NOT TALKING, TALKING, AND TELLING A TALE
FOUR REFLECTIONS ON FINDING A VOICE

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The data that forms the basis of this paper was generated at a *currere* retreat where the participants explored the approach to curriculum theorising. All the participants in the group had experience of working in schools, but some worked in a university at the time of the retreat. The data generation process was simple: after some discussion about what we wanted to achieve in terms of using our own experience to explore curriculum, each person in the group wrote a short narrative about a significant incident from their own experience, either as a pupil or a practitioner. In terms of the *currere* process, we were engaged in the regressive and analytical phases (Pinar, 1975/1994). Both phases operated in tandem because, as well as reflecting on past experience, the participants were analysing the experience to share with colleagues. During the retreat, the writing was presented orally to the group; subsequently, each participant went on to develop their narrative further. Two of the participants initially wrote their narrative in Welsh, and two wrote in English with one of the latter two later choosing to share the piece in Welsh rather than English.

Although the writing was independent and not finalised during the retreat phase of the project, common themes quickly emerged about the power of talk and the power to silence talk. In developing the analytic phase of the project further, it was agreed that we would use extracts from each piece, illuminating two main themes: the silencing of talk and the power of talk. The extracts were chosen in collaboration with the fifth author who conducted the analysis as representing a common thread in the independent writing of four individuals. The translations of the extract used in this paper were provided by the authors.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The narratives created by the participants are built from language, but they also concern experiences of language use. The double focus on language led us to use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an analytical tool: focusing on what the participants said about their language experience but also on how they said it. The simplest definition of discourse is that it is "language in use" (Gee, 2014, p. 8), but Gee starts from the fundamental position that language is action—that "it allows us to do things and to be things" (Gee, 2014, p. 2). The discussion draws on two main approaches to CDA: Fairclough's (2013, 2015) analysis of power and Gee's (2014) D/discourse approach. Fairclough (2015) states that the distinctive feature of CDA is that it combines both the analysis of discourse and of its contribution to social practice and social reality. The texts analysed here are all rooted in the social reality and social practice of schooling. Another aspect of Fairclough's (2015) approach is the analysis of power relations, which "define the character of an existing social order" (p. 26). The extracts demonstrate the ways in which the power to allow speech or to silence it can operate in school settings where teachers are positioned as more powerful than pupils, in addition to the power that society confers on adults over children. Gee's

(2014) approach also focuses on language in use (discourse) as active engagement with social practices (Discourse) and on the positioning of participants and recipients. It has much in common with Fairclough but also offers a variety of questions (building tasks) through which to explore what participants are doing with language. In the following analysis of extracts, aspects of both Fairclough's (CDA) and Gee's (D/discourse) are used to explore the "non-obvious ways in which language is involved in social life, including power/domination" (Fairclough, 2013, p. 418). A feature of both approaches is the focus on language at the level of word and syntax, allowing for a close analysis of linguistic choices. The detailed analysis of language in use is shaped by social and institutional factors that frame discursive formations and determine how language is used in given contexts (Fairclough, 2013). Another shared feature of the two approaches is that both emphasise the "critical'" element of the analysis as an intervention in social practice. In the project, the social practice under scrutiny is the control of language in schooling.

CDA is subject to challenge on several grounds, for example that the data are fragmentary and selective and that the approach is too qualitative in comparison with other methods of linguistic analysis (Statham, 2022). While there is validity in these critiques, they must be weighed against the insights that discourse analysis can offer into social practice and relations encoded in individual language encounters.

Outline of Method

Following the retreat, the authors revised their reflections and shared them with the whole group. There was no particular target for length, but all were between 400 and 500 words. The five authors collectively identified the themes of speech/silence, and the extracts were selected by the fifth member of the team, who conducted the analysis, in collaboration with the individual authors. This approach ensured that each author retained control over their own work while the fifth person provided the overview and analytical framework. The authors' positioning in the texts is complex. Each controls their own narrative, where sometimes they are active agents while at other times they are acted upon by others. Ultimately, each reflects on the incident(s) from the perspective of an experienced practitioner. The analyst's position is different in that they had no part in the narratives other than a role in the selection of the extract. This is not to claim, however, that the analyst is objective. Like the other participants, they are an experienced practitioner with a particular interest in language and literacy, especially the ways in which schools control or enable children's and young people's language.

