

Dialogic Pedagogies: Defining and Analyzing Four Types of Dialogue in Education

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Introduction

The empirical research on dialogue-based pedagogies shows that they improve student outcomes and, thus, teachers should make more use of these methods (Edwards-Groves & Hoare, 2012). However deeper analyses about whether certain modes of dialogue are better than others is under-researched, resulting in little information about which models best help teachers develop effective dialogic learning practices (Howe & Abedin, 2013, p. 325). Some researchers have argued that there is a gap in the literature, as there has been little proper exploration of what constitutes effective classroom dialogue, with practical examples of how to structure discourse for learning lacking in classroom practice (Myhill et al., 2005; Mercer, 2010; Edwards-Groves & Hoare, 2012; Howe & Abedin, 2013). Edwards-Groves and Davidson (2020, p. 126) suggest that “developing a shared language and collective understandings about classroom talk and interaction among teachers, and with and among their students, largely remains taken-for-granted in practice.” Howe and Abedin (2013) suggest that this leads to a lack of understanding about models of effective dialogue and allows poorer forms of dialogic pedagogy to persist. Alexander (2004) shares this concern that the most effective kinds of talk in classrooms are not widely practised. Nystrand (1997) also discusses how different modes of classroom discussion engender particular epistemic roles for both teachers and students, which can constrain their thinking and contribute to disadvantage. In sum, “the quality of student learning is closely related to the quality of classroom talk” (p. 29). Therefore, it is vitally important that we are able to demonstrate what kind of talk is most effective in the classroom. This paper identifies different kinds of dialogue-based pedagogies and, through conceptual analysis, articulates the notions of dialogue they assume and the educational implications of these different notions of dialogue. Four types of dialogic pedagogy have been identified in the existing literature. Although they may go by different names to different people, for consistency, this paper will categorise them as Teacher-Directed Dialogue, Mere Conversation, Adversarial Dialogue, and Exploratory Dialogue, each of which will be described in its own subsection.

Empirical Evidence for the Value of Dialogic Learning

There has been broad and diverse research undertaken to determine the impact of dialogic learning on students, and this comprehensive body of research indicates a significant positive impact. Skidmore (2004, 2006) demonstrates how the quality of classroom dialogue is crucial to students’ learning, and the meta-synthesis of Hattie (2020) ranks ‘Classroom Discussion’ as one of the teaching strategies with the most significant effect on student achievement. Skidmore (2004) claims that not

only can productive classroom dialogue produce a general rise in achievement, but it can also bridge the gap between higher and lower achieving students. Students' thinking (Mercer & Littleton 2007) and literacy (Alexander 2006) have been shown to develop through dialogue when that dialogue is of a particular type, which is to say of the nature of Exploratory Dialogue discussed below rather than the other three dialogue types (Michaels et al., 2008; Anderson et al., 2011). Students also develop meaningful understandings about concepts primarily through talk (Edwards-Groves et al., 2014). For example, Swain and Lapkin (1998) demonstrate that shared meanings are better remembered when they were produced in dialogic exchange.

Analysing what is typical in classrooms, Alexander (2001) reports that interrogatory whole-class talk is the dominant teaching method internationally. This has been the case for over one hundred years, since the research of Stevens (1912) reported that teachers predominantly ask questions which require students to recall textbook knowledge. Flanders (1970) utilised a systematic observation research methodology that led to the 'two-thirds rule,' which states that what happens in classrooms typically follows the pattern of: two-thirds of the time is dedicated to talk, two-thirds of that time is the teacher talking, and two-thirds of teacher-talk is made up of monologic talk and recitation questions. This leaves little room for more productive kinds of talk. Galton et al. (1999) replicated this research 30 years later and found that the two-thirds rule is now closer to three-quarters, and Smith et al. (2004) found similar numbers at 74%. Nystrand et al. (2003) found that in 1151 observations, only 6.69% could be described as dialogic in nature. Further research by Nystrand (1997) also reports that recitational patterns of discourse are "overwhelmingly prevalent," have a negative effect on learning, and are associated more strongly with low-achieving classes and students. More recent studies also show a similar pattern of teacher dominated talk (Vaish, 2008; Wangru, 2016). In a meta-analysis, Howe and Abedin (2013, p. 334) find that this pattern is highly visible within most classrooms. The most recent research continues to demonstrate that Exploratory Dialogue rarely occurs in classroom practice (Davies et al., 2017; Howe & Mercer, 2017; Wilkinson et al., 2017). Nystrand (1997) ponders why this approach to teaching continues to be so prevalent when it fails to either improve student outcomes or engage student interest. This kind of unproductive talk is what is categorised in this thesis as Teacher-Directed Dialogue.

