WRITING DIALOGUES: METALINGUISTIC TALK ABOUT WRITING

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Introduction

The importance of talk for learning has a long history, arguably beginning with Socrates and his emphasis on dialogue and debate as fundamental in fostering critical and moral thinking. Socratic dialogue is '*a shared dialogue between teacher and students in which both are responsible for pushing the dialogue forward through questioning'* (Reich 2003:2). In this dialogue, the teacher's role is not to transmit knowledge, but to open up and steer a line of inquiry through questioning, and challenging each other's thinking. The core ideas here concerning the role of talk in promoting thinking, and the enabling role of the teacher runs through all subsequent work on talk for learning, and is discernibly present in the early educational thought-leaders in this field, such as Wilkinson (1970), Barnes (1976), Britton (1983) and Edwards and Mercer (1987) in the UK, Freire (Shor and Freire 1987) in Brazil, Vygotsky (1987) in Russia, and Burbules (1993) in the United States. From these culturally and intellectually diverse thinkers has burgeoned a contemporary international field of research of major educational significance as evidenced in the recent *Handbook of Research on Dialogic Education* (Mercer, Wegerif and Major 2020) representing researchers from 23 countries.

And yet, attention to dialogic talk in the context of writing pedagogy is noticeable in its scarcity. In comparison with the breadth of research on dialogic talk in mathematics and science, there is almost nothing on dialogic talk in language education, other than a vein of research on how dialogic pedagogy can support reading comprehension and interaction around texts. This chapter sets out to address this gap by focussing on writing and the importance of dialogic metalinguistic talk about writing. It will draw on two studies conducted in the *Centre for Research in Writing* at the University of Exeter, and will synthesise and discuss the findings, proposing a theoretically and empirically informed pedagogical approach to foster metalinguistically discursive writing classrooms.

The Conceptual Framework

Dialogic Talk for Learning

Although understanding of the primacy of talk in promoting learning is well-established, it is also the case that there are multiple terms and concepts used to describe the phenomenon of talk, often synonymous and overlapping, as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Term	Used by (for example)
dialogic/dialogical teaching	Shor and Freire 1987; Burbules 1993; Alexander 2008
dialogic stance	Boyd and Markarian 2015
exploratory talk	Barnes 1976 Edwards and Mercer 1987
collaborative talk	Wells 1989 Newman 2016
co-operative talk	Gillies 2015
accountable talk	Reznick 2015
productive talk	Michaels and O'Connor 2019
dialogic inquiry	Wells 2009
dialogic space	Wegerif 2013

dialogic pedagogy	Skidmore 2002
Quality Talk	Wilkinson and Bourdage (in press)

Table 1: different terms used to describe talk for learning

Kim and Wilkinson (2019) offer a detailed analysis of the way different researchers, approaching the topic of talk from different perspectives, have used some of these terms, drawing out similarities across the field, but also ways in which they differ. In similar vein, Wegerif (2020) considers the concept of 'dialogue' which underpins dialogic talk, noting there are three distinctive ways to consider it. Firstly, the everyday understanding of dialogue, as defined in a dictionary, relates to conversation between people. He then distinguishes between an epistemological and an ontological definition of dialogue: an epistemological view sees dialogue as '*a theory of meaning'* (2020:2) which can only be understood in the context of a chain of utterances where learning is constructed together; whereas an ontological view is concerned '*with the very nature of our existence and identity'*, a way of being (2020:3). In our own work, our interest is epistemological – in how meaning is made through talk interactions in the classroom. Logically then, we are also primarily concerned with dialogic teaching, the way in which the teacher can lead and guide talk constructively to foster genuine learning, and particularly in '*the kinds of talk the teacher might use to open up the talk and hence the thinking of the student'* (Alexander 2020:48).

Recalling Socratic dialogue and its emphasis on shared dialogue pursued through careful questioning, dialogic teaching foregrounds the generation of opportunities for students to think, hypothese and speculate through talk. Such talk is '*hesitant and incomplete because it enables the speaker to try out ideas, to hear how they sound, to see what others make of them, to arrange information and ideas into different patterns*' (Barnes 2008:4) and allows learners to explore their thinking and crystallise their understanding. This talk contrasts with heavily-controlled classroom interactions, where '*the teacher takes turns at will, allocates turns to others, determines topics, interrupts and re-allocates turns judged to be irrelevant to those topics'* (Edwards and Westgate 1994: 46), and where the teacher is the '*controller of the spoken word'* and '*the learners remain in the shadows'* (Haworth 2001: 14). This kind of teaching treats learning as a form of recitation, which reduces learning to a requirement for '*children to report someone else's thinking rather than think for themselves'* (Alexander 2020: 15). In contrast, dialogic teaching creates '*a means for people to think and learn together'* (Mercer, 1995: 4) and is based on an epistemological view that learning is socially-constructed through interaction. Alexander's work on dialogic teaching (2008; 2020) is particularly useful because he details principles to '*guide the planning of and conduct of classroom talk'* (2020:131) and to enable evaluation of whether the talk that is happening in a lesson is genuinely dialogic. His most recent work outlines six principles, adding 'deliberative' to the original five explained in his earlier work (Alexander 2008). The six principles are presented in Table 2 below.

