Dialogic classroom talk in early childhood education

In the majority of classrooms, the interaction among teachers and children can still be characterized as being predominantly monologic in nature. Classroom conversations are overly teacher-steered, and mainly focused on the recitation of factual knowledge. This gives children only few opportunities to talk and think together. Conversations in which children are given space to talk, reason, listen, and think together – referred to as dialogic classroom talk – are often believed to be beneficial for children’s (language) learning and development.

This dissertation describes a study that offers insights in the concept, implementation, and effects of dialogic classroom talk in early childhood education. Results provide support for the importance of dialogic classroom talk in early childhood education. In a relatively short period of time, teachers that participated in a Professional Development Program on dialogic classroom talk were able to make their classroom conversations more dialogic. Findings suggest that classroom discussions in which children have space to talk and think together have a positive effect on children’s communicative abilities. It is argued that dialogic classroom talk is a powerful context in which (young) children, guided by a skillful teacher, learn to communicate more effectively.

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