The project adopts a novel approach in combining discourse analysis with *currere* in that the text producers were participants in the analysis of their language. While this feature of the project is a limitation, consistent with critiques of CDA that it is neither robust nor objective (Statham, 2022), it draws on the practice of *currere* through systematic reflection on and analysis of experience. In the following sections, each extract is discussed separately using tools of analysis from Fairclough and Gee, together with other relevant research for context. The themes are then brought together to create a synthesis (Pinar, 1975/1994) showing how discourse analysis can be integrated with *currere*.

The project overall received ethical approval from Cardiff University. The data for the project were generated by participants; nevertheless, our ethical responsibility towards those who played a part in our reflections was a focus of our discussion. The final versions of the reflections were shaped to respect those responsibilities.

It should be noted that the analysis offered here refers to the English text for the convenience of readers but is informed by the original Welsh. When using Fairclough's analytical questions of vocabulary and syntax (Fairclough, 2015) both languages inform the analysis.

Analysis of Extracts

Not Talking

One participant provided the title "Talks a Lot" for her writing.

> *Aged four and deskbound in a 1990's classroom, staring ahead at my teacher in a starched white shirt and pleated skirt, I was certainly dressed to be present, but when I showed my presence, it wasn't received with the sentiment I had hoped for… . I had so much to share about the recital we had received from our teacher, I either knew something about it, or had pressing questions; these were questions that I was urgently keen to voice. I was hushed two or more times, but I knew my words were important, and I wanted my teacher to know that I wasn't being awkward. I had something to contribute, so I remained self-assured and put my hand up. My hand was waved down. I raised my hand again; I was determined to be heard. Snappily it was waved down a second time, so I turned to my friend to deliberate instead. To my dismay, this was promptly responded to with a grimace, a huff, and a loud thud on the table in front of me. Once more, I was told off for talking … . This wasn't an isolated incident; this was a common occurrence. I learnt by asking and discussing; this was how I would consolidate my learning. However, this was not welcomed, and my end of year report always read in the same way: "Talks a lot," "******* talks too much," "Chatty!," "Always talking!".*

Conflicting discourses of learning are present in this fragment. From the child's perspective, learning is sharing and questioning: "so much to share"; "keen to voice"; "turned to my friend to deliberate." Working with Gee's (2014) tool of significance, what matters most to the child is the interaction; the urge to communicate is powerful and bursts out in unsanctioned ways. The repeated use of the infinitive suggests the purposeful nature of the communication, indeed Simpson and Mayr (2010) use the term 'purposive' to describe one function of infinitives (p. 10). The teacher's perspective is that learning must be silent and compliant: "I was hushed"; "my hand was waved down"; "snappily … waved down a second time"; "a grimace, a huff and a loud thud"; "I was told off for talking." The teacher's use of gesture and paralinguistics shows the child learning the social semiotic (Kress, 2010) of those silencing gestures, which will be used to control them throughout their school life. The teacher asserts their identity as a controlling presence and at the same time imposes an identity (Gee, 2014) of a compliant child whose voice must be controlled. The language at first suggests a gentleness, "hushed," "waved down," but this soon wears thin; the child is told off. None of these communicative actions by the teacher invites interaction. The teacher is using their institutional power to control the child's environment, silencing the child—what Shultz (2010) refers to as "silence as compliance" (p. 2834). That the child's agency is denied is demonstrated by the syntactical choice of passive voice in this part of the narrative, in contrast to the active voice earlier in the piece (Fairclough, 2015). The teacher's role here is to control communication, an institutional rather than an individual action, shown in

the end of year reports. This fragment provides the child's perspective on having channels of communication closed down by a powerful adult who can impose the institutional norms simply through gesture. The teacher's gestures do more, however; they also model silence as a denial of speech. The wider classroom semiotics of uniform and classroom behaviours such as "hands-up" and "deskbound" also support the compliance discourse, one in which teachers exercise individual power over children's voices and bodies, supported by the power of the institution through formal reporting (Fairclough, 2015).

A Different Silence

In this extract, the impact of a teacher's choice of shared reading is the focus.

