# Working together: necessary conditions for productive group work

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# P. 1 a board game

Josua:    **Let's start our game**.

Pete:    **You choose first**.

Josua:  **Okay.**

Pete:     What colour is it?

Josua:   It's black.

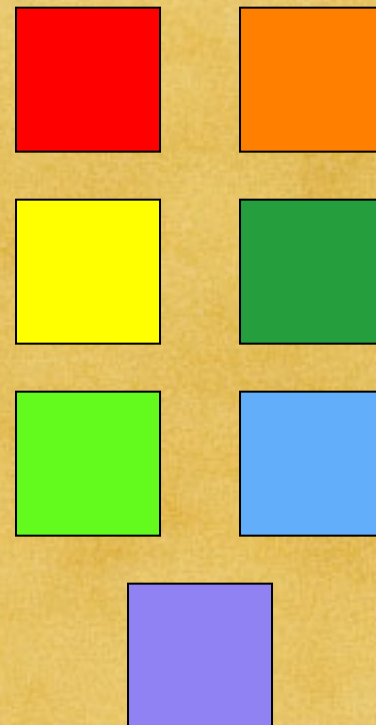All:       **You're right.**

Josua:   **Your turn** …What colour is it?

Kate:     It's yellow.

All:       **You're right**.

Kate:      **Your turn** …What colour is it?

Pete:     It's blue.

All:       **You're right.**

**Greeting card (1)**

A: Hello! My name is _____ _____.
   What is your name?
B: My name is _____ _____.

**A: Nice to meet you.**
**B: Nice to meet you too.**

**Greeting card (2)**

A: How old are you?
B: I am _____ years old.  **And you?**

 **A: I am _____ years old.**
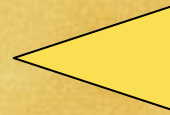
**Greeting card (3)**

A: How are you?
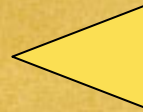B: I am fine, thank you.
 **A: And you?**
 **B: I am good.**
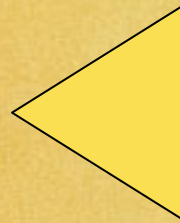
# Theoretical support