Principle	**Explanation**
Collective	The classroom is a site of joint learning and enquiry where students and teachers address learning tasks together.
Supportive	Students feel able to express ideas freely without fear of judgment and they work together to reach common understandings.
Reciprocal	Participants listen to each other, share ideas, ask questions and consider alternative viewpoints, enabled by the teacher.

Deliberative	Participants seek to resolve different points of view, to evaluate arguments and to arrive at a reasoned position.
Cumulative	Participants build on their own and each other's contributions and chain them into coherent lines of enquiry.
Purposeful	Classroom talk, though sometimes open-ended, is nevertheless structured with specific learning goals in view.

Table 2: Alexander's Six Principles of Dialogic Teaching (summarised from Alexander 2020:131)

Alexander (2020-131) helpfully distinguishes between the first and the last three principles, noting that collectivity, support and reciprocity relate to the environment of the classroom and the talk culture established. This connects with the notion of accountable talk, which Michaels et al (2008:287) describe as evident when '*participants listen carefully to one another, build on each other's ideas, and ask each other questions aimed at clarifying or expanding a proposition. When talk is accountable to the community, participants listen to others and build their contributions in response to those of others'.* It also links to research on co-operative and collaborative group talk (for example, Gillies 2015; Newman 2016; 2017). This classroom culture of mutual respect and collaboration is, in effect, a precondition for the effectiveness of deliberativeness, cumulation and purposefulness which are more closely focused on thinking and learning.

One crucial implication resonating throughout this substantial body of international research is that dialogic teaching which fosters higher-level thinking and understanding relies strongly on the role of the teacher, and in many cases, changed pedagogical practice. Changing professional practice in managing talk can be challenging, and the tendency to teacher-centred domination of classroom talk is well-reported (Galton 1999; Mroz et al 2002; Howe and Abedin 2013) and even when teachers believe in the value of dialogic talk, their enacted practices often remaining controlling (Myhill and Warren 2005). The teacher has to shift from high control of both learning content and classroom talk, to an arguably much more demanding skilled management of talk and learning which both creates space for student thinking talk and orients towards learning goals. Skidmore (2002) characterises this as a move from pedagogical dialogue, where the teacher-as-expert transmits learning to less expert others, to dialogic pedagogy, where the process of thinking through rich discussion is prioritised. This is not simply a change in practice, it is an epistemological shift to a dialogic stance towards learning (Boyd and Markarian 2015) which involves the value orientation of the teacher: in other words, teachers do not 'do' dialogic teaching, they enact it.

Dialogic Talk about Writing

Dialogic teaching, then, is fundamentally concerned with creating classroom cultures which facilitate student engagement through participatory, collaborative and supportive talk opportunities. This learning environment acts as an enabler for higher-level thinking which pursues cumulative of inquiry, generating learning together. Whilst particular teaching *practices* may typify dialogic teaching – such as group and peer activities, or allowing wait time after asking questions – dialogic teaching is fundamentally about teacher *beliefs* and their epistemological stance towards talk and learning. So simply setting a group task will not necessarily generate dialogic peer-to-peer talk if the activity is geared towards a narrow, predetermined outcome; and asking an 'open' question will not necessarily stimulate dialogic responses if students know a right answer is expected.

In the context of this understanding, it seems obvious that dialogic teaching has enormous potential value in the language classroom, which is intimately concerned with the making of meaning, and with learning about language through language: indeed, '*when children learn language … they are learning the foundations of learning itself*' (Halliday, 1993: 93). Language education is central to this tenet, because as Hammond (2016:10) argues, knowledge is constructed socially *'through the patterns of language interaction that take place in classrooms, and through the talking, reading and writing with which students engage*'. Yet, where research on dialogic teaching has taken a subject orientation it has tended to address Science (Scott et al, 2006; Bianchi and Booth, 2014) and Mathematics (Bakker et al, 2015; Hofmann and Ruthven, 2018). There is far less research on dialogic teaching in language education, and what there is focuses principally on reading comprehension (Pearson 2010; Maine 2020; Wilkinson 2020); or on the effect of dialogic talk in general on writing outcomes (Davies and Meissel 2016; Howe et al 2019). Matre and Solheim (2016) provide valuable insight into teachers' talk about writing assessment, underlining the value of dialogic talk about writing for professional development. Three studies have specifically considered the benefits of dialogic talk in teaching writing: the use of dialogic talk in teaching creative writing to students aged 16-18 (Caine 2015); the relationship between dialogic talk and persuasive writing (Al-Adeimi and O'Connor 2021); and dialogic talk in writing mini-lessons (Boyd et al 2020). However, these studies have been more interested in the dialogic talk per se, than the specific nature of dialogic talk about writing. Our own research has been concerned with the intersection of understanding about dialogic talk and teaching, and metalinguistic understanding about writing.