> *Mae llais fy athrawes gynradd yn atseinio trwy'r degawdau: ei hymroddiad cadarn i dreulio amser sylweddol ar ddiwedd pob dydd i'n cludo o fyd ein cymuned gwledig, cyfyng yng Nghymru i ganol helbulion cyffrous a diarth plant mewn nofelau fel Emil and the Detectives, The Silver Sword, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Hi fu'n gyfrifol am danio fy niddordeb mewn rhythmau a soniaredd ieithoedd estron trwy storïau, a hyn osododd sylfeini i fy nealltwriaeth i o werth amhrisadwy ffuglen a llenyddiaeth yn natblygiad iaith a dychymyg plentyn.*
>
> [My primary teacher's voice resonates through the decades: her sound commitment to spend significant time at the end of each day to transport us from the narrow confines of our rural community in Wales to the heart of exciting and exotic adventures in novels like *Emil and the Detectives*, *The Silver Sword*, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. She was responsible for sparking my delight in the rhythms and resonance of foreign languages through stories, and this laid the foundations for my understanding of the priceless value of fiction and literature in the development of children's language and imagination.]
>
> *Er fy mod wedi fy magu yng Nghymru, nid oedd lle i mi glywed fy llais fy hun yn yr ysgol. Roeddwn yn ddiarth ac yn od, yn wahanol ac arwahân, gan mai Cymraeg oedd iaith ein haelwyd.*
>
> [Even though I was brought up in Wales, there was no place for me to hear my own voice at school. I was strange and odd, different, and apart, because Cymraeg was the language of our home.]

In this extract, language both includes and excludes. In the first part of the extract, the value of reading with children is celebrated as "transporting" (*cludo*) the child to the "exciting adventures" (*helbulion cyffrous*) recounted in children's books. The teacher here has the power, through her own choice of text, to expand the children's worlds by sharing a novel at the end of each day. Her choice makes significant (Gee, 2014) both the act of reading and the canon of classic children's literature. There is more, however, to this experience than an exciting story; there is the fascination of the language itself, its "rhythms and resonance" (*rhythmau a soniaredd*), which provided further invitations, to language study and an understanding of the role of children's literature in learning and development. This is a complex and multilayered discourse, where the teacher's power opens doors for the child in terms of imagination, narrative, empathy, and language. The magnitude of teachers' power has been discussed in the exploration of a lack of

diversity in children's books as far back as Rudine Sims Bishop's work on "mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors" (McNair & Edwards, 2021). Sulzer (2022) discusses the institutional silencing that occurs in the reading of canonical literature, and in this case, the silencing is the result of the difference in language, and the child's perception is that she and her language are "strange, odd, different. and apart" (*yn ddiarth ac yn od, yn wahanol ac arwahân*). The rich stories that led to so many imaginary adventures did not lead home. The experience of curriculum for the child is fractured by the disparity between the discourses of schooled and home literacies. The identity (Gee, 2014) that the child brought from home was not recognised by the literacy activities of school (Little, 2017).

The difference between home and school language, also underpinned a specific identity assigned to the author by school authority (Gee, 2014):

> *Yr unig adeg cefais fy annog i ddefnyddio iaith fy mebyd oedd er mwyn cysuro fy chwaer fach yn wythnosau cynnar ei gyrfa ysgol hithau.*
>
> *"She's crying again – will you sort her out?" oedd cri di-amynedd goruchwylwyr yr iard amser cinio. Roedd iaith ddiarth Saesneg ar ben hiraeth am goflaid mam yn drech na'r un fach. Ystyr "sorting her out" oedd ei darbwyllo bod angen geiriau a chystrawen estron i fynegi ei hofnau a'i phryder pedair oed. Cofio teimlo'n flin am wacter eu dealltwriaeth sylfaenol am gefndir ein hiaith.*
>
> [The only time I was encouraged to use my childhood language was to comfort my little sister in the early weeks of her school career.
>
> "She's crying again – will you sort her out?" was the impatient call of school yard supervisors. The unfamiliarity and otherness of English, added to her longing for her mother's embrace, was too much for the little one. "Sorting her out" meant counselling her to use alien words and syntax to express her four-year-old fears and anxiety. Memories of feeling angry at their empty ignorance about our language background.]

