

Rethinking 'voice': Laying foundations for impactful engagement with Service Children

Dr Claire Lee

Centre for Psychological Research,
Oxford Brookes University
clairelee@brookes.ac.uk



Meaningful, impactful, ethical

Why?



How?

What?

What is 'voice'?



Aims of workshop

- Develop a clearer understanding of voice
- Take away some ideas for meaningful, ethical and impactful voice work

Through

- Learning from examples of voice activities
- Exploring approaches to 'voice'
- Considering the implications for practice

Example 1 – school voice activity



Photo by Artem Podrez: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/children-sitting-in-front-of-a-woman-8087868/>



‘Common-sense’ approach to voice



Children

- Experts in their own lives
- Well-developed, authentic views; know what they want
- Unlimited imagination
- Capacity to articulate their views



Communication

- Transferring ideas from speaker to listener
- Achieved through words
- Children's words speak for themselves



Adult

- Willingness to listen
- Unbiased
- Capture/amplify/provide a platform for children's views

Example 2 – Service children’s voice



House of Commons
Defence Committee

Educating Service Children



Questions:

- How might the children have felt, and why?
- How meaningful, impactful and ethical do you think this consultation may have been?
- Go to www.menti.com and enter code 3104 9845



Evidence-based approach to voice

“We don’t know what people don’t know about us”



“If you ask my ‘Michael’ a direct question, he probably wouldn’t know what to say because to him it’s just normal, he doesn’t know anything else.”

Children

- All our lives are affected by factors we don’t fully understand
- Children may not have a view on a particular issue yet, and what they say may be shaped by what others have told them. And things change.
- Imagining something never experienced is difficult for anyone.



Communication

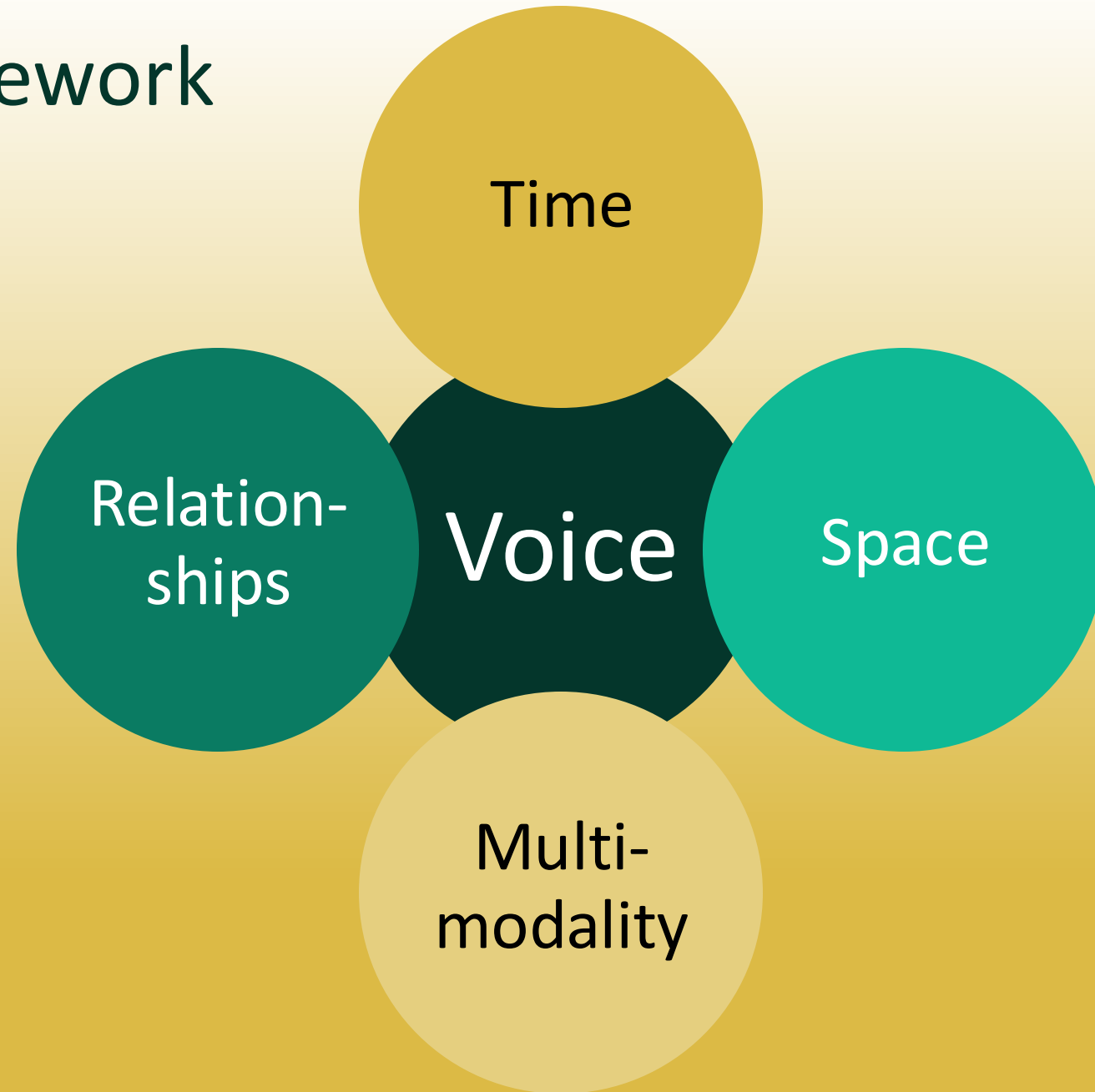
- Context and power relations shape what anyone is (or isn't) able to say
- Voice is made in dialogue between people and in context
- Words only tell part of the story and may have multiple interpretations



