

Why Collaborative Conversation? The Power of Authentic Communication in Every Lesson

Jeff Zwiers

Benchmark Education National Sales Meeting

Understanding Language | Language, Literacy, & Learning in the Content Areas

Jeff Zwiers

If you don't use language, you won't learn it.

“Ladies and gentlemen, from the cockpit, this is your airplane mechanic. I was asked to fly the plane today. I have never flown a plane before, nor in this type of weather, but I do know all the names of all the engine parts and how they fit together...

So sit back, relax, & enjoy your flight.”




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SHIFT from...

LESS


Individual accumulating
of right answers,
“paying” for points, &
playing school



➔

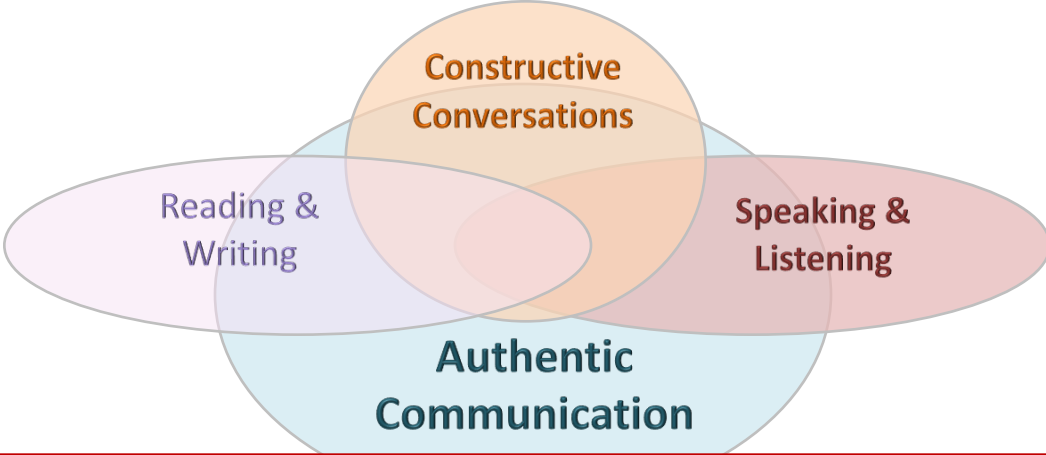
MORE

**Collaborating,
understanding,
building, using, &
communicating
whole ideas**



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The Role of Authentic Communication?



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

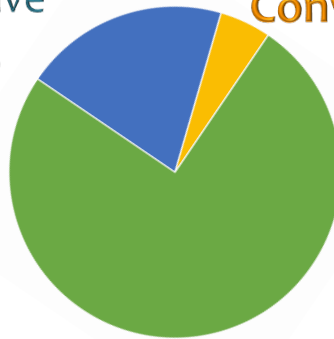
Neil Mercer, Courtney Cazden, Lev Vygotsky, John Dewey, Pierre Bourdieu, Jerome Bruner, Michael Long, Lisa Delpit, Michael Halliday, Martin Nystrand, Patricia Gándara, Lily Wong Fillmore, Kenji Hakuta, Diane August, David Pearson, James Gee, Shirley Brice Heath, Guadalupe Valdés, Derek Edwards, Mikhail Bakhtin, Sarah Michaels, Cathy O'Connor

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Types of Classroom Communication

One-way (Productive
Speaking, Listening,
Reading, Writing,
Multimedia)

(e.g., Turn and
tell your partner
your opinion on
this issue)



Conversational

(Collaborative Building,
Exploring, Arguing)

(e.g., With your
partner, decide
which is the best
choice.)

Pseudo-Communication

(Shiny, Fake, Indirect, Display, Drills, Games, IRE)

(e.g., Turn to tell your partner the meaning of irony. Can someone tell me when WWII started? Solve this math problem. Write a response to literature essay (\$5). Make a poster about photosynthesis)

Pseudo-Communication--

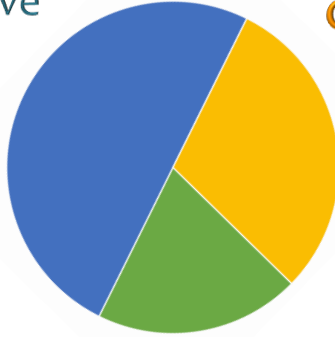
we need to notice it,

and it should bug us.



More Authentic Communication

One-way (Productive
Speaking, Listening,
Reading, Writing,
Multimedia)



Conversational
(Collaborative
Building,
Exploring,
Arguing)



Pseudo-Communication

(Shiny, Fake, Indirect, Display, Drills, Games, IRE)

Authentic Communication in School is

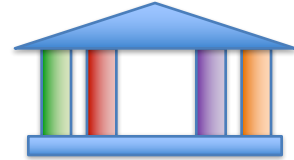
the use of words
(and/or other meaning-carriers)
to share information
for doing meaningful things (creating, changing,
deciding, clarifying, etc.)
that just one person can't do.



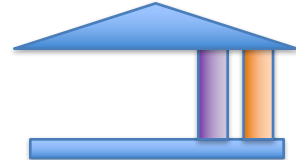
**Why is it so
important?**

Features of Activities that Accelerate Language Development

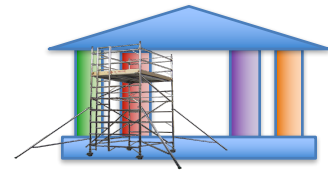
___ **Is there a useful & engaging purpose?** Students use language to do/build/change something beyond just answering questions for praise or points. Clarity matters.



___ **Are there information gaps?** Students get or give information that they want, need, or don't have. (interdependence)



___ **Is there attention to language in service of communication?** There is extra work (modeling, practicing, giving feedback, scaffolds) on language used.



e.g., - Transition Improv Activity (Pro-Con)

Topics:

Annual state tests

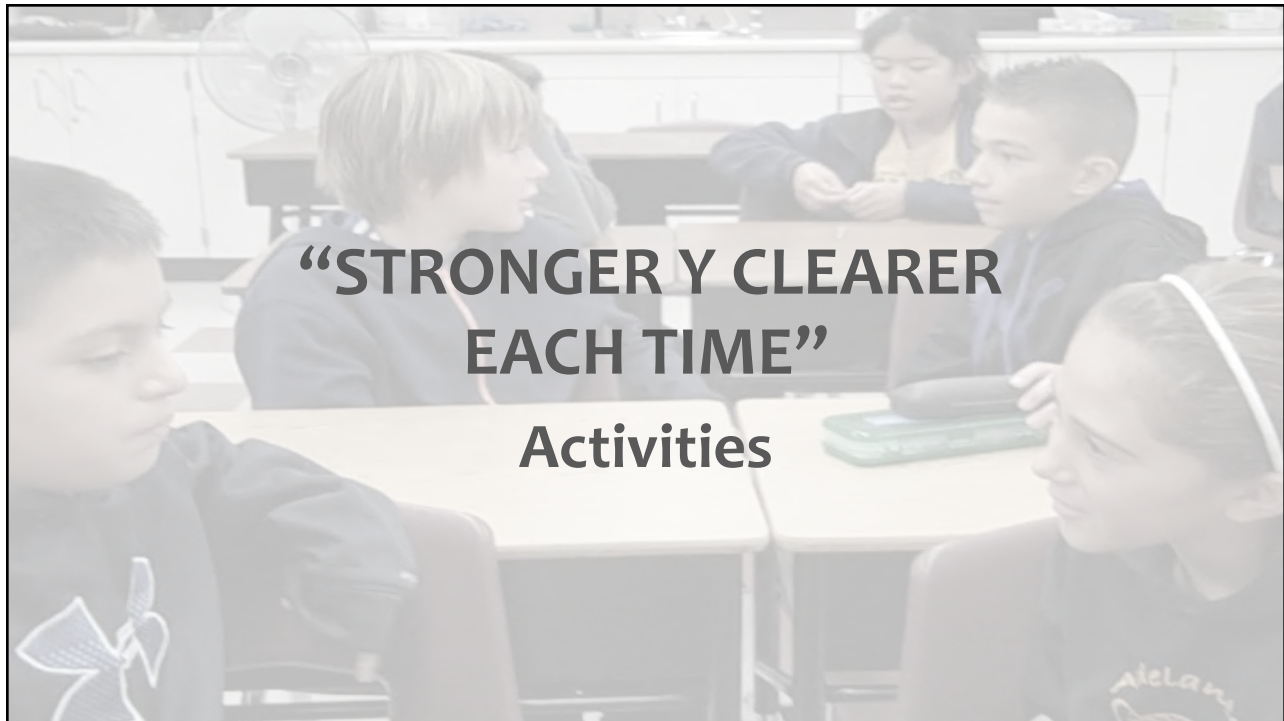
(You will make recommendations to teachers on if and how to prepare students for state tests)

