. The researcher had to manage two separate filing systems, one for electronic copies of research papers and another for paper copies. The two systems became unmanageable, therefore the researcher found it necessary to organise the papers into categories. Within these categories the research could be placed into alphabetic order and the papers were much more accessible.

2.11 Editing

The researcher completed a draft of the thesis which was over the word count allowed. Therefore, the researcher set about editing the thesis. The researcher found that it was a difficult task as she was so involved in the research that it was difficult to identify those aspects which were less important than others. The researcher also found it difficult to produce two literature reviews, of very different lengths, on the same topic, as it proved very difficult to decide which aspects of the extended literature review would be omitted from the research paper.

2.12 Influence of the Research for the Work of the Applied Psychologist

The researcher feels that the ethical considerations confronted during the research process have influenced her consideration of the ethical implications of her work as an applied psychologist. The researcher believes she now has a much improved understanding of the process of gaining informed consent from service users and the implications of confidentiality for her work.

The researcher started the research process prior to undertaking ELSA supervision, therefore, was unaware of the role that ELSAs play in the inclusion of children with emotional difficulties in mainstream schools. The researcher now feels she has developed a greater knowledge of the role of ELSAs in supporting children and the important role that EPs play in training and supervising ELSAs. The findings of the research illustrate the ways ELSAs develop and maintain the ELSA-pupil relationship. Utilising this new knowledge in her work as a trainee EP means that the researcher is able to ensure that training and supervision sessions can support ELSAs in developing the ELSA-pupil relationship. Therefore, both experienced ELSAs and ELSAs in training are able to benefit from this knowledge. According to the research that proposes that the alliance is positively related to outcome (Horvath et al., 2011), this in turn may have an impact on the benefits experienced by pupils who receive ELSA support.

In addition to this, it is possible that the researcher may apply some of the findings to support the development of relationships between pupils and other school staff.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A1 Principal Educational Psychologist Gatekeeper Letter

Address of PEP

Date

Dear (Name of PEP)

I am a second year student on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology course in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my training I am proposing to carry out a study of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants' perceptions of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant-pupil relationship. The research aims to explore what aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship ELSAs perceive to be important. It also aims to explore the factors Emotional Literacy Support Assistants perceive to facilitate or act as barriers to the development and maintenance of the relationship.

I am writing to enquire whether you would be willing to grant me permission to approach the head teachers of local primary schools within the local authority to ask permission to recruit individuals to take part in this research.

The aim of the project is to explore ELSAs' perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship. It will explore what aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship ELSAs perceive to be important and the factors that ELSAs perceive to be facilitators or barriers to developing and maintaining a relationship with the pupils they work with. The researcher will afford attention to whether themes emerge that suggest that ELSA's perceptions of the factors affecting the relationship reflect the components of the working alliance (Bordin, 1979), and the researcher will explore whether the factors that ELSAs perceive to facilitate or act as barriers to the

relationship, are similar to those identified in the literature about the working alliance (Ackerman and Hilsenroth, 2001; 2003).

The research will involve interviewing ELSAs who trained at least one year previously, who work with KS 2 pupils on an individual basis within primary schools within the local authority, to explore their perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship.

I would be most grateful if you would consider granting me permission to recruit individuals from primary schools within your local authority to take part in the study and to conduct interviews with these individuals at times and locations convenient to them. My research is being supervised by Gillian Rhydderch, Academic Director and Professional Tutor. Her contact details can be found below.

For your information, I enclose a copy of the gatekeeper letter for head teachers and the information sheet for participants, which both explain the research. The consent form, the debrief form which will be given to participants on completion of the interviews and sample interview questions are also enclosed.

No names will be used during the interview and details relating to individuals will neither be solicited nor recorded. The performance of individuals is not being evaluated in any way. Information about any individual ELSA's performance or information about individual pupils that the ELSAs may have experience of working with will neither be solicited nor recorded. A process ensuring deep anonymity will be followed, including making sure that the responses of individuals will not be identifiable in the final report.

