

Teaching through and for Dialogue



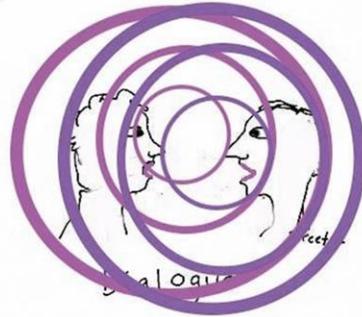
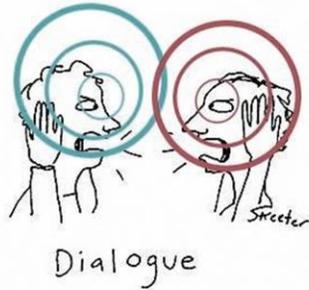
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What is dialogue?



Dialogue is a particular form of interaction. Not my ideas and your ideas but our ideas in the shared space between us. Ideas seek to understand each other, to challenge each other, and give rise to new ideas and new perspectives. A shared chain of thinking where each provisional answer gives rise to a new question (Bakhtin). An immersive 'I – thou' encounter with the other, not a transactional exchange (Buber).

Characteristics of Dialogic Teaching (Alexander, 2017)



Dialogic Teaching is:

1. **Collective** (the classroom is a site of joint learning and enquiry)
2. **Reciprocal** (participants listen to each other, share ideas and consider alternative viewpoints)
3. **Cumulative** (participants build on their own and each other's contributions and chain them into coherent lines of thinking and understanding)
4. **Supportive** (participants feel able to express ideas freely, without risk of embarrassment over 'wrong' answers, and they help each other to reach common understandings)
5. **Purposeful** (classroom talk, though open and dialogic, is structured with specific learning goals in view)

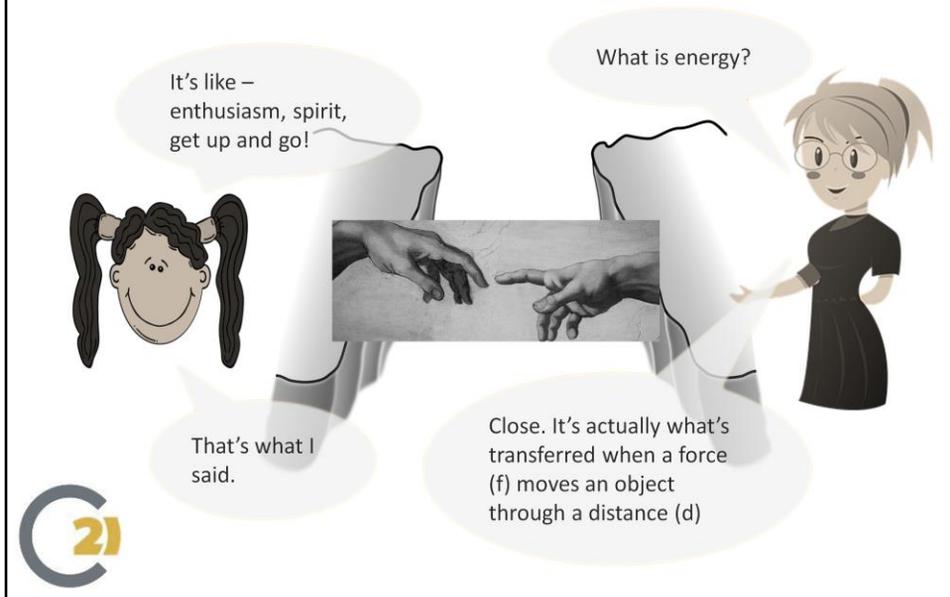
A more practical description of what teaching and learning that is recognisably dialogic might entail.

Why is dialogic talk of value?

1. Supports the **meaningful acquisition of knowledge** and allows us to build bridges between everyday perspectives and the perspective of the subject / discipline
2. Makes understanding **visible**
3. Is a way of teaching **thinking**



1. Meaningful acquisition of knowledge...



A chasm between the teacher's perspective (and the perspective of the subject / discipline) and the child's 'everyday' perspective. Can the teacher's perspective be 'transmitted'. To an extent, but there needs to be the opportunity for the child to make meaning, to be actively involved in constructing their own understanding by questioning, answering, making connections, finding examples, making distinctions etc. The child needs to come to understand the perspective of the teacher; understanding other perspectives is what we learn to do in dialogues.

2. Making understanding visible...

When you dry your washing inside, the windows get wet.



- P1:** I think this is melting then condensation
T: What is melting?
P1: The water – it's melting out of the clothes.
T: Why do you think it's melting?
P1: Because it's dripping out of the clothes.
T: Do we all agree that this is melting?
P2: I thought there had to be ice first...



