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## Moving ideas: an exploration of students' use of dialogue for writing in history

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### ABSTRACT

In this study, we explored how students make use of whole-class interaction in individual writing. Although various studies show the importance of classroom interaction for writing, little is known about how this works, particularly in history. Starting point is the idea that learning can move from the interpersonal level in classroom discourse to the intrapersonal level in subsequent individual writing. We analyzed nine student texts in history (Grade 11) and traced back the origins of the ideas used (documents or discussion). We found that students not only referenced both documents and classroom discussion in their texts but also that they developed additional ideas. We identified two ways in which students used classroom interaction in their texts: reproducing existing ideas or transforming existing ideas into new ones. Examples of both are discussed. Furthermore, we found differences in students' use of the language of history in the discussion and in writing. When writing, students seemed to use more nominalizations and the language of time was more complex. We conclude that individual writing can benefit from whole-class discussion because students reproduced and transformed ideas in their writing, resulting in knowledge development, and because students' use of the language of history became more proficient.

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## Introduction

Spoken and written language are semiotic tools teachers and students can use to make meaning in the classroom (Lemke 1992). Both foster students' ability to use discipline-based discourse and to develop their thinking (Horowitz 2007). Although researchers have extensively investigated spoken and written language use, the link between them has received less attention (Chen, Park, and Hand 2016; Dysthe 1996). This particularly holds for school history, despite the fact that history sets high demands on students' use of language.

From a sociocultural perspective, writing is viewed as social action, and talking and writing can be mutually supportive (Prior 2006). Talking and writing can be combined in

various ways. Our focus is on whole-class interaction prior to writing, in particular as a means to develop students' domain-specific reasoning and idea-generation abilities.

Participating in discourse before writing is found to have positive effects on writing (e.g. Chinn, Anderson, and Waggoner 2001; Reznitskaya et al. 2001; Rivard and Straw 2000). It enables students to express their initial thoughts and ideas and share, discuss, and refine these in interaction with each other. While writing, students transform these ideas into more coherent and structured knowledge (Rivard and Straw 2000). Furthermore, it can inspire students to use the dialogic structure of argumentation from the discussion in their writing (Kuhn, Hemberger, and Khait 2016; Reznitskaya et al. 2001). With respect to history, Hilliard (2013) found in design-based research that the written products of students who were most actively engaged dialogically in the argumentation process improved the most. However, most of these studies focus on peer interaction before writing, instead of whole-class interaction.

Moreover, still little is known about how exactly students make use of talk during writing. Anderson et al. (2001) found that ways of speaking and thinking once used tend to spread to other children and occur more often – the so-called snowball hypothesis. This idea can be traced back to Vygotsky's notion of internalization (1981): processes of interaction between a learner and others (the interpersonal level) can become the basis for processes that occur in the mind of the learner – the intrapersonal level. This brings us to the question: do ideas and ways of thinking brought up in whole-class discourse (interpersonal level) transfer to other students and become internalized and discernible in individual writing (intrapersonal level)? And do ideas evolve in this process, both in terms of meaning and language use? From a pedagogical perspective, more insight is needed to answer these questions because whole-class discourse is often used in history education (van Drie and van Boxtel 2011) and little is known about what students take away from these discussions. To study this link between spoken and written language in the history classroom, we adopt a domain-specific perspective because thinking, talking, and writing are highly domain-specific (Sperling 1996).

### Talking, writing, and thinking

From a sociocultural perspective, interaction, thinking, and learning are considered processes that are shaped by culture, and knowledge is shared and jointly constructed (Mercer and Littleton 2007). Mercer and Littleton (2007) have shown, based on several studies, that 'through engaging in collective thinking, children learn how to think better on their own' (133). What are the characteristics of classroom interaction that promote thinking and learning? Although researchers highlight various aspects, they generally agree on the idea that classroom interaction is effective when learners are stimulated to think and to reason with each other, thereby exploring various ideas (e.g. Alexander 2008; Cazden 2001; Mercer and Littleton 2007; van Boxtel and van Drie 2017). In this kind of classroom interaction, students are actively involved, make substantive contributions in relation to each other, express their ideas, ask questions, and challenge or contradict one another (Engle and Conant 2002). The main role of the teacher is to elicit and to sustain an ongoing dialogue, for example, by asking questions to elicit students' thinking (instead of evaluating it) and to make thinking explicit and open to further discussion (Chin 2006).

