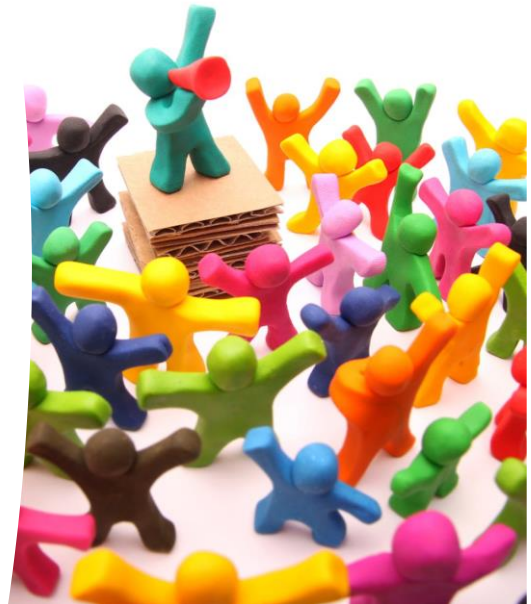


Oracy In The Classroom: A Teacher's Guide

What is Oracy?

In this article, we explore ways of developing a strong culture of language use in the classroom. The importance of oracy in language development cannot be emphasised enough. Discussion is central to all aspects of the curriculum including areas such as grammar development. If the conditions are set up correctly with the right sort of tools, children can have purposeful discussions about the possibilities, effects and meaning of the curriculum.



Oracy can be described as learning **to** talk and learning **through** talk. This article focuses on the latter, we are particularly interested in how using active discussions can form the foundation for pupils understanding of curriculum content.

Enabling children to understand the different types of discussion roles available to them broadens their repertoire of classroom talk. As well as being a tool of communication, effective oracy skills enable pupils to participate in deep learning activities where they can exchange ideas, explore new areas and challenge assumptions.

This area of pedagogy has particular significance for disadvantaged or low-attaining pupils. Within this article and the rest of the website you will find examples of how classroom talk can be used for knowledge acquisition and the development spoken language skills. Oracy is the art of speaking eloquently and persuasively. When someone speaks in a persuasive manner, they try to convince others of their point of view. While this type of

communication is common in everyday life, it's also a fundamental part of the curriculum.

Speaking is one of the most basic skills that humans possess. We learn to talk early in life, and our ability to communicate continues to develop throughout adulthood. Regardless of whether someone speaks fluently or struggles to express themselves, learning to speak is the foundational building block of literacy. Learning to read and write is much easier when you understand the basics of spoken communication.

For example, knowing how to pronounce certain letters and sounds allows children to recognize letter patterns and build vocabulary. When kids grow into adults, they continue to rely on their knowledge of pronunciation to decode written text. It's no surprise then that mastering the art of speech is a critical part of developing literacy. People who lack proficiency in speaking tend to fall behind academically, especially when it comes to reading comprehension. Organisations such as Voice 21 I've been promoting effective oracy skills across schools in the UK, it is clear that providing children with the tool of communication sets them up for a lifetime of success.

Oracy is to communicate what literacy is to reading and writing; and numeracy to mathematics. The term 'oracy' was first used by Andrew Wilkinson in the 1960s. Andrew believed that oracy – one's ability to express themselves with fluency in speech – must get equal status to math performance and literacy in school curriculums.

In its simplest form, oracy is to be able to express oneself well. It relates to having a broad range of vocabulary to say what one needs to say and the proficiency to structure thoughts so that the person makes sense to others.

More recently, oracy has become even more important. This is because, education in schools is predominantly provided in English (in the UK), but many children lack spoken communication skills because they speak another language at home. Once schools begun reopening

after the initial pandemic lockdown, many educators reported a dip in oracy skills particularly in children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

How do you measure Oracy Skills?

Many studies have discussed the potential role of teachers and schools in building Oracy skills in students. In recent times, online learning has made serious negative impacts on students such as social isolation, and poor communication skills. After opening, the majority of schools can reduce the negative impact of online education through different competitions, programmes and resources based upon 4 key oracy skillsets: evidence and reasoning; response and listening; delivery and expression; and prioritisation and organisation. Schools must teach and develop students' proficiency in these skillsets just like literacy and numeracy.

Improving Oracy Skills in the classroom

Schools can take the following steps to build strong foundations of oracy skills for the students in a classroom:

1. Allocating Extra Classroom Time for Oracy Techniques: More than anything else, classroom time is needed for building correct language speaking skills in the students. Although each class has a fixed timetable to follow, the teachers must try to engage students in oracy explicit activities within the classroom time. Also, teachers must not be hesitant to make oracy an objective or focus for a lesson. Learning through Oracy must be practised in every classroom.

