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## **Dialogic Communication in the One-to-One Improvisation Lesson: A Qualitative Study**

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*Abstract: This qualitative study investigates the dialogic interactions between teacher and student that enhance learning and teaching within the one-to-one music improvisation lesson. This study analyses the ways teachers elicit student actions, thoughts and processes that develop student skills, critical and creative thinking processes necessary for improvisational development. Interactions and interplay between six Australian conservatoire improvisation students and their teachers were investigated. Data reveal dialogic interactions that span instruction, conversation, inquiry and enablement of student knowledge and skills that constitute a complex socio-cultural tapestry of discursive threads. Teacher-student interactions that activate desired creative student activity engage meta-cognitive processes and the cultivation of creative habits of mind that allow improvisational skill to flourish. Teachers engage in dialogic interaction and shape interactional behaviour, asserting a learning culture that makes explicit and visible the acquiring of skills and knowledge. Implications for skilled teaching that can effectively craft the at times improvisatory and ephemeral nature of teacher-student interactions are suggested.*

### **Introduction**

Teachers in the classroom can mediate action and thought and shape the parameters and perceptions of what students think they are capable of achieving. By engaging students in talk, play, gesture, or demonstration through other modalities, teachers create a situated learning environment that not only passes on skill and knowledge within a cultural mindset, but also establishes a temporal understanding of these processes, contexts and environments. It is through student-teacher interactions during the learning process that learners construct or 'map' their own meaningful networks of understanding and possibility (Sannino, 2015).

Teachers design learning situations and utilize pedagogies that can engage students in an interactive process of teaching and learning. Within higher music education the one-to-one lesson is the clear pedagogical model that facilitates the interaction and organization of effective, empathic learning between student and teacher (Dillenbourg, 2013; Gaunt, 2008). Research within the one-to-one lesson has evinced strategies such as scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976), coaching (Schon, 1987), mentoring (Creech, Gaunt, Long & Hallam, 2012), cognitive apprenticeship (de Bruin, 2017, 2016) as well as communicative learning within a 'master' and 'apprentice' culture (Koopman, Smit, De Vugt, Deneer & Den Ouden, 2007).

Investigating student-teacher interactions can reveal better understandings of the way dialogue between teacher and student can shape student actions, thoughts and processes. Whilst Gaunt suggests 'teachers are the musical agents, the models and the motivating forces

for their students' (2008, p. 215) who strive to develop optimal and prolonged moments of synchrony in teacher-student engagement, the instrumental music lesson is a site of negotiated interactions and behaviors of awareness and focus, frustrations, disappointments and epiphanies. With the one-to-one lesson, research has explored verbal interactions on student behaviour (Folkestad, 2005), the effectiveness of teacher skills, techniques and instruction (Galenson, 2006), and the use of teacher engagement in student-teacher discussion (Mercer, Hennessy & Warwick, 2010). Creativity scholars in education have begun to identify creatively based activities and collaborative pedagogies that stimulate and maximize understandings, confluence of goals, and interconnections between student and teacher that reveal 'each other's minds' and maximize learning opportunities (de Bruin & Harris, 2017; Bruner, 1996, p. 12). However, the function of talk and dialogue within lessons, and the way this shapes student understandings, enhances instrumental demonstration/exemplars and promotes learning is an aspect of the one-to-one instrumental lesson currently under explored.

This timely and necessary study explores the micro-moment teacher and student interactions, and the interpersonal connectivity and negotiation through dialogue that promotes learning and teaching within the one-to-one lesson. Analysing six conservatoire music lessons, teacher-student behaviours are observed through a socio-cultural lens that supports individual, interpersonal and collective learning (Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 2008). Utilizing both teacher and student perspectives to learning, this study observes ways teachers elicit actions and evoke thinking needed in developing students' creative improvisatory responses. This article offers perspectives on the development of creative and critical thinking in students, analyzing teachers dialogic practices from which better understandings of interpersonal interactions can be explained in a pedagogically meaningful way.

### **The Teacher-Student Interaction**

Student-teacher relationships are defined as enduring connections between two individuals, characterized by degrees of continuity, shared history, and interdependent interactions and are a powerful and significant influence on the success of learning (Wentzel, 2012). Teacher-student relationships can be understood in terms of the interpretations and meanings attributed and derived from moment-to-moment interactions that establish, develop and achieve goals, qualities of trust, intimacy, sharing, positive effect, safety, authority, and quality of communication (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007). Offering stability and continuity, these qualities are dynamic, developmental aspects of a learning relationship that meet the changing needs of the student over time.

Effective communication and empathic dialogue can facilitate students' learning and responding in more sophisticated ways as they understand the rules for interpreting and acting to events as they occur. Crucially, effective 'in the moment' interaction is dependent on a healthy teacher-student relationship that is connected, empathic and respectful, and research clearly asserts how the fostering of positive influence in learning relationships impacts on the effectiveness of teaching, learning, and student motivation (Creech & Hallam, 2011; Wubbels, Brekelmans, Den Brok & Van Tartwijk (2006). More fine-grained analysis of teacher-student interactions has revealed how effective relations can further develop learning that imparts skills, knowledge, and know-how, enhancing learners' sense-making and situated awareness that ensures a more implicit learning mindset that promotes students' comprehension of "what is it that's going on here?" during specific moments in the lesson (Goffman, 1974/1986, p. 8).

Talk between teacher and student guides the development of learners' understandings (Mercer & Howe, 2012), creating a contextual experience in which to apply learning and

thinking. Teachers guide student actions, direct their attention by highlighting critical features, provide information, exemplars and motivate learners (Wood et al., 1976). Teachers shape appropriate levels of task challenge to the level of learner understanding (Van de Pol & Elbers, 2013), adapting modeling, coaching, scaffolding and fading in response to the learner's developing skills and growing independence (Collins et al, 1991).

Teachers apply sensitive pedagogical recalibration within "zones of proximal development" (Vygotsky's (1978) whereby the teacher moves through a monitor–analyze–assist cycle of interaction within explicit content-related guidance, or in providing more process-related support (Scott, 1998). Effective interactions can promote learners' active roles in collaborating, integrating, elaborating and heighten students' adaptability and awareness of the learning moment (Rojas-Drummond et al., 2010).

### **Learning, Creativity and Critical Thinking**

Current creativity theory posits that creative thinking in learners has moved from universalized perspectives, to a more complex, contextual, collectively and collaboratively situated process and activity (Borgo, 2005; Craft, 2008; Glăveanu, 2014). This increased significance of social context heightens the importance of the ways teachers can enhance learning with the student that can then be utilized and connected with individual and socially shared environments. The transmitting of skill and knowledge within the one-to-one improvisation lesson offers a dynamic example of an educational practice where creativity is fundamental to the learning outcome, and one that equips the student with processes to negotiate both individually and collaboratively with ensembles.

Improvisers utilize creative skill and abilities to generate novel and appropriate ideas, and to make fluid, malleable and transformable learned knowledge (Guilford, 1959; Chiu, 2012; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). As a multifaceted and polymorphic concept creativity in improvisation draws on mental processes such as imagination, purposefulness, originality and the ability to use insight and intellect, as well as feeling and emotion, in order to move or transform an idea from one state to an alternate, previously unexplored state (Simonton, 2003; Dellas & Gaier, 1970). Teacher-student interaction in developing creative processes in musical improvisation is a largely unexplored aspect of research. Whilst improvising musicians' self-regulatory processes (de Bruin, 2016), developmental task setting (Kratus, 1995; Wiggins, 2002), and the importance of motor-sensory, audiation, and creative strategies in learners that cultivate a range of habits of mind that allow creativity to flourish (de Bruin, 2015) have been investigated, little is known of the transactional nature of how teachers go about this work.

### **Learning in Improvisation**

Musical improvisation is the process of creating something new as an expression of musical ideas where the performer mediates 'in the moment' interplay with learned musical vocabularies, stylistic tenets, habits and creative insights (Berkowitz, 2009; Berliner, 1994; Pressing, 1988). Improvisers can instrumentally or vocally improvise by themselves, reacting to purely self-generated impulses, or they can improvise collectively in applying stylistic constraints and structures (Sawyer, 2000).

Improvisers use divergent thinking both in learning and performing (Borgo, 2005; Mendonca & Wallace, 2005) and develop a schema of skills and knowledge that can be spontaneously and uniquely used to construct a musical response and conversation (Pressing,

1988). Substantial knowledge is needed to be able to improvise well (Hinz, 1995) and the need for teachers to emphasise creativity-fostering procedures in learners that resists repetitious behaviours in performance has been argued (Lewis, 2002; Louth, 2012). Effective improvisation educators encourage and promote flexibility, originality, divergent thinking, and foster the development of creative improvisatory processes and dispositions (Sawyer, 2006, 2012). Improvising is a collaborative activity that utilizes what Schön (1987) describes as a concept of 'reflection-in-action', whereby improvisers adjust responses and appreciations triggered by the physical, psychological and emotional connections created between members of a music ensemble during collaborative performance.

