



# Structured Talk

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# Key Questions

1. What types of talk are likely to be most beneficial for student learning?
1. How can we structure speaking and listening activities to support learning?
1. How can we ensure discussion activities support all students?

# Teaching and Learning Toolkit

An accessible summary of education evidence

## Oral language interventions

Very high impact for very low cost based on extensive evidence

Implementation cost



Evidence strength



Impact (months)



## Oral language approaches might include:

- targeted reading aloud and book discussion with young children;
- explicitly extending pupils' spoken vocabulary;
- the use of structured questioning to develop reading comprehension; and
- the use of purposeful, curriculum-focused, dialogue and interaction.



Impact in early years (+7 months) and primary schools (+6 months) tends to be higher than that secondary schools (+5 months.)

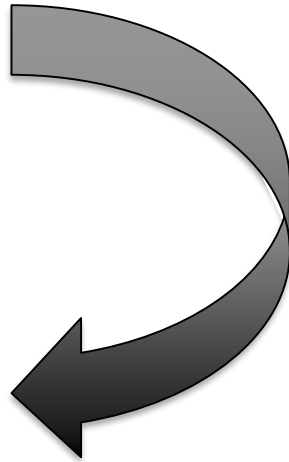
# Four Evidence-Informed Approaches to Classroom Talk

1. Dialogically organised instruction

1. **Exploratory talk**

1. **Accountable Talk**

1. **Dialogic teaching**



# Accountable Talk – Lauren Resnick

1. Accountability to *knowledge*: for example, by seeking to be accurate and true.
1. Accountability to *reasoning*: for example, by providing justifications for claims.
1. Accountability to *community*: for example, listening and showing respect to others.

# Accountability to Knowledge

- The subject-specific features of talk are important to recognise, i.e. prioritising the facts in science.
- ‘When speakers make an observation or claim, they try to be as specific and accurate as possible, not just saying anything that comes to mind.’ Ways of validating claims will be subject specific, e.g.:
  - **referring to knowledge attained in previous lessons or outside the classroom;**
  - **citing a specific passage from a text or historical facts.**
- Teachers need to step in with knowledge when unvalidated claims are made, misconceptions are used to support claims, or claims are inaccurate.

# Accountability to Reasoning

- Building a line of argument by linking claims in a logical and coherent manner
- Having the knowledge is not enough: the knowledge has to be examined in order to build thought:
  - Is it sufficient?
  - Is it credible?
  - Is it relevant?
  - Is it qualified in terms of supporting the idea?

# Accountability to Community

- Students listen and *attend* to each other so that they can use and build on one another's ideas
- Students ask for clarification and disagree with claims (not people) respectfully
- Students move the talk forward – sometimes with the teacher's help
- The teacher has to balance maintaining focus and incorporating 'teachable moments'. This involves enabling students from all cultural and linguistic background to participate
- Teachers will have carefully laid the groundwork for cultural norms that support accountability to the community.

