

Teaching Students How to Talk: A 5-Week Plan for Integrating Educational Dialogue

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For further information on the project visit <https://www.surrey.ac.uk/research-projects/educational-dialogue-improving-foundation-year-student-outcomes>

1. Introduction

This guide supports educators in implementing the **Educational Dialogue** approach using the **Confidence in Speaking: Empower Your Voice** toolkits. The training can be embedded into any discipline to help students communicate effectively, collaborate thoughtfully, and engage in deep learning through talk.

2. How to Introduce the Training

Begin by showing the 'Pitch for Students' slides to spark curiosity and buy-in. The presentation explains the purpose of educational dialogue, its relevance across disciplines, and its value as a transferable skill for both academic and professional contexts. Emphasize that this is not about grading speaking ability, but about practising clear reasoning, collaboration, and reflective dialogue.

3. 5-Week Implementation Plan

Each session lasts approximately one hour and **can be integrated into seminars, tutorials, or lab discussions.**

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the programme, students will be able to:

1. Explain what educational dialogue is and why it is important for learning.
2. Identify and apply key dialogic moves (e.g., Build, Connect, Invite Reasoning, Express Reasoning, Position).
3. Use ground rules to conduct respectful and productive academic discussions.
4. Evaluate their own and peers' dialogue to plan specific improvements.
5. Transfer dialogic skills to disciplinary contexts and future academic work.

Session-by-Session Outline

Week 1 – Introducing Educational Dialogue and Ground Rules

Objectives:

- Introduce the concept of educational dialogue.

- Co-create and present ground rules for academic discussion.
- Practise recognising effective dialogue.

Activities

1. **Presentation (10 min):** What is educational dialogue and why it matters (Pitch for students).
2. **Video activity:** Watch a short example of a good academic discussion. (Toolkit activity 1)
 - *Prompt:* What makes this discussion effective?
3. **Ground rules activity (15 min):** Pairs compare 2 transcriptions and evaluate them. Students highlight effective and less effective turns. Whole class discussion and elicitation of ground rules. (toolkit activity 2)
4. **Dialogic moves overview (10 min):** Introduce dialogic moves and examples.
5. **Pair discussion (25 min):** Try the scratch-card activity applying moves.

Facilitator Tip: Display agreed ground rules each week as a reminder.

Week 2 – Reflection and Planning for Improvement

Objectives

- Reinforce ground rules and dialogic moves.
- Encourage self-evaluation and goal setting.

Activities

1. **Warm-up (10 min):** Ask students to recall the ground rules and why they matter in academia.
2. **Dialogic moves discussion (10 min):** Which moves they think are most important in their discipline? Why?
3. **Pair discussion (25 min):** New scratch-card activity.
4. **Self-assessment (5 min):** Students complete toolkit self-assessment sheet and reflect on strengths and next steps. (toolkit activity 5)
5. **Whole-group reflection (10 min):** Share examples what went well and what they feel can improve. Ask them how they plan to implement improvements.

Sample prompts

- *What went well in your discussion?*
- *What do you feel could have gone better?*
- *How would you improve this?*

Facilitator tip: Capture a few student quotes for later reflection on progress.

Week 3 – Focus on Handling Disagreement

Objectives

- Practise resolving disagreements respectfully.
- Strengthen argumentation and reason-giving.

Activities

1. **Discussion starter (5 min):** Ask if they had any disagreements last time—how were they resolved?
2. **Mini-input (5 min):** Remind students that productive disagreement advances learning.
3. **Pair discussion (40 min):** Scratch-card activity with emphasis on listening and reasoning.
4. **Reflection (10 min):** Prompts below.

Sample prompts

- *Did any disagreements emerge? How did you handle them?*
- *What made the resolution effective or ineffective?*
- *What will you try next time?*

Facilitator tip: Reinforce that disagreement can be constructive if respectful and evidence-based.

Week 4 – Monitoring Dialogue Quality

Objectives

- Increase awareness of dialogic moves.
- Practise peer observation and feedback.

Activities:

1. - **Form trios (30 min):** two students discuss, one acts as observer (Toolkit activity 4).
 - Observer uses tally sheet to record frequency of moves.
2. **Feedback exchange (10 min):** Observer shares notes—praise and suggestions.
3. **Group debrief (15 min):** Groups share they observations and assessments. What patterns did they notice? Ask them for their plan for improvement.

Sample prompts

- *Which moves appeared most often?*
- *Were some moves missing? Why?*
- *What would you focus on next time?*

Facilitator Tip: Observing peers helps students notice effective communication habits they can apply later.

Week 5 – Reflection and Transfer to Academic Work

Objectives:

- Consolidate learning and promote self-assessment
- Encourage transfer of dialogue skills to wider academic contexts.

Activities:

- Facilitate Activity 5: Self-assessment and reflection.
- Guide students to discuss what went well and what they can improve.
- Link discussion skills to writing, presentations, and group projects.

Prompts:

- *How has your communication changed since Week 1?*
- *How might you use these skills in other modules?*
- *How did dialogue help you understand this concept?*
- *What evidence did you use to support your answers?*

Facilitator Tip: Encourage written reflection or short discussion logs to document progress.

Alternative or additional sessions:

Deepening Reasoning and Building Connections

Objectives

- Strengthen the use of “Connect” and “Invite Reasoning.”
- Encourage links between ideas and prior knowledge.

Activities

1. Mini-recap (5 min) on dialogic moves.
2. Pair discussion (40 min).
3. Reflection (15 min) using these prompts:

- *Did you ask each other why or how questions?*
- *Did you connect ideas from lectures or readings?*
- *How did that change the discussion?*

Balancing Participation

Objectives

- Ensure both partners contribute equitably.
- Practise active listening and turn-taking.

Activities

1. **Warm-up:** “What does a balanced discussion look like?” (5 min).
2. **Pair discussion (45 min).**
3. **Reflection (10 min):**
 - *Who spoke more? How could you rebalance next time?*
 - *What helped you listen actively?*

4. Adapting the Activities

- For large groups: Run parallel discussions and rotate observers.
- For online learning: Use breakout rooms and shared digital tally sheets.
- For lab or studio settings: Link dialogue to explaining methods or design choices.
- For interdisciplinary teaching: Highlight how different subjects use different reasoning patterns.

5. Encouraging Reflection and Assessment

The self-assessment sheets in the toolkit can be used to promote metacognition. Encourage students to compare early and later sessions, focusing on growth rather than accuracy. Facilitators can provide informal verbal feedback or short written comments.

6. Resources and Attribution

- Confidence in Speaking: Empower Your Voice – Teacher Toolkit
- Confidence in Speaking: Empower Your Voice – Student Toolkit
- Pitch for Students presentation

All resources are licensed under CC BY 4.0 and can be freely adapted with attribution.

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