Of course, the value of classroom talk in the context of teaching writing is itself not new, and was emphasised in Britton's seminal argument that '*reading and writing float on a sea of talk'* (1983:11). However, pedagogically this has tended to be realised in terms of giving learners opportunities to talk about the content of their writing – to generate initial ideas for writing and to rehearse ideas with others. It has been much less focused on *how* the text is written, and the compositional choices that writers can choose to communicate meaning. At the same time, research in writing has emphasised the importance of metacognition in writing (Hacker et al 2009; Graham et al 2014), but not *metalinguistic* understanding in writing, except in the context of second language learning (for example, Bialystok 2007; ter Kuile et al 2011) and spelling (for example, Nunes et al 2006). It is important to note that we believe metacognitive talk about writing is of enormous value: learners need opportunities to talk about how they manage the writing process, and dialogic metacognitive talk needs further research. This chapter, however, is focused specifically on metalinguistic talk and how it can help writers to think about and reflect on their linguistic decision-making in writing.

Metalinguistic understanding refers to the capacity to think about language, not just to use it. Gombert explains metalinguistic understanding as both '*reflection on language and its use'* and learners' ability '*intentionally to monitor and plan their own methods of linguistic processing …'* (1992, p.13). Importantly, this signals that metalinguistic understanding involves both recognition and acting on that recognition when speaking, reading or writing. On one level, metalinguistic understanding can be conceived of involving reflection on grammatical structures or spelling rules, a form-focused representation of language use. In contrast, our own research has adopted a functional focus (Myhill et al 2012; Myhill et al 2020), drawing on Halliday's theories of language as social semiotic, a resource for meaning-making (Halliday 1975) and Carter and McArthy's notion of '*grammar as choice'* (2006). In other words, we are less interested in metalinguistic understanding simply as a driver of accuracy and rule-compliance in writing, and more in developing learners' sense of authorial agency and their

understanding of how the linguistic choices they make in their writing subtly alter how they communicate with readers and how they fulfil their authorial intentions.

We have appropriated the concept of metatalk from second language research to describe a particular kind of talk which focuses on heightening learners' understanding of the choices they make, what Schleppegrell (2013) calls '*consciousness-raising'*. Metatalk is thus functionally-oriented metalinguistic talk about linguistic choices in writing (Myhill and Newman 2016). One particular value of metatalk about writing is that is generating explicit knowledge about language choices in writing – whilst all language users have implicit knowledge about language that knowledge cannot be verbalised. Explicit knowledge can be shared, discussed, refined and challenged in the writing classroom, and is thus pedagogically important. Through metatalk, not only can teachers develop and extend students' metalinguistic understanding about writing, but the talk makes visible for teachers students' levels of understanding, and also their misconceptions and misunderstandings. We have conceptualised metatalk as a form of dialogic talk (Myhill and Newman 2020) because it is exploratory in nature and is in line with Alexander's six principles for dialogic teaching. To be effective, metatalk requires a classroom environment which is collective, supportive and reciprocal in order to establish the conditions for discursive metalinguistic exploration. Even more crucially, metatalk is founded upon talk which is *deliberative*, evaluating points and drawing reasoned conclusions; *cumulative*, building coherent lines of enquiry; and *purposeful,* geared towards a learning goal of better understanding of the communicative and rhetorical effect of different linguistic choices. Moreover, our conceptualisation of metatalk is epistemologically dialogic: '*a view of learning about writing as an induction into a fluid community of practice, rather than compliant adherence to a set of conventions; and a view of writing as more about linguistic choice than linguistic performance'* (Myhill and Newman 2020: 369).

Investigating Dialogic Metalinguistic Talk: The Two Studies

In order to explore the concept of dialogic metalinguistic talk, this chapter draws on data from two studies investigating the teaching of grammatical choice in writing. The studies are part of a cumulative body of 16 research studies conducted over the past 15 years, all of which have explored the role of grammar within the teaching of writing. At the heart of this research is a functional view of grammar and language, informed by Halliday's theorisation of language as '*learning how to mean'* (Halliday 1975), and his subsequent research into the relationship between language and meaning-making. In particular, Halliday conceives of '*the unity of grammar and lexis'* (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 64), arguing that syntax and morphology are both grammatical, and emphasising that creating meaning is not just about lexical aspects of vocabulary of word choice, but also about syntactical and textual choices. The notion of choice is central to our theorisation of the relationship between grammar and writing, with the pedagogical intention to foster metalinguistic understanding sufficient to enable students '*to make choices from among a range of linguistic resources, and to be aware of the effects of different choices on the rhetorical power of their writing'* (Lefstein 2009, 382). To support the implementation of this pedagogy, we have worked with teachers to develop a set of principles to inform the planning and teaching of writing. These have evolved and refined over time as a consequence of successive studies, and they are now summarised by the acronym, LEAD (Table 3). A more detailed explanation of the theoretical rationale for the LEAD principles, with practical classroom examples can be found in Myhill, Watson and Newman (2020).