### **Dialogic Influence on Teacher-Student Interactions**

The imparting of improvisational skill includes universal musical tools, vocabularies and a learning schema that promotes the cultivating creative processes, strategies and individual creativity (de Bruin, 2016; Prouty, 2012). The teacher within the one-to-one lesson implements strategic ways of inculcating and developing knowledge with which to engage learners in these processes. The interpersonal dialogue and interactions between teacher and student lie at the core of this development and learning procedure. The utilization of a dialogic pedagogy whereby the teacher is able to explore beyond learners' mere internalization of abstract knowledge, and develop convergences and divergences of creative thought and emphasize multi-directional development, diverse ideas and a multiplicity of perspectives is central to this teacher practice (Bakhtin, 1981; Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2014). Dialogic pedagogy can enhance a student's individuality of thought and creative process through dialogic positioning *to* and relationships *with* teachers and collaborators.

Development of divergent and convergent thinking is crucial for improvisers; divergent thinking allows the exploration of numerous possible alternatives or ideas, whilst convergent thinking facilitates the analysis of different ideas and the selection of most appropriate answers (Guilford, 1959; Torrance, 2002). Both convergent and divergent thinking have been deemed essential to creative development (Amabile, 1996), enabling the developing of a range of ideas synthesizing information, and 'possibility thinking' through creative processes and actions. Such a teaching and learning dynamic can arrange a confluence of ideals and aims, where a thinking together approach can help students and teachers develop an intersubjective understanding and orientation towards one another's perspectives that supports the creation of impactful dialogic spaces (Wegerif, 2007). This intersubjectivity is negotiated between teacher and learner, manifests as a perceptual experience and emphasizes a shared cognitive understanding and consensus essential in shaping ideas and further enhancing the learning relationship (Spaulding, 2012).

Dialogic teaching can thus utilize the power of talk to stimulate and extend students' thinking and advance their learning and understanding (Alexander, 2004). This 'in-action' approach forces educators to rethink not just the techniques used to encourage dialogic engagement, but foster learning relationships, maintain the flow of ideas and focus, and direction, and enhance the way students conceive of knowledge. Dialogic interplay can discuss and critique through argumentation, constituting a complex tapestry of discursive threads situated within a dynamic learning environment.

In focusing on dialogic teacher-student activity, interpersonal theory is used in this study to more deeply investigate functions of talk in its socially situated context. (Den Brok, Brekelmans & Wubbels, 2006). The study categorizes dialogicity into three categories; dialogue as instruction; dialogue as a conversation; and dialogue as enablement. The study provides an illuminating perspective to this dyadic relationship, offering a distinctive glimpse

into the phenomena of specific improvisatory and creative musical task-related learning and outcomes.

Observing dialogic approaches to teaching and learning can, as Wubbels, et al. (2006) suggest, provide large variations in student-teacher relationships in terms of approach, direction and ways of communication. This study acknowledges that teachers of improvisation bring their own socio-cultural beliefs, understandings and attitudes that shape their methods of teaching. By observing various approaches to the teaching and learning of improvisation research can gain insight into the relation between real-time and developmental actions, processes and experiences. Such insights can highlight essential, powerful characteristics of interpersonal teacher-student behaviour that facilitate and enhance improvisation instruction as well as glimpses of various personalised techniques used to apply effective teaching and learning.

The research questions that underpin this present study of the improvisation lesson and interview transcripts are as follows:

1. What evidence and instances of dialogic teaching, if any, are there in the lessons under study?
2. How can these occurrences be classified and interpreted according to extant models and frameworks?
3. How and to what extent can these dialogic exchanges be seen as contributing to effective teaching and learning of improvisation?

## **Qualitative Research Methodology**

A qualitative research methodology was preferred as a less intrusive and flexible method to understand students and teachers, and the interactions between them (Richards, 2005; Smith, 2015). Participant observation in the one-to-one lesson was used as a primary data collection method (Creswell, 2011). Six conservatoire improvisation educators responded to an invitation to take part in the study. Their students were communicated to by the researcher and informed of the study so as to negate teacher influence or bias in taking part in the study. Eligibility criteria set for the study were (1) the teacher-practitioner was an expert of 20 years' experience; (2) the student was of tertiary level; (3) a teacher-student relationship of over 6 months had existed preceding the study; and (4) informed consent from both student and teacher had been granted prior to the lesson and interviews.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

Lessons were videoed to capture teacher/researcher's observations and non-verbal gestures. After the lessons, both the teacher and the student separately took part in semi-structured interviews that captured more detailed and reflexive accounts of the in-lesson interactions. Interviews were transcribed for analysis within 48 hours.

An inductive method (Patton, 2002) was apposite in examining teachers' and students' interactions during the lesson, revealing rich and thick descriptions of reflections of interactive processes, strategies and procedures (Smith & Osborn, 2009). Coding of responses were compared to identify emerging themes between video and interview, and between participant student/teacher groupings that provided a constant comparative analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to identify salient and consistent themes. The analytic procedures informed by Miles and Huberman (1994) realized a four-step approach.

Firstly, all transcript data was labeled into meaning units for further analysis. Using a

constant comparative analysis method, major themes from the video interview were correlated with data from the personal interviews. Priority of analysis on the varied aspects of dialogic engagement investigated learners' experiences and perceptions through social action and organization. The third phase applied interaction analysis that ordered and categorized discursive, spatial, semiotic and gestural interactions, utilizing an abductive logic that focused on practical engagement fore-mostly through dialogic engagement. Lastly, three major themes were identified and confirmed as the lenses of inquiry in the findings.

Ensuring consistent and systematized rigor, trustworthiness was ensured through feedback or member-checking and triangulation of the three elements of data (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2013). As is typical for inductive research, the verified analytical interpretations of the researcher throughout the process was ensured through independent researcher analysis and discussion within the research field (Smith, 2015). Bias control between interviews ensured the suspension of assumptions (*epoché*) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and strengthened investigator triangulation (Yin, 2003). The data are presented as separate categories, demonstrating the complex interplay of dialogue, action and learning.

As this was a qualitative study, the aim was not to generalize findings but to develop a fine-grained understanding of teacher and student interactions within the context of the lesson. The findings, due to the contextual and situational nature of the case study, concern only these circumstances and participants and are presented as the analytical lenses of dialogue as instruction; dialogue as conversation; and dialogue as enablement. The six lessons were a sufficient sample for theoretical replication without saturation (Yin, 2003). The descriptive data and portions of transcript is reported in the findings section to ensure naturalistic generalization (Stake, 1995) and is reported as Teacher 1(T1), student1 (S1) and so forth.

## Findings

The one-to-one learning situation can develop and shape the learning of a variety of skills and be customized to optimise the learning relationship. A diverse array of dialogue established focus and direction of micro-moments and enhanced the capacity of learning. Teachers used dialogue to construct knowledge pathways, developing a culture of learning, exploration, inquiry, and reflection rather than a result of just transmitting information.

## Dialogue as Instruction

Teachers used verbal direction in tandem with demonstrative performances to model and scaffold student learning. Dialogue played an important role in the organization and scaffolding of students learning, such as in this example:

- T1 I will play these 5 notes, and you repeat it back to me  
S1 (plays)  
T1 The next structure is this one, repeat this after me  
S1 (plays)  
T1 Now play the first, and then second like this (demonstrates)  
S1 (plays)  
T1 Now I add a note, repeat it back  
S1 (plays)  
T1 now add an additional note, you pick which one, and select where it goes.  
S1 (plays several attempts before consolidating the idea)  
T1 Now stretch the third note out like this (demonstrates), elongate the phrase.

- S1 (plays)  
T1 Good, now play these phrases back to me.  
S1 Student directly replays what teacher plays.  
T1 Now follow closely my inflection, it's not just the notes, it's the expression (plays)  
S1 (plays) Student attempts to capture stylistic nuance. This repeats several times.  
T1 Yes, start to hone your listening to the specific tonal changes, and not just the notes.  
This instructive modelling engages the student through direct imitation of materials.