Interview data will be stored securely and confidentially and only the researcher will have access to it. Data will be anonymised two weeks after the interview so that information cannot be traced back to an individual. Participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any point before the interviews are anonymised without giving a reason.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information.

Regards,

Nicola Miles

Nicola Miles

Trainee Educational Psychologist

School of Psychology

Cardiff University

Tower Building

Park Place

Cardiff

CF10 3AT

Tel: 029 20874007

Email: MilesNS@Cardiff.ac.uk

Gillian Rhydderch

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Email: RhydderchGA@Cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix A2 Head Teacher Gatekeeper Letter

Name of Head teacher

Address of school

Date

Dear (Name of Head teacher)

I am a second year student on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology course in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my training I am carrying out a study of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants' (ELSAs) perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship.

I am writing to enquire whether you would be willing to grant me permission to approach ELSAs trained at least one year ago, who work on an individual basis with KS 2 pupils within your school, to ask whether they would be interested in taking part in this research.

The research aims to explore what aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship the ELSAs perceive to be important. It also aims to explore the factors ELSAs perceive to facilitate or act as barriers to the development and maintenance of the relationship. The research will involve interviewing ELSAs to explore their perceptions of these issues.

I would be most grateful if you would consider granting me permission to invite ELSAs, who trained at least one year ago, from your primary school to take part in the study and to conduct interviews with these individuals at times and locations convenient to them. My research is being supervised by Gillian Rhydderch, Academic Director and Professional Tutor. Her contact details can be found below.

For your information, I enclose a copy of the information sheet for participants which explains the research, the consent form, the debrief form which will be given to participants on completion of the interviews and sample interview questions.

No names will be used during the interview and details relating to individuals will neither be solicited nor recorded. The performance of individuals is not being evaluated in any way. Information about any individual ELSA's performance, or information about individual pupils that the ELSAs may have experience of working with, will neither be solicited nor recorded. A process ensuring deep anonymity will be followed, including making sure that the responses of individuals will not be identifiable in the final report.

Interview data will be stored securely and confidentially and only the researcher will have access to it. Data will be anonymised two weeks after the interview so that information cannot be traced back to an individual. Participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any point before the interviews are anonymised without giving a reason.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information.

Regards,

Nicola Miles

Nicola Miles

Trainee Educational Psychologist

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Appendix A3: Information Sheet

Information Sheet

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a trainee educational psychologist in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my training I am carrying out research on Emotional Literacy Support Assistants' (ELSAs) perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship. The research aims to explore what aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship the ELSAs perceive to be important. It also aims to explore the factors ELSAs perceive to facilitate or act as barriers to the development and maintenance of the relationship.

As an ELSA trained at least one year ago, and who works with KS 2 pupils on an individual basis, I am inviting you to help with my research by taking part in a short interview about your perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship.

This will take approximately 45 minutes of your time and will be arranged at a time and location that is convenient to you.

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and your decision about whether or not to participate will not affect your rights, access to services or benefits and will not have a negative consequence on your employment.

During the short interview you will be asked questions about your perceptions of the ELSA-pupil relationship. You should be aware that you may refrain from answering questions you do not wish to answer and you may end participation without providing a reason. No names

will be used during the interview and details relating to individuals will neither be solicited nor recorded. The performance of yourself or any other individual is not being evaluated in any way. Information about any individual ELSA's performance or information about individual pupils that the ELSAs may have experience of working with will neither be solicited nor recorded. A process ensuring deep anonymity will be followed, including making sure that the responses of individuals will not be identifiable in the final report.

Interview data will be stored securely and confidentially and only the researcher will have access to it. Data will be anonymised two weeks after the interview so that information cannot be traced back to an individual. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any point before the interviews are anonymised without giving a reason. Withdrawal from the study will not affect your rights, access to services or benefits and will not have a negative consequence on your employment.

The results of the research study will be written up as a formal report and will be submitted as a thesis as part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme. A process ensuring deep anonymity will be followed, including making sure that the responses of individuals will not be identifiable in the final report.