Transitions: **However,**
On the other hand,
Then again,

but

Frames: **One advantage is ... For example, ...**
Another positive of ... is... because...
A negative aspect of ___ is ...
In spite of the positives of _____,

A & B, Lean?



Designing “Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Activities



1. Prompt for an **original response**
2. Successive partners: **borrow and use the language, ideas, and evidence** each time-->
 - **Stronger** (often longer) with better supporting evidence and examples, and
 - **Clearer** with more precise terms and linked, organized, complete sentences.
3. Scaffolds **are reduced during** the activity.


“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid


I think bad things happen when cultures meet, like wars.

Switch partners!
Don't forget to use examples; Stronger + clearer!

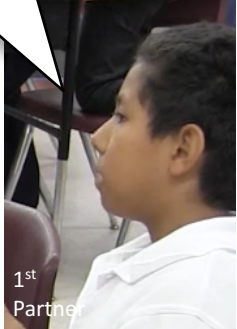
I think it's both good and bad. Like you learn from each other, but also you can fight.

(PRE)
Bad things happen when they meet.
Wars start.





Manuel



1st Partner

What happens when cultures meet and why?

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“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

I think bad things happen when cultures meet, like wars.

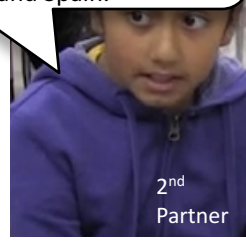
Switch partners!
Don't forget to use examples; Stronger + clearer!

I think it's both good and bad. Like you learn from each other, but also you can fight.

Cultures meet and bad things happen like war. But good things, too, like you can learn other language.



Manuel



2nd Partner

1. Mario	<i>both, learn</i>
2. Juan	<i>religion, Aztecs, Spain</i>
3.	
Me	

What happens when cultures meet and why?

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“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

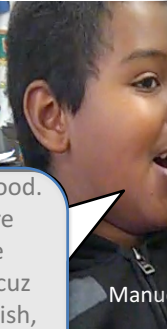
I think bad things happen when cultures meet, like wars.

Cultures meet and bad things happen like war. But good things, too, like you can learn other language.

When cultures meet, is bad and good. Bad cuz they fight wars, like they're different. Spain thought they were better than the Aztecs. And good cuz you can learn languages, like Spanish, and new religion.

(PRE)
Bad things happen when they meet.
Wars start.

(POST)
When cultures meet, is both bad and good. Bad cuz they fight, like the Aztecs and Spain. Spain thought they were better so they took over. Good cuz of new food and languages and religion.



... happens when cultures meet and why?

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“Stronger & Clearer Each Time” Grid

Name	How might we (individually & as a company) help teachers in teaching, assessing, and/or using materials in order to foster more authentic communication in every lesson?
Me	<small>(just two or three key words, if any)</small>
1.	
2.	
3.	
Me	

One powerful way in which we can support teachers is...

I think educators need to know that authentic communication means...

To improve materials and teacher resources, we can...