PRINCIPLE	EXPLANATION
Link	Make a link between the grammar being introduced and how it works in the writing being taught
Example	Explain the grammar through examples, not lengthy explanations
Authentic text	Use examples from authentic texts to links writers to the broader community of writers;
Discussion	Build in high-quality discussion about grammar and its effects

Table 3: The LEAD Principles

The two studies informing this chapter were nationally-funded randomised controlled trials, the second repeating the first at a larger scale. They built on the findings of an earlier project (Myhill et al 2012; Jones et al 2013) which had found a positive impact on student writing of embedding grammar as choice within the teaching of writing. The two studies were part of a national programme, run by the Education Endowment Foundation, set up to determine 'what works' through randomised controlled trials. Because of our recognition of the limitations of simplistic views of what works in the professionally highly complex setting of a classroom (Myhill and Jones 2007; Myhill 2021), we paralleled the statistical data collection with qualitative data observing lessons to gain an understanding of how the teachers were implementing the pedagogical approach, and what any barriers or constraints might be.

Study 1 (Myhill, Jones and Wilson 2016; Myhill and Newman 2016) involved 779 students, aged 10-11, in 54 demographically representative state primary schools across England. The qualitative data was collected from classroom observations of a lesson in 53 of the schools (one school was omitted due to staff illness). A semi-structured observation schedule was used, and the lessons were also audio-recorded for later transcription. Study 2 (Myhilll and Newman 2020; Newman and Watson 2020; Watson, Newman and Morgan 2021) involved 155 primary schools across the country, again with students aged 10-11. In this case, the qualitative data comprised a smaller dataset of audio-recorded observation of 17 lessons from 17 teachers in different schools. For both studies, the transcribed data was analysed inductively using Nvivo, with initial open coding followed by axial coding, grouping the coding into thematic clusters. This analysis focused on the teachers' management of dialogic metalinguistic talk, and highlighted both effective and less effective practice.

The qualitative analysis of the Study 1 data highlighted the critical importance of attending to how teachers' manage dialogic metalinguistic talk, the D (discussion) of the LEAD principles. It illustrated how teachers could effectively draw out and develop students' articulation of their thinking about language choices, but also how, if not managed carefully, the talk could narrow and limit student thinking. Skilful management extended the discussion across a sequence of interaction, building a coherent line of enquiry, with a clear learning focus (Myhill, Jones and Wilson 2016). Within this interaction sequence, the teachers pushed students to justify their answers, as is evidenced in the brief sequence below:

Student:	Guinevere's pretty pretty
Teacher:	What do you mean by pretty pretty?
Student:	Because, like, where is it, they're like describing her hair saying '*honey*' and '*gold, washed in milk'*, that sounds like she's quite pretty.
Teacher:	OK, so the words that the writer is using then. What words can you pick out that suggest prettiness?
Student:	'*Her hair was the colour of honey and gold washed in milk'*, she would be perfect – I think that might mean kind of like love.
Teacher:	So you're associating words like honey and gold with niceness, positive images?

Figure 1

In contrast, less dialogic talk was characterised by too much teacher talk, often with an unclear learning focus, and missing opportunities to pick up on students' responses to develop them. For example, in one lesson the class are considering how descriptive detail can help the reader to infer character through showing what the character is like, rather than telling directly. In the interaction sequence below, the teacher strongly cues a series of right answers which involve low-level retrieval of information from the text. The teacher dominates and controls the sequence, with students tending to give one-word answers; and the learning focus is unclear, particularly as the teacher misses the opportunity to discuss and explore how the words they have found help the reader to infer through Show not Tell:

Teacher:	Fingers …?
Student:	Extended?
Teacher:	Fair maiden … whose hair is the colour of …?
Student:	Gold?
Teacher:	Or?
Student:	Honey?
Teacher:	Fingers are the …?
Student:	Noun?
Teacher:	Fat, short, stumpy? Like sausages? Long, fair, dainty …? What about the hair of Nimueh?
Student:	Dark?
Teacher:	What did it do?
Student:	It swayed. And flowed.
Teacher:	This is 'Show not tell'. Good writers do this.

Figure 2

As a consequence of this rather monologic exchange, it is not clear what students have learned, and the teacher simply knows her class can locate words from the text.

