

ECT Mentor session

Module 3: Developing quality pedagogy

Week 5: Developing high-quality classroom talk

Session Elements



sharing of
practice



collaborative
planning

Learning Intentions for this session

Your ECT will learn how to:

- 4l. plan activities around what you want pupils to think hard about
- 4o. consider the factors that will support effective collaborative or paired work (e.g. familiarity with routines, whether pupils have the necessary prior knowledge and how pupils are grouped)
- 4p. provide scaffolds for pupil talk to increase the focus and rigour of dialogue

Introduction

In their self-directed study session earlier this week, your mentee extended their knowledge of the importance of high-quality classroom talk for supporting pupils to acquire key knowledge and understand key processes. They considered how the development of high-quality classroom talk should be embedded in the principles of effective pupil grouping.

In this session, you will help your mentee build on this activity, focusing in more detail on its practical implications. You will assist them in refining activities and approaches to be tried in the classroom: start by helping them to explore their current practice and clarifying the ways in which the research might help to develop their impact on pupil success. Key goals for the session include helping your mentee to understand a) the importance of planning what they want their pupils to think hard about in the lesson and b) how to develop scaffolds and routines for high-quality

classroom talk which will focus on the areas they want their pupils to think hard about.

Research and Practice Summary

Collaborative learning and dialogue are both effective ways of developing pupils' learning at different stages, but are particularly helpful in supporting your pupils with practice. The evidence also highlights the importance of explicitly teaching and supporting both collaborative learning and classroom talk.

Collaborative classroom talk – Year 11 Geography

In Sarah's Year 11 geography lesson, she wanted her pupils to think hard about different economic and social measures of development (gross national income (GNI) per head, birth and death rates, infant mortality, life expectancy, people per doctor, literacy rates, access to safe water, Human Development Index (HDI)) and the limitations of using these economic and social measures.

The class contains 25 mixed-attainment pupils. Sarah has been trying to encourage effective collaborative talk throughout a range of different tasks during the year.

How might Sarah make use of the strategies in this summary?

Collaborative learning involves pupils working together, in pairs or small groups, where everyone can participate on a collective activity. This may involve each pupil taking responsibility for a part of the activity or all pupils working together on the same activity. The impact of collaborative learning approaches is typically positive, but studies find a wide range of effects. This suggests that it is important to consider how to do it most effectively.



To help you to establish collaborative learning which is effective and efficient, you should:

- provide support and practice – effective collaborative learning requires more than just asking pupils to work together (e.g. explicitly teach routines and expectations and repeat these each time you ask your pupils to work collaboratively)
- carefully design tasks – collaborative learning will be ineffective if tasks are not designed so that pupils can work together effectively and efficiently-- if this is not

done, some pupils may opt to try and work alone (e.g. provide specific roles and responsibilities; rotate these so that the same pupils don't get type-cast in the same roles; to avoid drifting off task, be strict on timing and clear about expected outcomes)

- carefully group pupils – one of the benefits of collaborative learning is that pupils of different attainment levels can benefit from working with each other-- give consideration to the impact of specific grouping on behaviour and motivation (e.g. before grouping by friendship, ask yourself if this is likely to help or hinder their work)
- use competition purposefully – competition can be an effective way of enhancing collaborative learning; however, it is not essential and it is likely to be unhelpful if competition becomes a distraction from the intended learning (carefully monitoring the impact of competition is likely to be useful: not all pupils respond positively to competition)

Which of these strategies might Sarah consider essential for her geography class, and which might she think are desirable? Which might she avoid?

Classroom talk refers to the use of vocabulary and the quality of discussion by pupils as well as teachers. Encouraging pupils to use specific vocabulary and terminology during discussion in class helps to normalise and embed new words and improve the development of deep understanding. It broadens pupils' vocabulary and helps them to articulate high-level ideas. Spoken language underpins both reading and writing development. Quality pupil talk positively affects academic attainment across the curriculum and children's social and emotional development.