2. Promoting Oracy in the Classroom: The most effective teachers take the responsibility for the language development of children very seriously. They make sure to commemorate oracy in their classroom environment. Following are some of the ways to promote oracy in the classroom.

- a. Children's verbal comments must be gathered and displayed in the classroom.
 - b. Teachers must frequently read aloud and tell stories to the students.
 - c. Children must be invited to perform the poetry and plays.
 - d. Displaying unusual objects in the classroom and encouraging children to talk about them.
 - e. Making a 'talking corner' in the classroom and inviting guests to talk about an interesting topic with the class.
- All the above activities will build students' confidence and enhance their oracy skills.

3. **Explicitly Teaching Oracy:** Teachers must use direct vocabulary instruction especially with the students having any other native language. They must teach oracy related topics in the classroom. It is suggested to start by teaching a language structure or speaking frame each week. But unfortunately, teachers cannot give everything they know to the students. Children have to grab things and make them their own. Hence, teachers must support children to reflect and analyze their language skills - not only after they've completed their written tasks but also while they're writing their ideas and vocabulary.

4. Providing Opportunities to Practise Oracy: To make children confident speakers, teachers must provide them with a lot of opportunities to use their oracy skills in the classroom. Teachers must try different ways to talk about different topics and the structures they use in the classroom. Teachers can ask questions about students' major achievements in education or, prompt or comment about any topic. Teachers need to build upon students' comments. It is a must to think about how frequently children get the opportunity to report verbally, both planned and unplanned. It is also recommended to allocate some of the classroom time for children with poor communication skills and design additional language-related

activities for them. Teachers can build a 'conversation station' with some rules to facilitate conversations between children.

5. Practice to Elaborate: An element of communication that's extremely powerful is 'elaboration.' Elaboration means to explain one's idea to someone else and add details to it. This method acts as a verbal rehearsal before writing ideas on paper. For young learners, oral practice separates the process of the creation of ideas from the more complex task of writing them. Older children can practice elaborating which help them in trying out different ways to write sentences and to listen to their writing aloud.

6. Expect Oracy from each student: For teachers, it is crucial to teach students about the fundamentals of classroom talk and model what good communication sounds like. A teacher's thinking voice plays an important role in building children's metacognitive skills in both oracy and writing. To think about the most useful ways to phrase speech and to verbalise oracy choices are keys to supporting the development of oracy skills. It is an effective way to give feedback about Oracy. A teacher must not highlight if a child says something incorrectly, it might be more effective to repeat what they said incorrectly using the right words.

7. Make Oracy a fun-filled Activity: It is necessary to enjoy oracy explicit activities in the class with children such as games, role play, performances and debates. Teachers can design a thorough curriculum for oracy including many oracy related activities to improve oracy in children.

A child first acquires language to build upon natural fluency. Each student must get the opportunity to improve their content vocabulary through oral presentations and discussion rather than learning new vocabulary to be used in writing. Improvements in a student's spoken English are usually followed by developments in their writing skills.

However, incorporating tier 2 direct vocabulary instruction into the curriculum has been shown to have positive outcomes for pupils.

What are the benefits of Oracy Skills for the pupils?

High-quality language development activities in primary classrooms can greatly improve educational attainment, from improving science and SAT results in maths to enhancing reasoning, reading and writing skills.

There is an extensive body of evidence that suggests that students with better communication skills are 4 times more likely to achieve five A* at GCSE.

When teachers engage students in cognitively challenging classroom talk students do not only improve their language skills but also gain additional progress in subjects like science and mathematics. High-quality oracy education improves different techniques of writing in students; mainly including extended writing and collective writing skills. Oracy also has a positive impact on children's spelling and reading comprehension. The spoken language supports children's cognitive development, helping them to understand the world around them.

More recently, teachers and employers think that life skills such as communication, confidence, resilience and motivation are equally or even more important than educational qualifications. Oracy improves a child's academic and cognitive outcomes, his mental-wellbeing, self-esteem, employability, social mobility, and civic engagement. With companies now rating effective speaking as the most desirable skill, having superior public speaking and communication skills and a strong ability to express ideas through discussion are more needed in life beyond school.

There are hundreds of schools all across the country where teachers

have understood the importance of building strong Oracy skills within the students. But, despite having all the above advantages and teachers' realisation of its importance we don't see the oracy curriculum receiving as much attention as literacy and numeracy in the school curriculum.