~~I disagree with you...~~

(Listeners can and should ask clarifying and supporting questions)



Conversations

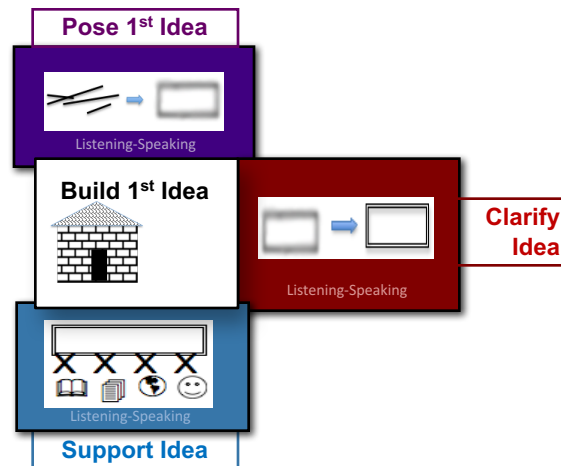
True conversations are much rarer than we think.



Conversation is a meeting of minds with different memories and habits. When minds meet, they don't just exchange facts: they transform them, reshape them, draw different implications from them, engage in new trains of thought. Conversation doesn't just reshuffle the cards-- it creates new ones.

--Theodore Zeldin

WHAT: Constructive Conversation Skills (Build one Idea)



Conversation

Alicia: Rosa Parks. Marcos said all she did was sit down, but I think she was a hero.

Paty: I agree. She has a book about her.

Alicia: Why do you think a whole book?

Paty: She was so brave to go to jail, and it was like just cuz she sat down on a bus. I still can't believe that all happened.

Alicia: All what?