Researchers also consider writing an important means for thinking (cf. Tynjälä, Mason, and Lonka 2001). The act of writing can be seen as a means of transforming a writer's knowledge. Knowledge transforming, as Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) define it, means that writing can contribute to knowledge acquisition when the text is formulated within a continuous interaction between the content-related knowledge (the topic addressed in the text) and the rhetorical knowledge (as reflected by the design of the text and, among other things, its structure). This problem-solving process (Hayes 1996) requires writers to reflect on and to extend their knowledge. When writing in history, students must integrate their content knowledge with their historical reasoning ability and with their knowledge of appropriate ways in which to present their ideas in text (van Drie, van Boxtel, and Braaksma 2014). Research has shown that writing can have a positive effect on students' learning and reasoning in history (e.g. Boscolo and Mason 2001).

### Using the language of history

Horowitz (2007) pointed out that speech and writing are 'the means by which students develop cognitively and linguistically' (3). The linguistic demands of history are challenging and not easily acquired (Coffin 2006b), and the ability to reason in history is also difficult to hone (van Drie and van Boxtel 2008; Wineburg 2001). Historical reasoning requires students to construct or evaluate processes of change and continuity and to provide explanations for or comparisons of historical phenomena, which involves asking historical questions, contextualizing, using substantive historical concepts and metaconcepts (e.g. change, cause, consequence), and supporting claims with arguments based on evidence from historical sources (van Drie and van Boxtel 2008).

Drawing on systematic functional linguistics (Halliday 1994), several researchers have revealed aspects of the language of history (e.g. Coffin 2006a, 2006b; Schleppegrell, Greer, and Taylor 2008), which include using nominalization and the language of time. Nominalization refers to 'the process of turning a conjunction, verb or attribute into a noun' (Coffin 2006b, 191), and it is often positioned at the start of a clause and acts as the subject. With respect to the language of time, Coffin (2006b) identifies three shifts in student writing over time: from personally oriented representations in time to more historically valued ones, using different ways of representing historical time, and a diminished reliance on chronology as the main organizing principle to structure a text.

Speech and writing differ from each other in the sense that speech is more context-bound and fragmentary, whereas written text is more explicit (for a more elaborate and nuanced view, see Nystrand [1986]). '[W]riting is never a simple transcription of speech' (Nystrand 1986, 29), which raises the question how do students use the language of history in whole-class discourse and in their writing?

### Method

The research question guiding this small-scale exploratory study is do students draw on a whole-class interaction in their subsequent writing in history, and if so, how? In this multiple-case study, in which the students are the cases, we used microgenetic methodology to analyze how students used classroom discourse in writing. This method is suitable

because it aims at gathering information about processes of change and how change happens (Flynn and Siegler 2007).

Data derived from a larger study, conducted in the Netherlands, which investigated the effects of a series of lessons on students' historical reasoning (see van Drie, van Boxtel, and Stam 2013). Data included student texts and a video transcript of the closing whole-class discussion. This particular discussion was chosen because the same overarching question was underlying both this discussion and the writing task. Moreover, the aim of this discussion was to prepare students for the writing task. One of the participating classes was selected to participate in this study because the discussion in this particular class contained high and substantive student participation (see van Drie et al. 2013).

### **Participants**

Participants included one history class (Grade 11, pre-university level) of 14 students and their experienced teacher. The small number of students is due to the fact that history is not compulsory at this level. Although most classes in the Netherlands are larger, smaller classes are not uncommon in the higher educational tracks. The students lacked experience with essay writing in history because this is not part of the Dutch national history exams. Due to student illness and approaching summer holidays, it was only possible to collect 9 of the 14 student texts.

### **Materials**

The whole-class discussion and writing task were part of a history unit (six lessons), which sought to develop students' knowledge of political developments in the Netherlands over the last 200 years and students' reasoning about historical significance. The overarching question was which person or event most significantly influenced the development of Dutch democracy from 1800 to the present? Determining the historical significance of people, events, and developments is a key activity of historians and includes many components of historical reasoning (Lévesque 2008; Seixas and Morton 2012). For example, one should consider the changes a person or event brought about, the impact of these changes, and their causes and consequences, all which require contextualized thinking. Students were provided with three criteria for determining historical significance: was it important for the time itself, does it have greater consequences even for present times, and does it have a symbolic function (cf. Lévesque 2008). We based the design of the lessons on principles to enhance historical reasoning in the classroom (van Boxtel and van Drie 2013) – using realistic and meaningful tasks, including small-group and whole-class interaction, and using schemes as tools for thinking (i.e. timeline, argumentation scheme). An overview of the lessons can be found in Appendix.