Talk-Types in Schools

Teacher-Directed Dialogue

Students are often engaged in talk that is primarily teacher-centred. This involves students in a watch-listen-repeat model of learning (Swan, 2006). This type of dialogue allows few opportunities for students to actively contribute to the discussion and rarely engages with higher order thinking skills (Tinzmann et al., 1990). It is structured to convey factual information to students, is instructive rather than investigative, and it embraces authoritative methods of talk such as lecturing and teacher questioning (Gillies, 2006; Edwards-Groves et al., 2014). F. Hardman (2020, p. 142) explains that this kind of talk consists of "closed teacher questions, brief student answers, superficial praise or criticism, rather than diagnostic feedback, and an emphasis on recalling information rather than genuine exploration."

This type of dialogue also includes a pedagogical form commonly known as IRF/IRE, standing for teacher-initiated question, student response, teacher *follow-up* or *evaluation* (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Mehan, 1979). This form of classroom talk is highly visible and commonplace in education worldwide (Edwards & Westgate, 1994; Alexander, 2001), Cazden (2001) even refers to this as the 'traditional' classroom structure. The F/E in the IRF/E pattern only evaluates compliance in rote memorisation and repeating information (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; J. Hardman, 2020). Wegerif (2020, p. 14) describes Teacher-Directed Dialogue as knowledge that, instead of being connecting to living relationships, is something that is stored in books and transmitted into brains. Cazden (2001) describes this as a strategy suited to areas of the curriculum that require an understanding only of factual knowledge. These are areas of learning that require students to learn and memorise by rote, for example, learning that the capital of Australia is Canberra.

Cazden (2001) warns that there is a danger in the prevalence of IRF/E in classrooms reducing the curriculum to just those aspects that can be memorised by rote. Rather than using this strategy only in the service of learning that is suitable to be learned by rote, the type of learning that occurs is determined by what fits the IRF/E pattern. Skidmore (2016a, p. 92) criticises it for being restricted to learning that is axiomatic and repeatable. This discourse pattern is not collaborative or interactive and can create closed talk and restrict understanding amongst students (Leva, 2015, pp. 8-9). Research has demonstrated the constricting effect that this teacher-directed talk has on students' learning (Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Edwards & Westgate, 1994). Cazden (2001) reiterates that this form of classroom talk is not suited to deeper learning about complex concepts, and therefore its prevalence marks a danger that learning about complex concepts is not being effectively undertaken or is not happening at all. Howe (2010, p. 48) even states that open inquiry dialogue is "inconceivable" with Teacher-Directed Dialogue being used as a pedagogical strategy. Therefore, the prevalence of Teacher-Directed Dialogue suggests a lack in the exploration of deep and complex concepts.