Should you have any further questions about the study or should you have any complaints please contact me or my supervisor, Gillian Rhydderch, using the details at the bottom of the page. The project has been reviewed and ethically approved by the School Research Ethics Committee (SREC). The contact details of Dr Simon Griffey, can be found at the bottom of this page should you wish to discuss the research in more detail.

If you are willing to take part, please read the consent form carefully and sign it. Once you have completed the interview you will be given a debrief sheet providing you with further information about the study.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project.   Please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below should you require further information, or contact my supervisor Gillian Rhydderch.

Regards,

Nicola Miles

Nicola Miles	**Gillian Rhydderch**
Trainee Educational Psychologist	Academic Director and Professional Tutor, DEdPsy.
School of Psychology	School of Psychology
Cardiff University	Cardiff University
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Appendix A 4: Consent Form

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Consent Form

Title: An exploration of the perceptions of emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs) of the ELSA-pupil relationship.

I understand that my participation in this project will involve taking part in an interview with the researcher about my perception of the ELSA-pupil relationship and the factors that facilitate or act as barriers to this relationship.

I understand that the interview will require approximately 45 minutes of my time.

I understand that I may refrain from answering questions I do not wish to answer and that I may end participation without providing a reason.

I understand that I will be asked questions about my perception of the aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship which I perceive to be important and my perception of the factors that facilitate or act as barriers to developing and maintaining the relationship.

I understand that I will not be asked to evaluate the work of any individual. Information about any individual ELSA's performance or information about individual pupils that the ELSAs may have experience of working with will neither be solicited nor recorded. A process ensuring deep anonymity will be followed, including making sure that the responses of individuals will not be identifiable in the final report.

I understand that the information provided by me will be stored confidentially prior to anonymisation and only the researcher will have access to it. Data will be anonymised two weeks after the interview so that it is impossible to trace this information back to me individually. I understand that this information may be retained indefinitely.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any point prior to anonymisation without giving a reason. I understand that withdrawal from the study will not affect my rights, access to services or benefits and will not have a negative consequence on my employment.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to discuss my concerns with Gillian Rhydderch, Academic Director and Professional Tutor, School of Psychology, Cardiff University.

I understand that the results of the research study will be written up as a formal report and will be submitted as an assessed piece of work as part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme. A process of deep anonymity will be followed, thus ensuring that the responses of individuals will not be identifiable in the final report.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I, _____(NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Nicola Miles, Trainee Educational Psychologist, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Gillian Rhydderch, Academic Director and Professional Tutor, School of Psychology, Cardiff University .

Signed:

Date:

Appendix A5: Debrief Form

Title: An exploration of the perceptions of emotional literacy support assistants (ELSAs) of the ELSA-pupil relationship.

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for taking part in the above named study. Please read this sheet to find out further information about the purpose of the research.

The current research aims to explore the perceptions that ELSAs, who work with KS 2 pupils on an individual basis, have of the ELSA-pupil relationship. It will explore what aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship ELSAs perceive to be important and the factors that ELSAs perceive to be facilitators and barriers to developing and maintaining a relationship with the pupils with whom they work. The research was inspired by the working alliance (Bordin, 1979), therefore, the researcher will afford attention to whether themes emerge that suggest that ELSA's perceptions of the factors affecting the relationship reflect the components of the working alliance (Bordin, 1979), and the researcher will explore whether the factors that ELSAs perceive to facilitate or act as barriers to the relationship, are similar to those identified in the literature about the working alliance (Ackerman and Hilsenroth, 2001; 2003).

The current research is guided by the research questions:

1) How do ELSAs describe their role?
2) What aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship do ELSAs perceive to be important?
3) What factors do ELSAs perceive to be facilitators to developing a relationship with the pupils they work with?

4) What factors do ELSAs perceive to be facilitators to maintaining a relationship with the pupils they work with?

5) What factors do ELSAs perceive to be barriers to developing a relationship with the pupils they work with?

6) What factors do ELSAs perceive to be barriers to maintaining a relationship with the pupils they work with?

The interview data will be stored securely and confidentially and only the researcher will have access to it. The data will be anonymised two weeks after the interview. You are free to withdraw from the study at any point prior to anonymisation.