The analysis also revealed how dialogic metalinguistic talk directed student thinking to the relationship between grammatical choice and rhetorical effect by making the connection explicit, discussing the choices made by published writers, attending to the effect of different choices on readers, and discussing vocabulary choices (Myhill and Newman 2016). More monologic talk was directive, asking students to put certain grammatical structures into their writing, but without making any meaningful discussion of why, as in the examples below from four different teachers:

Teacher 1:	Don't forget, can you get a short sentence in there?
Teacher 2:	Can you put adjectives after the noun; can you put in a prepositional phrase?
Teacher 3:	And think about how you could add nouns, I'd really like to see some noun phrases with post-modification, adjectives after to describe. You might have a go at adding some -ed verbs or some -ing verbs after the noun as well.
Teacher 4:	Can we add some -ing or -ed verbs into our sentence, this is thinking about what the person is doing.

Figure 3

The analysis of data for Study 2 confirmed the talk patterns evident in Study 1, and deepened understanding of dialogic metalinguistic talk. Close analysis of the nature of teachers' talk invitations to students contrasted directive closed questions, which oriented students towards a 'right' answer, with questions which opened up student thinking or invited them to elaborate their responses (Myhill, Newman and Watson 2020). Dialogic metalinguistic talk was also generated through giving opportunities for peer-to-peer discussion, allowing space for student-initiated questions, and teacher modelling of metalinguistic thinking. This analysis also noted the relevance of questions which check understanding as a constructive element within an interaction sequence, requiring a subtle interplay of the teacher's authoritative knowledge with space for more exploratory thinking. Moreover, through skilful switching between authoritative and exploratory talk, the teacher was able to use metatalk as a mediating mechanism between discussion of model texts and students' own writing (Newman and Watson 2020). A further strand of our analysis considered how declarative knowledge of grammatical terminology could be transformed into procedural knowledge about language choices through dialogic metalinguistic talk (Watson, Newman and Morgan 2021), moving student attention from a focus on the terminology itself to what it is achieving in the text. In the interaction sequence below, the teacher's learning goal is to open up understanding of alternatives to a string of adjectives for description. The teacher initiates the sequence with a description she has written (containing an excess of adjectives) – notice how initially students think this question is about adding more adjectives, but the teacher allows space for further thinking which leads to the suggestion to cut down the number of adjectives, eventually leading to three different suggestions:

Teacher.	'*Beautiful long thick flowing tail'*. What do you think? '*Beautiful long thick flowing tail'.*
Student 1.	You need to describe the flowing tail like with a colour?
Teacher:	I think now looking at it I think I can see why that's not great. Not great. S?
Student 2.	It could have err, erm '*beautiful long flowing charcoal black tail'*.
Teacher:	Oh. That's getting even more complicated isn't it? What do you think F?
Student 3:	I think you should cut down the adjectives.
Teacher:	I think so too. Sometimes, if you put too many adjectives you lose it a little bit. It becomes a little bit too prescriptive and a little bit… it's almost you're putting adjectives there for the sake of putting them there. So, can somebody, I want to say that its got a beautiful tail, I want to say it's long it's thick it's flowing. But I don't want a list of adjectives followed by the noun. How can I turn that around?
Student 4:	'*His river of a tail whipped his sides'*.
Student 5:	'*Beautiful tail, long, thick and flowing'*.
Teacher:	Smashing, so. Anyone want to change anything else there? F?
Student 6:	'*Beautiful rainbow tail was dancing in the breeze'*.

Figure 4

The three suggestions from students 4, 5 and 6 make the students' metalinguistic understanding visible to the teacher: student 4 removes the list of adjectives by creating a new noun phrase with no adjectives; student 5 picks up on the idea of 'turn that around' by positioning the adjectives after the noun, something the class had looked at in a previous lesson as a way of emphasis; and student 6 adds in a new adjective to replace the teacher's. From this point, the teacher explains that just using a long list of adjectives may not be as effective and prompts further discussion of Student 4's suggestion, and choice of the verb 'whipped':

Teacher:	How is it different from waved? His tail waved against his side, his tail whipped against his side. A?
Student 7:	Is it like he's going quickly?
Teacher:	Yes, it gives us a sense of speed, doesn't it? Urgency. F?
Student:	Even though he's beautiful he is strong, he's like thrashing.
Teacher:	That's right, it's reminding you of that beauty and that strength. Good.

Figure 5

A further finding, evident in both datasets, is that 'being dialogic' is not simply about whether teachers are dialogic or monologic in their teaching. Whilst it was indeed the case that some teachers were more dialogic than others, in many more cases, individual teachers exhibited moments of dialogic interaction as well as less dialogic interaction. It is important to acknowledge the realities of classroom practice, where a teacher is making multiple micro-decisions live in the moment, compared with the privilege of being a researcher, able to analyse transcriptions of talk in detail with time to do so. Similarly, the kind of metalinguistic talk that we were asking teachers to engage with – the discuss of the communicative or rhetorical effect of language choices – is not a familiar kind of talk in the UK context, and through our research projects, they, and we, were still learning about it. What the analyses illustrate are some of the characteristics of effective dialogic metalinguistic talk, not judgments of the efficacy of the teachers. Moreover, whilst we are advocating the benefits of dialogic

metalinguistic talk, not all classroom talk can be dialogic, and not all talk about writing is metalinguistic.