Wegerif (2020, p. 23) acknowledges that there are different pedagogies required for different learning objectives. The IRF/E sequence of classroom talk may help facilitate certain kinds of valuable learning. For instance, where a teacher initiates an IRF/E sequence, they ask a question to which they already know an answer and students have the opportunity to test whether their thinking aligns with their teacher's. However, open dialogic talk is a valuable pedagogy across all kinds of learning objectives (Scott et al., 2006). Langer (2016) demonstrates that students who are taught the 'universally correct' ways of doing things fail to be able to adapt these procedures to different contexts and reapply them creatively. She goes on to argue that everything should be taught with a variety of perspectives involving debate, rather than rote learning traditional ways of doing things. The justification for this comes from the idea that being taught the best way to do something is insufficient. Competing perspectives are required, even if they are inadequate, so that learners can better understand why one way is better than another (Phillipson & Wegerif, 2016; Marton & Häggström, 2017). This links with research on student metacognition that posits that students benefit when they reflect on the ways they think, not just about the correctness of their thinking (Mercer & Dawes, 2008; Lefstein, 2010; Reznitskaya & Gregory, 2013; van der Veen et al., 2017). On the pedagogical value and limitations of Teacher-Directed Dialogue, Alexander (2001) states that IRF/E patterns of classroom interaction appear to add pace to the learning by eliciting short responses for students, but fail to extend their thinking. Skidmore (2016c) lends weight to this, claiming that an

over-reliance on IRF/E patterns creates a uniformity in students' thinking because of the limitations set on students' responses. It reduces knowledge to the successful display of the facts that the teacher wants to hear at any given time. Therefore, Teacher-Directed Dialogue is limited in its value in a way that more open dialogic talk is not.

Mere Conversation

Approaches that move classroom talk beyond recall and recitation often aim to engage students in exploring personal meaning and connection to the concepts under discussion (Mercer & Dawes, 2008; Leva, 2015). Mercer (1996) describes this as 'cumulative talk,' characterised by speakers building positively but uncritically on what others have said. He describes it as neither argumentative nor collaborative and without serious considerations.

Conversation is important to learning. Brown (2007) describes the notion that learning happens independently from explicit instruction by an act of becoming in child development. This suggests that students process ideas through their relationships with others, an interactive process that mediates how ideas are presented to students, with communal discussion enabling them to form connections to ideas in personal and meaningful ways (Fisher, 2009). Markova (2003) states that "to be means to communicate, and to communicate means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself." Research also demonstrates that students rarely talk to each other about school-based topics, so Mere Conversation is a way to enable that talk to occur (Galton et al., 1980; Galton, 1999). Mere Conversation allows students to engage in reciprocal student-to-student interaction which is not teacher-directed. Howe (2010, p. 189) states that this talk is more productive than Adversarial Dialogue (see next section) and also has fewer opportunities for withdrawal. Leaning on the notion from Vygotsky (1978, p. 57) that "all higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals," Saavedra and Opfer (2012) remark that collaboration is not an outcome but a necessary condition for learning, and the model of conversational-discussion-as-learning supports student achievement. Vygotsky (1978, p. 57) asserts that the development of children takes place, firstly, on a social level between people which he describes as interpsychological, then, secondly, on the individual level inside the child, described as intrapsychological. Allowing students to engage socially in cognitive processes supports their thinking according to this theory of psychological development. Harris (1998, p. 241) simply states that "to children in school, the most important people in the classroom are other children." Therefore, the student-to-student talk that Mere Conversation produces is educationally worthwhile, albeit insufficient.

The move from teacher-directed to conversational talk shifts the focus from teacher-centred to student-centred discussion in some positive ways, but it is still not representative of the highest quality educational dialogue. Howe (2010, p. 79) states that "the expression of contrasting opinions cannot be sufficient in its own right to precipitate growth. Children must also resolve differences in a productive fashion." Leva (2015, p. 53) asserts that for classroom talk to be constructive it needs to include negotiation and evaluation. If negotiation and evaluation are not features of the discussion, then it will be merely conversational idea-sharing, which Leva (2015) says is much more common. Alexander (2001) and Edwards-Groves et al. (2014) acknowledge the importance of using the best kinds of talk for learning purposes, and while Mere Conversation gets students involved in the talk, it

