Stop talking.

Get into your groups and discuss.

Talk it over with your partner.

Work in your groups to get the answer.

Please keep quiet and do your work.
A: And the good thing is you can earn money.
B: Ya, can earn money.
A: Can buy my things, like… my branded stuff.
B: Ya, lor, can buy new handphone.

C: It affects the students’ performance in school.
D: What if their parents want them to take up part-time jobs?
C: Then they have no choice.. Must listen to parents, right?
E: I think if they want extra money, then they should go and get jobs.
C: Ya, when they have financial difficulty and…
E: What if they are greedy for money? You know … they become money-face! (Laughs)

Source: Goh, 2008
Central Questions

• What is the value of talk?
• What kinds of talk do students need to develop?
• What makes talk enjoyable and how can we help learners enjoy talk in academic contexts?
What is the value of talk?
21st C Skills

Learning and Innovation Skills
• Creativity & Innovation
• Critical thinking & problem solving
• Communication & collaboration

Life and Career Skills
• Flexibility & adaptability
• Initiative & self-direction
• Social & cross-cultural
• Productivity & accountability
• Leadership & responsibility

Information, Media and Technology Skills
• Information literacy
• Media literacy
• ICT literacy

The centrality of talk

(Based on Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011)
Talk occurs during…

Whole-class teaching
Pair work
Group work
Group work
Learners use talk to jointly develop a better understanding about an issue or a subject in question.

Source: NTU
Oracy:
A person’s ability to use the skills of speaking and listening to engage with and influence his or her world in learning, thinking and communication.

(Barnes, 1988; Wilkinson, 1965)

Source: NIE
Oracy

Oracy as Competence  Oracy for Learning

“Speech as language skills”  “Speech as action upon the world”

(Maclure, 1988)
“The general aim of education to develop the whole person is immediately relevant to the development of oracy, and oracy will be a necessary and important constituent of that wholeness.”

(Wilkinson, 1965, p. 40)
Oracy contributes to the way children gain knowledge and understanding from social interaction.
Child (3;4) is talking to her parents during dinner.

Child: When I fall, Daddy can fix me.
Father: No, Daddy can’t. That’s why Daddy says you mustn’t jump on the sofa.
Mother: If you fall, you’ll hurt yourself, just like Humpty Dumpty. Remember Humpty Dumpty?
Child: He fell down from the wall and he cracked open!
Mother: Yes.
Child: But I’m not an egg.

Source: Goh & Silver, 2006
Oracy facilitates literate thinking and the acquisition of academic literacy.
Talking to learn

LEARNING TO TALK
Oracy Development in Schools

The various subjects in the curriculum enable pupils to develop different ways of thinking and communicating through the spoken language.
“Like the child’s conversational learning of and through language in the pre-school years, learning in school can be seen quite largely as a continuing apprenticeship in discourse, as he or she participates in, and takes over, the different discourse genres – that is, ways of making meaning – that are encountered in various subjects of the curriculum.”

Benefits of Talk to a Child’s Development

• Cultivating a questioning stance
• A curious disposition
• Pursuing one’s beliefs
• Opening up to others
• Developing empathy
• Developing language creativity
• Recognising ambiguity
• Accepting of differing views
• Constructing knowledge and understanding jointly with others
What kinds of talk do students need to develop?
“…not the kind of talk that simply feeds back information, but rather talk that has the power to shape knowledge through participant engagement with a range of processes – hypothesizing, exploration, debate and synthesis. This kind of talk is antithesis to “right answerism” and facilitates learning which is active and which prepares young people for a complex world with many uncertainties and many occasions when rational choice is required.”

(Barnes 2010, p.7)
Teacher: What is the capital of Venezuela?
Student A: Caracas!
Teacher: That’s correct!
Teacher: Name the largest country in South America.
Student B: Chile.
Teacher: Try again.
Adults can use talk to help learners develop new ways of thinking about a subject and skills for expressing themselves.
Two kinds of learner talk for educational purposes (Barnes, 2008)

**Presentational talk**
- Audience-focused
- Providing expected answers
- Offering a “final draft”
- Complete and correct

**Exploratory talk**
- Self-focused
- Working on understanding
- Trying out ideas and test reactions
- Hesitant and tentative
Presentational Talk
Exploratory talk can (potentially) occur during…

Whole-class teaching

Pair work

Group work

Group work
What is Exploratory Talk?