The tension between home and schooled languages is more acute in this extract. Welsh is positioned as belonging to the domestic sphere rather than the academic. At school, its value is limited to the necessity—"the only time I was encouraged" (*Yr unig adeg cefais fy annog*)—of comforting a little sister who did not speak English yet. The encouragement to use the language is for purely practical purposes; Welsh is positioned as the language of the nursery; comforting a distressed child was beyond the capacity of the supervisors with whom she had no shared language. The Welsh-speaker, the older child, is positioned as a carer simply because of the language, rather than because an older sister might be a comfort to a child in an unfamiliar environment. The expressive values (Fairclough, 2015) of the vocabulary of the supervisors, "sort her out," positions the child and her language as problematic rather than acknowledging the limitations of the environment where staff could not understand her language. The language itself is valued only for its utility in solving a practical problem.

Talking in Class

This extract reflects on the impact of classroom talk in developing the learners' experience of and interest in language and language varieties. The author of the extract offers their own commentary by way of introduction:

> *"[The extract] reflects on how classroom talk influenced learners' confidence to participate in discussions and how the teacher's pedagogy encouraged learners to accept feedback constructively. Rather than bringing a negative judgemental approach, this teacher used humour and language varieties and provided learners with greater autonomy and ownership of their learning*."
>
> *Doedd y gwersi byth yn teimlo ar ruthr. Roedd pob gwers yn dechrau gyda sgwrs hamddenol hwyliog a llaer o dynnu coes . Fel disgyblion roedd hyn yn golygu llai o amser ar ffocws y wers! Ond wrth edrych nôl, drwy'r sgyrsiau roedd yr athro'n dod i'n hadnabod, yn dangos diddordeb ynom a'n bywydau ac yn magu perthynas a pharch. Mae'n siwr ei fod hefyd yn 'asesu' safon ein llefaredd yn ystod y sgyrsiau hamddenol.*
>
> *Cyflwynai iaith raenus gan wau tafodiaith yr ardal yn gelfydd i'r sgwrs, a hyn yn hwyluso'r sgwrsio gan greu naws ac ethos cartrefol i'n denu i gyfrannu a theimlo'n gyfforddus. O ganlyniad, rhannwyd hynt a helynt penwythnosau a straeon aelwydydd. Yn hytrach na'n ceryddu, byddai'n rhoi hanner gwên a chynnig ambell sylw, gan ysgogi'r sgwrs yn hytrach na'i ddiffodd.*
>
> [The lessons never felt rushed. Each lesson started with a fun relaxed conversation and lots of leg-pulling. As pupils, this meant less time on the lesson focus! But looking back, through the conversations, the teacher was getting to know us, showing an interest in us and our lives and cultivating a relationship of respect. I'm sure he was also "assessing" the quality of our oracy during the relaxed conversations.
>
> Whilst conversing with us in this way, he modelled a high standard of language, artfully weaving our local dialect into the conversation, and this facilitated further conversation, creating a comfortable, relaxed, familiar, and homely atmosphere and ethos. As a result, the ups and downs of weekend stories in our lives were shared. Instead of reprimanding us, he would give us a half smile and offer the occasional comment, stimulating rather than silencing further conversation.]

Classroom dialogue in a variety of forms is recognised as a powerful tool for learning and teaching (Alexander, 2020; Muhonen et al., 2018). Effective talk is located in the wider norms of the community (Hudiyono et al., 2021), and effective teachers recognise that "Dialogue has social and emotional as well as cognitive dimensions. Everyone's contributions need to be valued, and learners need to feel safe to take risks" (Hennessy et al., 2023, p. 187). The author of this extract positions (Fairclough, 2015) the teacher as an interactional partner in the classroom, interested in and appreciative of his students' language use. To the students, he appeared to be relaxed in his approach: as pupils this meant less time on the lesson focus (*Fel disgyblion roedd hyn yn golygu llai o amser ar ffocws y wers*!). Did this appear to the pupils to be a relinquishing of pedagogical