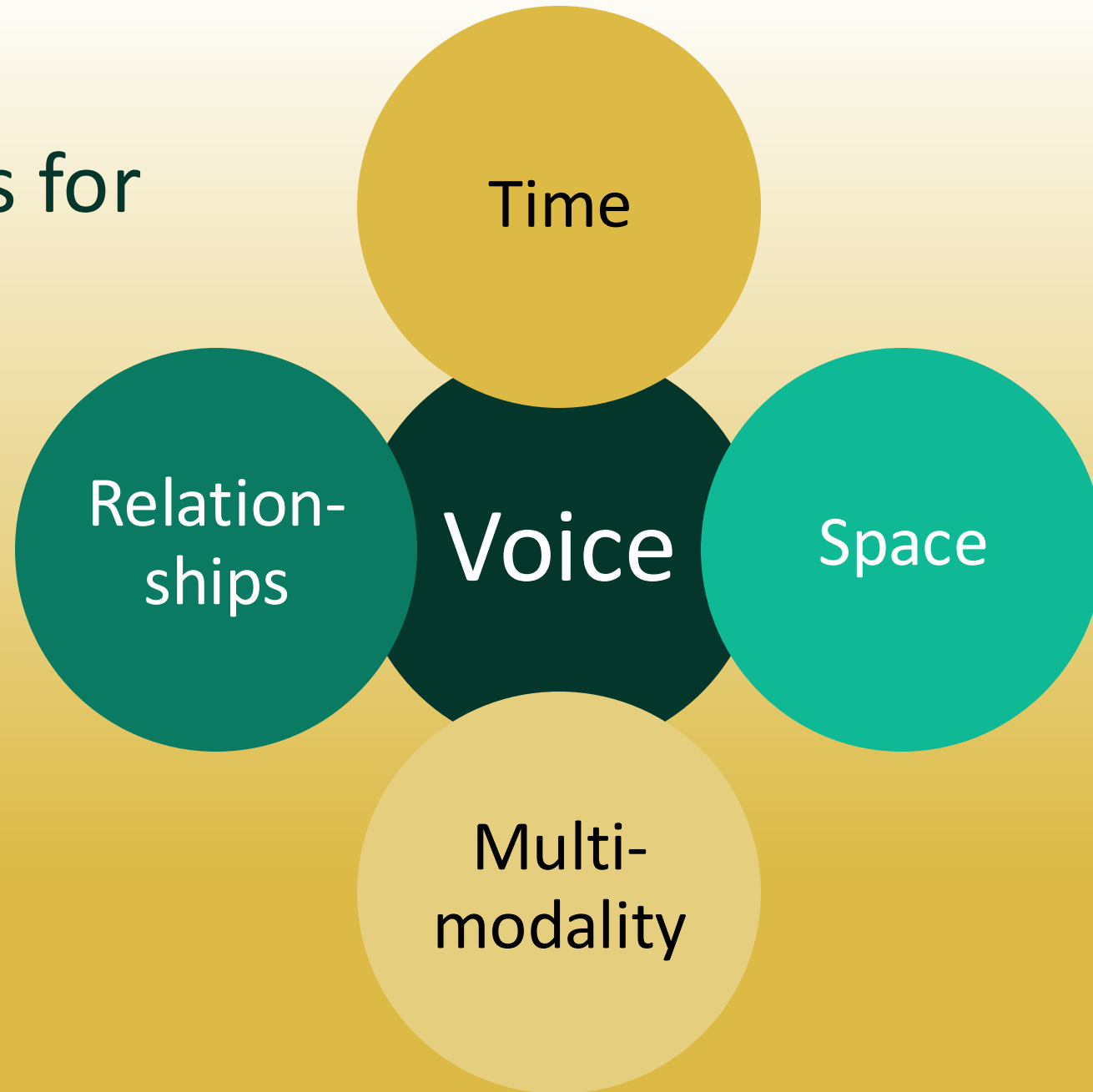
Adult's role

- Provide a safe, supportive and equitable space to explore ideas meaningfully in different ways
- Critically recognise own interpretive role
- Bear witness to the meanings made in context

4 part framework



Discussion:
implications for
practice



Rethinking 'voice': Laying foundations for impactful engagement with Service Children

Dr Claire Lee

Centre for Psychological Research,
Oxford Brookes University
clairelee@brookes.ac.uk



Q81 Mr Jenkins: If I gave you one wish to make things better, apart from not sending your dad away and not moving, what would you like to make things better for you in this school or when you move schools?

Amber Martin: Because my dad has just left another regiment to join another one so he can work in Britain, probably more Army children you know in the school.

Q82 Mr Jenkins: You want a bit more stability?

Amber Martin: Yes.

Q83 Mr Jenkins: Kelly, what would you like?

Kelly Saunders: The same as Amber.

Q84 Mr Jenkins: You cannot have the same. You are wasting a wish here. What do you want on top of that one?

Kelly Saunders: I would just like more Army children and ordinary children to go to the same school and people we know so we can go and hang around with them.

Q85 Mr Jenkins: It is stability rather than movement that is the difficulty.

Q85 Mr Jenkins: Sheree?

Sheree Hart: I do not know.

Q86 Chairman: Because everything is absolutely as you would like it?

Sheree Hart: No

Chairman: Why is it not? What would be the best thing?...

Sheree Hart: I do not know

Mr Crausby: So everything is perfect

Q88 Mr Jenkins: Or as good as. Chris, what would you like?

Chris Horseman: In the Army they get certain leave off. I would like more flexibility so you get more time to see your mum and dad ... [clarifying]

Q91 Mr Jenkins: That is a good point. [To Sheree] That is the sort of thing you could have thought of if you put a bit more effort in! Lucy?

Lucy Fawcett: When we move to a place usually your mum or dad goes straight into work so they are not around to help you settle into your new school.

Q92 Mr Jenkins: How long would you want your mum and dad to hold your hand when you go to a new school?

Lucy Fawcett: Not hold my hand. When you come home you come home to an empty house on your first day because they are already at work. My dad usually moves before we do so we can move in and out of school and sometimes that is frustrating.

Q93 Mr Jenkins: So you think that when you start a school, the day you start, your dad should be given compassionate leave or allowed to come home early so that when you come back from school he is there?

Lucy Fawcett: No, but—

Q94 Mr Jenkins: There is nothing wrong with that, it is a good idea. I like that.