Chapter 14
Tracing Policy in Practice. Exploring the Interactional Exercise of Oral Assessment

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Abstract By empirically zooming in on oracy as an area of educational reforms, this chapter illuminates how a new oral assessment phenomenon that has been observed in practice meets, overlaps, and, more recently, challenges educational policy in the Norwegian educational context. Conducted in three lower secondary schools, the study draws on audio-recorded materials capturing authentic teacher–student dialogues in group subject talk tests. By exploring authentic assessment practices, the chapter analyzes (1) which aspects of competence students are made accountable for and (2) how the introduction of learning outcomes and oracy as one of five core skills can challenge the interactional exercise of oral assessment in educational practice. The results illustrate how subject talk evaluation practices through the organization in social groups go beyond assessing students in terms of assessment criteria or scales. The oral assessment situation becomes a setting where teachers share professional judgments and approve specific oral initiatives for groups of students. In this nexus of group subject talks and recent policy on learning outcomes and oracy as a core skill, students become competent contributors through retrospective evaluations of their own performance, making themselves accountable for the group's community, subject-specific knowledge, and the norms and rules of reasoning in the group's subject talks. The findings raise several questions about how we understand actors as the coconstructors of educational policy when certain educational practices seem to be in front of policy uptake in the nexuses where policy and practice conflict, overlap, and meet.

Keywords Oral assessment · Oracy · Student evaluation · Accountable talk · Group dialogues · Learning outcome · Social interaction · Policy uptake

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Introduction

By empirically zooming in on oracy—here as an emphasized area of political educational reforms over the past 20 years—this chapter will illuminate how group subject talks as a new oral assessment phenomenon that have been observed in practice meet, overlap, and challenge the educational policy of assessment in the Norwegian educational context. By exploring authentic assessment practices in a lower secondary school, the chapter investigates which aspects of competence the students are made accountable for, along with how the introduction of learning outcomes related to oracy as a core skill seems to challenge the interactional exercise of oral assessment in educational practice.

Andrew Wilkinson first introduced the term "oracy" as a way to refer to "the ability to use the oral skills of speaking and listening" (Wilkinson, 1965, p. 13). He created the term "oracy" to give spoken language skills the same status as reading, writing, and counting. Oracy has a long tradition in the Norwegian school system, dating back to the oral hearings in confirmation ceremonies in 1736. First beginning as a rhetorical recitation of literature in the first schools, the practice has moved toward today's consequential position as one of five core skills enacted through the National Knowledge Promotion Reform of 2006 (LK06). In conjunction with the National Knowledge Promotion Reform (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006), a sharper focus on learning outcomes and assessment practices became visible in policy documents. For instance, the description "to be able to express oneself orally" changed to "oral skills"; hence, focusing on the interactional collaboration with others and the ability to listen to and assess others' oral competence became consequential in classroom practices (Kverndokken, 2017). Additionally, across subjects, the introduction of learning outcomes related to oracy were described using common instructional verbs, such as interacting, discussing, interpreting, arguing, listening, telling, performing, and explaining. As a result, the new focus on the interactional aspects of learning outcomes became important for the organization of collaborative oral assessment exercises in Norwegian school practices.

International Research on Oral Assessment

In major international reference works on assessment, there has been only a minimal focus on oracy (see Andrade & Cizek, 2009; Andrade et al., 2019; Howe & Abedin, 2013; McMillan, 2013). Even so, the assessment of oral skills has been a longstanding component of secondary school examinations in education systems around the world (Skovholt et al., 2021). For instance, the value of assessing oracy and the issue of how to assess fairly has been debated for many years (Brooks, 1989). Barnes (1980) argued that, while assessing children's oral skills, teachers' need a wide range of contexts in which to gather evidence. Following this line of argumentation, Howe (1991) described three main challenges for assessing oracy:

the fact that spoken language is ephemeral, the restriction on the number of students who can be assessed at a time, and the context specificity of speech acts. Additionally, Mercer et al. (2017) underlined that speech involves the integrated activities of two or more people, so how can individual performance be isolated while assessing oral skills? The debates regarding the assessment practices of oracy have led to the development of diagnostic assessment schemes for teachers by, for instance, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency in the UK (QCDA) or the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (CCSI, 2015) in the US, both of which provide a set of guidelines showing the expected standard for spoken language use at the end of each grade of schooling. However, most previous approaches to assessing oracy have relied on performance criteria related to specific situations, such as public speaking or group work, not on assessing what students said or did (Mercer et al., 2017).