To help develop quality classroom talk, you should:

- carefully consider how ground rules and pupil reflection can help build a supportive environment for talk (e.g. by agreeing class rules for talk and keeping them on display)
- create shared expectations and routines, such as listening to and respecting everyone, to support high-quality classroom talk (e.g. introducing specific frameworks and approaches that pupils can use to guide their talk; this may be

as simple as providing specialist vocabulary or sentence stems to develop pupils' thinking)

- model polite, constructive talk by insisting on rules for turn-taking (this can be more than 'hands up' e.g. it could include handovers such as 'I agree with Sara because... I would like to challenge what Sami said...')

What Sarah did with her Year 11 geographers – Sarah explains her thinking

'I have been trying to encourage effective collaborative talk throughout a range of different tasks during the year. In GCSE geography, it's a great way to get pupils to articulate the key ideas, consolidate their understanding and extend their vocabulary because they have to explain their thinking to their peers.

Mine is a mixed-attainment group; I have to pay close attention to the impact my groupings have on pupil attainment, their behaviour and motivation. I have a couple of pupils with tricky behaviour in there: they respond much better when they are familiar with routines. So, at the start of the year, I set up a system of grouping pupils into one of five 'home' and 'away' discussion groups. The five 'home' groups were named after continents, and the 'away' groups were named after ecosystems. The pupils had their 'home' and 'away' group name written on the front of their file. The 'home' groups were mixed attainment groups, whereas the 'away' groups were based on prior attainment levels. In order to do this, I also had to take into account the pupils' prior knowledge of the topic. The pupils feel a sense of responsibility towards their groups, which I occasionally reinforce with competition. I am certain this has boosted their intrinsic motivation.

I never do collaborative work just for the sake of it: it must always be about thinking harder about and achieving a deeper understanding of the subject and the exam. For this, they need guidance, support and practice. So, in the first stage of the lesson on different economic and social measures of development, pupils worked in 'home' groups. They were given a range of keywords, definitions and pictures which exemplified the core concepts of the lesson. Once they had developed their understanding of these concepts, I questioned the different groups about each measure of development to further embed their understanding. In the second phase of the lesson, I told them to move into their 'away' groups. At this point, I gave a series of differentiated questions set to challenge the different prior attainment groups in the class. In the final stages of the lesson, I asked them to create their own

'best' measure of development.

Ben, an A Level history teacher, shares another approach to high-quality group talk

The issue: In A-Level history, pupils are required to make judgements about the validity of general statements and the claims of other historians. My Year 12s were preparing for an essay answering the question 'Was Henry VIII's foreign policy from 1509-1527 a success?'

How he grouped them: I put pupils into groups of mixed ability based on how they had tackled their previous essay. Person 1 in each group had the weakest skills in this area, Person 4 had the strongest.

We used the following scaffold to structure discussion.

"What would 'success' look like for Henry VIII in terms of his foreign policy 1509-1527?"

- 1 Suggest a definition for success.
- 2 Ask a question about the definition - Person 1 should respond to your question.
- 3 Suggest a change to the definition in the light of this discussion.
- 4 Ask a further question about the definition and then draft a final definition on which the whole group should then agree before all writing down an answer.

How he modelled group talk: As this was a skill that was not yet totally embedded with this class, I had already scripted an exemplar discussion using a similar question about 'Henry VII's foreign policy', and we modelled this with one of the groups. This helped to re-activate prior knowledge, provided some guidance about the types of comments that could be made and gave additional support to pupils who were not confident about the process.

Why it was successful: The success of the essay would rely on pupils understanding the different concepts involved in this task. It doesn't focus specifically on knowledge - although a different task could - as this will be the next stage in the process (having defined success – was it actually a success?) (4.7)

By using the 1-4 approach and assigning different tasks or roles to each number, it was possible to provide relevant challenge and support for each pupil based on their prior attainment. (4.10) This grouping was carefully assigned based on prior

assessment and a secure knowledge of pupil ability in relation to this particular skill.

(4o)

Providing a scaffold for discussion meant that all pupils were clear about their role in the discussion, and it was clear that all pupils had a key role to play in the success of the activity. (4.9) Once pupils are confident with this approach (as a result of opportunities to practise), then it may not be necessary to include the worked examples as part of the set-up, and ultimately, pupils should be able to have these discussions without using the scaffold.