Awareness ← Fill the gaps

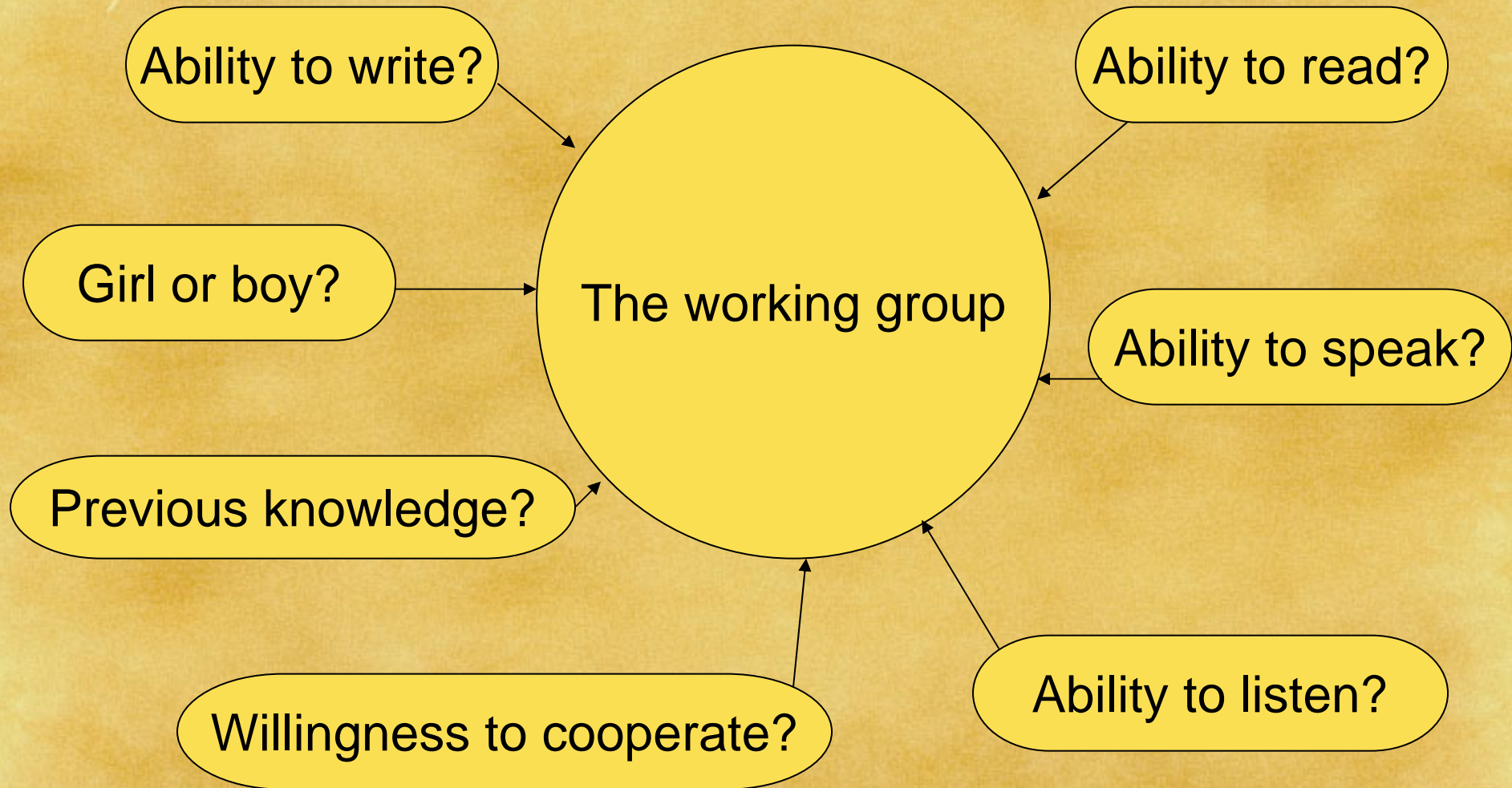Appropriation ← Feedback and controlled practice

Autonomy ← Self & peer Feedback and More semi-controlled practice

# Grouping students to work together:
## *What attributes of each child could be considered?*

Ability to write?

Ability to read?

Girl or boy?

The working group

Ability to speak?

Previous knowledge?

Ability to listen?

Willingness to cooperate?

# Think more about…

My roles & students' roles

Questioning & feedback during and after group work

Groupings

Task design

Assessing and evaluating group work

Packed curriculum:
Weighting of group work within the syllabus

# ESR lesson observation

**Cater for learning diversity**

Opportunities for different learners to participate;
Collaborative learning;
Appropriate grouping;
Monitor progress;
Provide individual support

**Questioning**

Frequent questioning to check understanding;
Ask a range of questions;
Effective probing/prompting;
Enough wait time;
Provoking thinking;

**Feedback**

Feedback to facilitate learning
Encourage peer / self feedback
Positive, timely, specific

…

## School background

- located in Shek Lei Chuen

- most students lack parental support in English learning

- TSA results : need improvement

- Start cooperative learning in the year 2008-09

## Awareness-raising

❧ Students trained to be *aware of the gaps* between the language of *their own, their peers and the teacher*

❧ *explicit teaching of group discussion skills*; students to be taught explicitly the language they could use to communicate with their peers

## Appropriation

- During group work, teachers walked around to *check the groups' progress* and joined in the groups to *provide feedback* to help students move on with the task

- progressive control of a skill in a series of tasks

- students trained to *self-regulate* their language through *repeated practices*

- Teachers provided various opportunities for students to *repeat using the language* through similar tasks

The video evidence showed that most of the group members had learned how to negotiate their ideas, and that they were able to consult the other members
of the group and give proper attention to their views.

They could ask one another for opinions, and make their own reasoning explicit in their talk.  They support one another's attempt to discuss ideas and reach a joint conclusion.