We can respond to this misconception in dialogue, and we can return to 'authoritative' teaching armed with an understanding of this misconception. Good AfL practice with dynamic feedback.

3. Teaching thinking...



Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice. First it appears between people as an inter-psychological category, and then within the child as an intra-psychological category. Social relations... genetically underlie all higher functions and their relationships. (Vygotsky, 2012, p. 163)



Learning how to engage constructively with other perspectives in dialogue is a way of teaching thinking. How do we respond when we encounter the other – an alien perspective from the discipline of science or theology or maths, or a different perspective on football or politics? Defend? Attack? Explore difference? Seek to understand?

Some challenges...

1. Analysis of pupil-pupil interaction suggests that little dialogic or exploratory talk occurs without intervention (**see Wegerif and Scrimshaw, 1997**)



Common 'types' of talk...



Disputational Talk: trying to 'beat' each other, to be the winner (identifying with the self)



Cummulative Talk: trying to agree to maintain the harmony of the group (identifying with the group)



If we simply create opportunities for talk / group work etc., and this is the quality of talk taking place we won't get the benefits described earlier (we may even do harm).

Some challenges...

2. Analysis of teacher-pupil interaction continues to stress the dominance of **IRE** routines (**see references in Vrikki *et al*, 2018**)



Teacher Initiates (often with a closed question or one requiring a brief response), child Responds (but does not elaborate), Teacher Evaluates (right or wrong).

An IRE exchange

(Interactive / authoritative)

T: So we only see the moon because the light from the sun does what?

P: Bounces off it!

T: Bounces or reflects off it – that's right.



Teacher only interested in one answer. Might show no interest in 'wrong' answers and what they can tell us. This is not 'bad teaching'. Authoritative interactions in which the teacher reinforces accepted knowledge are valuable, but should not dominate to the exclusion of more dialogic encounters that allow meaning making. Need to know when we have done enough 'putting in' and should switch to facilitating children's thinking.

Having a 'repertoire' of talk-types...

- Rote
- Recitation
- Instruction
- Exposition
- Discussion
- Dialogue

"Dialogic teaching... encompasses the full range of teaching talk listed but privileges the last two and **especially dialogue.**"

(Alexander, 2017)



There is a place for transmission and authoritative teaching, but also for dialogue. Teacher needs a repertoire and to be able to recognise when to switch modes or 'communicative approaches'.

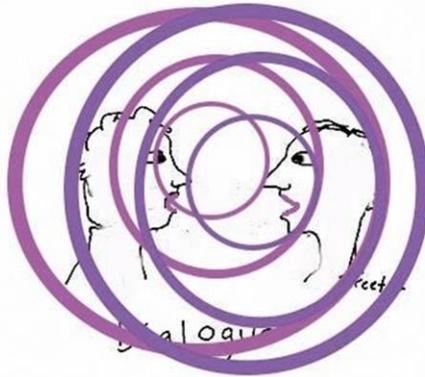
Dialogic Teaching...

- Dialogic teaching requires teaching *for* dialogue as well as teaching *through* dialogue.

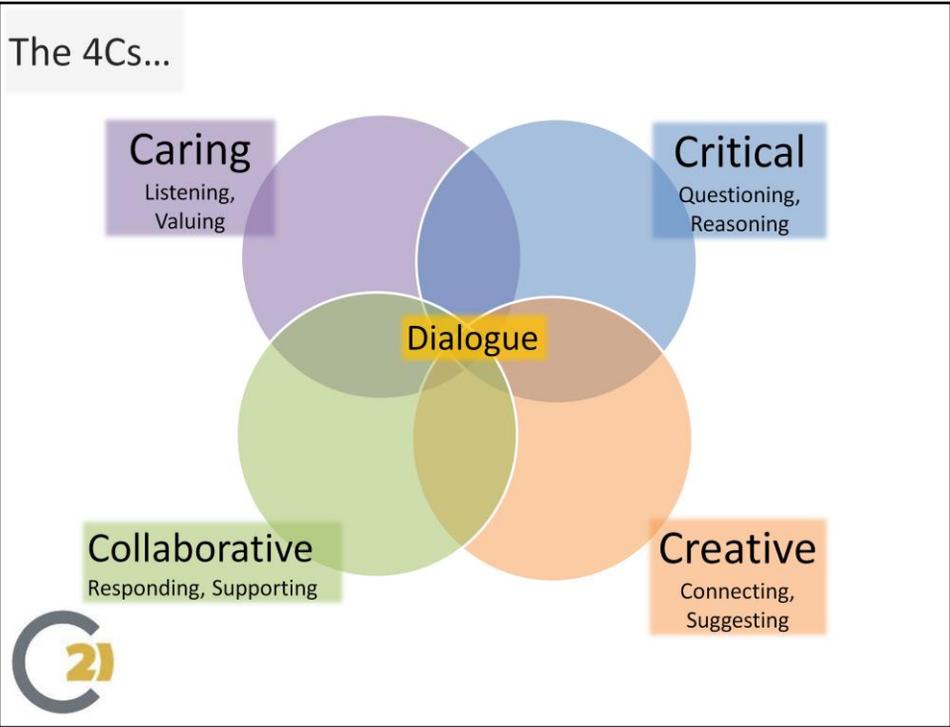


We can't simply create opportunities to teach through dialogue. We need to teach for dialogue – for a progressively better quality of dialogue – and this is effortful.