Talk where learners express their ideas openly, adopt positions, evaluate viewpoints, express tentativeness, negotiate ideas and modify their viewpoints.
“…not the kind of talk that simply feeds back information, but rather talk that has the power to shape knowledge through participant engagement with a range of processes – hypothesizing, exploration, debate and synthesis. This kind of talk is antithesis to “right answerism” and facilitates learning which is active and which prepares young people for a complex world with many uncertainties and many occasions when rational choice is required.”

“Exploratory talk is important in learning because it provides a ready tool for trying out different ways of thinking and understanding.”

(Barnes 2010, p.7)
A key characteristic of exploratory talk is the element of ‘collaborativeness’ demonstrated through (a) invitation to others to participate, (b) extension of previous contributions, and (c) acknowledgement of others’ identities.

(Barnes & Todd, 1977, p.3).
Exploratory Talk during Group Discussions

Learners use speech to jointly develop a better understanding about an issue or a subject in question.
The Purposes of Group Discussions

**Speaking & listening practice**
Language tasks for developing language fluency and accuracy, confidence and motivation (Johnson & Morrow, 1981).

**Interthinking (thinking together)**
The use of language for thinking together, for collectively making sense of experience and solving problems (Mercer et al. 1999; Mercer 2000).

**Safe environment for experimenting with ideas**
Symmetrical nature of peer interaction encourages exploratory talk to try out new ideas (Barnes, 2010).

Richness of student contribution in peer talk that is lacking in teacher-student talk (Howe & Abedin, 2013).
Types of Talk and Thinking (Together)

**Cumulative Talk:** “speakers build positively but uncritically on what the other has said, partners use such talk to construct a common knowledge by accumulation” (Mercer, 1996: 369).

**Exploratory Talk:** “when partners engage critically but constructively with each other’s ideas. Statements and suggestions are offered for joint consideration. These may be challenged and counter challenged, but challenges are justified and alternative hypotheses are offered” (Mercer, 1996: 369).
Cumulative
A: And the good thing is you can earn money.
B: Ya, can earn money.
A: Can buy my things, like… my branded stuff.
B: Ya, lor, can buy new handphone.

Exploratory
C: It affects the students’ performance in school.
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Source: Goh, 2008
We need to teach exploratory talk explicitly:

- Thinking process
- Language use and practice
- Collaboration and learning

Group discussions and exploratory talk
What makes talk enjoyable and how can we help learners enjoy talk in academic contexts?
Developing learners’ joy in talk

• Create environments for talk
• Direct attention to the process (not product) of talk
• Offer meaning and relevance (e.g. topics, purpose)
• Start from what learners’ know
• Encourage curiosity and excitement in ideas
• Value both convergent and divergent talk
• Teach enabling skills: active listening and speaking
• Teach language for talk
• Model talk for active learning
In successful group talk, learners

- display a critical-analytical stance (Wilkinson et al., 2010).

- listen actively and respond in a critical manner by arguing, reasoning, justifying and evaluating ideas (Alexander, 2006).

- engage in dialogic construction of the task (Bloome, 2015).

- have a common understanding of the collaborative nature of their talk, accepting it as part of their responsibility.

- jointly undertake inquiry and work towards a common understanding and agreed conclusion and respect minority viewpoints (Alexander, 2006).

- are metacognitively aware of their talk and learning (Palinscar & Brown, 1986; Reznitskaya et al. 2001; Wilkinson et al., 2010).

- Are actively shaping and reshaping their understanding (Barnes 2010)
Challenges and Opportunities for Talk

Learners

Teachers

Content
Central Questions

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Selected references

Thank you

To cite this presentation: