Dialogic Conversations: Promoting Critical Thinking

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of dialogic pedagogy in improving critical thinking and enhancing quality talk in a Primary 5 Singapore English Language classroom. Fifty-four Primary 5 students were involved in this study – 27 students in the control group and 27 students in the treatment group. The students in the treatment group participated in a series of lessons centred on developing dialogic skills through conversations. However, only 22 students and 16 students from the treatment group and control group respectively completed the series of lessons and both tests. The rubrics, adapted from Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), were used to evaluate students' competency in demonstrating critical thinking in conversations. 'Let's Talk' cards were also used to teach students dialogic skills and the effectiveness of this was monitored through the students' conversations during lesson observations and video recordings. A qualitative survey was designed to assess the affective outcomes of the approach taken to teach dialogic skills. The results revealed that the students showed greater competency in demonstrating critical thinking skills and enjoyed the learning approach taken. However, the students' aptitudes for conversations were not analysed and these may have had a significant effect on the students' performance. Implications for practice and research are provided for future study.

Introduction

Children's first experiences of conversation begin with their parents – mostly question-and-answer segments and, at times, the exchange of views occur. This natural exchange evolves when a child enters primary school, especially when their views are put down or they are not given the opportunity to agree or disagree during a discussion.

According to the Oxford Living Dictionaries, conversation is defined as 'a talk, especially an informal one, between two or more people, in which news and ideas are exchanged'. Conversation, an integral part of socialising, allows individuals to get to know their peers. In addition, it is a platform for sharing views and getting different perspectives on a particular topic.

Amy Gaunt, a Year 3 teacher at School 21 in London, regards speaking as 'one of the biggest indicators of success later in life' and a huge priority, playing an important role in an individual's employability,

well-being and success in both career and society (Edutopia, 2016). She puts forth two necessary elements: discussion and drawing conclusions when students are engaged in a topic – these support thinking and learning.

Our quest to enhance talk among students led us to explore Dialogic Pedagogy – a tool which provided opportunities for dialogic conversations to take place. Dialogic refers to the conveying of the meaning of the content, building on the views of others, clarifying by seeking information through questioning, summarising information, giving reasons to support views and listening actively and responding appropriately with other individuals. Students' discussions surface authentic exchanges which are both exploratory and collaborative. Hence, we believe that classroom discourse, though guided, should be a comfortable and natural exchange of views. Theories on dialogic pedagogy and dialogic conversations further support the need to authenticate classroom talk, making it a natural phenomenon.

Literature Review

According to Lyle (2008), Bakhtin viewed language as a social practice and holds the notion that dialogic conversation 'allows the learner to play an active role in developing a personally constructed understanding… through a process of dialogic interchange' (pp. 224-225).

A number of studies have discussed the topic of dialogic pedagogy and its effect on children's talk in the classroom. It has been argued that dialogic teaching harnesses the power of talk to engage students, stimulate and extend their thinking, and advance their understanding (Alexander, 2006). Mercer and Hodgkinson (2008) also presented evidence that children need a careful combination of teacher-guidance (through whole class, teacher-led activities) and group work (in which they can try out ways of using language to solve problems together) for the potential value of dialogue for teaching and learning to be realised. In addition, a study with 60 British primary students aged nine to 10 showed that the explicit teaching of how to use language to reason supports intellectual development. First, using the kind of language we call 'exploratory talk' helps children to work more effectively together on problem-solving tasks. Second, using a specially-designed programme of teacher-led and group-based activities, teachers can increase the amount of exploratory talk used by children working together in the classroom. Third, children who have been taught to use more exploratory talk make greater gains in their individual scores on the Raven's test of reasoning (Raven, Court, & Raven, 1995) than do children who have not had such teaching (Mercer, Wegerif, & Dawes, 1999).

While discussion initiates the exchange of ideas with the intention of sharing prior knowledge or current information and solving issues, dialogue allows for the achievement of a common understanding of concepts and principles through structured, cumulative questioning and discussion. In essence, these concepts and principles are able to challenge children cognitively. However, for this to take place, educators, besides being skilled and effectively grounded in pedagogy, need to conceptualise a lesson's subject matter well. In addition, they must be ready to accord more freedom to children, which will allow the children to explore different perspectives of a subject matter.