Norwegian Research on Oral Assessment

In Norwegian literature studies, the assessment of oracy is seldom examined (Børresen et al., 2012; Fjørtoft, 2017; Skovholt et al., 2021). In the Norwegian school context, students' learning outcomes are assessed through final "disciplinary oral competence exams" (DOCEs) in Year 10 (age 15) in lower secondary school and Year 3 (age 18) in higher secondary school. Even though DOCEs are widely used, we know very little about their quality in terms of their validity, reliability, and fairness (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019; Pellegrino et al., 2001). Critiques have documented the weak construct of language oral tests (Okada, 2010), a lack of research focusing on trouble management in nonstandardized test talk (Nyroos et al., 2017), and how teachers struggle to manage students' insufficient answers in authentic oral examinations (Vonen et al., 2022). Also, there seems to be a growing gap between classroom realities of oracy and theories on development and learning, which underscores the significance and consequences of social interactions in various forms of classroom dialogues (Alexander, 2012; Wiig et al., 2018). In Littleton and Howe's (2010) seminal work on educational dialogues, criticism was raised toward educational research for treating oracy and the conception of language as a unitary tool:

> The apparent 'gap' between what theory construes as being of significance, and the apparently bleak picture emerging form actual classroom practice, gives pause for thought. (…) What is needed are research-based accounts of educational dialogues, and productive interaction, that are sensitive to the variety of forms and functions of language as used in pursuit of teaching and learning in classroom settings (p. 5).

Rooted in classroom realities, this chapter will explore a new oral assessment phenomenon called "subject talks," which are 20–30 minutes structured and graded dialogues where teachers and students engage in talks about subject-specific topics as an alternative approach to more conventional ways of individual oral

examinations. In particular, the chapter zooms in and investigates group subject talks in the subject Norwegian in a lower secondary school, a type of institutional interaction that until now has received little attention in the policy–practice nexus.

Oracy in Practice

Historically, oracy, rhetoric, and oral examinations have a long tradition in the development of the Norwegian educational system. In 1736, the Danish–Norwegian government introduced the religious ceremony of confirmation as a mandatory ceremony, which politically meant that a very general requirement was made for schooling. The new political significance of confirmation made the practical preparation for the oral hearing far more important because no children would be admitted to confirmation until they had gone to school and acquired the necessary knowledge about Christianity. In places where there were no schools, political governance decided that priests and traveling schoolmasters were still to oversee teaching. The educational aim was to teach students to read, and then, the students would be held accountable to use their new reading skills to learn and present good Christianity in the confirmation ceremony (Elstad et al., 2022). The schoolbook used for almost 150 years was Pontoppidan's (1737) *Sandhet til Gudfryktighed* (i.e., "Truth to Godliness"). The book was written in the form of 539 questions and answers elaborating on Martin Luther's little catechism, with frequent references to the Bible, such as the Ten Commandments and explanations in detail what these are about. On the day of confirmation, the priest would conduct an oral hearing where all the children were held accountable for displaying their knowledge about Christianity by reciting what they could memorize from the 539 questions and answers in front of the church community. Confirmation was extremely rigorous and meant an important change in social status. As a political educational decision, it marked the transition from child to adult, thus coinciding with changes in clothing, lifestyle, and job opportunities. Confirmation was also a political condition for entering marriage. If one was not able to pass the oral hearing of confirmation before the age of 19, the individual would be punished with penitentiary and social exclusion.

Later in the nineteenth century, when educational systems were established in Norway, great emphasis was placed on reading and recitation exercises in Norwegian Latin schools (Aksnes, 2017). These oral exercises had a dual policy aim: they should give students the practical opportunity to understand and communicate texts, such as poems, while also providing them with training in performing in public (Steinfeld, 1986). In 1883, the first oral examination was introduced by the Norwegian Ministry of Education as a traditional oral exam, where teachers asked questions related to subject matters and the students were made accountable to answer by reciting facts from the schoolbooks. Several guides in the art of recitation were published, and as a result of the educational practice, rhetoric was introduced and used primarily as a doctrine of external eloquence and performance style. Until the latter part of the twentieth century, oracy as a discipline gained an increasing

focus in educational policy and practice. A fundamental change in oracy as an educational discipline came with the new National Knowledge Promotion Reform of 2006 (*Kunnskapsløftet*, LK06). With LK06, oracy became one of five core skills, together with reading and writing, calculation, and digital skills. Consequently, oral competence became something the students were required to develop across all subjects and during the entire educational system (first to tenth grade). In the 2013 revision of LK06, rhetoric became a central topic, especially in Norwegian language training (Aksnes, 2017). In the nexus of policy and practice, rhetoric changed from being an analytical tool for performing text analysis to becoming a tool for practical work with oracy both in ordinary classroom interactions across subjects, such as in whole-class discussions, presentations, or subject talks, and in formalized individual oral exams, such as in the school subject Norwegian. According to Bakken, "the introduction of rhetoric as a topic must be said to be one of the major changes that occurred in the school subject Norwegian in connection to the Knowledge Promotion Reform" (2009/2011, p. 2). Thus, a practical consequence of the policy-initiated reform on oracy as a core skill was that the means for the proof of rhetoric, such as ethos, pathos, and logos, should give students the appropriate amount of support to create oral texts and a language to talk about oracy as a way to fulfill the introduction of the learning outcomes of oracy. Consequently, detailed directions and practical guidelines were developed, particularly in the school subject Norwegian. As this chapter will show, these guidelines of oracy became consequential for educational practice and empirical observations of new forms of assessment practice called subject talks. Thus, the current chapter will focus on oracy as an area of educational reform, discussing the nexus in which policy and practice meet, conflict, and overlap.

Untangling the Nexus

The present study employs a sociocultural perspective on the ways educational policy is partly brought up and used as cultural tools in schools, along with how policy formalizes the popular practices developed in schools. From a sociocultural perspective, learning and assessment activities in school practices are interactional endeavors that are shaped by cultural and historical activities (Daniels et al., 2007). The underlying premise in these sociocultural perspectives on assessing learning activities is that when teachers design dialogues by drawing on how students explicate their reasoning and bring forward arguments for what they claim, challenges arise regarding accountable methods of engaging in these new practices. Thus, *accountability* can be studied as "elements of situated knowing-in-practice, i.e., as elements of knowing how to behave" (Mäkitalo, 2003, p. 496). This implies that when, as groups, students are invited into new assessment practices, discrepancies exist in the views of learning. What is considered relevant or accountable and the goals of measurement (i.e., elaboration of knowledge, recitation of facts, presenting group work) can lead to tensions and practical challenges (Wiig et al., 2019).

The empirical material forming the foundation of the analysis was collected during structured 30-minute subject talks in Norwegian language (L1) at a lower secondary school in Norway. Subject talks in lower secondary education can take many forms; they can be trial exams in various subjects in preparation for national examinations or "practice conversations" before oral exam (Vonen et al., 2022), oral classroom assessment with grades, oral presentations finalizing assignments or projects, organized as group work, or as individual conversations making use of the various tools available for meaning-making (Prøitz et al., 2020; Wiig et al., 2020). Thus, subject talks serve different purposes in lower secondary education. The data corpus for the present chapter represents the final oral test in which a grade was given for the subject and that ended a period specializing in analyzing multimodal advertisements in eighth grade. During subject talks, the teacher would assess the student's participation by asking questions, making notes, and keeping a record of the students' performance based on written assessment criteria. Immediately after the students' presentation and group dialogue, there would be an evaluation of the subject talk, which led the way to opening up for teacher's feedback, students' reflection, and communication of the results in terms of a final grade put into a digital system. Thus, in the present chapter, I investigate what students are made accountable for when participating in group subject talks, that is, which aspects of knowledge are highlighted and rendered visible as important in teachers' evaluation of students' oral performance. Specifically, the analytical focus is on the idea that the teachers' framing of accountable ways of engaging within the subject talks has a strong guiding influence on how the students participate and what students focus on in their retrospective reflections over what counts as meaningful assessment and learning practices in this nexus of policy and practice.

Assessing Own Performance Through Accountable Talk

In the current study, the notion of "accountable talk" has served as the analytical lens (e.g., Michaels et al., 2008; Resnick et al., 2018; Sellberg et al., 2022; Wiig et al., 2019). Although accountability in educational policy refers to evidence or assessment, performance data, and the indicators by which policy makers monitor the performance of students and schools, this chapter uses sociolinguistic and dialogic approaches. Thus, accountable talk means those discursive practices that "support and promote equity and access to rigorous academic learning" (Michaels et al., 2008, p. 283). Hence, those studies on accountable talk have focused on how the dialogues between teachers and students go beyond being able to reproduce what is known as established facts in the discipline, hence directing the analytical interest toward how instructional dialogue may foster better reasoning and understanding of complex and ambiguous problems that require students' judgment (Resnick et al., 2018). Accountable talk takes place in the educational practices that carefully

combine designed tasks with teacher-led discussions and the other activities in which students are encouraged to explicate their reasoning and bring forward arguments of what they claim and do. Michaels et al. (2008) suggested that, in academically productive classroom talk, three broad dimensions are critical features: accountability to the community, accountability to knowledge, and accountability to the accepted standards of reasoning. The three facets of accountable talk—community, knowledge, and reasoning—are analytically separable, but in practice, they are interdependent and must co-occur if the discourse is to promote academic learning (O'Connor et al., 2015). These dimensions will be applied as analytical tools to explore the social interactions of negotiating the situated practice of knowing how to behave as well-informed students in subject talk settings in classroom interactions. Combining the three dimensions of accountability can provide a general picture of the overall function of subject talk in the data corpus, as well as more detailed accounts of subject talk practices.

Accountability to the Learning Community

The first dimension is related to the *learning community,* in which productive discussions take place. This type of accountability is related to mastering the forms of talk, ways of acting, and making sense that are relevant within the community. In the present study, the learning community can be contextualized as the group subject talks in Norwegian L1 in a lower secondary class in Norway. In this learning community, teacher and student groups make use of students' presentation and analyses of a multimodal TV advertisement. During the subject talks, the teacher orchestrates discussions, and the groups of students are invited to engage in the dialogue, that is, to listen to others in the group, share their reasoning, and explicate their analysis to display their knowledge of literate analysis as a collaborating endeavor. Thus, accountability to the learning community is coconstructed and negotiated through the discursive practices among the groups of students and the teacher in situ.

Accountability to the Norms and Rules

The second dimension relates to the accepted standards of reasoning in a learning community, such as within group subject talks. Here, accountability is associated with the norms and rules of how the students explicate their reasoning orally and bring forward their arguments in relation to the given assessment criteria for the school subject Norwegian. In the group subject talks, these standards are both the criteria from the teacher describing what is expected in an analysis of a multimodal

TV advertisement and the ways for sharing responsibility, knowledge, and the more invisible youth standards of what are acceptable activities within the group. Thus, being a member of a youth group, which has its own accepted standards of reasoning, might conflict with the teacher's standards of what it takes to achieve good results for the group in subject-specific matters. Consequently, what is at stake in these discursive practices might show layers of standards within a group that can conflict with the schools' norms, rules, and principles.

Accountability to Knowledge

The last dimension regarding the accountability for knowledge is related to understanding and making use of the relevant knowledge in situ. Michaels et al. (2008) underlined that accountability to knowledge goes behind the recitation of facts. Rather, Michaels et al. (2008) highlighted the role of discursive reasoning in which the participants made explicit the evidence behind their claims. In a subject talks setting, accountability to knowledge is demonstrated through a structured oral group process of 30-minute conversations in which the students' skills are tested in a formal sense and graded individually by the teacher. Thus, the current study is in line with previous research on accountable talk that has focused on those school subjects where the students are expected to master a body of authoritative knowledge such as formulas, symbolic tools, facts, or accepted theories (Michaels et al., 2008). The empirical material in the present chapter offers a different point of entry to the issue of accountable talk, putting on display a new discursive practice called subject talks, in which little research has been done. I will further elaborate on what this means in the nexus of policy and practice in the analysis of authentic audio-recorded group subject talks, since the assessment situation the teacher provide for in-group subject talk can be seen as a demanding task. By encouraging the students to make themselves assessable by balancing among the various layers of accountability to community, knowledge, and reasoning, the teacher and students socially interact in situ to elaborate on students' thinking and reflections.

Research Design

The examined subject talks can be classified as *a defined summative classroom assessment situation ending a period of student work with a given assignment and a final grade set by the teacher* (Wiig et al., 2020). Because the current study explores a phenomenon first observed in practice in schools that have been limitedly researched and described by policy, the analysis takes the empirical data from schools as its point of departure.

Data Corpus

Data were collected from a lower secondary school called North School (pseudonym) in Norway during the school year of 2017–2018. The selected school was a public school in a medium-sized Norwegian city. The participants included a teacher in the Norwegian language and about 50 ninth and tenth grade students. All teachers and students volunteered to participate and provided informed consent. For the present study, a corpus of 17 audio-recorded group subject talks in Norwegian was used for the analysis. In addition, field notes and artifacts, such as video clips, assignments, assessment criteria, and self-assessment criteria, were collected and used as secondary material. The 17 subject talks were fully but roughly transcribed totaling 8.5 hours of audio-recordings.

Analytical Process

During the preliminary analysis, all episodes were subjected to thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This technique gave an overview of the organization and content that were particularly relevant to the research questions, enabling me to select episodes of relevant interaction. In this process, NVivo software was used. In the next step, interaction analysis (Jordan & Henderson, 1995) was applied to analyze how the students negotiated and co-constructed explanations and what the teacher emphasized while evaluating the performance of the groups. This analytical tradition has stressed the importance of analyzing meaning-making as sequentially organized in encounters between participants. Moreover, it helps emphasize the need to analyze activities as interactional achievement happening in a sociocultural practice (Mäkitalo & Säljö, 2002). Here, sequentially refers to meaning-making as a chain of utterances and events that are sensitive to each other.

The analytical focus was on how groups of students and the teacher responded to each other's utterances turn by turn and how they coconstructed the meaning of the situation so they could negotiate the ways to behave and interact. At this time, the transcriptions were revisited with attention to detail to confirm the correct transcriptions has been reported verbatim. Therefore, the analysis was developed with information on the teacher–student talk, the level of interactivity with the participants, and the engagement of the participants during the talks. As a result, the inner functions of subject talks in these specific assessment practices were rendered visible. At this time, the transcribed talk was elaborated on with information on time, content, participants, and composition. To understand how the teachers and students negotiated the elements of knowing how to behave in the subject talks, the analysis focused on the types of accountabilities the teacher found accurate and significant while structuring the subject talks.

The three broad dimensions of accountable talk were applied to analyze how the participants oriented themselves concerning what counted as accurate and relevant ways to behave and talk: *(1) accountability to the community, in which the participants listened and built their contributions in response to others; (2) accountability to the accepted standards of reasoning, which emphasized logical connections and drawing reasonable conclusions; and (3) accountability to knowledge, that is, talk based explicitly on facts, written texts or other public information* (Michaels et al., 2008; Wiig et al., 2019). In the present study, the accountable talk dimensions worked together as a conceptual lens to derive meaning from the interaction data. Thus, they should not be understood as comprehensive or mutually exclusive categories for analysis.

When narrowing down the analysis, two excerpts were chosen to represent the data corpus, here illustrating what students are made accountable for when participating in group subject talks, that is, which aspects of knowledge were highlighted and rendered visible as important in teachers' evaluation of students' group performance.

The Empirical Case

The subject talk was part of the students' final grade, ending a period specializing in analyzing multimodal advertisements. The data corpus for this chapter represented the final test of the period, which assessed 17 groups of students' preplanned analysis of a TV commercial, their knowledge of linguistic means, ability to work in groups, and reflections on their own participation in subject talks. According to the assessment criteria, the students should be able to demonstrate knowledge in the following areas: (a) present an analysis of a TV commercial with a focus on aesthetic means and reflect on how they can be affected by sound, language, and pictures, (b) participate and collaborate during the group work, (c) display knowledge about the theme with a clear structure and answer the questions in the assignment, d) use scientific concepts during the subject talk and display an overview of the material, engage with the material, and talk clearly, articulated, and with passion (Appendix). During the subject talks, the teacher assessed the student's participation by asking questions, making notes, and keeping a record of students' performance according to the above assessment criteria. Immediately after the students' presentation and group dialogue, there was an evaluation of the subject talk that opened up for teacher's feedback, students' reflection, and communication of the results in terms of a final grade, which was put into a digital system. Although the students worked in teams of three or four, the final evaluation was an individual grade. The 30-minute structured subject talk was performed in their classroom, and the groups of students were assigned different time slots over the course of 2 days.

At an overall level, the subject talks were organized into four different sequences, as shown in Table 14.1.

Table 14.1 The organization of group subject talks (Wiig et al., 2020)

Organization of group subject talks	Time
1. Teacher introduction	2 min
2. Student presentation of their advertisement and literate analysis	5 min
3. Student–teacher dialogue	15–20 min
4. Reflection and evaluation	Last 10 min
A. Reflections of own participation in the subject talk	
B. Teacher feedback	2–3 min
C. Student self-assessment according to aims	
D. Teacher instruction of students' self-assessment in digital app and information about final grade	1 min

In the analysis below, the teachers' introduction and reflection and evaluation parts have been analyzed, here with a focus on the teacher and students' coproduction of retrospective accounts.

Introducing the Group Subject Talk

Before the students' PowerPoint presentation began, there was a short introduction where the teacher explained the conditions for the upcoming subject talk. This was done in an overarching way, hence not introducing much detail or information about time, form, or procedures. Rather, each subject talk was slightly different, but they were all similar in their structure and in the design of the assessment criteria. Two typical introductions have been exemplified in the below excerpts.

The first episode started with a group of four female students who had chosen a commercial called "Kolonial" (i.e., Colonial). When the group entered the classroom, they were told to upload their presentation, and while they quietly oriented toward their presentation, the teacher explicated her intentions by saying the following:.

Teacher	The more you control the conversation, the better. But I jump in and ask about things if it standstills or there are things I wonder about or things like that. So it is important to remember that this is a conversation. I'm not trying to upset anyone; I'm looking for what you guys know.

At the start of the excerpt, the teacher explicated that, in subject talks, it would be better if the students took over the control to display what they knew and that she would ask them to elaborate if there were things she wondered about, but her task was not to upset or dig into things they did not know. Rather, she emphasized that subject talk was a conversation where students should be given the opportunity to take control and show what they know. Hence, through this first introduction, the teacher was seeking to establish a shared understanding of her role in the situation

and position students as active contributors and leaders of the conversation. Thus, in this discursive assessment practice, the teacher carefully combined designed tasks with teacher-led discussions, fostering opportunities for engaging in instructional dialogues to explicate their reasoning and display what they claimed and did.

In the next excerpt, a group of four boys entered the classroom while whispering and mumbling. When they were asked to upload their PowerPoint presentation about a kebab pizza advertisement, they struggled with some technical issues, and it took some time before the presentation was visible on the screen. Here, the teacher explicated the intentions with the subject talk by elaborating more about the intentions and addressing the schedule by saying the following:

1.	Teacher	We'll start with you to tell a bit about the advertisement you have worked with and why you have chosen to work with it. And then we go into that section of conversation. *(Sounds from the computer and whispering about technical issues)* But eh do you also remember from the last time that the best starting point is that the more you talk, the better?
2.	Student	Yes
3.	Teacher	So you know I'm gonna jump in and ask if there's anything I'm wondering about. And it's not scary.
4.	Student	Not at all…
5.	Teacher	It's not scary at all. And you have worked with our kebab pizza? Do you intend to start by saying something about the advertisement or?