According to academic evidence, pupils' average contribution in each class remains limited to just four words per lesson. Therefore, it is suggested that just as literacy and numeracy, oracy framework and key oracy skillset must be taught and, essentially practised for developing communication proficiency in students.

Building learning conversations

As a teacher you can't give them what you know. Learners have to take it and make it their own, and it's the discussion that really helps to do that. You can really support this by giving children tasks that require them to create several versions of something and then discuss which is best. Using the 'Writer's block', we have seen children make changes and then reason their ideas to someone else. So you might say, 'write several opening sentences and discuss which one is the best'. The children can then use the Structural Learning blocks to move and change the parts of the sentence without any fear of 'getting it wrong'. As learners make changes, they always justify their thinking to their peers, a gateway to critical thinking.

There are many different types of communication skills, including speaking, listening, asking questions, giving feedback, and presenting ideas. Each type of skill requires a specific set of techniques to master. Speaking is the most fundamental form of communication to learn. When facilitating classroom talking exercises, focus on your learners practicing their voice inflections and pronunciation. Once they feel comfortable with their speaking abilities, try practicing public speaking. Listening is another key component of effective

communication. While you might be able to read someone's body language, you still need to pay attention to their tone and volume level. Try to practice active listening by actively participating in conversations.

Questions are another useful technique for communicating effectively. Asking open-ended questions allows others to share their opinions and feelings. Avoid leading questions, however, which can lead to answers that aren't entirely honest. Instead, ask questions that allow others to answer honestly. Giving feedback is yet another way to communicate effectively. Giving constructive criticism in the classroom is helpful for improving relationships and encouraging academic growth. As with any performance, avoid faulting students directly; instead, offer suggestions for improvement.

Classroom talk for generating ideas

Another important role for talk in writing is the kind of talk that helps children to generate the ideas.

You can't write if you haven't got anything to say and the talking to generate ideas helps you to work through your ideas in a logical way. One element of talk that's particularly powerful is elaboration. This is the idea of explaining your ideas back to someone else and adding details along the way. This approach acts as an oral rehearsal before pen is committed to paper. For very young children, oral rehearsal separates the formulating of a sentence from the very difficult demand of writing it.

With older children it helps them try out different possibilities for sentences and to hear their writing aloud. And finally, talk is important for reflection and evaluation. We all know how hard it is to get children revising their work. Support children to reflect and evaluate on their writing - not just after they've written but also as they're developing

their ideas and vocabulary. The block structures can easily be manipulated into different combinations, it's a lot less daunting than putting a line through it. Focus their revision with key evaluative questions tied to the learning focus.

Remember, talk is the foundation of all learning.

Oracy tips for your classroom

Communication is one of the most important aspects of learning. Children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. They learn best when they are engaged in meaningful tasks. Children who are able to express themselves clearly and effectively are much more successful learners. This means that teachers need to pay attention to the communication skills of students.

1. Be Aware of What Students Say

It's important for teachers to listen carefully to what students say. Teachers should ask questions to find out what students think and understand. Teachers should also encourage students to explain things to each other. For example, if a student has an idea for a project, he/she may want to discuss it with another child.

This helps students develop their understanding of others' opinions and encourages them to talk about their ideas.

2. Encourage Students to Talk About Their Ideas

Encouraging students to talk about their ideas is a great way to improve their ability to communicate. If students don't have any ideas, they won't be able to talk about them. However, encouraging students to talk about their thoughts and feelings is a great way to promote self-expression.

When students feel comfortable talking about their ideas, they are more likely to participate in class discussions and projects.

3. Help Students Develop Their Writing Skills

Writing is a skill that develops over time. Educators can encourage students to write down notes and then elaborate on their ideas which

helps them join their points together. This type of practice helps children create logical arguments that fit together.

4. Provide Opportunities for Students to Practice Speaking

Speaking is another area where students often lack confidence. To help students overcome this problem, teachers should provide speaking opportunities. These opportunities could include giving presentations, participating in debates, or presenting information orally.

Providing these opportunities gives students the chance to practice speaking in front of groups of people.

5. Give Students Time to Think Before Responding

Sometimes, students respond without thinking. This can make them appear rude and abrupt. Giving students time to think before responding is a great way to avoid such problems. Teachers should allow students to pause after asking a question before answering. This allows students to reflect on their answer before replying.

By doing this, students are more likely to come up with thoughtful responses. Asking students to pause before responding is a simple way to teach students to think before they speak.