# Questioning

Asking questions is the most commonly used strategy to assess their learning and progress. We can challenge students' thinking if these questions are 'kept open', leading them into other areas of discussions and further questions.

# Use both pre-planned and emerging questions

ය Use *pre-planned questions* to introduce new concepts, focus the discussion on certain items, or identify student knowledge level on the topic

ය *Make good use of emerging questions* derive from the discussion itself. Think quickly and act decisively to phrase these questions accurately and pose them at appropriate times in the discussion

# Define your purpose of asking questions

- Focus attention on a topic
- Structure or guide the learning of a task
- Challenge students
- Reinforce learnt materials
- Assess students
- Revision of content
- Control behavior of the class or individuals
- Excite interest or curiosity
- Encourage students to be actively engage in learning
- Evaluation purposes
- Help students make connections
- Identify gaps in students' learning

- Spark further questions
- Direct students' thinking in a particular way.
- Gain feedback from students about teaching
- Help students clarify their understanding
- Model questioning and thinking
- Motivate students to inquire

The group engages critically but constructively with each others' ideas or suggestions are offered for joint consideration.

**Common scenarios observed in the classrooms**

ೞ Most discussions of students are *cumulative talk*.

ೞ *Uncritical agreement* is all that is required to complete a task.

ೞ Examples: doing a jigsaw, collaborating to present a joint piece of work

**Benefit:**

• **This draws on friendship and trust of the group.**

• **They agree with each others' ideas without examining either the idea or their response to it**

# Establish Ground Rules for Talk

ଓ Everyone should have a chance to talk;

ଓ Everyone's ideas are carefully considered;

ଓ Each member of the group should be asked e.g. *What do you think? Why do you think that?*

ଓ We will look and listen to the person talking;

ଓ After discussion. The group will agree on their idea.

ℭ It is appropriate for children to write down ideas they have talked about either as they go along or after discussion. Teachers can try to provide students with *a choice of recording materials* e.g. large sheets of paper and felt-tipped pens, A4 size papers, exercise books

In any mixed ability class, some of the students had developed their discussion skills quickly, while others found it hard to listen, or hard to talk, hard to think of reasons for their assertions.

They need a little longer time and their classmates could remind and coach them.

When facing difficult questions, we *were asked to think and discuss in groups.*
Teacher deliberately *asked students of different abilities* to respond to her questions.

# Autonomous activities

ଔ  let students engage in **semi structured tasks** that carry some degree of autonomy, tasks required them to **activate their previous knowledge** to give more spontaneous response

ଔ  the *feedback provided by their peers and the teacher* helped students self-regulate their speaking skills through appreciating their own strengths and noticing the areas for improvement

ଔ  it is evident that students **converse more independently in group work in a later stage**