In this excerpt, the teacher constructed a carefully designed task similar to the template students were offered while preparing for the subject talk: present the advertisement, state why you choose it, and then begin the conversation. She highlighted that the best starting point was that, the more they talked, the better it would be and that it was nothing to be afraid about, underlining that "*it is not scary at all*" (line 5). Thus, during this introduction, the teacher was seeking to establish a teacher-led structure, positioning the students to follow the support given by the template, schedule, and her prompts. By underlining that it was not scary to engage in the instructional dialogue, the teacher was showing her concern for facilitating an oral assessment situation about which some of the pupils felt anxious. Here, she treated them as boys she trusted would accomplish the situation—talking about the kebab pizza advertisement; she did this by explicating that she would support them with prompts, questions, and further elaboration, as long as they engaged in the talk. Thus, in this discursive assessment practice, the teacher was seeking to establish a shared understanding of a safe learning community that could support and promote equity and access to rigorous academic learning for all kinds of students, here going beyond being accountable to reproduce what is known as established facts in the discipline.

Accordingly, the analysis of the two excerpts of introductions displays how the group subject talks were organized as carefully designed tasks, here with teacher-led discussions and activities in which the students were encouraged to explicate their reasoning and various understanding while bringing forward arguments of what they claimed and did to foster equity and access to rigorous dialogues.

Thus, bringing in the three dimensions of accountable talk as analytical tools, the teacher sought to position students toward an interactional process of *knowing how to behave* as well-informed students in subject talks (Mäkitalo, 2003). More specifically, the introduction displays how the teacher framed what they would be held accountable for when it came to the three dimensions of accountability to the learning community, to knowledge, and to reasoning. More specifically, the introduction of the subject talk displays how the teacher framed what they would be held accountable for when it came to the three dimensions of accountability to the learning community in the group, to knowledge about commercials, and to reasoning explained as mastery levels of learning outcomes in which I will explore next.

The next subsection focuses on the evaluation and reflection part of the group subject talks to set the analytical focus on which aspects of knowledge were highlighted and rendered visible as important for engaging in accountable ways in the oral assessment practice, along with how the nexus of policy and practice met, overlapped, and conflicted.

Evaluating Group Subject Talks

The excerpt below was chosen to display a typical teacher–student evaluation of a group subject talk. Following the four boys analyzing the commercial of a kebab pizza, the teacher and students summarized the conversation by talking about how to conduct a self-assessment. Underlining that individual self-assessment was necessary before they received their grades, the teacher brought in her record with notes, here presented as a paper sheet describing the characteristics of goal achievement in a table. Interestingly, these criteria were directly copied from the policy document based on the Knowledge Promotion Reform (2009/2011), which characterizes mastery levels and learning outcomes for how to read and analyze a complex text in the school subject Norwegian. As a collaborative matter, the excerpt displays how the teacher and students interacted and discussed the assessment criteria, which gave the students support to create oral texts and the language to talk about oracy as consequential for subject talks as a new educational practice. Thus, the excerpt can be seen as an example of how educational practice and policy meet, how educational policy is enacted and taken up in oral assessment practices, and how educational practice invites collaborative and interactional assessment activities that extend the structures of educational policy of oracy (Table 14.2).

Looking at this excerpt, the teacher and students pointed toward the scheme of criteria, discussing how the boys would evaluate their own oral performance related to the descriptions of mastery levels and the scoring system of one to three (low–high):

Table 14.2 Scheme of criteria directly copied from the policy document based on the Knowledge Promotion Reform (2009/2011), here characterizing mastery levels and learning outcomes for how to read and analyze a complex text in the school subject Norwegian

Criteria	Mastering level 1	Mastering level 2	Mastering level 3
Learning objective: Read and analyze a complex text and convey possible interpretations describe the interaction between aesthetic means in multiple texts, and reflect on how we are affected by sound, language, and images	Present a short analysis of a complex text, can answer simple questions about aesthetic means and about the influence of sound, language, and images	Present an analysis of a complex text, can talk about some aesthetic means, and can reflect somewhat on how we are influenced by sound, language, and images	Present a conscious analysis of a complex text, can talk about aesthetic means, and can reflect on how we are affected by sound, language, and images
Collaboration	Participates to a small/no degree in the work.	Participates to some extent in the work.	Shows good collaboration skills. Participates actively in work.
Content:	Shows little knowledge of the subject. The subject matter is poorly structured. Does not answer the task.	Shows some knowledge of the subject. The subject matter is well structured. Have partially answered the assignment.	Shows good knowledge of the subject. The subject matter is very well structured. Have answered the assignment.
Subject talk:	Present some important elements of the topic's content. Focuses mostly on the script, and not the audience. Speaks in a "normal" voice, and often a little too fast or a little incoherently.	Present several important elements from the theme's content. Using some own words and freeing oneself to some extent from the script. Speaks clearly and is engaged.	Use new words that are specific to the topic in the presentation, and show a good overview of the topic speak freely and with empathy is independent of the script. Speaks clearly and articulately, is engaged.

1.	Teacher	Now I wondered if you can look at those points and try to reason with me; where do you think you are now?
2.	Student B	Mm. Number three is best, right?
3.	Teacher	Number three is best (laughter.) So we can imagine ehm that mastery level 1 corresponds to grades 1 to 2. Mastery levels 2, is 3 to 4 and mastery levels 3, are approximately 5 to 6.
4.	Student O	Maybe somewhere between mastery levels 1 and 2?
5.	Teacher	Mm, why do you think that, O?
6.	Student O	No ehm, that the presentation was really short, it was ehm we talked about language aesthetically and ehm we participate to a decent extent in the work, we show knowledge of what we have talked about and we have presented several and important elements from the content of the topic.