does not engage them in deeper levels of thinking. Moreover, where the conversational discussion is still controlled by the teacher, even though students are engaging in much of the talk themselves, it fails to be collaborative or reflective, which are integral features of productive classroom discussions (Stremmel & Fu, 1993; Myhill, 2006). Allport (1954) also suggests that a focus on a shared or superordinate goal allows for more productive talk than students merely engaging in free talk. In her article 'Inquiry is No Mere Conversation,' Gardner (1995) details a model of teacher facilitation of classroom dialogue that is not teacher-centred, but at the same time does not allow a completely open free conversation dictated to by the idea-sharing of students. Therefore, while Mere Conversation provides some additional benefits to Teacher-Directed Dialogue, it fails to constitute all the features of the most productive forms of classroom discussion and there is still some work to do to get to a conception of best practice in dialogic pedagogy.

Adversarial Dialogue

Adversarial Dialogue is focused on a critical and competitive type of communication. It is primarily concerned with sound reasoning and argumentation. This type of dialogue involves exposing viewpoints and arguments to extreme opposition, whereby a defender will have to muster all the evidence possible to support their view against a real or imagined adversary. This type of dialogue is most conspicuous in school debating competitions. Baker et al. (2020) describe how debating societies were founded from the tradition of ritualistic religious training. From this tradition comes a dogmatic approach to dialogue, where strict adherence to a view is encouraged, and the goal is to persuade another person to side with you while doing little critical reflection yourself.

Osborne (2010) claims that reasoned argumentation of the kind present in Adversarial Dialogue is pivotal to scientific practice and intellectual inquiry. Indeed, the critical analysis in this form of dialogue is valuable in many aspects. Mead (1934) describes how students need to learn not only how to persuade specific others, but to argue in terms of 'what anyone would think.' This is wherein lies the value in Adversarial Dialogue. It has some features of productive dialogue, notably the critical-analytical aspects. Baker et al. (2020, p. 76) claim that argumentative interactions may have educational value because they force students to contest views with reasoned analysis. Students have to explain, examine, and construct counterarguments for views that contribute to thinking better than discussion that is peaceful and placid, which is more likely to move the discussion towards facile acceptance. Dialogue that has the central tenet of providing reasons for arguments has a significant positive impact on cognition and student achievement (Kuhn et al., 2008; Crowell & Kuhn, 2014; Trickey & Topping, 2015). This kind of reasoned argumentation has been theorised by Kuhn and Crowell (2011) as 'dialogic argumentation' and by Resnick et al. (2017) as 'accountable talk'. The CABLE project, focused on investigating collaborative argumentation dialogue, has researched this kind of talk extensively and found that it has a positive effect not only on student cognition and achievement, but also socio-emotional factors as well (Andriessen & Coirier, 1999; Andriessen et al., 2003; Baker et al., 2013; Baker et al., 2020). Reasoning and justification in dialogue have also been shown to provide academic benefits in a number of other studies (O'Connor et al., 2015; van der Veen et al., 2017; Muhonen et al., 2018). This critical examination and reasoning is beneficial to dialogic learning, and while the argument-focused methods and projects mentioned above are not

necessarily examples of Adversarial Dialogue in the same way that debating is, there is a risk that being too argumentatively focused will lead to Adversarial Dialogue.

Adversarial Dialogue is justified by the claim that any “position ought to be defended from, and subjected to, the criticism of the strongest opposition” (Moulton, 1983, p. 153). If that evaluation is not adversarial in nature, then it is assumed to be weaker and less effective (p. 154). Alston and Brandt (1974, pp. 9-10) suggest that a person engaged in this kind of dialogue is “more adept at tearing down than at building up, and he delights in reducing his interlocutors to confusion.” This hyper-critical element forces interlocutors to work within a scheme that requires them to tear down and criticise ideas; that requires them to constantly think of objections and counterexamples; and that requires them to attempt to undermine any and all ideas that are presented for evaluation. Mercer (1996) calls this disputational dialogue, characterised by disagreement, individualised thinking, and short exchanges of assertions. Freidman (2013) denotes the adversarial mode as consisting of objections and counterexamples to which the best responses are refutations, then more objections and counterexamples in a cyclical motion of unending competitive attacks where “all that matters is the gladiatorial skirmish.” This suggests that the aggressive nature of Adversarial Dialogue creates an atmosphere that is inhospitable for anyone who has not been “raised to fight or enjoy combat” (p. 28).

