

## The Fundamentals of Educational Dialogue – Week 3 video transcript

Welcome to Week 3 of the course. This week we will look at the work of Professor Neil Mercer. We will explore: (1) How we might understand learning as happening through interthinking; (2) Exploratory talk, which is a type of talk that allows for interthinking to happen; (3) Ground rules for a dialogic classroom. Research has shown that ground rules encourage exploratory talk and are very important in generating high quality educational dialogue.

### ***Part 1: Interthinking***

Neil Mercer coined the term interthinking to link the cognitive and social functions of group talk. It is useful for understanding that the social interaction that happens when we talk together generates new thoughts and ideas. Essentially, interthinking means using talk to think collectively, to engage with others' ideas through oral language and thereby produce understanding and new ideas. If we understand this relationship between talk and thinking, we can see how asking learners to talk in groups is as much about helping them to learn the skills of interthinking, as to help them get to a 'right' answer. But how can we as educators improve our practice in this area?

### ***Part 2: Exploratory talk***

One way to do this is to understand that Exploratory Talk is very different to Instructional Talk. It allows learners to collectively problem-solve, make mistakes, share half-formed thoughts and explore the subject they are trying to learn about together. Although this is the ideal, typically in Group Work we will often observe disputational or cumulative talk. So we see either disagreement, with little attempt to work out why learners are disagreeing in something. Or we see Cumulative Talk, where learners just agree with each other and repeat what a co-learner has said. This means that they are not really challenging themselves or each other to develop their understanding. The reason for this is that trust and co-operating skills are needed for learners to effectively work together. They need to actually know and understand *how* to work together effectively. Meaghan will now talk about how Ground Rules can help to achieve this.

### ***Part 3: Ground Rules***

The readings and activities for this week focus on Ground Rules. This is because

ground rules are an important way of creating a dialogic ethos in your classroom and they support learners and educators to take a dialogic stance. It is really important that you develop your Ground Rules together with your class. Research has shown that when learners collectively agree Ground Rules for talking together, not only are they more likely to stick to them, they also develop an understanding of how dialogue is in itself a learning activity; how it enables them to interthink. The Thinking Together website has several resources that can help you to plan some lessons where you develop ground rules with your learners.

Example of ground rules for exploratory talk:

1. We will share what we know with each other.
2. We will ask everyone to say what they think.
3. Everyone should listen to others.
4. We will think about what to do together.
5. We will give reasons for what we say.
6. We will decide what to do only when everyone has said all they want..

This example is not the only way to construct ground rules. It's best to allow learners to come up with a lot of variations themselves and then work with them to select the top 5-10 important rules that they all agree on. Once you have done that, you can print out these rules and stick them around the classroom to help develop a dialogic ethos.

This is just the first stage in a journey to develop a dialogic classroom. This first stage will not lead to automatic changes. Taking a Dialogic Stance involves ongoing professional reflection by educators and an ongoing dialogue with your learners about how to enhance the quality of dialogic interactions in your classroom. Remember to use your Reflective Journal to make notes on the videos, readings and other research you may do. This will help you write your 300 word reflection for this week. Remember also to post on the discussion forum and to respond to others. This will be really helpful for your learning.