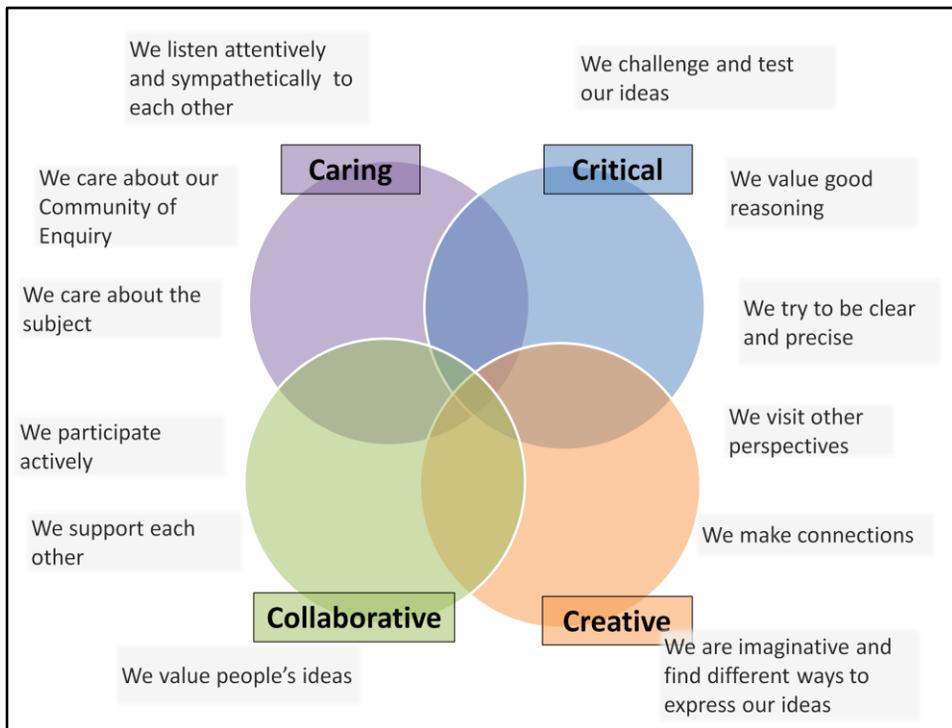
How would we need to behave?



Establishing ground rules helps us to a) Begin to give an account of the quality of talk we are after b) Work progressively towards that quality of talk using the ground rules as a scaffold.



The 4Cs offers us a more sophisticated way of thinking about good dialogue. Map the children's ground rules onto the 4Cs and begin a discussion about what each mode of thinking might mean and what further ground rules might be needed.



A suggested set of overarching 4Cs ground rules.

Progressive development...

We value reasons and evidence...

- We give reasons / evidence to support our ideas
- We ask others for reasons / evidence
- We think about the quality of reasons / evidence
- We make judgments based on the best reasons / arguments we have heard



In the Progress Toolkit, each ground rule is broken down into a more precise set of rules that can be introduced progressively. The teacher has a bank of ground rules to help them to think about what might come next. We avoid plateauing at a superficial level. Toolkit also contains supporting language for teachers and pupils and skills building exercises.

Reflection and metacognition...



Reflection on the quality of dialogue is essential. Becoming aware of why certain moves (e.g. looking for counter-examples) are useful, practising and applying such moves and ultimately internalising them. Metacognition.

From teacher to facilitator (and back again)...

To be authoritative
or to be dialogic?

To be interactive
or not?



To be **accountable to knowledge**

Teacher needs to make decisions about when to use dialogic approaches and when to stop. Sessions mustn't conclude with 'shared ignorance' and confusion – the teacher does have an accountability to accurate subject knowledge (Resnick).

Strategies for the facilitation of classroom dialogue...