According to Romney (2003), dialogue is focused conversation, engaged in intentionally with the goal of increasing understanding, addressing problems and questioning thoughts or actions. Dialogic pedagogy enhances this experience because it considers students as participants who have equal voices to that of the teacher and, as Matusov (2011) maintained, an authentic dialogic project allows students to be authors of their own learning as they initiate inquiries, delve in wonderment, and draw connections from their prior experiences, or respond to questions raised by others. Matusov (2011) insisted that the teacher has to be sincere in seeking an answer that emerges in the student's consciousness and not in imposing his or her own convictions.

Since students author their own learning in dialogic pedagogy, it can be expected that the students' voices will be diverse. According to Lyle (2008), Bruner felt that students are not merely an ignorant mind or an empty vessel, but are individuals who are able to reason, to make sense, both on their own and through discourse with others. They are capable of thinking about their own thinking, and of correcting their ideas and notions through reflection.

Chappell (2013) holds the notion that 'conversation-driven' English Language Teaching (ELT) privileges classroom talk as a primary source of language learning. In fact, when children are engaged in 'natural' conversation, rich, spontaneous spoken language takes place in real time and in a shared context. It is interactive and therefore jointly constructed and reciprocal. This leads to one of its primary functions – to developing interpersonal relations; accordingly it is often informal and expressive of the students 'wishes, feelings, attitudes and judgements' (Thornbury & Slade, 2006, p. 8).

Dialogic teaching is an approach and a professional outlook rather than a specific method. It requires us to rethink not just the techniques we use but also the classroom relationships we foster, the balance of power between teacher and students and the way knowledge is conceived. Dialogic teaching, like all good teaching, is grounded in evidence and principles. Like all good teaching, it draws on a broad repertoire of strategies and techniques. The teacher draws on this repertoire in response to different educational purposes and contexts to address the needs of different students, their diverse characters and how teaching and learning is orchestrated.

Conversations connect the known to the new naturally. It constructs its own expectancies and its own context, and offers choices to the participants. In addition, listening skills come into play because in a conversation, we must continually make decisions on the basis of what other people mean. Consequently, the need to listen very carefully is paramount and we also have to take great care in constructing our contributions so that we can be understood. At the same time, for such conversations to provide a platform for learning, the teacher needs to employ strategic interventions – interventions that differentiate normal conversation between peers from what has been called 'instructional conversation' (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

This research proposal is guided by the following research questions:

- *Does Dialogic Pedagogy improve critical thinking and enhance quality talk in a Primary 5 Singapore English Language (EL) classroom?*

- *How are critical thinking and quality talk measured?*

- *Do students enjoy and appreciate this approach?*

Dialogue between teachers and students happens frequently in our classrooms. Dialogic Pedagogy, however, takes dialoguing to a more focused level, ultimately leading to a purposeful, and more goal-oriented level of discussion.

Methodology

Research Design

After much consideration, we decided to use a mixed methods action research design. A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was employed to investigate if dialogic pedagogy improves critical thinking and enhances quality talk in a Primary 5 (P5) English Language (EL) classroom.

Participants

CHIJ Our Lady Queen of Peace (CHIJ OLQP) is an all-girls school. For this study, two mixed ability P5 classes were selected. The treatment and control groups in this study each comprised 27 P5 students who were between 10 and 11 years in age. They were of different ethnic backgrounds and were bilingual. However, only 22 students and 16 students from the treatment group and control group respectively completed the series of lessons and both tests. Dialogic pedagogy was employed during lessons for the treatment group while the control group were exposed to the prescribed strategies adopted by CHIJ OLQP as a whole school approach. (The prescribed strategies are the set of strategies adopted by CHIJ OLQP in the teaching of EL: Questioning Techniques, via the Oral Package put together by the EL Department). Video recordings of both the treatment and control groups for the pre-test and post-test were made and transcribed to be analysed for quality based on a set of rubrics adapted from Bloom's Taxonomy (refer to Table 1).