The context for the lessons was The House of Democracy (formerly a Dutch foundation concerned with promoting knowledge of democracy among youths) planning to organize an exhibition on the development of democracy in the Netherlands. The writing task asked students to nominate a person or event to be part of this exhibition and to detail why this person or event was most significant in influencing the development of Dutch democracy. In addition, they were instructed to compare their first choice with two different people or events and to argue why they considered their first choice to be more

significant. They were allowed to make use of the preconceived documents they had studied during the unit. The texts were written on paper during one lesson (50 minutes). The chosen genre of an argumentative letter gave students room to take a personal viewpoint on the issue and required argumentation to persuade the reader. The letter format corresponded to the authentic setting of the assignment, but it also helped to clarify the audience and the aim of the writing assignment, both of which are important characteristics of effective writing tasks.

### *Characterization of the whole-class discussion*

The aim of the final whole-class discussion was to practice ascribing historical significance and to generate ideas for writing. The starting point was the class ranking of the most significant person or event that influenced the development of Dutch democracy (Lesson 5, see Appendix). Using the criteria for determining historical significance, students were asked to argue whether they agreed with the class ranking. The discussion lasted about 24 minutes and contained high student participation – 62% of all the utterances stemmed from students and all students contributed substantially. Students expressed and discussed their ideas, supported their claims with arguments, criticized each other's viewpoints, and introduced alternative claims. The main role of the teacher was to orchestrate the discussion by giving turns, asking questions, asking for substantiation of claims, and challenging students' claims. The teacher avoided presenting opinions or arguments other than the ones aimed at challenging students' ideas, for example, 'Thorbecke meets all criteria well, why is he not ranked highest'? (For a detailed analysis of this discussion, see van Drie et al. 2013.)

### *Analyses*

First, in order to trace back the origin of ideas in students' writing, we conducted a content analysis. For this particular context, we operationalized ideas as arguments for or against the historical significance of a specific person or event because these were the core of the discussion and the texts. For instance, an argument in favor of the nineteenth-century liberal politician Johan Thorbecke is that he introduced an election system that enabled men to vote for parliament. An argument against Thorbecke is that the election system was not entirely democratic because it only allowed rich men to vote, excluding most men and all women. The pro-arguments were further categorized along the three criteria for historical significance (i.e., important for time itself, larger consequences, symbol). The categorization of the arguments in the documents resulted in 88 arguments. Based on this list, arguments in the discussion were identified by two researchers independently (first author and a researcher in history education); this resulted in 45 arguments and 52 arguments, respectively. There was discussion about 17 arguments – some of which were added and others removed, split, or moved to a different category. We added a 'General' category for arguments for which it was not clear from the context whether they applied to the criterion 'important for the time itself' or 'larger consequences'. Next, both coders identified arguments in the texts. There was discussion about 11 arguments, and (again) some were added, removed, split, or moved to a different category, which resulted in a list of 79 different arguments.

Second, we traced back the origin of the arguments in the student texts. Arguments in the texts could derive from (1) the documents (ARG-Doc), (2) the whole-class discussion (ARG-Disc), or (3) from both the documents and the discussion (ARG-DiscDoc). Some of the arguments in the texts could not be directly traced back to either the discussion or the documents, meaning that students had constructed additional arguments. For example, ‘women suffrage was only possible by Thorbecke’s laws’. We coded these as ARG-TextOnly. For each student, we counted the total number of arguments used in the text as well as the origin of the arguments used. Because students’ number of arguments varied in the texts, we also calculated percentages (with the total number of arguments in the text as 100%).

Third, to examine the way in which students used arguments from the discussion in their texts, we narrowed down our data and looked only at those arguments in the texts that were brought up first during the discussion (i.e. not mentioned in the documents) and arguments that were brought up first in the texts (ARG-TextOnly). We took a content perspective (was the argument changed on a content level?) and a linguistic perspective (did students’ use of language change?). For the latter, we drew upon the work of Coffin (2006a 2006b), who analyzed students’ writing based on the theory of systematic functional linguistics (Halliday 1994), and we focus in particular on the nominalization and language of time.