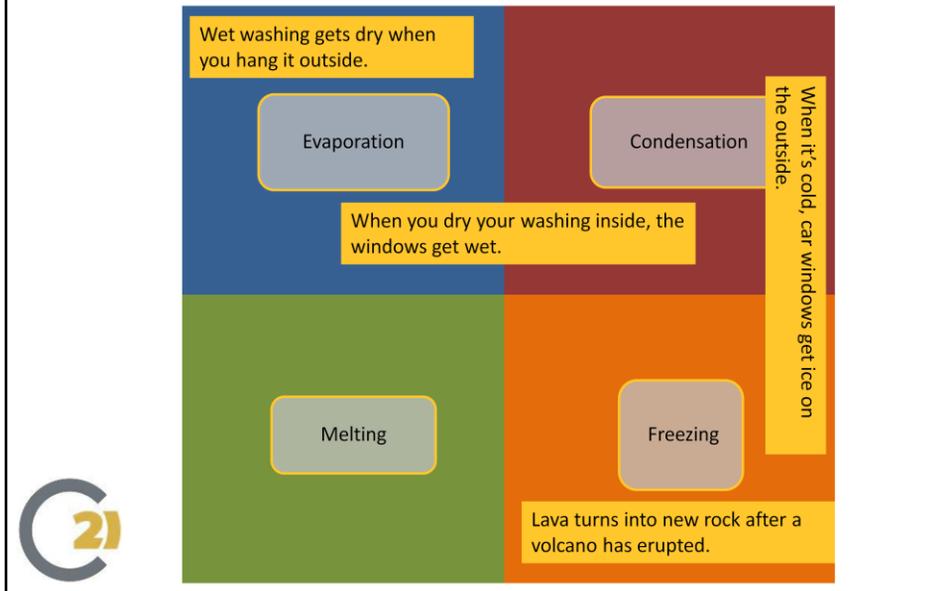
- Ask some **open** questions – and adopt an '**open question mindset**' with closed questions
- Ask not just one, but **several** children for possible answers, with **reasons** and **justifications** for their views
- Invite children to **comment** on each others' views (I agree / disagree with..., I would like to add to..., I think I have an example of...)
- Use **Socratic** (open procedural) questioning and **substantive** questions to make children think harder about the concepts involved (prepare a discussion plan).
- Help children to **connect** abstract ideas to shared / lived experiences.



Hold back **explanations** until ideas of at least some children have been heard (and then, where possible, **link** what you say to their ideas – enter into **dialogue** with them)

Facilitation is harder than we might think. Philosophy for Children, or sessions that are explicitly planned with dialogue in mind, can be a good arena for practise for children and teachers alike.

Applications: Development of conceptual understanding...



Conceptual enquiry can support the understanding of foundational ideas across the curriculum.

Applications:
Problem solving...



Group problem solving will become more effective.

Applications: Reading comprehension...



Dialogue around images / text builds comprehension. Layers of discussion from what do we notice to what do we infer to identification of and enquiry into the meaning of key concepts.

Applications: Different perspectives through history...



Epistemic enquiry (see also work of Alex Black) – in this case what characterises science as a way of knowing and how does that compare to other ways of knowing.

Applications: Community engagement...



Going beyond academic subjects – an enquiry into community values.

Evidence of impact: Alexander (EEF, 2019a)

Outcome/Group	Impact - the size of the difference between Dialogic Teaching pupils and other pupils ?	Security - how confident are we in this result? ?
Maths	+1 Months' Progress	
Maths (FSM)	+2 Months' Progress	N/A
Science	+2 Months' Progress	
Science (FSM)	+2 Months' Progress	N/A
English	+2 Months' Progress	
English (FSM)	+2 Months' Progress	N/A



Evidence of impact: P4C (EEF, 2019b)

Outcome/Group	Impact - the size of the difference between Philosophy for Children pupils and other pupils ?	Security - how confident are we in this result? ?
Maths	+2 Months' Progress	
Reading	+2 Months' Progress	
Writing	0 Months' Progress	
Maths (FSM)	+3 Months' Progress	N/A
Reading (FSM)	+4 Months' Progress	N/A
Writing (FSM)	+2 Months' Progress	N/A



Evidence of impact: Mercer (Mercer, 2019)

Analysis of 2 video-recorded lessons by each of 72 Year 6 teachers in 48 English primary schools suggested that children improved significantly more in maths and English when teachers...

1. Achieved high levels of **participation** in dialogue (e.g. numerous children contribute to a whole class discussion and discuss each other's ideas)
2. Encouraged children to **elaborate** their ideas (e.g. 'Can you explain a bit more what you mean by that?')
3. Encouraged the **questioning** of ideas by students (e.g. 'Do you agree that Tom is right?')
4. Organised **group work** which observing researchers judged as 'high quality'



The moral dimension...

"Dialogue is a therapy - perhaps **the** therapy - against the misrecognition of one person by another"

Dmitri Nikulin



Even if we weren't to see the desired impact on attainment, teaching children how to engage in dialogue is profoundly important and profoundly educational.

Further support available...

- Staff meetings / inset
- Modelling with pupils and teachers in class
- Planning implementation and development
- Philosophy for Children Level 1 training and support



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