Table 1

Rubrics adapted from Bloom's Taxonomy

Level	Description	Questioning and Response
1	**Remembering**	Able to • recite the discussion topic and related questions • state / list / identify main ideas related to the discussion topic • remember and describe the discussion points raised by peers
2	**Understanding**	Able to • explain with example(s) • summarise • classify
3	**Application**	Able to • build on the responses of others • apply prior knowledge • predict effects based on evidence
4	**Analysing**	Able to • compare and contrast • interpret • infer
5	**Evaluating**	Able to • critique • conclude • justify
6	**Creating**	Able to • create knowledge • hypothesise • make general statements

Action Research

Action research is an approach commonly used in the field of education to address a specific, practical issue and seeks to obtain solutions to a problem (Creswell, 2008). Thus, teachers come together for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of their educational environment to improve the effectiveness of their teaching (Burns, 2005). This collaborative aspect of action research with teachers working towards a common goal makes it a viable research design.

Mixed Methods

Mixed methods is primarily an approach which encompasses the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Clark, 2007). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the combination of quantitative and qualitative data results in 'a very powerful mix'. Qualitative research started gaining legitimacy about ten years ago while quantitative research was already an established design used by many researchers engaged in different fields of research.

The central premise of mixed methods research is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. This study uses the data listed in Table 2 below:

Table 2

Data used for the research questions in this study

No	Research Question	Types of Data Collected
1	Does Dialogic Pedagogy improve critical thinking and enhance quality talk in a Primary 5 Singapore EL classroom?	Qualitative: Video recordings (with transcription) of pre-test and post-test for the treatment and control groups
2	How are critical thinking and quality talk measured?	Distribution of contribution types on a pre-test and a post-test for the treatment and control groups based on a set of rubrics
3	Do students enjoy and appreciate this approach?	Qualitative: Survey responses from the treatment group

Talking Points

Talking Points is an activity that facilitates in-depth thinking about a topic under discussion. The teacher provides questions or statements which may be accurate, contentious or downright wrong for each topic. These questions or statements potentially stimulate talk and enable everyone to say what is in their minds while explaining whether and why they agree or disagree with the ideas and comments made by others. This activity should stimulate the kind of talk which reveals students' oracy skills in group discussions.

A series of lessons using Talking Points (refer to Annex A for a subset of the lesson package) was conducted to teach the students in the treatment group the dialogic approach explicitly. These lessons included the modelling of the process by the teacher and practice sessions for the students. Resources such as the 'Let's Talk' cards[1] were used to guide and scaffold the acquisition of the skills by the students.

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[1] The '*Let's Talk*' card game was developed by the English Language Institute of Singapore (ELIS) and designed by students from the School of Design (Nanyang Polytechnic).

Methods of Data Collection

Both the treatment and control groups were divided into mixed-ability groups. Video recordings using iPads (for both treatment and control groups) and surveys (for the treatment group only) were conducted. The content of the students' conversations captured in the video recordings for the pre-test and post-test was transcribed and analysed. Recording the pre-test and post-test was the most ideal because the discussions and dialogues could be analysed. The summary of the administration of the treatment processes for both the treatment and control groups is provided in Table 3 below:

Table 3

Summary of the administration of the treatment processes for both the treatment and control groups in this study

Activity	Treatment Group	Control Group
Pre-test	Students were divided into groups of three or four and used iPads to record themselves talking about the signs commonly seen at a park. The number and level (on Bloom's scale) of contributions from each student were noted.	
Treatment	A series of six lessons using Talking Points (refer to Annex A for a subset of the lesson package) was conducted to teach the students in the treatment group the dialogic approach explicitly. These lessons included the modelling of the process by the teacher and practice sessions for the students. Resources such as the 'Let's Talk' cards were used to guide and scaffold the acquisition of the skills by the students. The class sessions were not recorded.	A series of six lessons was conducted to give the students in the control group practice in talking about different areas. These lessons were not based on Talking Points and did not use the 'Let's Talk' cards. The class sessions were not recorded.
Post-test	Students were divided into groups of three or four and used iPads to record themselves talking about the signs commonly seen at a swimming pool. The conversations were recorded on iPads and the number and level (on Bloom's scale) of contributions from each student were noted. (Only the results of students who had completed all stages – the pre-test, the six lessons and the post-test – were analysed.)	
Survey	Students were asked to complete two simple written surveys.	No survey was administered.

Ethical Considerations

Students were randomly assigned codes to protect their privacy and anonymity in the reporting and analysis of the scores and survey responses. The codes were used for matching the pre- and post-scores for each student. The collected data obtained were used for research in this study only.