While this argumentation has in Adversarial Dialogue value, there are also many drawbacks. This type of dialogue is espoused as being the pinnacle of rational reasoning and argumentation insofar as it demands that all ideas presented by speakers are subject to rigorous critical analysis. However, where it falls short is in not allowing a collaborative exploration, whereupon building and strengthening ideas through dialogic processes is valued as highly as the critical deconstruction of those ideas through dialogue. This criticality leads to narrow perspectives dominating dialogue. Wegerif and Scrimshaw (1997) show that when a child dominates the discussion other children tend to withdraw, become quiet and subdued, or participate marginally. This narrowness of ideas and marginalisation of other students due to the lack of collaborative discourse is where Adversarial Dialogue fails to be adequately productive as a dialogic pedagogy. It fails to be conducive to diverse and pluralistic dialogue in a way that contributes to progress in ideation and thinking (cf. Golding, 2010).

Exploratory Dialogue as Exemplary Dialogue

Exploratory Dialogue is presented in this section to be the most productive form of classroom discussion. The concept of Exploratory Talk comes from Barnes (1992, 2008), but has undergone many additions and reviews since then. The use of this concept also refers to what is known as ‘thinking aloud’. Exploratory Dialogue, rather than Talk, emphasises the interactive nature of the communication, rather than the individualised notion of ‘thinking aloud.’ There are a variety of terms used to address the features of classroom interaction that is being labelled here as Exploratory Dialogue. These include Dialogic Instruction (Nystrand, 1997), Dialogic Enquiry (Wells, 1999), Dialogic Teaching (Alexander, 2001), Accountable Talk (Resnick et al., 2017), Inquiry Dialogue (Reznitskaya & Wilkinson, 2017), and Quality Talk (Wilkinson et al., 2010). In this thesis, Exploratory Dialogue will be the commonly used term to describe a specific kind of classroom interaction that draws on many different theories and will be explained in this section in full.

In terms of structure, Wegerif (2020, p. 21) describes three moves within Exploratory Dialogue: opening, widening, and deepening. Opening involves enabling space for relationships within the participants in the dialogue that makes it possible to “shape the attention of the other.” This move opens a question, problem, or idea that allows ideas, perspectives, and beliefs to shape the dialogue. In a way, it is a specific version of a prompt. It is specific in that it is a prompt that enables this divergent pluralistic dialogue. An example is: ‘eating meat is wrong’. This opening move creates the space for divergent opinions within a pluralistic discussion. Speakers can discuss their agreement or disagreement and reasoning in response. The second move is widening. This widens the concepts in the discussion by actively seeking out a diverse range of perspectives through asking what everyone thinks. This widening involves incorporating views from outside the perspectives of the specific people in the dialogue. For example, in a class with no indigenous students, an imaginative or speculative perspective of what an indigenous voice might have to say about the topic could be considered. The third move is deepening. This is a deepening of the way in which the topic is reasoned about. This might look like students identifying assumptions that have been made in the dialogue so far, such as ‘we are assuming that non-human animals have inner lives in the same way as humans when we claim that we should not eat them’. The widening move aims to expose students to a breadth of perspectives, while the deepening move aims for them to explore the depth within those perspectives.

These moves contrast with the previous three dialogue types. Teacher-Directed Dialogue does not aim at either breadth or depth through widening or deepening moves. The teacher wants the singular correct answer so that the class can memorise it and move on. Mere Conversation may have some breadth, but no depth. It fails to deeply and critically analyse perspectives and only involves the sharing of opinions. It also does not consider perspectives from outside the dialogue, such as the indigenous perspective example mentioned earlier. Adversarial Dialogue does not have the breadth, because each side of the argument has their narrow position as fixed and immovable. There may be multiple perspectives within the discussion as a whole (i.e., two opposing sides), but this is not breadth in the same way because there is no purposeful consideration for other perspectives, nor is it the case that speakers are open to changing their minds. As for depth, there is only one-sided depth. The aim of Adversarial Dialogue is to persuade your way to victory, therefore there is a deep critical analysis, but it is only of the oppositional view and not of one’s own view.