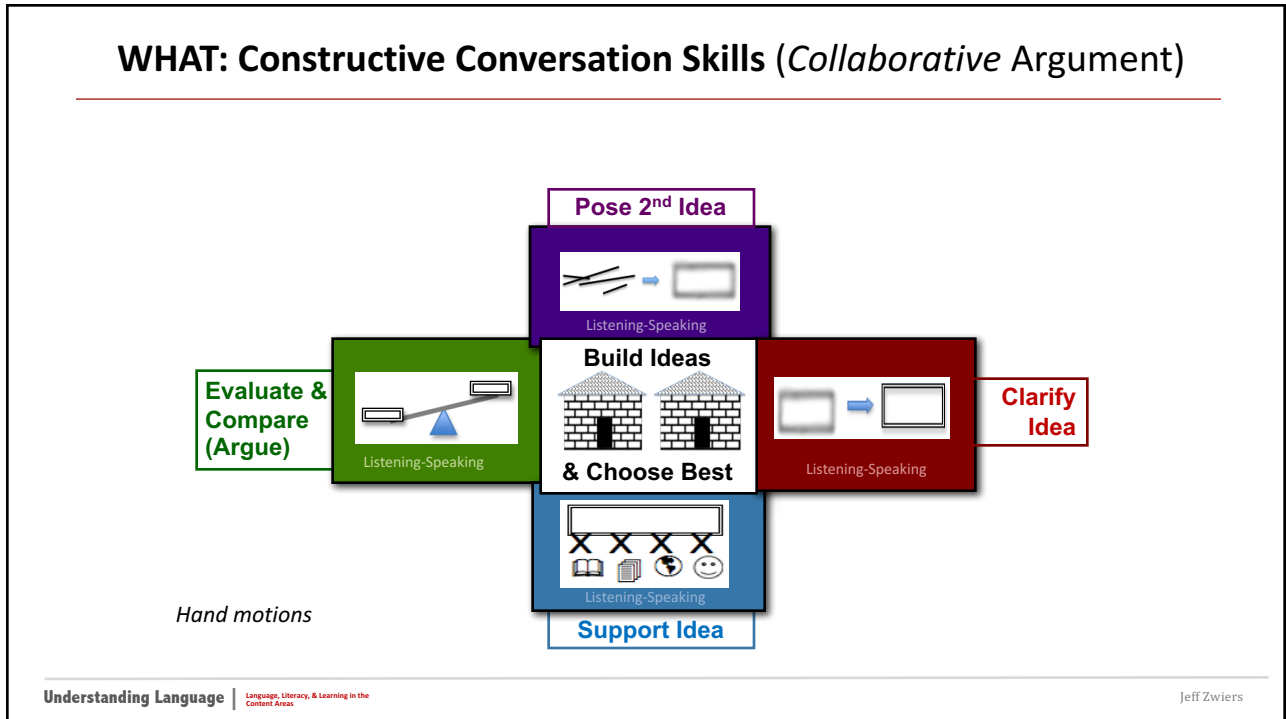
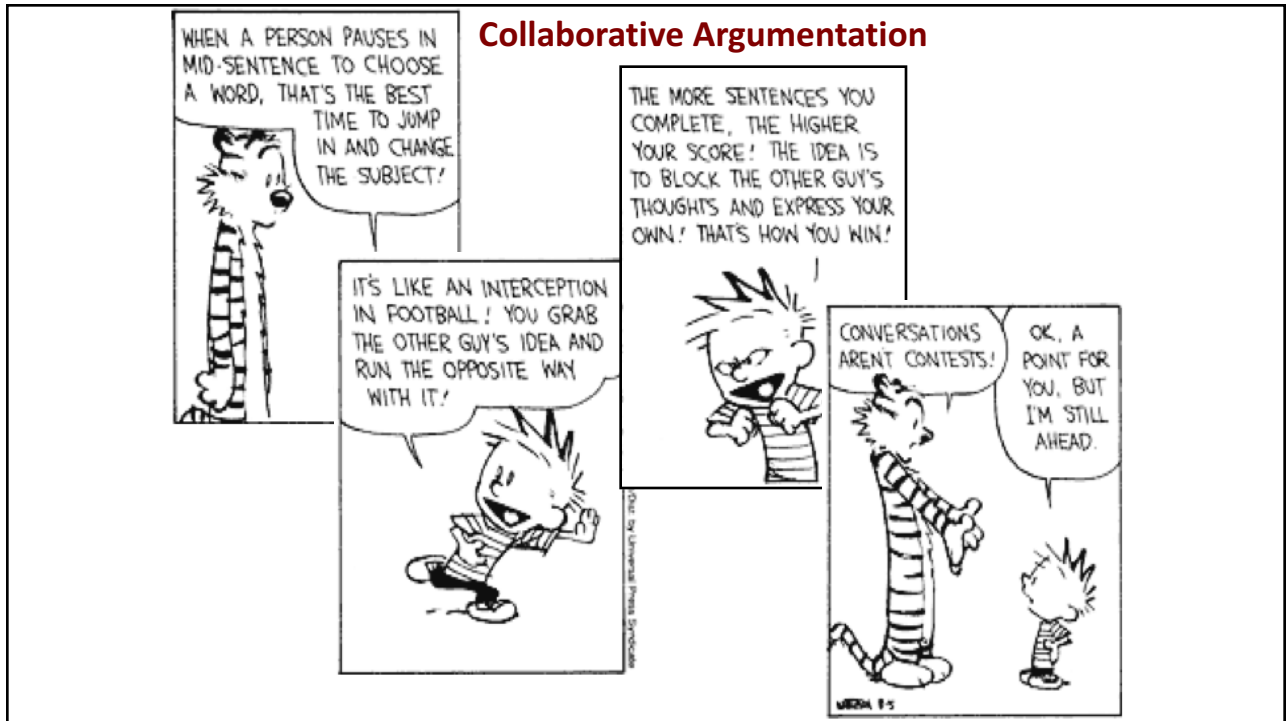
Paty: The racism stuff. Just cuz of skin color? Separate drinking fountains?

Alicia: And she started the...what's that word?

Paty: Boycott.

Alicia: Boycott, so they change those racism rules. All cuz of Rosa! ... Where's Marco?





Improving Conversations

- Alex: What caused the fall?
 Carlos: The book said disease and war.
 Alex: It also said crops and politics.
 Carlos: All of them, I guess.



- Lisa: I think the dog was his best friend in the story.
 Edgar: I would like to add to your idea. My dog ran away last year and we found him in the park.
 Lisa: Which park?
 Edgar: The one by the train station.
 Lisa: I took a train to San Jose last week.