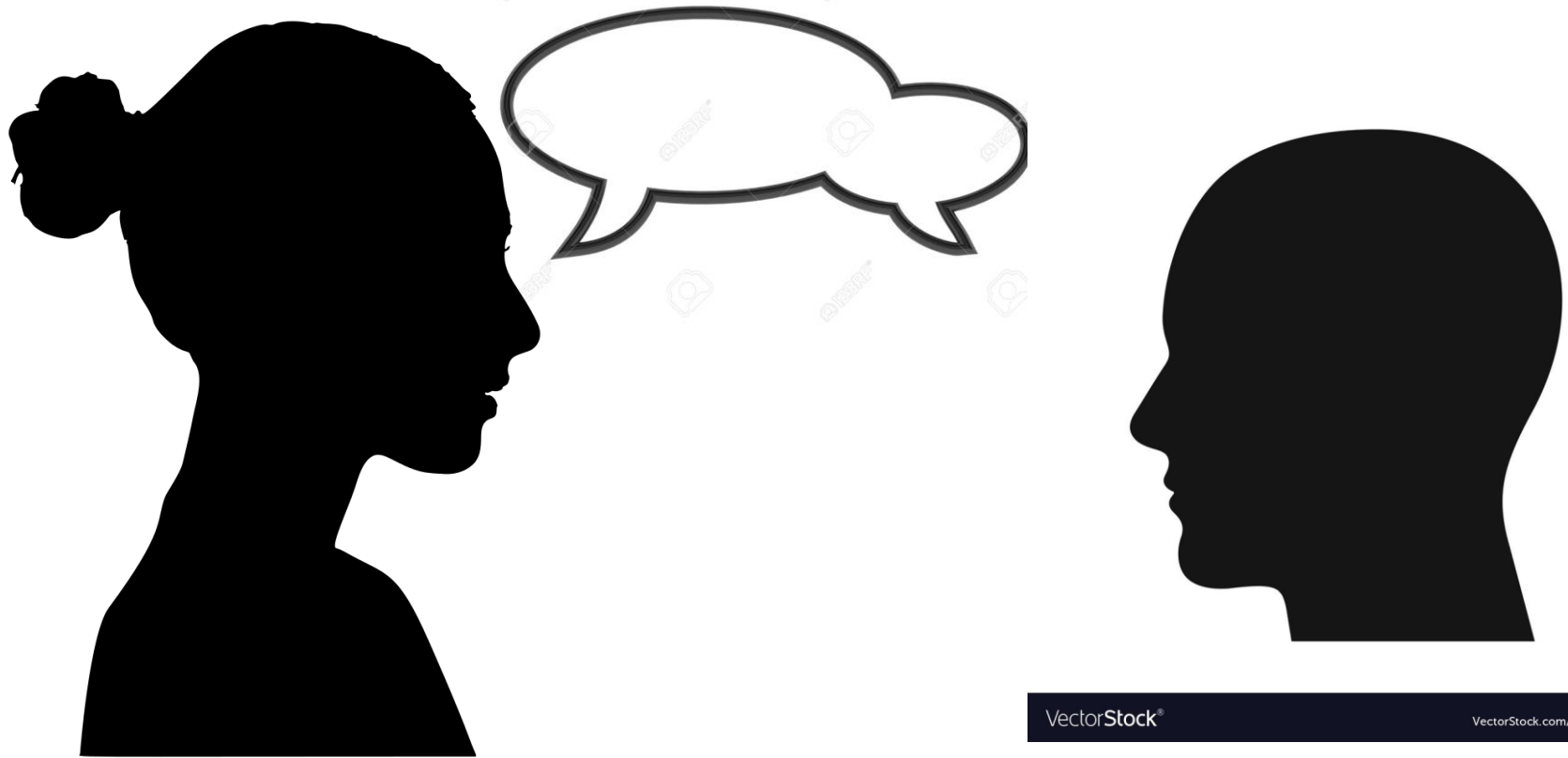
# Accountable Talk in the Classroom

1. Teachers need to establish recurring, predictable routines with specific talk formats, e.g. when to interrupt or not; how to ask questions etc.
1. These routines should take place at consistent times and in consistent ways.
1. These recurrent events must have a focus on rigorous academic content.

# Dialogic Teaching – Robin Alexander

## Key Ideas

- Speaking develops thinking, especially in the early years
- The quality of teacher talk (modelling) and student talk is equally important
- Does not advocate one way of using talk in the classroom, e.g. small group discussion, whole-class discussion etc.
- One of the major goals is to increase the students' repertoires of talk.



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# Dialogic Teaching – Robin Alexander

## Repertoires of Talk:

- Interactions
- Questions
- Answers
- Feedback
- Contributions
- Exchanges
- Discussion and argumentation
- Scaffolding
- Professional mastery of subject matter
- Time, space, organisation and relationships.

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## Repertoires of Talk:

1. Interactions
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5. Contributions
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7. Discussion and argumentation
- 8. Scaffolding**
- 9. Professional mastery of subject matter**
- 10. Time, space, organisation and relationships.**

'There is a danger...that we consign all but [...discussion and dialogue] to the despised archive of 'traditional methods'. In fact, exposition and recitation have an important role in teaching, for facts need to be imparted, information needs to be memorised, and explanations need to be provided, and even the deeply unfashionable rote has a place (memorising tables, rules, spellings and so on). However, the joint solving of problems through discussion, and the achievement of common understanding through dialogue, are undeniably more demanding of teacher skill than imparting information or testing through rote or recitation.'

*(Alexander, 2001).*

# Practical Strategies for Talk in the Classroom

# Ground Rules for Exploratory Talk– Alexander

1. All relevant information is shared.
2. The group seeks to reach agreement.
3. The group takes responsibility for decisions.
4. Reasons are expected.
5. Challenges are accepted.
6. Alternatives are discussed before a decision is made.
7. All in the group are encouraged to speak by other group members.

# Practical Strategies

- Use tasks that are **open-ended and challenging**, i.e. they *require* talk. A good example is a pyramid activity.
- Provide sentence stems for talk as you would for writing. For example, ***“I disagree with the claim \_\_\_\_\_ and my evidence for this is...”*** This can work with connectives, too.
- **Assigning roles** if students are working in groups can be beneficial, for example Devil’s advocate. These become normalised if made routine.
- Students can practise creating coherent structures in their talk using the **ABCQ: Agree, build, challenge or question using evidence**
- **Model the way talk (and writing) works in the subject.** For example, using relevant tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary, or in science beginning with empirical facts and then positing a hypothesis.

# Key Questions for Planning Talk

1. What types of talk are likely to be most beneficial for student learning?
1. How can we structure speaking and listening activities to support learning?
1. How can we ensure discussion activities support all students?
4. What types of talk work best for specific subjects (disciplinary literacy)?



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