Dialogic Metalinguistic Talk

The classroom talk data gathered in these two studies have provided valuable insights into the nature of dialogic metalinguistic talk, but this chapter provides the opportunity to reflect on the two sets of analysis and to synthesise the findings into a more coherent understanding of the nature of dialogic metalinguistic talk. In particular, we will consider here how research on talk moves, a talk repertoire, and authoritative teacher talk need to be adjusted to accommodate the specific demands of dialogic metalinguistic talk.

Talk Moves for Metalinguistic Talk

The notion of *talk moves* derives from the work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) on discourse analysis of classroom talk, who classified talk into five nested categories, in effect from the smallest unit through to the largest (act; move, exchange; transaction; lesson). They argued that talk moves comprised interactions which acted as framing, focusing, opening, answering, or follow-up moves (1975:26-27). The most ubiquitous move is the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) or Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE: Mehan 1979) move which has been repeatedly found to dominate whole class talk. Michaels and O'Connor (2015) have substantially developed the idea of talk moves, addressing how effective use of talk moves can generate academically productive talk. They define talk moves as '*simple families of conversational moves intended to accomplish local goals*' (2015: 334), and they give the example of an invitation to a student to 'say more' as a move intended to foster the goal of student elaboration of their thinking. In contrast to Sinclair and Coulthard's discourse ranks based effectively on increasing lengths of discourse, Michaels and O'Connor identify seven talk moves which are categorised by type (Table 4).

Talk Move	**Explanation**
Revoicing	Teacher repeats a student response, inviting them to confirm it is a correct interpretation
Repeating	Students repeat what a peer has said to check their understanding
Agreeing/disagreeing	Teacher invites students to agree or disagree with a comment and explain why
'Say more'	Teacher invites a student to elaborate on their comment or another student to elaborate on a peer's comment
Example or Counter-example	Teacher asks student to provide an example or counter-example to support their own or a peer's claim
'Why do you think that?'	Teacher invites students to explain how they arrived at a particular point or viewpoint
Wait time	Teacher allows time for students to think before taking responses

Table 4: Academically-Productive Talk Moves (summarised from O'Connor (n.d.)

Building on the work of Michaels and O'Connor, Edwards-Groves (2014) shifts the focus to dialogic talk and specifically to the nature of student response that nine particular teacher moves can make (Table 5). She highlights how the IRF sequence gives primacy to the teacher's talk and advocates that '*deliberate and conscious moves are taken by the teacher to allow students to take up more of the talk*

time' (Edwards-Groves 2014:5), particularly by changing the third turn in the IRF sequence to sustain and develop the dialogue further.

Talk Move	**Explanation**
Demonstrate active listening	Invites students to 'repeat back' or 'say it in their own words
Reflect on and review learning	Invites students to 'tune it', 'think back' and 'go public' so the teacher can 'feed forward'
Give learning focused responses	Invites students to 'hear back' and 'build the dialogue'
Control their own learning and talk as they take the floor	Invites students to 'turn-to-talk'; handing the floor 'over to others'
Ask questions and respond to open guiding questions	Invites students to 'investigate', or 'to think more deeply about the possibilities' or to 'dig deep and wide' or to 'take a 360° view'.
Have time for thinking and formulating	Allows students time to 'think, share and rehearse'.
Challenge the thinking of others	Invites students to respectfully 'question others' and to 'challenge the point'.
Sustain the thinking	Invites students to 'say more' or to 'give evidence' or to 'state reasons'.
Extend and deepen thinking	Invites other students to 'add on' or to 'go further

Table 5: Dialogic Talk Moves (summarised from Edwards-Groves 2014)

Both Michaels and O'Connor, and Edwards-Groves draw attention to the pedagogical value of taxonomies of talk moves such as these – to help teachers '*think strategically'* and '*share strategies and think about effects'* (O'Connor n.d.) and to support teachers to '*deliberately and consciously use dialogic talk practices'* (Edwards-Groves 2014:4). The concept of metalinguistic talk about choices in writing is still relatively new, and thus dialogic metalinguistic talk may be doubly challenging for teachers in managing both the linguistic content of metalinguistic talk and the pedagogical skills of dialogic talk. Thus a specific taxonomy of dialogic metalinguistic talk may be particularly helpful in supporting teachers in professional discussion and classroom practice. Synthesising the results from our own data, and drawing particularly on the work of O'Connor, and Edwards-Groves, we propose a set of talk moves particularly oriented to facilitating dialogic metalinguistic discussion.