## Results

### *Types of arguments*

The outcomes of the analysis on the types of arguments used in the documents, the discussion, and the texts are presented in Table 1. It should be noted that for the texts we presented the number of different arguments; thus, when two students used the same argument it was counted as one. The table shows that the criterion ‘important for time itself’ was most often used, in contrast to ‘is a symbol.’ Furthermore, it is striking that the number of counter arguments is much higher in the texts compared to the documents and discussion.

### *Origin of the arguments in the texts*

Table 2 presents the number and origin of the arguments in each student text. Most arguments in the texts were mentioned in the documents and in the discussion as well (36.0% ARG-DiscDoc). About 25% originated from the documents only, and about 11% originated from the discussion only. Taking these results together, about 61% of the arguments could be traced back to the documents (25.2% ARG-Doc, 36.0% ARG-DiscDoc) and 47%

**Table 1.** Overview of types of arguments in documents, discussion, and texts.

	Documents	Discussion	Texts
General	0	4	5
Time itself	34	14	28
Consequences	26	14	18
Symbol	15	7	5
Counter arguments	12	13	23
Total	87	52	79

**Table 2.** Text scores and numbers and origin of arguments for each student text in numbers and percentages.

Student	ARG-TextTotal	ARG-Disc	ARG-DiscDoc	ARG-Doc	ARG-TextOnly
Pien	8 (100)	1 (12.5)	4 (50.0)	2 (25.0)	1 (12.5)
Alice	14 (100)	2 (14.3)	5 (35.7)	4 (28.6)	3 (21.4)
Selma	11 (100)	1 (9.1)	4 (36.4)	3 (27.3)	3 (27.3)
Lieke	17 (100)	0 (0.0)	5 (29.4)	7 (41.2)	5 (29.4)
Cora	14 (100)	1 (7.1)	5 (35.7)	2 (14.3)	6 (42.9)
Tirza	9 (100)	2 (22.2)	4 (44.4)	1 (11.1)	2 (22.2)
Janine	12 (100)	0 (0.0)	5 (41.7)	5 (41.7)	2 (16.7)
Linda	13 (100)	3 (23.1)	7 (53.8)	2 (15.4)	1 (7.7)
Carin	13 (100)	2 (15.4)	1 (7.7)	2 (15.4)	8 (61.5)
Total	111 (100)	12 (10.8)	40 (36.0)	28 (25.2)	31 (27.9)

Note. All student names have been changed for privacy reasons.

to the discussion (36.0% ARG-DiscDoc, 10.8% ARG-Disc). Students used a significant number of additional arguments in their texts (27.9% ARG-TextOnly). All students constructed at least one new argument, with a maximum of eight. These results show that students not only used a large number arguments from the discussion in their texts but also that they constructed additional arguments.

### *Ways of using classroom interaction in writing*

We particularly looked at those arguments that were brought up in the texts (ARG-TextOnly) or that were brought up first during the discussion and were used in the texts (eight arguments of 12 ARG-Disc). We identified two different ways in which the whole-class discussion was used in writing. First, students could have *reproduced ideas*, meaning that students directly used ideas from the discussion in their writing (in a more or less literal way). This could imply that students either adopted the ideas of other students or used ideas that were brought up in the discussion by themselves. Second, students could have *transformed ideas* from the discussion during writing. These arguments were earlier categorized as 'ARG-TextOnly' because they could not be traced back to the discussion or the documents. As we will show, these arguments are often transformations of arguments and ideas brought up earlier in the discussion. These two ways resemble Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) notion of 'knowledge telling' and 'knowledge transforming.' Below, we will illustrate these two ways with examples of the texts of three students: Tirza, Selma, and Linda. Both Tirza and Selma made a comparison in their text between Willem Drees, the postwar prime minister and the class' highest ranked figure, and Johan Thorbecke, a nineteenth-century liberal politician and the class' second highest ranked figure. In their letters, Tirza made a case for Drees, Selma for Thorbecke. Linda argued that the founding of the Batavian Republic in 1795 was most significant. Subsequently, we will describe students' use of the language of history.

### *Reproducing ideas*

Some ideas are directly reproduced from the discussion. In Excerpt 1, Tirza used a phrase from the discussion in an almost literal way. The teacher asked the class why Willem Drees was ranked the highest, and one student stated 'he is an example.' The teacher asked

for clarification, and several students tried to construct an adequate formulation – S7 stated that Drees is a symbol of the welfare state, and Tirza added that he is a symbol of a development in society.

#### Excerpt 1<sup>1</sup>

S8	An example
[... ]	
T	What is [Drees] an example of?
S7	[He is] a symbol.
S6	Of democracy.
T	Of?
S8	Of society.
T	Of society.
S8	And indirect democracy.
T	Yes, but we're talking about him generally, we've already covered that.
S7	He is a symbol, he is a symbol of the welfare state.
S8	Yes.
Tirza	[He] is an example of a symbol of a development of society.
T	Development of society. Well said.

In her text, Tirza used these phrases when stating, 'Willem Drees is a symbol for a development, namely, the welfare state.' And later on, '...and he is a symbol of a development in society.' Thus, Tirza co-constructed a formulation together with another student, which she subsequently used in her writing.

Tirza not only used arguments brought up by herself in the discussion but also those of other students – for example, the argument presented by S7 (see Excerpt 2). The teacher asked which person or event would score the highest on the criterion 'has great consequences, even for present times.' In response to another student, S7 argued that Drees is more significant compared to the feminist Aletta Jacobs.

#### Excerpt 2

S7	Well, I think that Willem Drees was far more significant than Aletta Jacobs. Aletta Jacobs is only important for a small [group]...yes it is important, I mean for women, otherwise we wouldn't be here at school, but, I mean, Willem Drees is the founder of, of our state in which we do live...and uh, is uh. Look, [Drees] had a greater effect, on the economy and on the reconstruction of the Netherlands and the Marshall Plan and hey, we all know, the seniority laws, and so on. So, I think that is far more significant than Aletta Jacobs, who only took care of one thing, only for women.
----	--

In her text, Tirza made a comparison between Jacobs and Drees and used S7's statement that Drees contributed to the whole society, whereas Jacobs only focused on women's rights:

I also think that Willem should get more attention than Aletta Jacobs. She only provided rights for women, whereas Willem Drees did things for all the people. Although I do think that Thorbecke and Aletta Jacobs did good things, I do think that Willem Drees should receive more attention because he did more for all the people, on an economical level (Marshall Plan) as well as on a social level (seniority laws).

Linda also used this argument, made by S7, but combined it with an argument brought forward earlier in the discussion. S5 argued that because of Aletta Jacobs, the lives of many people changed because 'taboos were broken' (see Excerpt 3). S9 countered this argument by stating that it was not as if all people suddenly were using birth control; that took time and only came later.

## Excerpt 3

- S5 Well, I still think Aletta Jacobs, because taboos were also broken...contraceptives such as condoms were not there yet, that is important, [but] taboos were broken...And only suffrage? Yes okay, [women] can vote, but that is only one small event...Actually, I agree with [name]. Aletta Jacobs caused a lot of commotion, she also caused the population to shrink [because] of the loss in terms of children.
- T [Student's name]
- S9 Look, contraceptives and that taboos were broken, that is very good indeed, but that has more influence on people nowadays and on people that came after [Jacobs], because *back then* [contraceptives] were still a taboo...back then, people didn't dare to take a package of condoms home, they were scared shitless that their parents would find out, weren't they?

Linda used arguments made by S7 (Jacobs only focused on women) and S9 (Jacobs' actions did not have a great impact at that time) to argue why the Batavian Republic is more significant compared to Aletta Jacobs:

The Batavian Republic is also more significant than Aletta Jacobs. Aletta Jacobs only stood up for a part of the population (women) and not for everyone. Thus, the changes she brought about did not influence the entire population. Aletta Jacobs also did not have much influence on the people of that time because they probably did not dare to use contraceptives, even though they were available. The changes only become apparent in the long term.

This example is also interesting because S9's argument shows that the student is aware of the historical context of the time in which Aletta Jacobs lived – even though one person made a significant contribution (i.e. introduced birth control), it did not guarantee the immediate universal adoption of such a contribution. Linda also acknowledged this idea and added that these changes become more apparent in the long term. Therefore, both Linda and S9 demonstrated the ability to contextualize by placing Aletta Jacobs' acts in the context of her own time, and they showed that they were aware that historical changes sometimes evolve gradually.