power? The reflection by the experienced practitioner shows that this was not the case; he was taking the opportunity both to build relationships and to notice the pupils' natural language use. The vocabulary choices in the extract denoting speech lean towards interaction and community: "fun, relaxed conversation and lots of leg-pulling" (*sgwrs hamddenol hwyliog a llawer o dynnu coes*); "cultivating a relationship and respect" (*yn magu perthynas a pharch*); "artfully weaving our local dialect into the conversations" (g*wau tafodiaith yr ardal yn gelfydd i'r sgwrs*); "homely ethos" (*ethos cartrefol*). In Gee's (2014) terms, the knowledge that was privileged in these conversations was the knowledge of the students as individuals, but at the same time, for the teacher, the sign systems of formal and colloquial Welsh provided him with vital knowledge about his students' language use. The metaphor of weaving represents classroom talk as a co-operative endeavour, the spoken text woven by all participants. The extract is dense with reference to rich and relaxed speech strengthening and validating the students' identities through acceptance of their language choices. On the other hand, "*asesu*" ("assessment") is placed in quotation marks, signalling that, for the students at least, this aspect of the teacher's practice faded into the background. This is in contrast to the contemporary discourse and practice of language policing that exists in some contexts (Cushing, 2022). Here classroom language and literacy are part of the continuum of language use and literacies that span home, school, and leisure activities.

Talking as a Community

In this reflection, there is a direct link between the practitioner's experience as a child and their provision of a similar experience to the children they now teach.

> *Pan oeddwn tua 11 aeth taith o'r ardal i Sain Ffagan. Roedd yn cynnwys plant, eu rhieni ac aelodau hyn o'r gymuned. Rwy'n cofio'r chwilfrydedd o fod yno a'r trafodaethau gyda'r rhai hyn na mi.*
>
> *Ar ddiwedd tymor yr ysgol trefnais ymweliad â Sain Ffagan ac estynias wahoddiad i rieni, neiniau a theidiau i ddod hefyd er mwyn sbarduno trafodaethau.*
>
> *Mewn un tŷ, Hendre'r Ywydd, eisteddodd y disgyblion o amgylch y lle tân a darllenodd un o bob grŵp eu gwaith, sef gwaith creadigol yn disgirfio cartref Heulyn Goch o Freuddwyd Rhonabwy.*
>
> *Ar ôl darllen eu gwaith penderfynodd y disgyblion osod pren yn y ffenestri, fel petai'n nos, ac i gadw'r gwynt a'r glaw allan, (roedd hi'n noson stormus yn y stori) yna aethant i gyd i orwedd a y llwyfan pren lle byddai'r criw wedi cysgu yn y stori. Roedd hyn i gyd heb arweiniad yr athro. Roedd darllen y stori yn y lleoliad wedi tanio eu dychymyg ac am gyfnod byr yn Hendre'r Ywydd roeddent yn ôl yn y cyfnod ac yn rhan o'r stori.*
>
> *Yr oedd un disgybl eisiau gofyn i gymydog dros ei 80 oed i ddod ar y daith. Yn anffodus ni fedrai ddod. Dywedodd ei fam nad oedd wedi stopio siarad am y daith ar ôl dod adre. Rwy'n siwr byddai sgwrs rhyng-genedlaethol wedi digwydd ar ôl yr ymweliad.*

Roedd yr ymweliad yn crynhoi pwysigrwydd dysgu cymdeithasol, dysgu yn y cartref a'r profiadau sy'n cael eu llunio ar y cyd. Hefyd y ffaith fod y dysgu cymaint yn fwy perthnasol a byw i'r disgyblion os ydynt yn cael cyfleoedd i lywio'r dysgu.

[When I was about 11, a trip was arranged from my home area to St Fagans [National Museum of History]. It involved children, their parents, and older members of the community. I remember the curiosity of being there and the discussions with those older than me.

At the end of the school term, I arranged a visit to St Fagans and invited parents and grandparents to join us, so as to aid discussion.

In one house, Hendre'r Ywydd, pupils sat around the fireplace and one of each group read their creative writing, describing the home of Heulyn Goch of Rhonabwy's Dream.

After reading their work, the pupils decided to place the shutters in the windows, as if it were night, and to keep out the wind and rain, (it was a stormy night in the tale); then, they all went to lie down on the wooden platform where the travellers in the story would have slept. All of this was without the teacher's guidance. Reading the story in the setting had fired their imaginations, and for a short time in Hendre'r Ywydd, they had gone back in time and were part of the story.