Talk Move	**Explanation**
Initiating	A question or elicitation which opens up a line of thinking about a language choice
Elaborating	An invitation to a student, or a peer, to expand on their answer, offering a fuller explanation of their metalinguistic thinking
Justifying	An invitation to a student, or a peer, to justify their metalinguistic response with reasons or evidence

Challenging	A question or elicitation which offers a counter metalinguistic perspective on a student response, inviting students to re-think or raise new questions
Verbalising	An invitation to students to articulate the link between a grammatical choice and its rhetorical effect, with or without grammatical metalanguage
Reflecting	A question or prompt which invites students to reflect on, evaluate and consolidate their learning about language choices
Aligning	A question or statement which steers the metalinguistic talk towards the learning focus, perhaps through re-orienting the line of enquiry, or through a correction

Table 6: Dialogic Metalinguistic Talk Moves.

Although *Initiating* is clearly a move likely to begin a sequence of metalinguistic talk, there is no order or priority for the remaining six moves, and it requires the skill of the teacher to make talk moves which create coherent lines of enquiry over an episode of talk. In line with Michaels and O'Connor, we believe that '*conceptualizing talk moves as tools provides teachers with a useful construct for facilitating academically productive talk'* (2015:344), in this case, metalinguistic talk. At this point, it may be helpful also to consider the place of grammatical concepts and its associated metalanguage in metalinguistic talk. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that valuable metalinguistic talk can be expressed in 'everyday' language, without the use of grammatical terminology; equally, the use of grammatical terminology is not always an expression of rich metalinguistic understanding. Both are evidenced in the talk excerpts presented earlier. The primary pedagogical purpose of promoting dialogic metalinguistic talk is to stimulate students' thinking about the language choices made in composing written text, not to develop grammatical knowledge *per se*. However, grammatical metalanguage is a tool for talking about language, and represents the academic vocabulary of language study. As students mature conceptually, being able to use the grammatical terminology is an effective way to express and to share metalinguistic understanding and should be encouraged. This is why the explicit grammar is presented through examples in the LEAD principles - so that students hear the appropriate terminology, even if they do not use it themselves.

Talk Repertoires for Metalinguistic Talk

To an extent, talk moves represent micro-level aspects of dialogic metalinguistic talk: in parallel to this, the concept of *talk repertoires* might be considered a macro-level issue. Kim and Wilkinson (2019) trace the ways in which researchers have referred to repertoire in the context of classroom talk, but in a nutshell, a talk repertoire refers to the different types of talk at a teacher's disposal, '*a varied repertoire of ways of using language as a tool for teaching and learning*' (Mercer & Littleton, 2007:51). The concept of a talk repertoire is fundamentally pedagogical – it concerns '*the flexibility and depth that allow a teacher to call upon a wide range of possible courses of action and to successfully implement them*' (Lefstein and Snell 2014:8), and like talk moves, a talk repertoire is something which teachers '*strategically deploy to suit the teaching purpose'* (Kim and Wilkinson 2019: 76). This repertoire includes all kinds of classroom talk, including monologic and directive talk.

Without doubt, however, it is Robin Alexander who has developed most fully the idea of a talk repertoire for dialogic teaching, which teachers draw on '*according to circumstance and need, ideally*

reconciling professional agency with dialogic principle' (Alexander 2020:127). It is a comprehensive consideration of classroom talk with eight categories, addressing the cultural environment and organisation of the classroom (*Interactive Culture* and *Interactive Settings*); student talk (*Learning Talk*); teacher talk (*Teaching Talk*); and talk moves (*Questioning, Extending, Discussing*, and *Arguing*). Each of these eight categories is further elaborated with sub-strands which clarify what that element of repertoire means (Alexander 2020: 133-165). Alexander's representation of a dialogic talk repertoire is wholly applicable to dialogic metalinguistic talk, except that we would add ***Metalinguistic Modelling*** to the list of teacher talk types. The idea of metacognitive modelling is perhaps more familiar in writing pedagogy, where the teacher models their thinking about how they manage the writing process – for example, why they use a spider diagram to gather ideas for a story, or how they move from freewriting to a more developed idea for writing. *Metalinguistic* modelling of writing turns the spotlight on to the writing, the text itself - when teachers model their thinking about language choices, focusing on the written text. What is critical is that metalinguistic modelling models *thinking*, not 'doing': it is not showing students what they should do, but making visible the thinking behind the doing. There are two different ways to model metalinguistic thinking: modelling where the teacher uses his or her own writing as the source, verbalising the teacher's thinking about the language choices they made and why; and modelling using a published text (or a student's writing) where the teacher gives a clear verbalisation of the link between a choice and its effect in the writing.

