

# Teaching Discussion Oracy Skills: Supporting Pupils to Participate Confidently and Effectively During Small Group Discussion.

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## Introduction

Developing pupils' oracy skills is vital to support their learning across the curriculum. Donaldson's (2015) curriculum report urges teachers to provide rich learning opportunities to develop these skills. The aim of my study is to explore teaching strategies to develop pupils' discussion oracy skills to support them to take part effectively in group discussion.

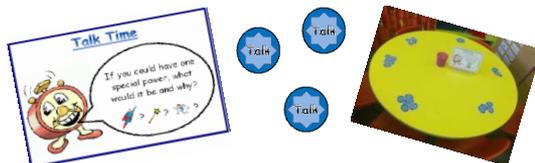
My 3 research questions are:

- 1) How effectively will my pupils use discussion skills during their small group discussions?
- 2) Will my pupils gain confidence in contributing to discussion in a small group setting?
- 3) How will my direct teaching of discussion skills support my pupils to participate effectively in small group discussions?

"Talk is arguably the true foundation of learning."  
(Alexander 2008)

## My Intervention

- Year 1 pupils taught discussion skills directly over a period of 5 weeks.
- Two 30 minute sessions a week.
- Focus group of 6 children for data collection.
- Opportunity to apply the skill learnt each session during a small group discussion.
- Children used Talk Time cards including a question to discuss within their group.
- Talk tokens introduced to encourage turn taking.



Session	Session Objective
1	Develop understanding of skills needed to have a good discussion.
2	Develop turn-taking skills.
3	Learn to speak clearly.
4	Develop confidence in expressing an opinion.
5	Develop effective listening skills.
6	Gain confidence in responding to others.
7	Understand the importance of giving a reason.
8	Learn to focus on a topic during a discussion.
9	Effectively apply oracy skills learnt during a group discussion.
10	Effectively apply oracy skills learnt during a group discussion.

## Method

I used a mixed-method approach, generating qualitative and quantitative data. This ensured my inquiry had methodological triangulation.

Data collection methods:

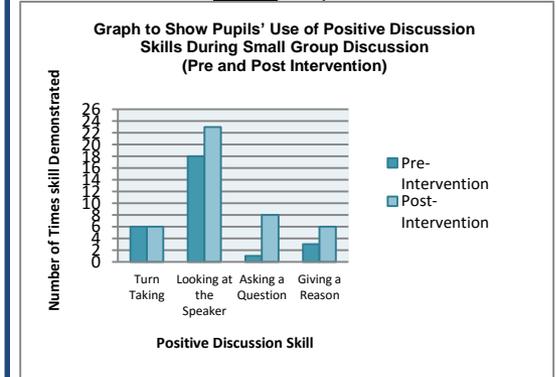
- Individual semi-structured interviews pre and post intervention coded into themes.
- Observation schedules of first and last group discussion (video recording used), which I analysed statistically.
- Likert confidence scale pre and post intervention.
- Research journal for qualitative data.

## Findings

At the end of the inquiry, I came to several conclusions:

- Directly teaching the discussion skills supported the children to use them more effectively in a small group, evidenced by the pre and post intervention data from observation schedules (see graph 1).
- 50% of pupils improved in confidence to participate in discussion (this is 100% of pupils who had less than 'very confident' at the start of the intervention).
- Children gained confidence due to the small group setting compared to whole class, evidenced by qualitative interview data (extract 3).

## Data Graph 1



## Extract 3

**Interviewer:** Now think back to how we have been working in small groups during our Talk Time, how did you feel speaking out loud then?

**Lilly:** A little bit more confident (2)

**Interviewer:** That's excellent, why did you feel a bit more confident?

**Lilly:** Because there weren't so many people there. I got more of a chance to talk. (1) (2)

## Implications for Practice

This inquiry has had a great impact on my own practice. I now recognise the importance of teaching discussion oracy skills directly, the benefit of using small group settings in my teaching and how developing discussion skills can lead to more child-led talk. I plan to embed these strategies in my future practice to improve my pupils' oracy outcomes.

Having shared my findings with colleagues, they are enthusiastic about directly teaching discussion skills in their own classrooms. I have shared my Talk Time resources to enable colleagues to undertake the intervention. This will ensure my inquiry will have a wider impact on more learners' oracy development.

## References

- Alexander, R. 2008. *Towards dialogic teaching*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. York: Dialogos.
- Donaldson, G. 2015. *Successful futures: Independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in wales*. Wales: Welsh Government.
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