### Transforming ideas

A second way in which students used the whole-class discussion was by transforming ideas. The next example demonstrates how Tirza and Selma used a particular part of the discussion in different ways. In Excerpt 4, the teacher challenged students by stating that universal suffrage is more significant than Willem Drees. Tirza countered this directly by saying that Drees 'took care' of the people. S7 added another argument, pointing out that suffrage is only possible in a well-organized state. S7 further stated that if Drees had not rebuild the Netherlands, elections could not have taken place because there would have been no state.

## Excerpt 4

- T When I take a look at universal suffrage. Isn't universal suffrage far more significant than Willem Drees?
- Tirza Not at all
- S No, but...
- T Not at all? Why not? Why not [student's name<sup>2</sup>]?
- Tirza Willem Drees also took care of the people.
- S [laughter]
- Tirza ...universal suffrage...
- S8 Yes, but look, you can still have the right to vote, but welfare...
- T [Student's name?]

(continued)

- S7 Well look, Willem Drees, he had rebuilt the Netherlands after World War II and, uh, thanks to him we received [help from the] Marshall plan and so forth. And if, uh, Willem Drees had not built up [the state], then we also couldn't have the right to vote because we wouldn't have a state, [back] then [the country] was still [buried in] rubbish and debris...
- T Okay then, universal suffrage, for the people back then [it was] very important, and it is a symbol of the period...it meets all criteria.
- S7 But you still have to have a, a, country, a well-organized country, [before] you can be able to vote.

Tirza used this line of argumentation in her text – not with respect to universal suffrage, as S7 did, but in relation to Thorbecke:

Thorbecke realized that people were able to vote, but that can be only of use when people feel safe and happy in their own country, and Willem Drees realized that. That is why I think that Thorbecke falls under the shadow of Willem Drees.

Tirza transformed the argument from the discussion and applied it in her writing to support Thorbecke, rather than universal suffrage.

In a very different way, Selma also used S7's argument, namely by taking a different perspective. S7 argued that democracy can only function in a well-organized country, but Selma claimed that without Thorbecke's democratic constitution, Drees would not have become prime minister and thus would have been unable to rebuild the Netherlands. From the beginning of Selma's letter, she implicitly states, 'Without the implementation of [Thorbecke's] constitution, the Netherlands wouldn't be a democracy that also flourished as a welfare state.' Later on, her argumentation becomes more explicit:

Also these actions of Willem Drees are consequences of Thorbecke's laws. Without democracy the welfare state would not have come into being. Willem Drees would not have gone far with his solidarity and representing the interests of the people if there wasn't a democracy. He, as a member of a political party, would not have been an influence. Without democracy people have no say, and the constitution that Thorbecke introduced in 1848 is today the basis of the Dutch parliamentary democracy.

Selma made a distinctive point a second time. After the teacher asked the class why Thorbecke is ranked higher than universal suffrage, S6 argued that Thorbecke's contributions outpaced universal suffrage because he introduced the first suffrage law, which allowed only rich men to vote, but it did put the country on the path towards universal suffrage (see Excerpt 5). This relates to the more general question in history of the particular role of specific people in the past – it also relates to more general developments.

#### Excerpt 5

- T Okay, well then, that is the next question, why is Thorbecke [ranked] higher than universal suffrage?
- S [Talking to each other]
- T One at a time, one at a time. [Name?]
- S6 He made it possible. Thus, the one who made it possible seems slightly more important than the one...
- S10 Of course not, it is about having it, not by whom?
- Selma Yes, but [Thorbecke] did do several things too...
- S6 [Thorbecke] also did other things.
- T Well, some of you say...
- Selma With him citizenship began to flourish. And universal suffrage because we...
- S10 But on the other hand, if Thorbecke hadn't come up with it, someone else would have, like Willem Drees, right?
- S11 Which came a hundred years later, or so.
- S10 Yes, well, but it would have been now
- S11 Maybe it would have been Pietje.
- S [laughter]

In the discussion and in her text, Selma took a stand against the viewpoint of S10. In the discussion, she argued that Thorbecke did more than simply make it possible for a small group of men to vote. In her text, Selma stated that the first step and the acts of individual people (in her case Thorbecke) are far more important: 'This is because Thorbecke's laws significantly influenced society both then and now. And universal suffrage is just one of the consequences of Thorbecke's constitutional law.' She seemed to realize that all people and events are interconnected and are the results of other events and people, making it hard to identify the specific moment when Dutch democracy began. This realization is important for historical thinking. Selma incorporated this thinking and applied it to Thorbecke when she argued that the introduction of universal suffrage and the actions of Willem Drees are, in fact, consequences of Thorbecke's constitution.

