# Developing Metalinguistic Talk

*A focus on metalinguistic learning*

| Metatalk Sequences | | | |
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| | **INITIATING QUESTIONS** | Questions which *check* understanding.<br><br>Skilful use of closed questions, either at the start of a talk sequence, or part way through, to check understanding of a point in order to allow further discussion of it. | • *What is the subject of the sentence?*<br>• *Where is the simile in this sentence?* |
| | | Questions which *open up* thinking.<br><br>'Opening up' questions which invite students to think more deeply about a language choice - often questions beginning with ***'Why? 'How?', or 'What do you think?'*** | • *Why would we use simple sentences?*<br>• *How could I make that better?*<br>• *What are your reactions to what we've just read?*<br>• *What does the physical description of the man and his horse suggest about his character?*<br>• *What might a reader think about a man who is completely green?*<br>• *What does the description of how the man arrives suggest about his character?* |
| | **ELABORATING QUESTIONS** | Inviting Elaboration questions: questions which pick up on students' responses and ask them to give more explanation, elaboration or justification.<br><br>It is important to listen to what a child's response tells you about their understanding, and to shape questions to extend and clarify from that point. | • *What have you learned about how to use sentences to describe characters and events?*<br>• *Ok so we need to use long sentences, short sharp sentences, tell me a bit more, Mark?*<br>• *Anyone got something else to comment on Anna's wine-red colour?*<br>• *Talk about that a bit more*<br>• So why do you think the short sentence works well there?'<br>• *Why is that such a good sentence?* |
| | **VERBALISING** | Verbalising the meaning-making effect of a linguistic choice in writing.<br><br>Teachers' verbalisation explains, consolidates, clarifies, extends, students' understanding of the meaning-making effect of linguistic choices. | • *Morpurgo shows us through his noun phrase that the horse is towering, it is a warhorse, it paws the grounds, it is lathered up: so we infer the knight riding it must be a warrior, an aggressive man.* |

# Developing Peer-to-Peer Metalinguistic Talk

| | | Make the features of effective metalinguistic talk explicit to students: | Explain the purpose of this metalinguistic talk: | Model questions and comment for students: |
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| *Teaching Metalinguistic Talk* | *Metatalk Sequences* | **INITIATING QUESTIONS** | Questions which ask partners to describe what they've written and what features they are pleased with. | • *What writing choices did you make?*<br>• *What feature are you proud of?* |
| | | | Questions which ask partners why and how they have made their writing choices.<br><br>Encourage students to try to pick out a word or feature and ask about this specifically. | ***Questions which begin with 'Why? 'How?', or 'What do you think…?' work well.***<br><br>• *Why did you use this word to describe the setting?*<br>• *What sort of character do you want the knight to be? What word shows this?*<br>• *How could you make that sentence better?*<br>• *In this description, what were you trying to suggest about the character?* |
| | | **ELABORATING QUESTIONS** | Follow up questions which explore your partner's writing choices and help them to improve their writing. | • *Talk about that a bit more*<br>• *So why do you think the short sentence works well there?'*<br>• *Could you use a different word her, like…* |
| | | **VERBALISE** | Students are encouraged to verbalise and **compare** their choices. | • *I chose the verb 'racing' **because** I wanted to create a sense of urgency and panic.*<br>• *I made a similar choice: I used the word 'plodding' to describe how the boy was walking, to show that he wasn't keen to go to school.* |