Results

The treatment and control groups each comprised 27 students. For both the treatment and control groups, the students were subdivided into smaller groups of three to four students of mixed ability. Then, in their sub-groups, the students were given a conversation stimulus on the signs commonly seen at a park (pre-treatment) [Annex B] and their conversation was recorded and transcribed. The same method was employed for the post-treatment recording using a second conversation stimulus on the signs commonly seen at a swimming pool [Annex B].

After the pre-test, the treatment group was taught to engage in a conversation using dialogic pedagogy based on Talking Points and the use of the 'Let's Talk' cards over six lessons. The students in the control group were only given practice in talking about different areas over six lessons and these lessons were not based on Talking Points and did not use the 'Let's Talk' cards.

The contribution types from the pre- and post-tests were analysed and these are presented in Table 4 and Table 5. Comparing the pre- and post-test contribution types for the control group, eight students did better in terms of the quality of the conversation in terms of Bloom's taxonomy and six students were able to contribute more frequently to the conversation. Comparing the pre- and post-scores of the treatment group, 12 students did better in terms of the quality of the conversation and 13 students were able to contribute more frequently to the conversation.

Table 4

Distribution of Conversation Contributions for Treatment Group

Students in the Treatment Group	Contribution Types (Recording 1)	Contribution Types (Recording 2)
A1	125	1001031
A2	22	12310
A3	22313313	13115010410
A4	3332313333	4033113113
A5	11	101310
A6	34233313	3313301
A7	3223132	133010000
A8	12	1000300
A9	333	30034003

Students in the Treatment Group	Contribution Types (Recording 1)	Contribution Types (Recording 2)
A10	334	433040
A11	2213	30
A12	2131123	3303330
A13	333	340
A14	11121333331	33330
A15	232	300
A16	1	313
A17	1313	30
A18	3	10313000
A19	223313333	3233
A20	13133	334
A21	333	55
A22	411331	133301101

❖ Each digit represents the level of contribution by a student for each contribution to the conversation, i.e. '125' meant that a student made three contributions and each contribution corresponded to Critical Thinking Levels 1, 2 and 5 respectively according to the rubrics in Table 1. '0' meant the contribution by a student did not entail critical thinking (e.g. 'yes', 'okay').

❖ *Conversation contributions of five students who were absent for either Recording 1 or Recording 2 were omitted from the analysis.*

Table 5

Distribution of Conversation Contributions for Control Group

Students in the Control Group	Contribution Types (Recording 1)	Contribution Types (Recording 2)
B1	010103	323
B2	211	100211100
B3	111	00310
B4	000	3
B5	00000	3
B6	123	2110
B7	313	2
B8	112	323
B9	123	000000
B10	121	00210
B11	113	1
B12	123	233
B13	1011	000
B14	113	3
B15	122	002001031
B16	120300	231

❖ *Conversation contributions of 11 students who were absent for either Recording 1 or Recording 2 were omitted from the analysis.*

In the post-test, students in the treatment group demonstrated greater competency in building on one another's views or opinions (dialogic). This was exemplified by the phrases used by the students to agree with, disagree with or add on to a proposed idea. Some examples of these phrases were:

I agree with you but I would also like to add on that…

Other rules? Oh, no smoking! I mean like we can… (repeating the idea voiced by the peer and adding on to it)*.*

The students in the treatment group contributed a greater percentage of comments at the higher critical thinking levels than the students in the control group based on the rubrics adapted from Bloom's Taxonomy (refer to Table 1). For example, contributions from seven students in the treatment group corresponded to levels 4 to 6 of the rubrics adapted from Bloom's Taxonomy whereas no students from the control group managed to make such contributions in the post-test.

In the treatment group, 96% of the students indicated that they enjoyed having dialogic conversations and appreciated this learning approach as they improved in their conversation skills, built up their confidence in being able to have a conversation with others to share their thoughts and listened to others and had fun [Annex C]. Some responses given by the students on building their confidence in having a conversation with others were:

It helps me to express myself more.

It gives me more confidence to speak to my teachers.

I can tell them what I feel and I can tell my thoughts.

As a team, we disagree and agree with each other on what we say.

I like to talk to my friends now.

As we grow up, we will have to talk to others and this helps me to have more confidence to talk to others.