The teacher also directs attentional focus to inflection- meaning beyond the notes that capture more detailed expressive possibilities. Through modelling the teacher can also inculcate a more critically aware sense of listening and learning. Critically the teacher modelled and scaffolded expert strategies in a shared problem context, mindfully guiding the student with demonstration and dialogue. Dialogue was used as an instructive comment that facilitated the recalibration of cognition and established a trajectory of inquiry, learning and meaning making. Instruction was used to strategically scaffold student endeavour, offering the student pathways of thinking, learning and executing action. Crucial in developing success in student outcomes, distributed instruction over an extended learning moment decomposes tasks to 'do-able' chunks that can help students to perceive precisely how to go about the task, such as in this exchange:

- T2 Play through these chords like this (demonstrates).  
S2 (plays)  
T2 Now, try faster and repeat the last sequence (demonstrates).  
S2 (plays)  
T2 Ok, now we can add some constraints, some stipulations to that– make the first note and the highest note longer, and the last note must be short.  
S2 (plays through several times, the teacher remaining silent as the student 'works through' the instruction) I have the feel for that now.  
T2 Now, how can we change this? We can stretch it, or make it faster and more compact, we can play it backwards, invert it. Try playing it backwards.  
S2 (several attempts to establish fluidity) Got it  
T2 Now you can subtly change one note, one other color, like this (demonstrates). You try.  
S2 (Plays several times)  
T2 Now, let's add one other note.  
S2 Deliberates and then plays, slowly at first but more assertive over iterative practice.  
T2 Developing creative thinking on simple ideas. Think of ways of changing initial ideas with the strategies I've given you. These strategies become significant approaches to developing creative practice. From this, more complex ones can evolve, and I would suggest from that some compositional ideas can develop.

The teacher engages the student through formats and activities that extend attention and skill through an increasingly complex yet coordinated interaction pattern. Specific dialogic instruction, along with performance exemplars push the student beyond the realm of normalized expectations and accomplishments. The teacher uses performance to demonstrate, but dialogue is used strategically assist in recalibrating student thinking and move the student away from naïve generalizations or assumptions of improvisational creativity. By making the processes of learning structured, visible (audible), and attainable, dialogic instruction removes the cloak of invisibility that often conceals creative processes. Dialogic instruction is a cornerstone of one-to-one teaching. Of significance to the improvisation student is that effective instructive dialogic direction can reveal creative processes camouflaged within other generic capabilities, hidden under the guise of problem-solving, critical thinking or



communication, uncovering it from more analytic ways of thinking, and make the tacit explicit without diminishing its complexity.

### **Dialogue as Conversation**

Experienced educator/ practitioners are able to employ heuristic methods, usually acquired tacitly through long experience. The teacher can develop these necessary skills in their students by adapting a more conversational style of teaching that can bring thinking ‘out into the open’. A conversational, discursive style of learning promotes questioning, feedback and detailed explanations. It can allow the teacher to highlight and dwell on specific features, provide more in-depth information and dialogically challenge the level of understanding as the learner is required to reflect and articulate on processes and products, such as in this exchange:

- T3 Through this phrase, you play lots of notes at the beginning, and less towards the end. Why did you do that?
- S3 I just really jumped in and responded to what I played, and tried to repair what I played, rather than thinking through- it seemed to keep on sinking!
- T3 So find a solution. That may be deliberately selecting a simpler melody and thinking about developing that rather than a cascade of notes.
- S3 I’m trying to be more melodically thoughtful, but seem to get lost in the notes. I have to take more time to develop that.
- T3 Yes, part of developing a creative mindset is to develop problems that need working out, otherwise you're just rehearsing the same old answer and approach. You might like to continue to work on this, and also apply differing constraints – limit the notes you use makes the selections more significant, and you will find better notes choices and manipulate rhythms and melody in more interesting ways.
- S3 I am realizing that the creative process becomes more meaningful the more I take the time to work on strategies- and how I think I want to develop them.
- T3 That’s terrific, so work them out, and don’t be afraid to experiment with them, take risks. That’s how we become creative, by deeply knowing and understanding our choices.

In this episode, the teacher directs the conversation to creative processes, offering support that promotes the learner to take a more active and responsible role in crafting creative processes. Through dialogic interaction the teacher gains an understanding, elaborates and helps the student comprehend and reformulate the process by mindfully outlining a course of action. This exchange between teacher and student offers an intimate snap-shot of directed prompts that emerge from teacher-led conversations that lay the groundwork for heightened awareness and deeper learning. Exploratory talk in the example above is an example of a teacher sharing ideas for joint consideration, reasoning opinions and offering perspectives that can promote active exploration, risk-taking and an intersubjective orientation and resonance between teachers and student's ideas. Conversation can allow time for processes to be deliberated on and tailor how information can be conveyed and delivered when the student is intently focused on learning. A teacher can enhance micro-procedural aspects of creative student thinking, by extending divergent thinking, and critically helping to elucidate not only the best problem-solving action, but encourage traits, attitudes and emerging dispositions that foreground advanced creative logic and enquiry, such as in this exchange:

- S4 improvises over a chord structure
- T4 OK, some interesting choices you made

- S4 I am thinking more about developing a statement that unfolds over several progressions of the structure.
- T4 explain that for me
- S4 well, I'm constructing a solo more thinking as a story-telling episode. I am using simple ideas and developing them and in a way by inter-twining them and making thematic connections. I developed two contrasting ideas and towards the end merge them together, creating tension, and the combining of them
- T1 So tell me how this has evolved your thinking and playing.
- S1 Well, I am confident in my ideas, the ways that I can both conceptualize what I think I can do, as well as what I do in performance. I am more relaxed, feeling that ideas will come, and secondly that I have abilities and processes that can play with these ideas and develop them into good ideas, and thirdly that I can develop these ideas in a collaborative situation with the band. I feel I am able to listen more and not be so closed off – I am open to spontaneous interplay more; I am excited by the ways I can respond and deliver in performance.

A conversational aspect certainly avails a more personalised approach and allows the student to passionately articulate their triumphs and pitfalls. Effective dialogue engages the student in task and strategy alignment with the teacher and establish a confidence and flow in their learning response. This teacher's verbal communication transmits an understanding, empathy and acknowledgement of the learning situation and the problem-solving processes involved, binding teacher and student understandings of the learning that is occurring. Dialogue between teacher and student promotes a confluence and empathically understanding, sorting out and sizing up musical and behavioural strengths, weaknesses and quirks of the student. This teacher's recollection of such a learning moment captures such an aspect of interpersonal understanding by the teacher:

- T3 Allowing the student to play with their ideas in the lesson is important. It shows the student you value the processes, and that the process of exploration, discovery, and creativity is not an effortless and magical one. Capturing and remarking on effective playful moments can have a significant impact on connecting with the student. Developing these creative processes in the lesson is the start to making this evolve in their own personal practice, and negotiating personal ideas with a group.

Teaching approaches in these improvisation lessons offer the student a supportive learner-oriented environment quite different from a teacher-centred instructionally dialogic approach. The minimizing of teacher-oriented interruptive dialogue promotes and nurtures student immersion and self-directed inquiry and activity, and promotes immersion in micro-investigative learning and reflective moments. Teacher dialogue is offered more as encouragement based than explicitly directive, and allows the student to divulge their exploratory nature of working through problems, and revealing 'discoveries' encountered along the way. This more conversatory approach sets the student more at ease and allows the student to discuss self-regulatory strategies, self-reflective practices, and the way they are learning to learn. In response to this the teacher adjusts their interplay, allowing the student to 'speak their mind' whilst preparing to further engage the student in careful questioning of emerging student processes of planning, making and re-evaluating decisions. Conversatory interplay allows teachers to be more actively aware of what the student is thinking, offers more detailed verbal instruction and provides more feedback.

## Dialogue as Enablement

Teachers engage students in activities and interactions that allows them to internalize social and cultural influences, and develop as individuals. As students develop a mastery of skills and processes, they also assert a confidence in these qualities. An important part of the learning- and teaching process is allowing the student to demonstrate their burgeoning abilities as well as allowing them dialogic space to articulate this confidence. The teacher that ‘fades’ their influence at appropriate times can enable and empower the student and facilitate deep student reflection of the skills and processes they are gaining mastery of, shown in this excerpt:

T5 Play through this piece

S5 Student responds by improvising over the chords for 2 minutes

T5 Very engaging, I didn’t want to stop you.

S5 Yeah, I feel that was pretty good too.

T5 Critically tell me what went on?

S5 That was interesting, but I feel I am able to develop an idea properly, and between the creative strategies I use and the constraint of the (chord) changes in the harmonic landscape I can negotiate both of those elements of thinking and successfully construct improvisations.

T5 Why is this happening?

S5 Well, I’ve got a cache of ideas there that I can refer to. As I have become more mentally agile with the thinking and the execution. I am more relaxed and confident in developing ideas appropriately. Having invested in the processes and working through these by performing with others, I really value what I am creating, and I can trust my instincts.