### *Using the language of history*

In the discussion, students tended to use everyday language, whereas in their writing the use of language became more formal. This can be illustrated by Linda's writing example and the use of the discussion presented in Excerpt 3. S9 used informal language, and she also produced a concrete example (e.g. 'because back then [contraceptives] were still a taboo...back then, people didn't dare to take a package of condoms home, they were scared shitless that their parents would find out, weren't they?'). In her writing, Linda used more formal language to express the same argument – 'Aletta Jacobs also did not have much influence on the people of that time because they probably did not dare to use contraceptives, even though they were available. The changes only become apparent in the long term.' If we compare the two excerpts, 'getting a pack of condoms' becomes 'contraceptives' and 'scared shitless' becomes 'did not dare.' Furthermore, Linda made a direct connection to the criteria of historical significance (e.g. 'The changes only become visible in the longer term.')

With respect to the use of nominalization – one of the characteristics of academic language use in history – we found only a few examples in the discussion (mostly well-known expressions such as 'the occupation of the Maagdenhuis'). Nominalizations were more apparent in students' writing; for example, Selma wrote, 'Without the *implementation of his constitution*, the Netherlands wouldn't be a democracy.'

To illustrate particular differences between language use in the discussion and in writing, we return to Excerpt 4 and S7's statement: 'Well look, Willem Drees, he had rebuilt the Netherlands after World War II and, uh, thanks to him we received [help from the] Marshall plan and so forth'. Cora, another student, wrote, '[Drees] ensured that the Netherlands received help from the Marshall plan, so that there was reconstruction.' When we compare these two excerpts, 'he had built' from the discussion became 'reconstruction' in the text. S7's statement was more complex because the student summed up two actions of Willem Drees as being equally important, whereas Cora, by using 'so that,' only made a causal connection between the two actions.

With respect to using the language of time, it becomes clear that in the discussion students did not often mention dates and periods, but did so in their writing. This can be explained by the fact that students shared the knowledge of time in one of the first assignments, which required students to construct a timetable to locate all persons and events in time (see Appendix, Lesson 2). When students wrote their letters to the secretary of the

foundation, this knowledge of time could not be assumed, so students used more dates. Selma, for example, wrote, ‘...the constitution that Thorbecke implemented in 1848 has remained until now and is still the foundation of Dutch parliamentary democracy.’ Students also used other approaches to identify a moment in time, for instance, ‘after World War II’ and ‘between 1800 and 1900’.

A more complex way of using the language of time can be found in Linda’s writing. She started her letter by stating the Batavian Republic was very important in 1795 because it resulted in many changes. Next, she elaborated on these changes by comparing the situation before and during the Batavian Republic, for which she used words such as ‘no longer,’ ‘now,’ ‘was abolished,’ and ‘there came.’ She concluded this section with, ‘Compared to the Ancien Regime, which had great influence before 1795, a lot has been changed by the Batavian Republic.’ In this sentence, Linda used the nominalizations ‘Ancien Regime’ and ‘Batavian Republic’, both of which encompass larger periods in time and refer to a specific historical period. She also identified ‘Ancien Regime’ in a particular time frame (i.e. ‘before 1795’). Furthermore, she contrasted the two periods (i.e. ‘compared with...a lot has been changed’). By contrasting these two historical periods and elaborating on particular changes (e.g. ‘separation of church and state’ and ‘more influence of the people’), Linda was able to describe the historical changes and to make a compelling argument that the Batavian Republic resulted in important changes. In this way, particular use of language made it possible for Linda to describe the impact of historical changes needed to ascribe historical significance.

## Conclusions and discussion

We explored the relationship between whole-class interaction and subsequent individual writing in history by tracing back the origin of arguments used in student writing and by providing examples of ways in which students used classroom interaction in their writing. Results indicate that ideas move from classroom interaction into individual writing, thus, supporting the snowball hypothesis of Anderson and colleagues (2001), which posits that ways of speaking and thinking spread to other students.

Moreover, our study showed how ideas can develop from interpersonal classroom interactions to intrapersonal individual writing. We identified two ways in which this process took place. First, students reproduced ideas from the discussion (i.e. knowledge telling), by using ideas that they brought up themselves in the discussion or adopting the ideas of other students. Second, students transformed ideas (i.e. knowledge transforming), in this case, by applying an argument to a different person or by taking a stance against a claim made in the discussion. The latter relates to the idea that through argumentation in discussion with others students create a kind of internal interlocutor to whom the written argument can be directed (cf. Kuhn, Hemberger, and Khait 2016).