(continued)

7.	Teacher	Mm, what do you three others think then?
8.	Student A	Between 1 and 2, the same. (..)
9.	Teacher	What do you think you have done well in this subject talk?
10.	Student A	Came with a lot of good content. And said something.
11.	Teacher	What do you others think has been good?
12.	Student B	Eh, everything?
13.	Teacher	What do you think you need to work on then?
14.	Student C	Writing because O wrote almost everything.
15.	Teacher	(…) I think that ehm I think you are very good at judging yourself and I very much agree with everything you say. I think very much was good at this subject talk. First, all four are in place, all four participate, everyone has talked a bit eh and I also see that all four know very much about this topic. Right? That's great. In addition, I completely agree that what you say is essential; that you cooperate, that everyone is involved in some writing, that everyone is involved in the entire process. So looking at us now, I think that everyone has conveyed parts of this topic and, additionally, that everyone manages to answer when I ask for something, because I have examined everyone about slightly different things, and ehm you respond.

In this case, the teacher invited the students to think together with her to evaluate their own performance related to learning outcome characterized as mastery level one, two, or three, as copied from LK06 and its directions for oracy in the subject Norwegian L2. She asked where they considered their own performance, and after discussing how the scale related to grades, student O picked something between levels 1 and 2 (line 3). The teacher asked if the group members agreed with their performance. At this point, the teacher encouraged the students to elaborate on their judgments to explicate why their performance may fit this level. This can be seen as interesting because the teacher positioned the students as competent contributors to explicate their claims and direct their reasoning toward an instructional dialogue opening for their understanding of what they were made accountable for as related to the learning outcomes of oracy in LK06. Student O described their presentation as really short, but they showed knowledge about literate analysis of advertisements exemplified with language, aesthetic means, and other important elements (line 6). In addition, he mentioned that they all participated to a decent extent in the work, upon which the other boys agreed. Thus, the analysis displays that the students acknowledged they were made accountable toward the learning community, knowledge, and accepted standards of reasoning (O'Michaels et al., 2008). This was related to mastering the forms of talk, ways of acting, and making sense that are relevant in subject talks and within the norms and rules of how to interact in a group and display their knowledge of literate analysis described in LK06, specifically as related to oracy as a core skill. As a result, these utterances display how the teacher's questions fostered students to reflect over and use language to talk about oracy. Thus, like the claims of Bakken (2009/2011), the practical consequence of the policy-initiated reform on oracy as a core skill became visible in the subject talk through a proof of rhetoric. Consequently, the excerpt indicates how the

policy-initiated reform of oracy, here as a core skill in Norwegian L1, has become consequential for the new educational practice of group subject talks.

Continuing the analysis of the reflection and assessment of the group subject talk, the teacher wanted the boys to reflect on what they managed well (line 10). Student A highlighted that they presented good content and that they talked a lot. This can be interpreted as a direct answer to the teacher's introduction, underlining that, even if they found the subject talks scary, they would be held accountable for engaging in the conversation; the more they talked, the better. The teacher encouraged the boys to illuminate what they should work with in the future (line 13), and student B recognized that they needed to better share the writing job because O had done almost everything. In this setting, the ways of sharing responsibility, knowledge, and youth standards of what are acceptable activities within the group were rendered visible. The boys agreed upon the fact that they did not follow the norms and rules of an accountable way of collaborating and needed to work on this in future school assignments. The teacher shared her professional judgments by building on the students' reflections. She underlined that she agreed upon their judgments and appraised their contribution in judging themselves (line 15). Being less critical, she brought in new topics that she considered great; all four students were in place, participated, talked, and knew a lot about the topic. Additionally, she highlighted and built upon what the boys said was essential: that they cooperated, were involved in writing, and contributed during the entire process. Finally, she revealed her strategy in examining each one of them with slightly different topics, in which all managed to answer based on their reasoning and understanding. According to Resnick et al. (2018), studies of accountable talk focusing on how dialogues between teachers and students have gone beyond being able to reproduce what is known as established facts in the discipline, directing the analytical interest toward how instructional dialogue may foster reasoning and an improved understanding of multifaceted and rigorous problems that require students' judgment. As documented in this excerpt, the teacher and students interactively discussed what the group was being held accountable for.

Interestingly, the teacher went beyond the levels of mastery, grades, and ability to recite facts given in the criteria scheme, which can be seen as a policy artifact, to appraise students' oral reflections, claims, and contribution of their own judgment of performance as important means in group subject talk. In this way, the pedagogical practice of framing group subject talks that opened the way for rigorous dialogues on subject-specific topics seemed to meet, overlap, and conflict in this nexus in which educational policy on oracy as a core skill and subject talk practices could meet. The educational practice conflicted with the educational policy on oracy in the sense of creating an interactional space for sharing professional judgments and approving specific oral initiatives on the part of the group of students, here rather than the teacher's assessment of individual students' contributions in traditional oral hearing, such as in confirmation or regular oral exams. However, the assessment situation the teacher provided for in-group subject talk can be seen as a demanding task, encouraging the students to make themselves assessable by balancing among the various layers of accountability to community, knowledge, and reasoning.