Discussion

Based on the observations from the lessons and tests carried out on the treatment group, dialogic pedagogy does indeed enhance the quality of talk and allows individuals to voice opinions and views. However, this largely depends on the familiarity of the given topic / stimulus and how extensive the individual's prior knowledge is. Thus, setting an appropriate subject matter for discussion is paramount. The pre-test, intervention lessons and post-test that were carried out support this opinion. As mentioned in the literature review, this platform allowed the students to exchange spontaneous ideas which were genuine as well. To minimise any form of stress, there was no emphasis placed on the students using grammatically correct sentence structures but they were encouraged to speak clearly and appropriately.

The pre-test topic 'Please help protect your park' generated extensive discussion among the students in both groups as keeping the environment clean is an ongoing effort practised in schools. The three key questions the students had to discuss kept them on track and focused. It was necessary to scaffold the conversations with some rules to ensure that every student had a chance to speak. The post-test topic 'Signs at the Pool' did not generate as rich a discussion as we had expected from some of the students. The recordings of the post-test revealed that there were students in some groups who had not been to a public pool and, hence, could not tap on prior knowledge or experience and thus just

offered general views. Nevertheless, for both groups, the conversations were authentic and spontaneous in the second recording. Most importantly, the students in the treatment group were asked to enjoy the conversations which encouraged input. The pre-selected *Let's Talk* cards we used during the series of lessons for the treatment group were good conversation builders, allowing the students to add on to points raised by their peers or even offer alternative views. These lessons equipped the students with more phrases that they could use in sustaining conversations. This corroborates Matusov's (2011) view of empowering the students to determine their own learning – this freedom led to a rich conversation filled with new ideas and humour, which were evident in the recordings of the post-test for the treatment group.

To measure the quality of the responses that were made during the conversation sessions and any evidence of critical thinking, we relied on the video recordings. Transcribing the video recordings of the conversations in class, though tedious, was a very important process. The transcription was verbatim as it was necessary to capture every single word and utterance for the analysis. We used Bloom's Taxonomy to analyse every response and assessed if the responses were dialogic. From the first (pre-test) and second (post-test) recordings of the treatment group, there was clear evidence of a good exchange of views coupled with personal experiences and useful suggestions. Following the conduct of the intervention lessons with the students, the post-test captured clear evidence of dialogic elements in some of the responses.

The novelty of being able to video-record the conversation was an attraction for both the treatment and control classes. Each group was given a topic, a picture stimulus and three questions to start a conversation and an iPad to record their conversation. Students used the video-recording function on the iPad to record their conversation on their own. The leader of each group was tasked to position the iPad to ensure the faces and voices of every member were captured clearly. To minimise distractions and to ensure clear recordings, the groups were seated at an appropriate distance from one another. They sought assistance from the teacher only when technical difficulties arose. The pre- and post-recordings by both the control and treatment groups were transcribed for analysis. The students were engaged and they enjoyed the discussions. This was evident in the light-hearted utterances and laughter that emanated from humorous responses. A class discussion was carried out after each recording, with students sharing their opinions without hesitation. A written survey was carried out with the treatment class and a majority of the students agreed that they enjoyed the 'Talking Points' sessions and that these sessions benefitted them. It was evident from our findings that the students enjoyed the activities while at the same time building up their confidence and gaining the new knowledge shared with them by their peers.

Limitations

The relatively short intervention period (six lessons over a period of two months) was a limitation of this study. The limited time for collaborative learning might have rendered the study inconclusive as to whether students' enhancement in quality conversations was significantly changed by this series of lessons on dialogic conversations. Besides, data on the students' aptitude in oral conversations should have been analysed to provide more in-depth understanding of students' progress in having dialogic conversations. In addition, both the treatment and control groups were made up of only girls and we could not determine if there would be a similar effect for boys.

Conclusion

The results reported in this study suggest that dialogic pedagogy promoted critical thinking and enhanced quality talk in a Primary 5 English Language classroom. When students are equipped with the

skills to engage in a dialogic conversation, there will be a richer exchange of ideas among them. As reflected by the survey findings, this approach is also appreciated by the students as it not only offers a cognitively rich environment but also a positive social environment in which to learn. This kind of classroom talk enables students to collaborate meaningfully to create knowledge and to learn. However, more in-depth studies could be conducted to study the effects of dialogic pedagogy on students of both genders over a significantly longer period of time.