Barnes (1992) uses the Vygotskyian concept of inner speech to suggest that learning should be transformational rather than merely additive. By this, he means that dialogue should produce a transformation in a learner that facilitates an inner dialogue based on the ideas that are presented by others during discussion. This inner dialogue is what counts as critical thinking and is specifically developed in conversation with others. In contrast, Teacher-Directed Dialogue is merely additive because it gifts students with new knowledge, but not a way to apply, contextualise, or modify that knowledge in innovative ways. Nystrand (1997) similarly says that Exploratory Dialogue builds a completely different kind of relationship between teacher and student, whereby the teacher’s role is to structure talk in order to facilitate students’ production of knowledge, and the students’ role is to think, not simply to remember. In this way, students’ knowledge is being moulded and transformed as the dialogue progresses, rather than merely adding fact upon fact to a bank of ‘things’ that students ‘know’.

Bakhtin (1981, p. 293) distinguishes between what is being described here as Teacher-Directed and Exploratory Dialogue through an understanding of the ownership of ideas and concepts. In Exploratory Dialogue, students are able to take ideas and concepts and make them their own; utilise and deploy them for purposes suited to the context and in unique and creative ways. He claims that this kind of dialogue reveals “newer ways to mean” (p. 346). “If an answer does not give rise to a new question from itself, it falls out of the dialogue” (p. 168). This directly contrasts with Teacher-Directed Dialogue where the teacher already has the answers and is not interested in new interpretations, questions, or understandings. Skidmore (2016b, p. 31) discusses this idea from Bakhtin by stating that when students are limited to an understanding of a concept that asks them to reproduce it in an identical form to which it was presented to them, the concept remains someone else’s and not a genuine psychological tool that they can use. Only when students are able to construct new meaning from a learned concept, incorporating their point of view, questioning the interpretation, or presenting something new can we be confident that they have a strong grasp on the concept in a way that demonstrates an emerging understanding of the domain of knowledge that they are studying. Thus, in Exploratory Dialogue, instead of teachers telling students what they need to know and remember, they stimulate thinking with ideas that launch students into knowledge construction using reasoning, perspective sharing, and critical analysis (Stein et al., 2008). Exploratory dialogue challenges students’ thinking with speculative and process questions that encourage them to reflect, reason, explore, and re-examine ideas. Speculative questions encourage more depth, and might include, ‘can you give me an example?’, ‘are there any other connections to [previous idea]’, or ‘do your reasons support your conclusion?’. Process questions address the procedure of the inquiry and might include, ‘do you agree or disagree?’, ‘could you explain in your own words?’, or ‘what do you mean by that?’. This kind of dialogue empowers students to participate in a pluralistic dialogue and construct meaning for themselves through owning the ideas and concepts under discussion.

Mere Conversation focuses on perspective sharing and Adversarial Dialogue focusses on criticising ideas, Exploratory Dialogue moves beyond these towards dialogue as a form of knowledge construction (Kovalainen & Kumpulainen, 2005; Edwards-Groves et al., 2014) (Fisher, 2009). Personal meaning and ideas can be constructed and shared, but more so, the meaning and the thinking behind them is shared through dialogue, enabling the construction of group understanding (Leva, 2015). The collaborative nature of the dialogue exposes students to multiple perspectives, while also building mutual understanding through the process of thinking together and thinking collaboratively (Mercer & Dawes, 2008; Fisher, 2009; Boyd & Galda, 2011). This enables knowledge construction as students are actively processing the exchange and there are opportunities to connect ideas through dialogue (Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Stremmel & Fu, 1993; Konings et al., 2005; Osberg & Biesta, 2008; Myers & Nulty, 2009; French, 2012). This kind of talk encourages students to socially construct understandings (Nachowitz & Brumer, 2014), and in order to do this they must build on each idea shared rather than merely hearing them out or searching for criticisms to tear them down (Edwards-Groves & Hoare, 2012).

Producing effective classroom discussion is not as simple as monitoring who talks and how much. Instead, the extent to which students are treated as epistemic agents (co-constructors of knowledge) is a greater predictor for quality dialogic learning and improved student outcomes (Skidmore, 2016c). Pauli and Reusser (2015) demonstrate a positive association between co-

constructing knowledge and student attainment in mathematics. Research has long demonstrated the importance of active dialogue to cognitive development (Trevarthen, 1979; Bråten, 1988; Resnick et al., 2018). Common features of Exploratory Dialogue include an open exchange of ideas, joint inquiry and construction of knowledge, multiple voices, and respectful classroom relations (Littleton & Mercer, 2013; Haneda, 2017; Khong et al., 2019; J. Hardman, 2020).

A key benefit of Exploratory Dialogue is that students reformulate knowledge in various contexts due to the diversity and pluralism in the dialogue. Students test and apply their understanding of new concepts so that they become familiar with their use. Skidmore (2016b, p. 33) contrasts this with Teacher-Directed Dialogue, suggesting that when instruction takes place using recitational methods, the knowledge acquired by the students is static and gets quickly discarded outside of the specific context in which it was learned. In Exploratory Dialogue, students move away from the recitation and reproduction questioning that takes place in Teacher-Directed Dialogue (Young, 1991). Curricular content is retold from the students' perspectives and applied and contextualised in various ways. The teacher talks with, rather than talks at, students, emphasising the varying perspectives and ideas that the students have to offer (Skidmore, 2016b, p. 35). Alexander (2001) distinguishes between dialogue and conversation by suggesting that dialogue utilises purposeful questioning, structure, and the pursuit of shared inquiry goals. He suggests that dialogue is the main way in which teachers are able to remove themselves from the habit of treating students as empty vessels and allows them to see students as competent thinkers in their own right. This is the kind of teaching that is "collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful" (p. 29).

One of the ways that Exploratory Dialogue aims to achieve purposeful meaning making is by attending to the individuality of student voices in the discussion. It emphasises different and unique voices interacting with each other in pursuit of knowledge and understanding, but never being reducible to a single authoritative voice (Skidmore, 2016b, p. 34). Wells (1999, p. 174) describes the meaning potential of shared language, which allows students to work towards achieving goals within their discursive social interaction. In an educational context, these goals are generally going to be skill development and a greater conceptual understanding of a topic. Alexander (2001, p. 527) details how this common understanding is achieved through joint activity and shared conceptions. It incorporates the social conversation with the cognitive inquiry to demand a specific kind of talk emerge. More than responding with perspective sharing, Exploratory Dialogue affords students the time and space to think for themselves in relation to others, augmenting understanding (Leva, 2015). Hedges and Cullen (2005) describe this as intersubjectivity, where a cognitive, social, and emotional exchange occurs between members of a learning community. These exchanges facilitate the communal interaction in dialogue to further the knowledge and understanding of all speakers. Vygotsky (1978) uses the notion of thinking as internalised self-talk, and thus, dialogue with others enables this internal thinking dialogue to become reasoned through the communal exchange (Stahl et al., 2014). Carless et al. (2011, p. 397) also delineate how the most successful interactive exchanges require shared and negotiated meanings and expectations. It is a process of shared inquiry into a concept of learning that takes place in the form of a dialogue (Wells, 1999; Linell, 2009). The concept of polyphony, or multiple voices and perspectives as part of a dialogue is important to Exploratory Dialogue (Bakhtin, 1984). Through this multiplicity of voices comes the notion of an epistemological framework that is used to construct shared knowledge through dialogue with a specific group (Mercer,

2000). Skidmore (2016a, p. 95) explains that the richer one's discursive space, "the wider this person's access to whatever forms of life the society and its culture have to offer and the greater her ability to collaborate with others." By this, he means that the greater diversity in dialogues that a person can participate in will open up their minds to a wider array of ideas, perspectives, and beliefs. This is of benefit in an educational context because a goal in education is to broaden the minds of students so that they can see, think, and create beyond their limited classroom context.