One pupil wanted to ask a neighbour over the age of 80 to join us. Unfortunately, he could not come. His mother said he hadn't stopped talking about the trip after coming home. I'm sure an inter-generational conversation would have taken place after the visit.

The visit summed up the importance of the social and home-based learning and the experiences that are collectively shaped. It was also obvious that learning is so much more relevant and engaging for the pupils if they have opportunities to guide the learning journey.]

In this extract, community stands out as a significant discourse (Gee, 2014), with shared experience and talk a vital element in sustaining community. An additional dimension is the representation of community across generations and across time. Not only do the participants in the trip share the experience with their families and neighbours, but the children enter imaginatively into the experience of characters in a medieval story. The teacher's own childhood visit to St Fagans and the school trip described both demonstrate the children's agency in the experience. The recollection of the original trip, "I remember the curiosity of being there and the discussions with these people older than me" (*Rwy'n cofio'r chwilfrydedd o fod yno a'r trafodaethau gyda'r rhai hyn na mi*), suggests shared experience and exploration. The vocabulary choice, "discussions" (*trafodaeth*'), suggests an equality in the conversation between the child and their older neighbours (Fairclough, 2015). The children in the more recent visit, take control of their own learning: "they decided" (*penderfynnodd*) to transform the space to represent the setting of the story. Furthermore, the children took ownership of a medieval Welsh story, extending even further the connections between present and past (Gee, 2014). And the child whose neighbour was unable to join the trip returned full of tales to tell. Drawing on community resources in this way

opens the channel between home and schooled literacies (Heath, 1982; Street, 1984) so that home and school share experiences and linguistic resources, empowering children to develop language skills in all aspects of their lives. The form of this extract, with a coherent narrative stretching back into the past and forward into the future, makes the act of storytelling significant and acknowledges children's identities as storytellers (Gee, 2014).

Synthesis

The four practitioners worked independently on their *currere* pieces, but when we read them as a group, themes emerged revealing the powerful impact of language experiences in school and their echoes into practice. The tools of discourse analysis provide a framework for discerning patterns in social reality. Its significance across all four pieces is testimony to how fundamental language and communication are to these practitioners. The pieces demonstrate the importance of children and young people having opportunities to speak and be heard in ways that they choose. The choices may be of language or language varieties, and they may be choices of form such as narrative or dialogue. These reflections show that the choices themselves are significant. Language is not a transparent channel; it carries its own significance, identity, and sign systems.

The salience of language and speech in these reflections suggested that a theoretical model with a focus on language was most appropriate. Discourse analysis has enabled a detailed exploration of the authors' conscious language choices but also of the "non-obvious ways in which language is involved in social life, including power/domination" (Fairclough, 2013, p. 418) across four independently produced texts.

Practice can be influenced by a commitment to ensuring that children and young people are given similar rich experiences to those that made a strong impression on us as pupils. At the same time, there is a recognition that the limitations and missed opportunities in our own experience form us into the practitioners we are. Curriculum making is the weaving of experience including a number of languages, language varieties, and languages for different purposes to enable all children and young people to find a voice.

Coda

To ensure that the voices of the participants are heard alongside the analysis, each reflects here on their own experience of participating in a *currere* project. The project was informed by the *currere* process described by Pinar (1975/1994), and although it does not follow the structure closely, this section partially fulfils the progressive function. Like the original reflections, each is distinctive, but together they demonstrate the impact of the collective process. In finding voices, the participants also found listeners who recognised the significance of their reflection on experience and positioned personal narratives in an academic space.

Voice 1

Profoundly, the process of *currere* reminded me that I too have faced the same pressures as my former educators throughout my professional career. Collectively, what we as participants

have in common is that our experiences were real to us—we were each influenced by positive and negative encounters.

Reviewing and scrutinising this process has reacquainted me with my personal scholarship. My experiences as a learner and educator have been wide-ranging; from past to present, dominant conventional compliance has been like a fly I have wanted to swat. The continuous reflective cycle we engage in as educators allows us to also consider ethics and values and highlights a culture of character that accompanies the formal and structural nature of education. Pertinently, the tacit knowledge and skills amassed through interactions and opportunities have become my toolkit to navigate instances of dutiful and submissive social conformity.