# Evaluating and assessing group work
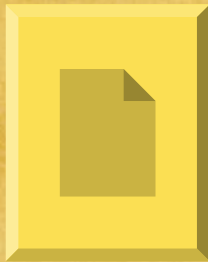
*Group work assessment and feedback sheets*
**Group Discussion (Generic)**
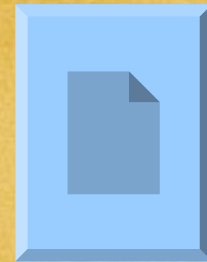**Group Discussion (Generic) Self Assessment Form**
**Group Project (Generic) Self Assessment Form**
**Group Project (Generic) Teacher Assessment Form**
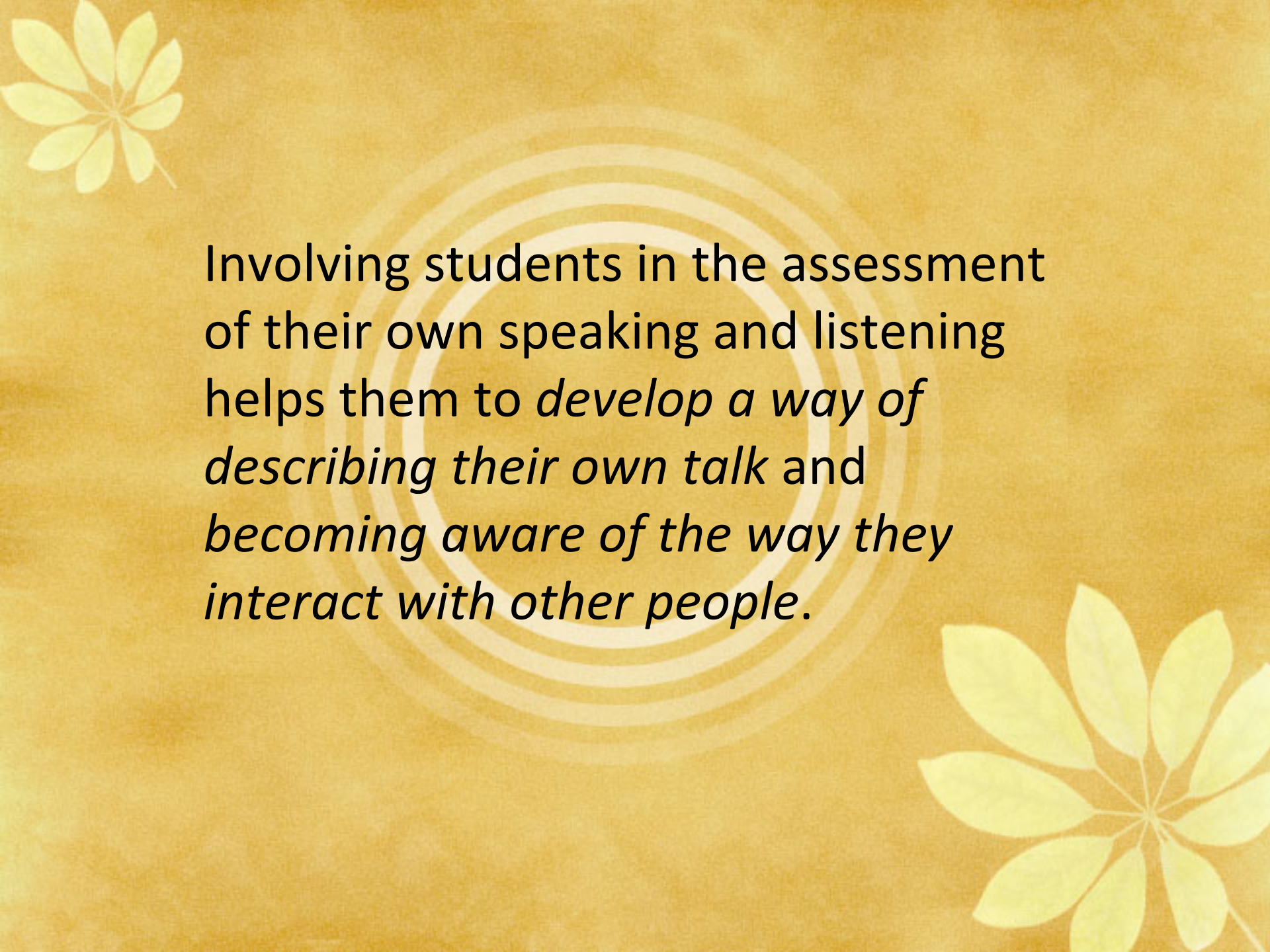**Collaborative Work - Peer Assessment Form**

Student completed assessment form

Various group assessment forms

Involving students in the assessment of their own speaking and listening helps them to *develop a way of describing their own talk* and *becoming aware of the way they interact with other people*.