In addition to ensuring that all pupils were involved, this scaffold and the modelled approach increased the quality of discussion and the rigour of the dialogue, as pupils were able to question, challenge assumptions and re-frame in the light of other people's input. (4p)

Mentor Meeting Activities

Throughout the session, try to refer explicitly to the Learning Intentions and encourage your mentee to record key points in their Learning Log below. Tailor your use of the Theory to Practice activities below in response to the Review and Plan section of this session.

Review and Plan 5 mins

Clarify the Learning Intentions for this session with your mentee.

At the start of this module, you looked at all of the 'learn how to' statements for Standards 4 and 5 and conducted a module audit with your mentee: in some areas they will already be confident and skilled; in others they will want more practice, and support from you and others. Look back at this audit now and use it to help decide how you and your mentee will make the most productive use of the suggested Theory to Practice activities below.

Theory to Practice 40 mins



1. Sharing of practice

In this session, you will collaboratively plan an activity that will combine all three of the 'learn how to' learning intentions. In their last self-directed study session, your mentee focused on one class and planned a lesson with two different approaches to

pupil grouping. (They might have deliberately chosen to do one badly!) Briefly discuss it with them now. Invite them to explain their rationale for grouping their pupils in the ways they did. What do they think would work well, and what do they think would not?



2. Collaborative Planning

Now, use their plan in this activity. Depending on the areas for further development that you identified with your mentee in their audit of Standard 4, select from the following activities:

a) Planning activities around what you want pupils to think hard about.

Explore the key learning intention for this lesson. What is it that pupils will need to work hard on and think hard about in order to make progress?

Planning such activities means you should consider:

- the different starting points of each pupil – will they all be thinking hard and working hard on the same thing?
- what scaffolds you should introduce or withdraw
- what pupil groupings will best support them
- the opportunities you give your pupils to practise independently

Are there any ideas you can borrow from the example of Sarah and her Year 11 geographers?

b) Considering the factors that will support effective collaborative or paired work (e.g. familiarity with routines, whether pupils have the necessary prior knowledge and how pupils are grouped).

It might be helpful to think of long-, medium- and short-term factors. Can your mentee say 'yes' to these?

	Factor	Yes	No
Long-term	I have agreed routines, and these are clear to all		
Long-term	The pupils have secure prior knowledge from earlier lessons		
Long-term	The pupils are used to working in different groups		
Medium-term	We have practised paired and collaborative work recently, where I reinforced expectations		
Medium-term	The class has recently revisited some of the material they will need in this lesson		
Short-term	I am clear about my learning intentions for this lesson		
Short-term	I am clear about which pupils will work effectively together to achieve the learning intentions		
Short-term	I will start with a retrieval exercise so the pupils' working memories are not overloaded		

c) Providing scaffolds for pupil talk to increase the focus and rigour of dialogue

Firstly, look again at the Research and Practice Summary for classroom talk for strategies you can use and at the example of Sarah's Year 11 geography class or Ben's Year 12 history class.

You could also consider smaller group and paired structures:

- think-pair-share (thinking alone, sharing with a partner, sharing with a larger group)
- specific roles for each member of the group (speaker, note-taker, challenger, checker)
- scaffolds for the conversation – Pupil A explain..... Pupil B.....; ABCQ (Agree, Build, Challenge, Question)
- giving specific timings for each part of the discussion

Also, consider your mentee's experiences of 'modelling' from earlier in this module. How might they apply this to the successful development of classroom talk in this context? To what extent can modelling and worked examples be applied to 'learning how to discuss'?

Next Steps 5 mins

Agree with your mentee how they will now put their learning from this week's session(s) into practice in their teaching. Help your mentee to clarify:

1. the action(s) they will take and how these action(s) are expected to contribute to improving pupil learning
2. what success will 'look like' in relation to these action(s)
3. how they will evaluate their success in taking these action(s)

Note the date of your next mentor meeting, when you will check on your mentee's progress.