To promote academic learning within the subject talk situation, the teacher and students socially interacted in situ to elaborate on students' thinking, building on each other's contributions in the retrospective reflections on what counts as meaningful assessment and learning practices in this nexus of policy and practice.

Discussion and Conclusion

By empirically zooming in on oracy as an emphasized area of political educational reforms over the past 20 years, this chapter has illuminated how subject talks as a new oral assessment phenomenon observed in practice meet, overlap, and challenge the educational policy of assessment in the Norwegian educational context. By exploring authentic assessment practices in a lower secondary school, the chapter has investigated which aspects of competence students are made accountable for and how the introduction of learning outcomes related to oracy have changed the practices of oral assessment toward collaborative, interactional practices. The empirical analyses of the teacher's introduction of group subject talk show that the teacher combined carefully designed tasks in groups with teacher-led discussions and evaluations in which the students were invited to explicate their reasoning and bring forward arguments of what they claimed and did. Thus, in these new assessment contexts, which were first observed in practice, the students were held accountable for collaboration, displaying their subject-specific knowledge; this assignment was engaged within the accepted norms and standards of reasoning while being implemented in the policy-initiated reform of oracy as a core skill.

In this nexus of policy and practice, the history of oracy developed and changed from oral hearings in confirmation ceremonies, here via rhetorical recitation of literature in the first Norwegian schools, toward today's consequential position as one of five core skills enacted through the National Knowledge Promotion Reform of 2006 (LK06). Thus, the consequences of recent policy of oracy as a core skill and educational practice exemplified by group subject talks have displayed how different and contradictory policy and practice contexts open for teacher's agency in continuing to build on more interactional relations between teachers and students in group oral assessment situations. Coburn (2006) argued that the actors in schools realize and frame education policy in the classroom through their individual practices as the coconstructors of educational policy. As such, the empirical analysis of authentic group subject talks has rendered visible an interactional oracy practice not visible in policy documents of how teacher's make students' accountable for assessing their own performance, building on interactional endeavors where the teacher shares professional judgments and approves specific initiatives such as the students' ability to reflect and evaluate what counts as relevant knowledge, hence positioning students as competent contributors in the evaluation of their own oral assessment participation. Consequently, group subject talks are an example of an educational policy and practice nexus in which the learning outcomes on oracy in educational policy documents such as the national curriculum are directly used as tools for

assessment; this also shows the teacher and students' interactions in situ go beyond the subject-specific content, assessment criteria, or scales. The oral assessment situation becomes a setting where teachers share professional judgments and approve specific oral initiatives, while students are invited to share their reflections and understanding on rigorous problems. The policy-practice nexus exemplified by oracy, might illustrate how the roles of teachers and students have changed towards more collaboration and coconstruction of how to make yourself accountable in new assessment practices such as group subject talks.

In this nexus of interactional assessment practice and recent formal policy uptake, the students have become competent contributors to the oral evaluations of their own social and academic knowledge. The findings raise several questions about how we understand change in the reform of oracy in between policy structure and educational practices and how certain educational practices seem to be in front of policy uptake and push forward reforms in the nexuses where policy and practice conflict, overlap, and meet.

Appendix: Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Mastering level 1	Mastering level 2	Mastering level 3
Learning objective: Read and analyze a complex text and convey possible interpretations. Describe the interaction between aesthetic means in multiple texts and reflect on how we are affected by sound, language, and images.	Present a short analysis of a complex text; can answer simple questions about aesthetic means and about the influence of sound, language, and images.	Present an analysis of a complex text, can talk about some aesthetic means, and can reflect somewhat on how we are influenced by sound, language, and images.	Present a conscious analysis of a complex text, can talk about aesthetic means, and can reflect on how we are affected by sound, language, and images.
Collaboration	Participates to a small/ no degree in the work.	Participates to some extent in the work.	Shows good collaboration skills. Participate actively in work.

(continued)

Criteria	Mastering level 1	Mastering level 2	Mastering level 3
Content	Shows little knowledge of the subject. The subject matter is poorly structured. Does not answer the task.	Shows some knowledge of the subject. The subject matter is well structured. Have partially answered the assignment.	Shows good knowledge of the subject. The subject matter is very well structured. Have answered the assignment.
Subject talk	Present some important elements of the topic's content. Focuses mostly on the script, not the audience. Speaks in a "normal" voice and often a little too fast or a little incoherently.	Present several important elements from the theme's content. Using some own words and freeing oneself to some extent from the script. Speaks clearly and is engaged.	Use new words that are specific to the topic in the presentation and show a good overview of the topic Speak freely and with empathy. Is independent of the script. Speaks clearly and articulately and is engaged.

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