# Assessment in child speak

|  | Unit 1 | Unit 2 | Unit 3 | Unit 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I listen carefully |  |  |  |  |
| I learn and use new words |  |  |  |  |
| I can explain what I mean |  |  |  |  |
| I take turns in discussions |  |  |  |  |
| I can describe |  |  |  |  |
| I know when not to talk |  |  |  |  |

# Organising speaking and listening activities

୪ Teacher-led discussion

୪ Talk partners

୪ Teaching listening skills

୪ Brainstorming

୪ Word explosions

୪ Practical demonstration

୪ Reading time

୪ Circle time

# Word explosion

ଔ Students were read the story about whales. They listen to a tape recorded with sounds made by whales and read some informational texts about their habitat. Students' words and ideas were written down on large sheets of paper stuck on the wall. Students move around the room to get ideas to plan their own poems. The teachers work with small groups of less able student while the rest of the class work individually.

# Reading times:

 Students share their responses towards characters and events of story books, magazine articles, informational leaflets etc. with each other and analyse comprehension together.

# Circle time:

- A strategy to develop students' confidence in speaking in front of a large group about topics that are designed to raise self-awareness and feelings about a whole range of issues.

- Good to enhance students' behaviour, attitudes to each other, their learning and above all their self-esteem.

- Can start by taking turns to read aloud short texts, until the confidence grows, moving onto talking, sharing in a formal circle.
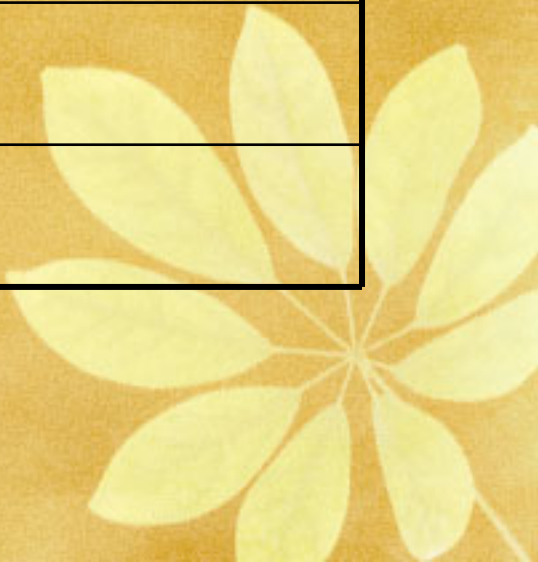
## Monitoring classroom talk

| Date | Context | Group names | notes |
|------|---------|-------------|-------|
|      |         |             |       |
|      |         |             |       |
|      |         |             |       |
|      |         |             |       |
|      |         |             |       |