Following Bakhtin (1984, p. 26), Exploratory Dialogue should be "profoundly pluralistic." This connects with Wegerif's idea of widening. In practical terms, this means ensuring that the discussion does not focus too much on trying to come to a universal consensus or find the 'correct' answer. Pluralistic views on topics are encouraged, and the value in the dialogue comes from the understandings and interpretations between diverse viewpoints. "If one is open in a dialogue and listens closely, there is no final position but always a voice from outside the current consensus knocking on the window with a new perspective, asking to be heard" (Wegerif, 2020, p. 18). Skidmore (2016b) says that this is the idea of "no single viewpoint being superior to any other." The teacher must provide the space for plurality to emerge, encouraging divergent thinking for interaction within the discussion. This interaction allows the consideration of multiple perspectives. The emphasis is placed not on the view in and of itself, but on ensuring that the reasoning a student uses to justify a particular view is made explicit (p. 39). This contrasts with Teacher-Directed Dialogue where the teacher is looking for a specific correct answer. Instead of searching for specific answers, Exploratory Dialogue seeks the reasoning behind any answer. It is through this examination of reasoning that learning can develop in an effective way. This is the case even where there is, in fact, a single correct answer. For example, where a student says that $1 + 1 = 3$. The focus is not on the incorrect answer of 3, but on the reasoning that led the student to think that the answer was 3. A critical communal examination of the reasoning will not only reveal an error in reasoning but also address potential misconceptions in student thinking. This is something Teacher-Directed Dialogue cannot do, as this form of interaction will state that this is the incorrect answer and restart the IRF/E sequence with another student until the correct answer is achieved. Visible student reasoning in discussion adds meaning, purpose, and contextuality to discussions, exploring uncertainties and original ideas. It enables students within the dialogue to evaluate, decide, and apply their own criteria to analyse the knowledge in question.

Conclusion

The importance of classroom dialogue for student achievement and wellbeing is well known. This paper contributes to the depth of understanding in the different kinds of dialogic pedagogy that teachers can employ. Notably, the role of Exploratory Dialogue is emphasised as having a strong positive impact on students. This kind of dialogic engagement provides teachers with an avenue to empower their students toward becoming critical, creative, caring, and collaborative thinkers, as well as good human beings.

In practice, the pedagogical work required of teachers is to be aware of the ways that they structure talk for optimal student learning and engagement. Being sensitive to the pedagogical moves that are inclusive to all students is necessary for high achievement. This collaborative discussion

should still be critical, analytical, and full of disagreement, making it a productive academic dialogue. But it does not have to be competitive and argumentative. There are many pedagogical models that teachers can access to ensure this efficacy, including Dialogic Instruction (Nystrand, 1997), Dialogic Enquiry (Wells, 1999), Dialogic Teaching (Alexander, 2001), Accountable Talk (Resnick et al., 2017), Inquiry Dialogue (Reznitskaya & Wilkinson, 2017), and Quality Talk (Wilkinson et al., 2010), and Philosophy for Children (Murriss et al., 2016). Teachers should also be aware of those features of other, less effective, dialogue types so that they can avoid falling into those traps. Dialogic pedagogy is of lesser quality when it is in fact monologic and teacher-directed, when it is more conversational ideas-sharing without criticality, and when it is strongly adversarial without collaboration or reflection. These dialogue types will fail to provide the most beneficial classroom experience. Teachers should be accountable for how effective their teaching is to enable all students to participate, succeed, and excel.

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