It is hoped that the research will improve the understanding of educational psychologists about the factors which ELSAs perceive to facilitate the development and maintenance of a positive ELSA-pupil relationship. It is envisaged that this knowledge will help to inform the future training and supervision of ELSAs.

Should you wish to read any further research regarding the psychological models and research which inspired this study, please contact me using the information below.

Should you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact myself or my supervisor, Gillian Rhydderch. Our contact details can be found below.

Regards,

Nicola Miles

Nicola Miles

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Appendix A6: Interview Schedule

Interview questions:

1. **Please could you describe the work of an ELSA when working with individual pupils?**

   - You said that ELSAs……… Can you tell me more about this?
   - Could you explain what you mean by ….?
   - Can you give me an example of ….?
   - Can you tell me more about ……?
   - Are there any other things an ELSA does that you haven't told me about?
   - What are the most important aspects of the work of an ELSA?
   - Can you think of any minor aspects of the work of an ELSA?

2. **What aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship do you perceive to be important when working with individual children?**

   - You said that the relationship ....Can you tell me more about this?
   - In what other ways may the relationship between yourself and the pupils affect your work with pupils?
   - Could you just explain what you mean by.....?
   - Can you tell me more about……………..?
   - Can you tell me of any other ways that the relationship can affect your work?

3. **In your opinion, what can an ELSA do to build a good relationship with a pupil when working with individual children?**

   - You said that.......... Can you tell me more about this?
   - Can you give me an example of this?

- Could you just explain what you mean by.....?

- Can you tell me more about ……………?

- Can you tell me more about how that helps build a good relationship with a pupil?

- Are there any other things an ELSA could do that you haven't told me about?

4. **In your opinion what can an ELSA do to help maintain a positive relationship with pupils when working with individual children?**

- You said that.......... Can you tell me more about this?

- Can you give me an example of this?

- Could you just explain what you mean by.....?

- Can you tell me more about ……………?

- Can you tell me more about how that helps to maintain a good relationship with a pupil?

- Are there any other things an ELSA could do that you haven't told me about?

5. **In your opinion, what other factors do you think have a positive effect on developing the relationship when working with individual children?**

- You said that.........Can you tell me more about this?

- Can you give me an example of this?

- Could you just explain what you mean by.....?

- Is there anything else that may have a positive influence on the relationship?

6. **In your opinion are there any behaviours that might present as barriers to developing the ELSA-pupil relationship when working with individual children?**

- Can you give me an example of this?

- Could you just explain what you mean by.....?

- Can you tell me why you think that ……..?

- Can you tell me more about why you think that?

- Is there anything else that may present as a barrier?

7. **In your opinion are there any behaviours that might present as barriers to maintaining the ELSA-pupil relationship when working with individual children?**

    - Can you give me an example of this?

    - Could you just explain what you mean by.....?

    - Can you tell me why you think that ……..?

    - Can you tell me more about why you think that?

    - Is there anything else that may present as a barrier?

8. **Think of the work you have done with a pupil with whom you feel that you have developed a good relationship. In your opinion what helped the development of this relationship?**

    - You said that.........Can you tell me more about this?

    - You said that......... was good. Can you tell me more about this?

9. **Think of the work you have done with a pupil with whom you feel that it was difficult to build a good relationship. In your opinion what challenges were there to the development of this relationship?**

    - You said that.........Can you tell me more about this?

    - Can you think of anything else that may have prevented the development of the relationship?

Appendix B1

Method of Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researcher followed the method of analysis for thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method is based on the following six phases.