Allowing students to express their point of view can be a significant moment of strength in the student, and an enriching experience for the teacher. Dialogic spaces permit students to not only demonstrate their learning through playing, but explain their learning, how they interpreted or processed the information, and how they took charge of their own learning, demonstrated by this exchange:

S6 Improvises through a chord structure several times, teacher listening.

T6 Well that was interesting

S6 You didn’t interrupt?

T6 No, there was lots of good things going on there, tell me, what’s going on?

S6 The ideas we’ve been working on all year are coming through in my playing. I couldn’t connect with them at first, it took a few months of synthesizing the exercise with my own ideas and manipulating it to suit my ends. I didn’t like the exercises very much, couldn’t really connect, but I could see how I could use that ‘play by the numbers’ approach to develop my own personal strategies and concepts. I wasn’t happy just sounding like exercises, but I could see their benefit- I really wanted to sound like me and that’s what we are hearing.

Teachers can create a stimulating sanctuary that can help students build strengths, find solutions and achieve ongoing success. Dialogic experiences can facilitate the personal understandings and divergence of thinking that positively impact student’s wider thinking, creative actions and cultivation of their own expertise and concepts. Teachers that fade their influence in the lesson, or withhold authority and more instructional approaches to teaching the student can provide empowering moments in the lesson from which the student can grow and gain confidence. Allowing students to articulate their decision-making encourages students to explore the reasoning behind their learning choices and persuasively articulate through argumentation their understandings as they exercise control over creative processes and strategies.

## Discussion

How a teacher perceives their role as teacher in relation to the student's learning has a significant impact on how these exchanges can influence the broader macro-culture of one-to-one learning. This study of six differing teaching and learning personalities showed that in these instances a nurturing teacher-student relationship built on trust, egalitarianism and solidarity allows teachers to guide student thinking and action to higher levels and facilitate the conception of new ideals, goals and creative possibilities. Rather than relying on instrumental demonstration and rote modelling and copying, teachers and students engaged in thoughtful learning by allowing each other to be active and dialogic participants in the learning process.

The participants in this study revealed effective behaviours that made instruction interactive, creative and collectively organized. The teachers implemented a balance between freedom and flexible structures, combining both an improvisatory 'feel' and specific design into their dialogic interplay. The teachers asserted a culture of expert practice through diverse dialogic interactions that contributed to the growing interpersonal learning relationship.

This varied dialogic interplay of instructive, conversatory and enabling discourse offers teachers in the one-to-one studio significant teaching strategies. It highlights the need for teachers to consider how they maximize the impact of their dialogue in the lesson, themselves developing a metacognitive awareness of the learning functions of talk and an appreciation of its potential value as a cultural and psychological teaching tool. Teachers understanding of differing levels of dialogic focus can facilitate a richer learning and teaching experience, and one that allows the student to reflect and articulate on their learning more lucidly.

This study may enlighten educators to the strengths of dialogic mechanisms that improve interpersonal learning relationships in education. Whilst acknowledging the limitations regarding a sample of six participants and the difficulty of expressing the ineffable aspects of music and teacher-student behaviours, these rich descriptions of behaviour in authentic settings capture the dynamic nature of teaching complex skills, and the multidimensional nature of learning. This study reveals that the interpersonal relationship acts as a conduit through which the teacher can identify and personalize the processes involved in a task, makes them visible, heard, understood and achievable. It adds further understandings of how teacher-student relationships develop from real-time interactional processes within the one-to-one lesson.

## Implications

Educators demonstrate skilled expertise beyond knowing, showing and doing by engaging students through active dialogic approaches that enhance learning and maximize student outcomes. Teacher's dialogic practice, responsivity and reciprocity of thoughts and actions emphasizes the important role meaning-making student-teacher discussions play, and the way this promotes students' attitudes, dispositions, knowledge and cultural growth.

The one-to-one improvisation lesson offers wider domains of learning beyond music an insight into the ephemeral nature of this learning dynamic and the ways in which teachers and students negotiate the imparting of skill and knowledge. Sawyer (2004) suggests that effective teaching practice be envisaged as a disciplined improvisational performance. This metaphor highlights the collaborative and emergent nature of teaching and learning, the various teaching skills required for experienced, effective practice, and how these attributes can be enacted within a continuum of teacher/student constraints and freedoms, aesthetics and

goals. Teachers open windows of opportunity to meaningful educational journeys, and those who can demonstrate a rich repertoire of interactional and dialogic teaching skills adaptable within diverse and complex systems will be well equipped to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century student.

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