Conversation – 2nd gr. SS

- A: What do firefighters need most? (*prompt*)
 B: Air.
 A: Can you give an example?
 B: Like a tank of air like the picture.
 A: Why do they need it most?
 B: So they won't die.
 A: Why?
 B: When they go in burned buildings. Smoke kills so they need air. Air is most important.
 A: I think they need water most.
 B: Why?
 A: They need it to put out the fire. That's what they do.
 B: But they can't use the water if they die from smoke.
 A: OK, yeah. Air is most important.



WHY: The Power of Collaborative Conversations

- ❑ **CONTENT: Clarify, Use, & Reinforce**
- ❑ **LANGUAGE: Input + Output + Mini-Challenges**
- ❑ **Formative Assessment**
- ❑ **Social Skills, Empathy, Equity, Agency, & Ownership**

HOW: Conversation Observation Cards

Ask for an (another) example to support the idea

Paraphrase what your partner said

Ask your partner to clarify (Why...How...)

Show that you are listening with your eyes, nods, posture

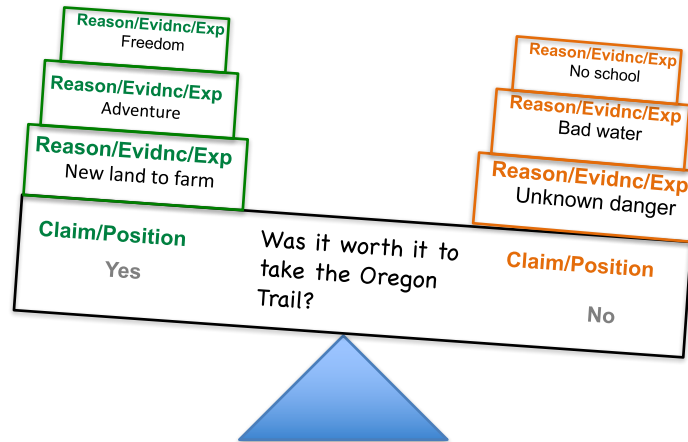
Pose an alternative idea and start to build it up

Stay focused on the conversation prompt/purpose

Encourage your partner to talk more

Summarize the conversation up until now

HOW: Collaborative Argument Balance Scale



5th Gr. Language Arts/ELD



Context

- 5th grade Language Arts/ELD class in San Francisco
- Advanced and early intermediate

This Clip

- After reading an allegory for the Holocaust, students discuss what could have happened if the animals had stood together.
- They practice stating opinions, paraphrasing, and clarifying

Conversation Prompts

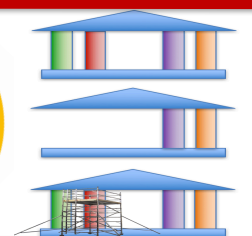
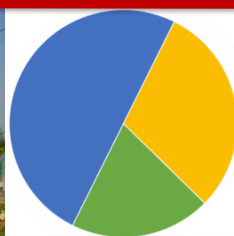
- ❑ **There is an engaging purpose** for conversing that (a) **connects to lesson objectives**, and (b) **requires thinking & doing something with ideas**
(e.g., create, clarify, argue (=>consensus), decide, rank, solve, evaluate, combine, compare, choose, fortify, build, & transform) (+ Agency)
- ❑ **There is a need to talk**
(info gaps; bring unique ideas)
- ❑ **There are clear directions** for how to converse (language use, thinking, content concepts...)

ELA Literature: Collaboratively decide

ELA Expository: Decide whether or not to

Your Prompt: With your partner(s), decide if, how much, and the type of support (e.g., communication) you give teachers and school districts **after** you have made the sale. What criteria do you use? Generate reasons and come up with evidence to support the claims on each side and compare the weight of each side. Prepare to explain your decision to others.

Conclusion (Where we are headed)



Learners must use language in order to learn it!

Shift from solo piling up pieces to co-constructing whole ideas!

*Increase **authentic** speaking, listening, reading, writing, & conversing*

Language features include purpose, info gaps, and attention to language

Conversations clarify content, foster language input & output, show learning, & cultivate noncognitive skills & agency