1. Becoming familiar with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Appendix B2

Example of Initial Coding

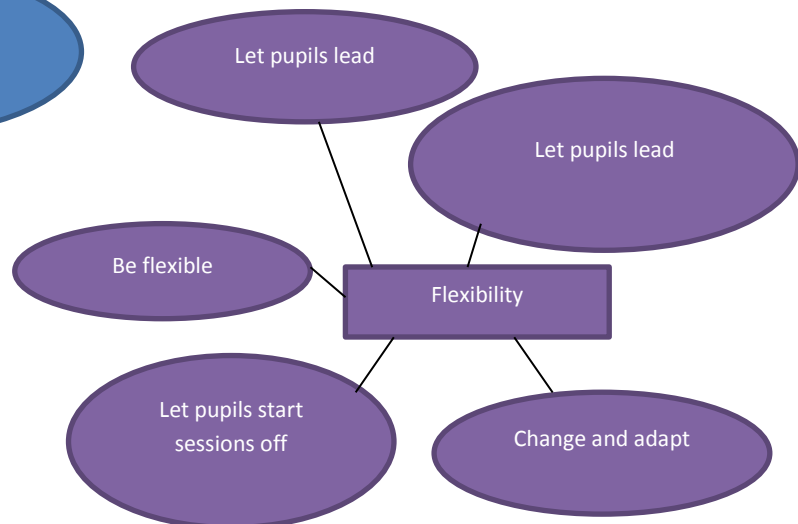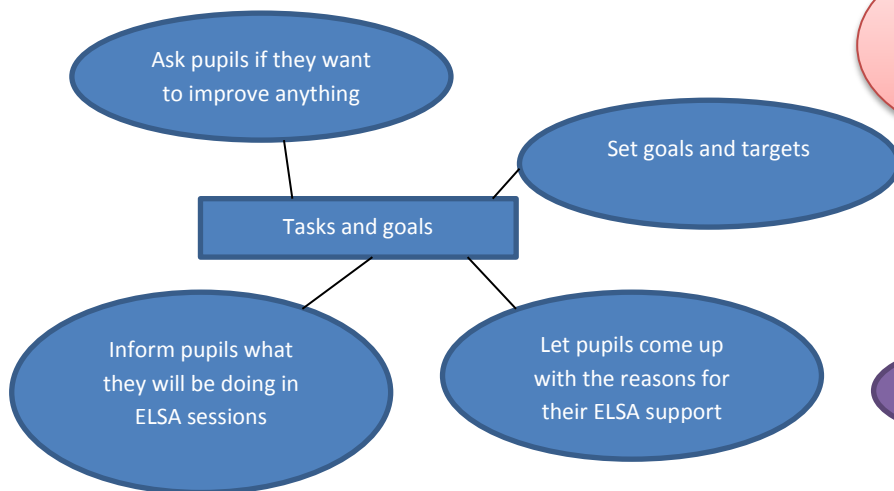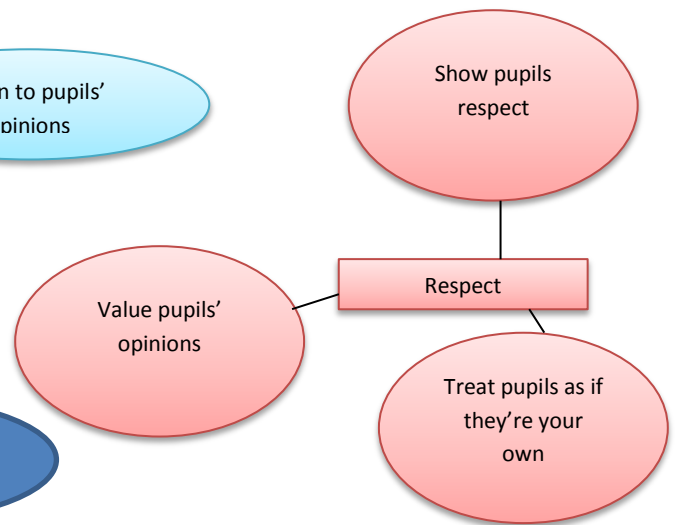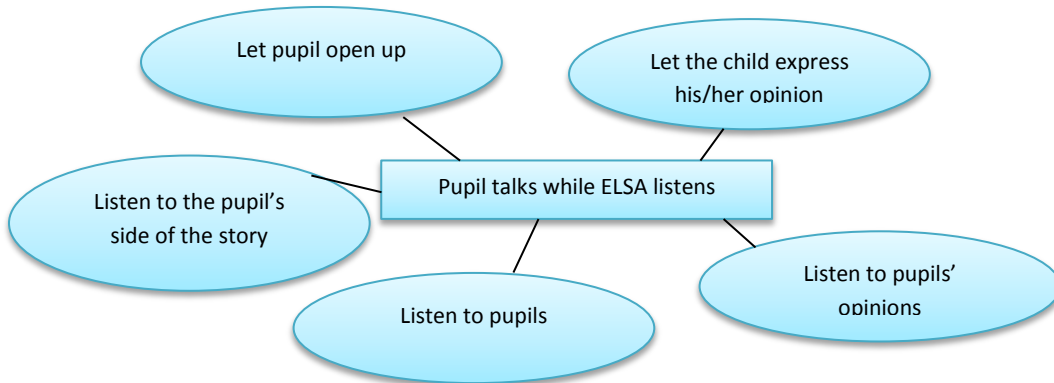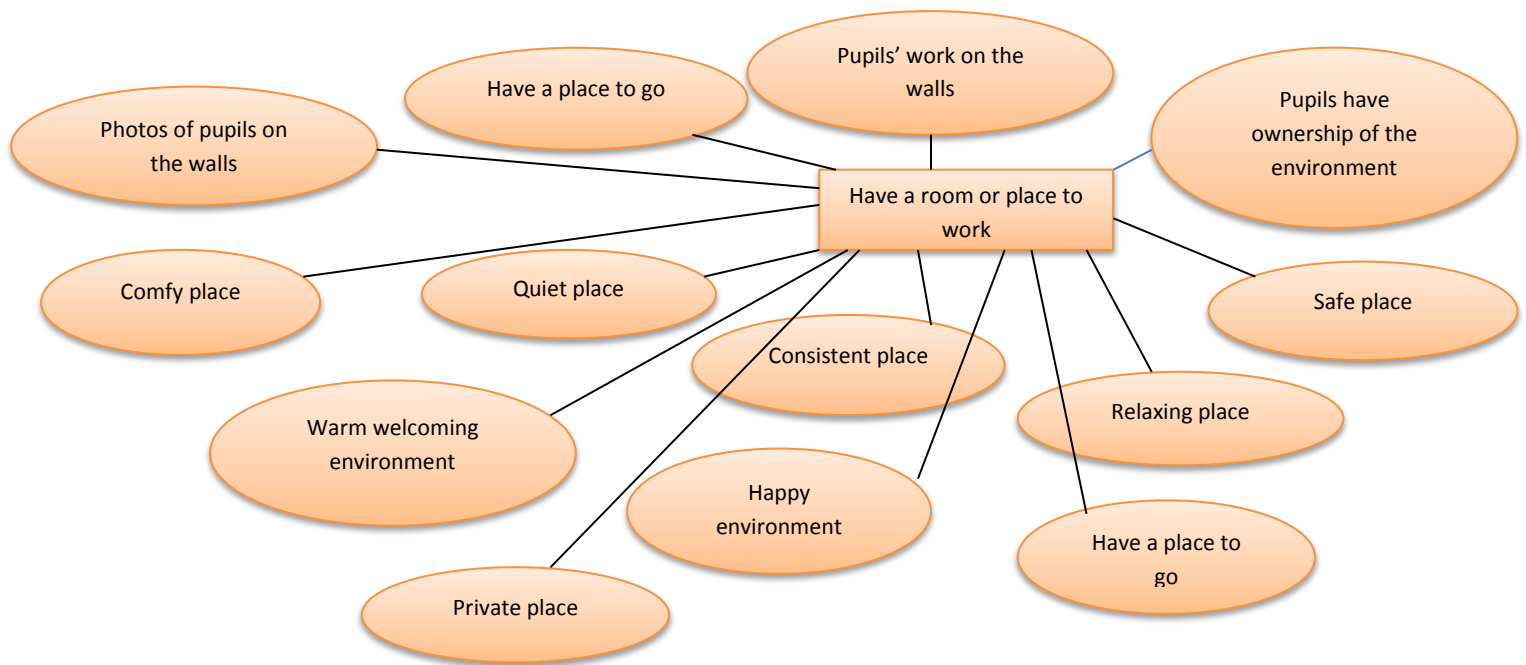| Interview Transcript	Initial Codes
"Question 3: In your opinion, what can an ELSA do to build a good relationship with a pupil when working with individual children?"	
"An ELSA needs to build trust by never letting a child down. So you must keep to your word, so when you say that you will work with a child or have a chat with a child at a certain time, you must do it. You can't let them down or they won't trust you. Also if you tell a child you will do something you must do it. Some of these children are let down by their parents and family and haven't been able to trust them. It's important that they learn to trust you if you're going to have a successful working relationship."	Trust, Don't let them down, Keep your word, Keep your word, Don't let them down. Trust, Keep your word, Trust,
"Yes."	
"ELSAs also need to show the pupil that they respect and value them and that they care for them. Children will know by the manner you take with them and your tone of voice, whether you respect them and care for them. You have to show them that you have respect for them no matter what they say and do. You might not always like what they say and do but you don't show them that. You have to help them to consider whether they could have behaved in another way without judging them or telling them they were wrong to do that. Umm honesty, I think that honesty is also very important. You	Respect pupils, Value pupils, Care for pupils, Respect pupils, Care for pupils, Respect pupils, Respect no matter what they do, Don't show them you don't approve, Don't judge them, Be honest

have to **be honest with pupils**. Part of this will involve **opening up and discussing your own feelings in situations**. For example I worked with a girl who had lost her dog recently. She was very upset and finding it difficult to move on. I **shared with her my own experiences and feelings** and she understood that it **was quite normal** to feel like she was feeling. So you make it an **honest** and **open two way conversation**. I **often talk about myself and my family and share situations and feelings** with the children so they **feel they are not the only one**. I also **share things I own**. For example I let children use my special pen or to look after one of my toys. I sometimes let them borrow equipment that they can use in class. This shows them again that I **trust them**. Umm I'm just trying to think what else. (pause) Oh **obviously confidentiality. You have to be able to keep things private or the children won't want to tell you anything**."	Be honest, Be open, Share your own feelings, Share own experiences and feelings, Normalise things, Honest, Open, Two-way conversation, Share own experiences and feelings, Normalise things, Share possessions, Trust them, Confidentiality,
"Yes."	
"Also **listening. You have to just listen. Give the child a chance to speak, get things off his chest and say what he thinks. You have to let him express his opinion**. It's **not just about letting the child tell their side of the story without interruption. Listening** to them helps them **feel valued. You need to let them understand that everyone has opinions and each person's opinion might be different to another person's opinion. It doesn't mean it's right or wrong**."	Listening, Let the child express his/her opinion, Listen to his/her side of the story, Value pupils,

"Right."	
"Another thing an ELSA must do is <mark>show empathy for the child</mark>. Let them know that you <mark>understand their feelings</mark>. <mark>Try to put yourself in their shoes</mark>. How would we feel if we were a year six pupil who had got her four younger siblings ready for school and walked them to school because their mother was still in bed. Then they walk into the school and a teacher says 'Where have you been? You're late!' and tells them off. The poor child needs a clap not a telling off. <mark>These children need empathy</mark>. They <mark>need to know you understand how hard it is for them</mark> and they need <mark>praise</mark> for getting to school more or less on time. You have to <mark>stay calm</mark> and <mark>not be shocked at anything the children say. Don't raise your voice or show it in your face</mark>."	Empathise, Understand pupils, Empathise, Empathise, Understand pupils, Praise pupils, Remain calm, Don't show pupils you are shocked,

Appendix B2:

Figure 1: Example of a thematic map to illustrate the process of searching for and reviewing themes

Have a room or place to work

- Photos of pupils on the walls
- Have a place to go
- Pupils' work on the walls
- Pupils have ownership of the environment
- Comfy place
- Quiet place
- Safe place
- Warm welcoming environment
- Consistent place
- Relaxing place
- Happy environment
- Private place
- Have a place to go

Pupil talks while ELSA listens

- Let pupil open up
- Let the child express his/her opinion
- Listen to the pupil's side of the story
- Listen to pupils
- Listen to pupils' opinions

Respect

- Show pupils respect
- Value pupils' opinions
- Treat pupils as if they're your own

Tasks and goals

- Ask pupils if they want to improve anything
- Set goals and targets
- Inform pupils what they will be doing in ELSA sessions
- Let pupils come up with the reasons for their ELSA support

Flexibility

- Let pupils lead
- Let pupils lead
- Be flexible
- Let pupils start sessions off
- Change and adapt

Undertake enjoyable activities

- Don't force pupils to write
- Draw pictures
- Let pupils choose activities
- Ask pupils if they're comfortable with what they're doing
- Do craft work
- Do cooking
- Use books
- Have a range of activities
- Do what the pupil enjoys or likes
- Play games
- Use puppets
- Use a variety of resources

Get to know each other

- Remember information about pupils
- Let pupils be themselves
- Be friendly
- Be understanding of the children
- Get on the same level as the children
- Know the children
- Find out pupils' interests
- Understand pupils' backgrounds
- Find common ground
- Share personal information
- Connect with the children

Not judging or criticising pupils

- Be calm
- Don't shout
- Don't speak down to pupils
- Don't lay into pupils
- Be on their side
- Don't judge pupils
- Don't hold any preconceptions
- Don't hold a grudge
- Don't correct pupils
- Don't show them you don't approve

Appendix B4

List of Themes that Emerged During Analysis of Each Key Question

Key question 1: How do ELSAs describe their role?

Five themes emerged from the data regarding how ELSA's describe their role. These are:

- Working with children who experience difficulties

- Undertaking a range of enjoyable activities

- The pupil talks and the ELSA listens

- Giving time to pupils

- A two-way relationship between the ELSA and pupil

Key question 2: What aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship do ELSAs perceive to be important?

Six themes emerged from the data regarding the aspects of the ELSA-pupil relationship that ELSAs perceive to be important. These are:

- Trust

- Giving time to pupils

- Confidentiality

- Respect and understand the child as an individual

- A two-way relationship between ELSA and pupil

- The pupil talks and the ELSA listens

Key question 3: What factors do ELSAs perceive to be facilitators to developing a relationship with the pupils they work with?

Ten themes emerged from the data regarding the factors ELSAs perceive to be facilitators to developing a relationship with the pupils they work with. These are:

- Trust

- Giving time to pupils

- Confidentiality

- Respect and understand the child as an individual

- A two-way relationship between ELSA and pupil

- The pupil talks and the ELSA listens

- Having a room or place to work

- Undertaking a range of enjoyable activities

- Setting tasks and goals

- Being flexible

Key question 4: What factors do ELSAs perceive to be facilitators to maintaining a relationship with the pupils they work with?

Seven themes emerged from the data regarding the factors ELSAs perceive to be facilitators to maintaining a relationship with the pupils they work with. These are:

- Trust

- Giving time to pupils

- Confidentiality

- Respect and understand the child as an individual

- A two-way relationship between ELSA and pupil

- The Pupil talks and the ELSA listens

- Being flexible

Key question 5: What factors do ELSAs perceive to be barriers to developing a relationship with the pupils they work with?

Five themes emerged from the data regarding the factors ELSAs perceive to be barriers to developing a relationship with the pupils they work with. These are:

- Not giving time to pupils

- Not respecting and understanding the child as an individual

- Not having a two-way relationship between ELSA and pupil

- Having multiple roles within school

- The pupil's behaviours

Key question 6: What factors do ELSAs perceive to be barriers to maintaining a relationship with the pupils they work with?

Seven themes emerged from the data regarding the factors ELSAs perceive to be barriers to developing a relationship with the pupils they work with. These are:

- Not giving time to pupils

- Not respecting and understanding the child as an individual

- Not having a two-way relationship between ELSA and pupil

- Having multiple roles within school

- Not being flexible

- Lack of trust

- Breaching confidentiality