

Dialogic teaching harnesses the learning power of classroom talk and is:

Collective: teachers and students address learning tasks together, as a group or whole class

Reciprocal: teachers and students listen to each other, share ideas and alternative views

Supportive: students articulate their ideas freely to reach shared understanding.

Challenging: struggle and mistakes are welcome because we learn from them

Cumulative: teachers and students build on their own ideas and each other's ideas

Purposeful: teachers identify key concepts and steer classroom talk to engage with them

(Alexander, 2017)

Developing the following strategies will move your teaching strongly towards dialogic teaching:

[A] Limit teacher instruction and exposition – talk less

Teachers use concise instructions and explanations to create plenty of time for peer talk, whole class interactive talk and especially active collaborative working on tasks by students. A single teacher led instruction / exposition might aim to normally be less than 7 minutes and teacher talk normally amount to no more than 15 minutes in total within a one hour lesson. Some lessons will start with an alternative 'hook' to begin the lesson – a puzzle, a picture, or a quiz rather than always relying on direct teacher explanation. A combination of buddy talk and whole class interactive teaching will enable teachers to steer classroom talk to engage with the big idea or key concept underpinning the lesson.

[B] Ensure engagement by all students

Teachers move away from hands-up by using student names with all students knowing they might be asked to respond. They use annotation of a seating plan to monitor engagement of all students. Teachers use 'think, pair, share' to develop buddy talk and then gather responses from named individuals to build from that into whole class discussion. They use 'keepy-uppy' questioning to draw student into whole class discussion: 'Mark... why does the air expand? Julie... can you add to Mark's answer...what else happens to the air? Jemma... what do you think of that suggestion? Stephen... can you sum up the explanation they are proposing?' (Wallace & Kirkman, 2014). Teachers use seating plans and vary the pairing up of students.

[C] Work towards sustained shared thinking

Teachers focus on the key concept underpinning the lesson and build on prior student knowledge. They use question and answer sparingly and purposefully. Teachers avoid too many leading questions that are seeking pre-determined answers and sometimes invite extended student answers. They work towards 'sustained shared thinking' (working together to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities or extend a narrative) by using open questions, wait time and / or buddy talk, extension or recasting of student contributions, introducing new vocabulary, building on the student's interests and aiming for equal power share of the conversation. Teacher responses aim to avoid embarrassment for wrong answers, provide diagnostic feedback and keep lines of enquiry open rather than closing them down.

[D] Design for 'exploratory talk'

Teachers design lessons, including sometimes introductions, learning tasks and plenaries, that provoke 'exploratory' talk where children and teacher:

- share relevant information
- engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas;
- all actively participate
- check understanding by asking questions
- build on each other's responses
- strive for agreement

[E] Negotiate classroom rules

Teachers negotiate and agree classroom rules for ‘exploratory talk’ and link this to ‘audience, purpose, topic’. Classroom talk shifts more often from ‘Ping-Pong’, between the teacher and one student, towards ‘Basketball’, where children are responding to, challenging and building on the ideas of their peers. Struggle and mistakes are embraced as learning opportunities. The use of the rules is developed by modelling and coaching so that they become ‘how we work here’.

Ground Rules for Exploratory Talk

1. Everyone should have a chance to talk
2. Everyone’s ideas should be carefully considered
3. Each member of the group should be asked:
What do you think? Why do you think that?
4. Look and listen to the person talking
5. After discussing, agree what to do

[F] Design lessons using the ‘quadrant’ model (Edwards, 2015):

Effective lessons need not follow in the order 1, 2, 3 but will include all three elements. Quadrant 3 is the most challenging for students and teachers and has learning power. Poor teaching is often characterised as a direct move from quadrant 1 to 4.

4. Demonstration of grasp of key concepts and ways of knowing. Higher stakes assessment with feedback to support student and teacher monitoring.	1. Instruction of key concepts and modelling of ways of knowing in the subject. Includes pre-assessment to enable the teacher to build on prior knowledge.
3. More open problem-solving tasks which enable learners to apply key concepts and ways of knowing. Low stakes assessment with feedback.	2. Structured tasks which engage with key concepts and ways of knowing in the subject. Intelligent practice and low stakes assessment with feedback.

Effective dialogic teaching needs to combine *all* four of the following (Mercer et al., Oracy Project):

High levels of participation in dialogue - numerous students contribute

Students elaborate their ideas - ‘Explain a bit more what you mean by that’

Encourage questioning of ideas by students - ‘Do you agree that Tom is right?’

Organize high quality interactive classroom teaching and group work

Dialogic teaching has **learning power** – it is an effective way to learn and to do well in test and exams.

Key References

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