This raises the question at what point did these ideas arise? Selma presented her ideas in her text, but not during the discussion. Had she already formed her ideas during the discussion but did not get the opportunity to speak, was she simply too shy to voice her opinions, or did she construct her opinions during the writing process? The question, at what point do new ideas arise, is a more fundamental one and researchers in writing do not agree on when new ideas occur – during the planning phase or during the translation phase (cf. Galbraith 1999). Recently, Jones (2014)

suggested that it differs for writers – for some writers ideas precede translation and for others ideas are a consequence of writing. In the particular setting of our study, new ideas could arise at various points: during the whole-class discussion, during the writing process, or during group work in the preceding lessons. Because our focus was on the relationship between the whole-class interaction and writing, we do not have recordings of the small-group interactions that could be used to answer this question. Still, if the ideas identified here are new (i.e. not mentioned in the documents or in the discussion) and originated from the small-group interactions, these ideas were ‘kept silent’ during classroom interaction and were instead brought up during the writing process. Thus, the process of writing activated these ‘slumbering ideas.’ In future, conducting stimulated-recall interviews with students after writing may shed light on this issue.

Of course, the extent to which students can make use of classroom discourse depends on the quality of it. This particular discussion was rich because there was room for students to explore various viewpoints and related arguments, and instead of straight lecturing, the teacher took the role of facilitating the discussion. A premise for eliciting these kinds of discussions is that students are well-prepared, so that they can make substantive contributions. Orchestrating these kinds of discussions might be more challenging within larger classes than this particular one; however, research provides us with various successful examples (e.g. Cazden 2001; Chin 2006; Engle and Conant 2002; van Drie and Dekker 2013)

Finally, this study provided examples of how students used the language of history in classroom interaction and in writing. This language use seems to be more proficient in writing because students tend to make more use of nominalization and the language of time. When aiming at improving students’ disciplinary language use, combining whole-class discussions with writing seems a fruitful approach, because writing seems to foster more formal and academic language use. This approach can be strengthened by paying more explicit attention to students’ domain-specific language, for example, by scaffolding language use in whole-class interaction (e.g. Smit, van Eerde, and Bakker 2012) or in writing (e.g. Caroll 2016). Still, more research is needed on developing students’ domain-specific language use.

In sum, our study suggests that classroom interaction prior to writing can be beneficial to stimulate students’ disciplinary thinking in several ways. It seems to aid students in the process of generating ideas, and they use these ideas in the subsequent writing task by reproducing or transforming them—meaning that thinking does not stop after the discussion. Moreover, writing seems to enhance more formal use of the disciplinary language, so by combining classroom interaction prior and writing students practice using this disciplinary language. More large-scale research is needed to substantiate our findings. In addition, more research is needed to perfect the design of effective classroom arrangements in which domain-specific thinking and reasoning is stimulated in speech and in writing (cf. Hilliard 2013). Although the outcomes of our study are task and sample specific, we think that our study can provide suggestions for other subjects and school levels; however, this also must be investigated further. All in all, this study showed how ideas can move from the interpersonal level in classroom interaction to the intrapersonal level in individual writing and how these ideas are transformed. Providing students with various ways of practicing domain-specific language use in speech and in writing develops thinking and reasoning (cf. Mercer and Littleton 2007).

## Notes

1. All transcripts of interaction and texts are translated from Dutch.
2. Not Tirza.

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## Appendix

### Overview of the lessons

Lesson	Description
1	<i>Introduction</i> Introduction to the concepts' historical significance and criteria to determine historical significance.
2	<i>Building context</i> Collaborative construction of a timeline of the period 1800 – present.
3	<i>What is the significance of your person/event?</i> Each group studies preselected sources about their person/event and collects arguments to establish the significance.
4	<i>One-minute recommendations</i> Each group presents, in one minute, the significance of their person/event.
5	<i>The class top 7</i> In new groups, students rank all people/events based on their significance. This results in a class ranking, which is discussed in a whole-class discussion.
6	<i>Writing an individual letter to the House of Democracy.</i> Each student makes a case for their personal favorite and compare this favorite with two other people/events from the top 7.