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Dialogic Conversations:

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❖ The picture stimuli for Lessons 1 to 3, pre-test and post-test have been omitted from the lesson package due to copyright issues.

❖ Refer to Lesson 4 for a sample of the complete set of resources – lesson plan, picture stimulus and talking points.

Oral Competency – Primary 5
Group Talk Task: Talking Points (2 periods)

Talking Points are statements about a topic which may be accurate, contentious or downright wrong. They stimulate talk about the topic, as members of a group can explain whether and why they agree or disagree with a statement. This activity should therefore show how well students are able to take part in a group discussion.

Talking Points offer ways into thinking more deeply about a subject under discussion. They potentially enable everyone to say what is in their minds, so that others can decide whether they agree or disagree. They should stimulate the kind of talk which will reveal students' oracy skills in group discussions.

Procedure

- Students should be in groups of three or four.
- Teacher will introduce topic for discussion.
- Students are given a list of questions to initiate 'Talking Points' session.
- One student should read out the questions to the others; if all are fluent readers, members of the group can take turns.
- Students will need to engage in the discussion, providing reasons for their views.
- They should be aware that speaking and listening, not reading, is the focus.
- When they have read through all the questions, they should select the first one for discussion.
- Having discussed one question, the students should select another and move on to discussing that.
- Let them talk for up to 10 minutes, depending upon whether they exhaust the topics for discussion. It does not matter whether or not the students discuss all the questions during 'Talking Points'.
- Engage students in classroom discussion/panel discussion so they can share views.

Preparation and Training of Students (1 period)

1. Teacher explains to the class that they will use the dialogic approach for the class discussion.

2. Students are taught how to ask questions and to co-construct information during the discussion.

3. Teacher gives the class a discussion topic and gives them time to ponder over it.

4. Teacher explains the dialogic approach and models the dialogic approach for the class using the discussion topic.

5. After the discussion, Teacher asks the class to recall the way she has phrased her questions or leading statements to the class to elicit responses from them.

6. Teacher then categorises the questions and leading statements with the class and introduces the 'Let's Talk' cards.

7. Teacher will explain and elaborate on each method with examples.

8. Teacher will model the dialogic approach again. This time, the teacher will show the 'Let's Talk' cards to the class as she models the facilitation of a second discussion (on a different topic) using the method shown on each card.

**Trial sessions to get students familiar with the dialogic approach
(2 periods)**

Strategy: Use a game format

Aim: To use the method indicated on the 'Let's Talk' cards during the group discussion

Procedure:

- Students are in groups of three or four. The pack of 'Let's Talk' cards are divided equally among the three or four students in each group.

- The topic for discussion will be given by the teacher.

Game rules:
- If a student uses the method on a 'Let's Talk' card during the group discussion, she will place the card face-up on the table.

- The first student to implement all the methods indicated on the cards that she has will be the winner.

- Peer assessment is required as the group members ascertain that the method has been used correctly. A student has to take the card back if the method is used wrongly.

- Students have to respect their group members.

Lesson 1: Topic: Mobile Phone

Duration	1 hour
Lesson Objective(s)	Students will be able to share and elaborate on their opinions about the topic based on a concept cartoon. Students will be able to consider the perspectives of others to build on the conversation.
Pre-requisite	Students have schemas on mobile phones
Lesson Procedure	
Introduction	Use of concept cartoons
Development	Students will be in their groups to engage in a discussion.
Conclusion	• Each group will appoint someone to summarise the group discussion. • The other groups are encouraged to add on to what the previous group has said. • Teacher will summarise the session.

Post-lesson:
Students view the previous recording. Elicit the good practices they need to remember when they are engaged in group talk.

Talking Points:

1. Look at the cartoon. Have you ever used any of these devices before?
2. Do you think that it is important for children to have mobile phones? Why/Why not?
3. How can children spend their time wisely instead of playing online games?

