

GENRE PEDAGOGY AND DIALOGIC TALK

The point in the writing cycle where talk changes hands

26 teachers' own accounts of a national genre-writing programme, translated for any classroom building talk into writing.

How much of the talk in your writing lessons is still yours?

In one line

A signal about where talk shifts from teacher-led to learner-led, not proof it improves writing: interviewed about a national genre-writing programme, teachers of Years 5 and 6 described talk moving from teacher-led discussion of a shared text towards learner-led paired and group talk while jointly writing a new one, several linking this shift to EAL learners contributing more, but this is 26 teachers' own interview accounts, not classroom observation or a measure of children's writing.



Two stages, two very different kinds of talk

Teachers were interviewed about a national genre-pedagogy writing programme (LILAC), trialled in 91 schools across England and evaluated for the Education Endowment Foundation. As part of the trial's implementation and process evaluation, researchers interviewed 26 teachers across 14 schools about how they used the programme's three-stage teaching and learning cycle: deconstruction, joint construction, independent construction.

- ✓ **Deconstruction talk was mostly teacher-led** · building shared knowledge together before learners were asked for their own ideas: "We started with a lot of previous knowledge input..." (School 11)
- ✓ **Joint construction shifted more talk to learners** · the same teacher described group work and 'talk as performance' handing more of the talking to learners, discussing ideas and word choices together
- ✓ **Deconstruction was linked to EAL learners accessing the text** · one Year 5 teacher described "even the low ability EAL kids" identifying similes and metaphors once the class talked the text apart word by word
- ✓ **Mixed-strength pairs pooled different skills** · one teacher described a quiet, able EAL learner paired with a talkative peer: "they work really well together during the planning stage"
- ✓ **Talking a piece through was linked to better writing** · one teacher: "it's only when they start to speak it... that's a really useful tool"; another: "I think it does give a better end product"

The scale behind these accounts

This paper re-examines interview data from a much larger EEF-evaluated trial.

91

schools across England ran the wider trial

26

teacher interviews behind this paper, across 14 of those schools

Schools were purposively selected for having at least 10 EAL learners in Years 5-6; across the wider trial, 53% of pupils were EAL learners and 44% were eligible for free school meals.

These are counts of schools and interviews, not an outcome measure: this paper reports no test scores or writing-quality data. Interviews took place midway through the programme, so most teachers had not completed a full cycle.

What teachers described doing before, during and after the talk

TECHNIQUE	WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE AT SCHOOL	WHY IT'S WORTH NOTING
Build the field first	<i>"What do we already know about this, before I tell you anything else?"</i>	In the deconstruction stage, one teacher described starting with what learners already knew, rather than giving them information upfront, as mostly teacher-led, collective talk.
SL GUIDANCE Do it well, for every learner: spend a few out-loud minutes on shared knowledge and vocabulary before any independent task, especially where EAL learners may lack the background words.		
Break the text down aloud	<i>"Where's the simile in this sentence? What does this word actually mean?"</i>	A Year 5 teacher linked this word-level, talk-heavy deconstruction directly to EAL access: "even the low ability EAL kids could identify similes and metaphors."
SL GUIDANCE Do it well, for every learner: build 5-10 minutes of out-loud word or feature spotting into close reading, not only silent annotation.		
Pair for strengths, not ability	<i>"You know what to say, she knows how to write it, so talk it through together."</i>	One teacher described a quiet, able EAL learner paired with a more talkative peer for joint construction: strong on ideas, strong on getting words on paper, "they work really well together."
SL GUIDANCE Do it well, for every learner: in planning pairs, put a strong talker with a strong writer and expect the talking role to actually talk, not just watch.		
Rehearse it before you write it	<i>"Say your sentence to your partner before you write it down."</i>	Several teachers described 'talk as performance' as more than rehearsal for reading aloud: a chance to hear an idea out loud and fix it before committing it to paper.
SL GUIDANCE Do it well, for every learner: frame a 'talk it through' step as genuine rehearsal for writing, not only a polished final performance.		

The honest fence: where this evidence stops

Teachers' perceptions only

The author states this explicitly: the data is limited to what teachers said about their own practice in interviews, not classroom observation, recordings of learner talk, or children's own accounts.

No learner outcome data

This paper reports no writing scores, talk-quality measures or pre/post comparisons. The trial that measured LILAC's impact on writing (a separate publication) is not what these results are drawn from.

Themes are illustrated, not counted

Every theme is shown through one or two named teachers (e.g. "School 1, Year 5"). The paper never reports how many of the 26 interviews mentioned each theme.

Interviews were mid-programme

Data collection "took place midway through the intervention," so most teachers had not completed a full cycle of deconstruction, joint construction and independent construction.

No comparison classroom

Nothing in this analysis rules out that any structured, talk-heavy writing routine, not specifically this genre-pedagogy cycle, would produce a similar teacher-reported shift.

One national programme, Years 5-6

Schools were purposively selected for having at least 10 EAL learners in Years 5-6. Whether the same shifts hold in other year groups or programmes is untested here.

● Early signal

Twenty-six teachers' own accounts of their perceptions, worth testing further, not a measured study. Classroom observation of the actual talk, alongside a simple count of how many teachers described each theme, would raise this to Developing.

Worth testing: is it the sequence, not the genre, doing the work?

The striking part of these accounts isn't that talk happened, it's the shape teachers describe underneath it: build shared knowledge together first, then hand talk to pairs with different strengths, then rehearse an idea aloud before it becomes a sentence. If breaking a text apart word by word gave one Year 5 teacher's EAL learners a route into similes and metaphors, and pairing a quiet, able learner with a confident talker gave both a way into a piece neither may have produced alone, it may be worth testing that specific sequence on its own, in any writing lesson, rather than filing it away as a genre-pedagogy-only result.

1

Talk before you mark it

Before a close-reading or writing task, spend a few minutes naming and discussing the specific words or features out loud, not only annotating silently.

2

Pair for strengths, not ability

For planning or drafting talk, deliberately pair a learner who generates ideas with one confident getting them onto paper, and expect both to talk.

3

Say it before you write it

Build in one out-loud rehearsal step, to a partner or small group, before learners commit a sentence or paragraph to paper.

Early signal, so run it as an experiment: try this sequence, shared knowledge first, then complementary pairs, then rehearsal aloud, on one piece of writing with one class, and note which learners you wouldn't normally hear from.

Why not try? Planning where talk sits before you teach the lesson is easier with a framework to build against. Explore [our oracy tools](#), and open a free account to plan your next writing lesson at app.structural-learning.com.