The Authoritative in the Dialogic

Alexander argues that the idea of repertoire acts as '*a corrective to the dichotomising tendency'* in education (2020:134), citing common binaries such as traditional/progressive teaching or informal/formal learning, and arguing that 'repertoire' acknowledges the complexity of real classrooms where at different points in a learning sequence a particular selection from the repertoire may be wholly appropriate. He observes that '*if teaching is about judgment and choice…then it is the teacher, and only the teacher who can decide what to do and how to act. The other side of the repertoire coin, therefore, is agency*' (2020:133). In the research on classroom talk, binaries are often presented between, for example, monologic and dialogic talk, open and closed questions, and authoritative and dialogic talk. As noted earlier, the teachers in our two studies frequently exhibited talk patterns which were sometimes dialogic, sometimes less dialogic and perhaps the key to determining what is most appropriate is to strengthen teachers' professional agency by encouraging more discussion of what talk practices are most effective, and when. Through the concept of 'repertoire' Alexander acknowledges the complexity of classroom practice and makes it possible to '*talk about the decisions and dilemmas of teaching using a shared language'* (2020:133).

We would also challenge the binary of the authoritative and the dialogic. Whilst Alexander would recognise the place of authoritative talk within a full classroom talk repertoire, it is not evident within his classification of dialogic Teaching Talk or the talk move categories. Similarly, Scott et al (2006) accept the role of authoritative talk in learning, but position it as in creative tension with dialogic talk – in effect, teachers oscillate between authoritative and dialogic talk. In contrast, however, we argue that in dialogic metalinguistic talk (and probably all dialogic talk?) the authoritative is an integral part of dialogic discussion, not in contradistinction to it (Myhill and Newman 2019). Metalinguistic talk about language choices in written texts draws on two knowledge sets: grammatical knowledge *per se*, and knowledge about how meaning in text is socially-constructed through linguistic choices. Fruitful lines of enquiry discussing language choice need the skilful integration of the teacher's expert knowledge, perhaps to correct a grammatical misunderstanding which is taking a discussion down a

blind alley, or to build in a challenge question through providing an alternative linguistic perspective. This kind of authoritative talk, integrated within a discussion thread, is not about transmitting knowledge, closing down discussion or finding the answer in the teacher's head: rather, it is about creating dialogic space for metalinguistic thinking through talk which is mediated and extended by the teacher's authoritative contributions. Indeed, the teacher's authoritative interventions are significant in supporting students' capacity to make independent linguistic choices, and thus the development of their authorial agency. Relevant to this argument is Alexander's observation that the cumulative principle, where the talk builds on participants' contributions chaining the discussion into a coherent line of enquiry, is the most challenging to realise in practice because it '*simultaneously tests teachers' mastery of the epistemological terrain being explored, their insight into students' understandings within that terrain, and their interactive skill in taking those understandings forward'* (Alexander 2018: 566). Wegerif's argument that we can '*talk about 'opening dialogic space', through interrupting an activity with a reflective question, for example or 'widening dialogic space' through bringing in new voices or 'deepening dialogic space' through reflection on assumptions'* (Wegerif 2013:32) is relevant here. In a metalinguistic interaction sequence, the interventions by teacher-as-expert act as important epistemic moments in the accumulation of learning. A teacher, for example, focussing on character development in narrative might *open* up a discussion by asking students to reflect on how the noun phrases an author uses to create a visual description of a character help the reader to infer what the character is like; the teacher might *widen* dialogic space by asking students to reflect on how a changed noun phrase alters the inferences established; and the teacher might deepen student metalinguistic thinking by inviting students to consider whether other grammatical choices might also establish inference. In each of these cases, the teacher draws on authoritative knowledge of language and text in order to initiate, extend and develop metalinguistic thinking: it is cumulative in that it '*attends more specifically to the epistemic content and trajectory of talk, transforming it from conversation into a dialogue of meaning as well as moves'* Alexander 2020:131).

Conclusion

Learning to write is a demanding process, integrating cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic understanding (Myhill 2020), and yet there has been far less research on how to teach writing than on how to teach reading. At the same time, there is very little research on dialogic talk for writing in the otherwise expansive field of research on dialogic teaching. Our own research has underlined the importance of talk and discussion in fostering metalinguistic understanding, and how that talk needs to be dialogic, generating '*collaborative reasoning… that enables knowledge to be constructed jointly'* (Camps, 2015: 11). In this way, developing writers are simultaneously developing agency and independence in decision-making about their writing. Alexander, however, also emphasises teachers' professional agency and the complexity of classroom practice. In this chapter, we offer ways to think about dialogic metalinguistic talk in terms of talk moves, teacher modelling of metalinguistic talk as part of the talk repertoire, and the integration of authoritative talk within dialogic sequences. This is not a behaviourist toolkit for managing metalinguistic talk, but a way to stimulate professional thinking and reflection about how to establish metalinguistically discursive classrooms.

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