Lesson 2: School Rules

Duration	1 hour
Lesson Objective(s)	Students will be able to share and elaborate on their opinions about the topic based on a concept cartoon. Students will be able to consider the perspectives of others to build on the conversation.
Pre-requisite	Students' familiarity and schema on school rules and rules in general
Lesson Procedure	
Introduction	Use of concept cartoons
Development	1. Introduce 'Let's Talk' Cards. 2. Students to use the cards to carry out discussion.
Conclusion	• Each group will appoint someone to summarise the group discussion. The other groups are encouraged to add on to what the previous group has said. • Each group will write down their suggested new rule on butcher paper. • Students will be given coloured stickers to vote for their choice.

Talking Points:

1. Is there a need for school rules? Why or Why not?
2. Which one of our school rules would you change?
3. What is a new rule that you would suggest?

Lesson 3: French Fries

Duration	1 hour
Lesson Objective(s)	Students will be able to share and elaborate on their opinions about the topic based on a concept cartoon. Students will be able to consider the perspectives of others to build on the conversation.
Pre-requisite	Students' experience on eating at fast-food restaurants
Lesson Procedure	
Introduction	Use of concept cartoons (Same grouping)
Development	1. Students will be in their groups to engage in a discussion. 2. Students to use 'Let's Talk' cards to carry out discussion.
Conclusion	• Each group will appoint someone to summarise the group discussion. • The other groups are encouraged to add on to what the previous group has said. • Teacher will summarise the session.

Talking Points:

1. Do you like to eat French Fries? Why/Why not?
2. Do you think fast-food is healthy? Why/Why not?
3. How do you keep yourself healthy?

Lesson 4: Transport Issues – MRT Disruption

Duration	1 hour
Lesson Objective(s)	Students will be able to share and elaborate on their opinions about the topic based on a concept cartoon. Students will be able to consider the perspectives of others to build on the conversation.
Pre-requisite	Students' experience on using public transport
Lesson Procedure	
Introduction	Use of concept cartoons (Same grouping)
Development	1. Students will be in their groups to engage in a discussion. 2. Students to use 'Let's Talk' cards to carry out discussion.
Conclusion	• Each group will appoint someone to summarise the group discussion. • The other groups are encouraged to add on to what the previous group has said. • Teacher will summarise the session.

Lesson 4: Transport Issues – MRT Disruption

Talking Points:

1. Who were affected by the above incident and how would they have felt?
2. What can affected commuters do?
3. What can the transport company do to prevent the above incident from happening again?

Test material (Pre-test)

Conversation Topic for 1st Recording

[The picture stimulus has been omitted due to copyright issues.]

Talking Points:

1. Look at this sign board. Do you think it is important to have this sign board at the park? Why / Why not?
2. Have you seen people obeying or disobeying the rules on the sign board?
3. What other rules should be included in the sign board? Why / why not?

Test material (Post-test)

Conversation Topic for 2nd Recording

[The picture stimulus has been omitted due to copyright issues.]

Talking Points:

1. Look at this sign board. Do you think it is important to have this sign board at the swimming pool? Why / Why not?
2. Have you seen people obeying or disobeying the rules on the sign board?
3. What other rules should be included in the sign board? Why / why not?

Dialogic Conversations: Promoting Critical Thinking

Collation of feedback – Lessons on dialogic conversations

Total number of respondents from the treatment group: 22

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree
1	I enjoy the lessons on Talking Point.	21 (96%)	1 (4%)

Reasons:

- Become more confident (when talking to an audience) / boosts my confidence (×6)
- Fun / entertaining / interesting / funny / laughed (×8)
- Educational (×1)
- Learnt to hold a conversation with friends / teachers (×16)
- Get to share my thoughts (×1)
- Hear my friends' thoughts (and know them better) (×1)
- Learnt teamwork / cooperation (×5)
- Teaches us to use proper grammar (×1)
- Think that the teachers should conduct this activity next year too (×1)
- Being intelligent (×1)
- Learnt to take turns / being considerate (×4)
- Teaches us to communicate better (×3)
- Teaches me to talk more about the topic (×2)
- Improves my ideas / think out of the box (×4)

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree
2	I appreciate learning how to hold a conversation.	21 (96%)	1 (4%)

Reasons:

- Improve my conversation skills / know how to converse with others easily so that they can understand us / express myself (×13)
- Keeps me well-informed (×3)
- Helps me to speak fluently (×1)
- Builds my confidence (×3)
- Learn new things (×1)
- Get to spend time talking to people (×2)
- Learn to listen to the thoughts of others (×4)