# Talk Diary

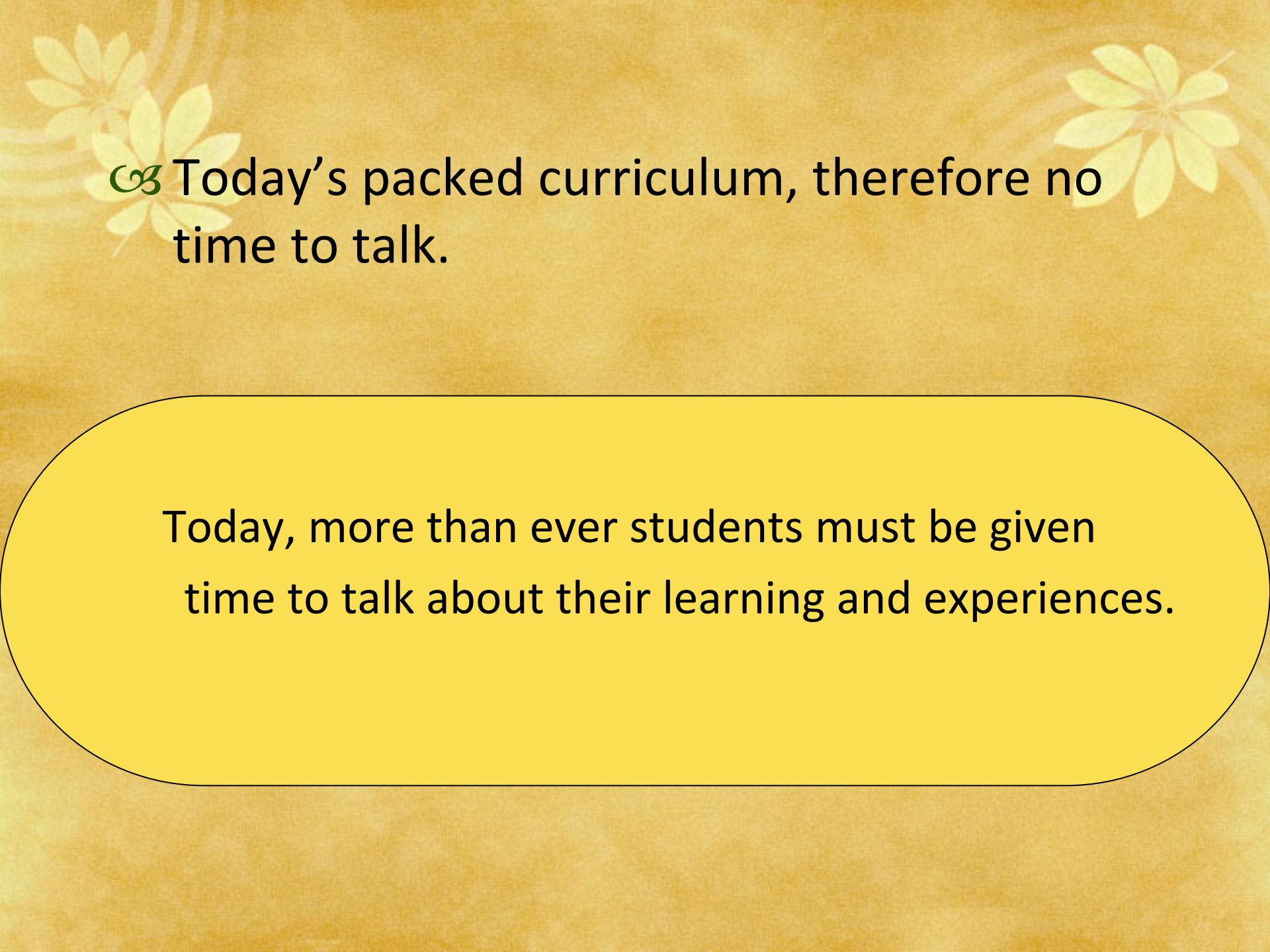| | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| storytelling | | | | |
| reading aloud | | | | |
| describing | | | | |
| discussing | | | | |
| asking questions | | | | |
| … | | | | |
| … | | | | |

# Weighting of group work within the English Language Syllabus

# 3-year curriculum planning on speaking

respond to characters and events in familiar stories through making some simple evaluative remarks

| P. 4 | Skills & Activities | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Sep | | Sep | Unit 1 - Commenting on the story of Aladdin P. 4 | | | |
| Oct | | Oct | Unit 2 – expressing opinion on some characters in the story *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* | | | |
| Nov | | Nov | | | | |
| Dec | | Dec | | Dec | | |
| Jan | | Jan | | Jan | | |
| Feb | | Feb | | Feb | | |
| Mar | | Mar | | Mar | | |
| April | | April | | April | | |
| May | | May | | May | | |
| June | | June | | June | | |

Today's packed curriculum, therefore no time to talk.

Today, more than ever students must be given time to talk about their learning and experiences.

Speaking and listening has **equal status** in the English scheme of work with Reading and Writing.

The adoption of a **whole-school approach**

**Supportive attitudes** in individual teachers and other students

**Plentiful opportunities** to speak and be listened to

**Careful planning and organisation** of speaking and listening opportunities

A whole-school approach is the ideal way to help students understand that what they have to say is valued. It should permeate all areas of school life.

# Necessary conditions for productive group work

**Awareness**

**Appropriation**

**Autonomy**

- Teachers' attitude
- Task Design
- Students' participation
- Learning atmosphere
- Types of questions asked
- Teachers' Questioning Techniques
- Teachers' and peers' feedback

# Thank you

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