Relatability and sharing the nature of our experiences is how we understand and help others to understand. My agency and assumptions continue to be challenged, and generational trends remain; nevertheless, today, I get paid to talk.

VOICE 2

I embarked upon an invitation to consider what curriculum means to me with trepidation. Allowing myself to explore the subjective, to value myself as an academic researcher, was both exciting and unsettling. What would I reveal to myself and others about key moments and people that shaped my understanding of what matters? I questioned the wisdom of seeking clarity from my seven-year-old self.

Exploring the complex textures of our memories cannot be an objective process. Sharing these snippets of childhood with supportive and empathetic colleagues was invaluable. I remembered precious people who instilled confidence to embrace the "other" and to feed my hungry imagination and curiosity. *Currere* deepened my understanding of *why* I chose specific themes and texts for my pupils. The collective nature of our reflections gave me confidence to say: Yes, being silenced from speaking my own language, either directly or indirectly, through arrogance or ignorance, both hurt and emboldened me.

Currere was a process of unexpected affirmation. Reading our deeply personal fragments was a privilege. Sharing our memories enhanced my appreciation of the depth and richness of our collective experience as teachers and will always be a source of inspiration.

VOICE 3

Initially the *currere* process led me to reflect upon my early career experiences and the varied subsequent influences. Throughout these experiences, I thrived on opportunities to engage in reflective dialogue, which very often ended in more questions than answers. During the retreat, my thoughts turned to my experiences as a pupil, in particular, one teacher's approach, and how this became a way I approached my learning. It was only during our group dialogue, following our individual reflective writing, that I realised how influential this had been and how it changed my response to my learning throughout university and beyond.

Whilst listening to others' experiences and reflections, I started to unpick threads of thought and look at the process through a different lens, now from within. I initially struggled to identify a strong link with themes from others' reflections, but interestingly, this was not the case for other members of the group. I could hear echoes of different pedagogies and values in their

writing entwined with empowering learner autonomy and voice. This brought me back full circle to what initially drew me to *currere*, the drive for co-constructive ownership of a Curriculum for all our learners in Wales.

VOICE 4

The *currere* experience for me was inspirational. As a class teacher and headteacher, I rarely get time set aside for thinking and reflecting. Discussing with colleagues from other sectors was a refreshing change. It was surprising how similar were the challenges we faced. Our shared stories highlighted the importance of respecting the learner and engaging their curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. Where this is done effectively the learning develops a life of its own; pupils' learning can be more and more self-directed.

Placing myself in the role of learner was important, this was made easier as I was completely out of my comfort zone at the writing retreat, working with higher education colleagues. The normal rules of enquiry were set aside. The process was simple, reflecting on past learning experiences. As our words can be interpreted differently by others, so looking back at our own actions and experiences was a valuable tool to identify what was important to us as individuals and as a group. I believe the *currere* process gave me the insight to reflect on my values and what is important. Following the *currere* project, I felt empowerment and enthusiasm to create positive learning experiences for our pupils.

VOICE 5

The four voices speak of insights into their own practice gained through the *currere* process. Juxtaposing the extracts, using critical discourse analysis, and placing them in the context of wider scholarship on classroom talk adds further dimensions to the work. Scholarship on classroom talk often links the quality of talk to academic achievement (e.g., Muhonen et al., 2018), but in these extracts, the social and emotional dimensions of the curriculum take priority for the participants. Silence is more difficult to discuss. While there is a corpus of academic literature on talk, that on silence is rarer. Recently, however, there has been greater interest**;** Sulzer's (2022) paper was part of a special edition of the journal, *Linguistics and Education*. Often work on silence has focused on the silence/ing of marginalised groups (Cushing, 2022). The four voices in this paper experienced silence in different ways: the deliberate silencing for compliance and the silencing of a language. But as Shultz (2010) argues, silence can also be an invitation. The teacher in "Talking in Class" gave his pupils the opportunity to talk (or not) by being silent himself, and in "Talking as a Community," the children lay down to "sleep" in silence as part of their re-creation of the story. The foundation of this paper is a group of fragments that were produced in the collaborative silence of a *currere* retreat where practitioners had the space to listen to themselves and to colleagues. Silence is a part of the curriculum, but we need to listen and take the opportunities it offers.

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