Oracy across the Welsh curriculum

A research-based review: key principles and recommendations for teachers

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Oracy Cambridge
The Hughes Hall Centre for Effective Spoken Communication

HUGHES HALL
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EAS
Education Achievement Service
for South East Wales
Gwasanaeth Cyflawni Addysg
i Dde Ddwyrain Cymru

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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A psychologist with a special interest in the role of language in the classroom and the development of children's thinking, Neil regularly contributes to professional development activities for schools and other organisations. One of the main outcomes of Neil's research has been the teaching approach called *Thinking Together*, created with Lyn Dawes, Karen Littleton and Rupert Wegerif, which has been shown to improve children's skills in communicating, learning and reasoning.

Neil's research has generated strong links with researchers outside the UK, especially in the Scandinavian countries, Holland, Mexico, Japan, Brazil, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Australia and the USA. He has been a consultant, visiting scholar and examiner for governments and universities in many countries. He is a former editor of the journals *Learning and Instruction*, the *International Journal of Educational Research*, and *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*. He is also a member of the editorial boards of *Infancia y Aprendizaje*, *Anuario Psicologia*, *Educational Psychologist* and *Language and Education*. Neil can be contacted at nmm31@cam.ac.uk, or via @profneilmercer on Twitter.

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James holds an MA in Person Centred Education from the University of Sussex, and recently completed a PhD in Learning to Learn at the University of Cambridge. James's doctoral thesis is an 8-year evaluation of *Learning Skills*, a whole-school approach to teaching and learning centred around metacognition, self-regulation and oracy, which was associated with significant gains in subject learning and accelerated learning gains among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. James can be contacted at james@rethinking-ed.org, or via @rethinking_ed on Twitter.

Oracy Cambridge

Oracy Cambridge is an interdisciplinary study centre for developing and sharing understanding about the effective use of talk in schools and workplaces. Based at Hughes Hall, Oracy Cambridge aims to raise awareness of the importance of oracy, and the ways in which it can be taught and learned, amongst policy makers and practitioners within the UK and internationally. For more details, visit oracycambridge.org.

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Oracy across the Welsh curriculum

Executive summary

- In the 2015 review of the Welsh curriculum and assessment arrangements *Successful Futures*, Professor Graham Donaldson wrote: "Being able to listen attentively and speak lucidly and understandably, or to use non-verbal communication effectively, are crucial attributes in learning and life more generally. Developing oracy – the capacity to develop and express ideas through speech – is of central importance to both thinking and learning." [1]

- Donaldson proposed that the new national curriculum in Wales should have six Areas of Learning and Experience, of which Languages, Literacy and Communication (LLC) is one: "This Area of Learning and Experience encompasses the progressive development of skills in listening and speaking (oracy), reading and writing in English and Welsh; modern foreign languages; digital communication; and literature. It has obvious connections with all of the other Areas of Learning and Experience". [2]

- As part of this wave of reform, the Newport Education Achievement Service (EAS) is working to improve the achievement and attainment of all pupils with regard to speaking and listening. To this end, this report was commissioned to serve three purposes:

    1. To report on a comprehensive *Review of the relevant research literature* relating to the development of speaking and listening skills in young people;
    2. To produce a set of *Key principles derived from research evidence*;
    3. To outline a set of *Practical recommendations for teachers* based on the research evidence and key principles.

- The literature reviewed in this report provides a powerful account of the importance of spoken language education as a means to improve cognitive, social and emotional and life outcomes for all young people.

- Cognitive gains associated with effective spoken communication skills include improved attainment in traditional subject learning; literacy skills; cognitive reasoning; communication for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); communication for bilingual pupils; and transfer of comprehension and reasoning skills to other subjects.

- Social/emotional gains associated with effective spoken communication skills include increased self-esteem and self-confidence; increased engagement and on-task focus; enhanced social development and peer interactions; improved emotional intelligence; greater empathy; and an increased ability to handle stress.

- Life outcomes associated with spoken communication skills include overcoming social disadvantage; reduced risk of exclusions and juvenile offending; and improved future earnings.

- Despite the compelling research literature outlining the benefits that follow the explicit teaching of effective spoken communication among young people,

[1] Donaldson, 2015 (p. 48)

[2] *Op. cit.* (p. 50)

historically, oracy has been the 'poor relation' to written literacy and numeracy in schools. However, there are many organisations working very effectively on redressing this imbalance, and significant developments have been achieved in recent years. There has never been a better time for Newport EAS and the Welsh government to step forward and take a lead in proactively developing the skills of effective spoken communication for all young people, across the curriculum.

Key principles derived from research evidence

- Oracy skills can be taught explicitly to pupils in any year of school.

- Helping pupils understand how language can be used for learning will help them learn better together and on their own.

- By helping pupils develop their oracy skills (such as those involved in collaborative group work and presenting their work to classmates) teachers will also help develop their skills in reasoning.

- 'Soft skills', which include the oracy skills needed for team work and effective leadership, are an important aspect of an individual's employability; and they will be in higher demand as we move towards a more knowledge-intensive economy and increased automation. Employers commonly say that members of their workforce, especially those engaged in creative activities, management and customer-related roles, need well-developed skills in spoken communication.

- Evidence from recent research suggests that that there are significant cognitive benefits to bilingualism. For example, pupils who are bilingual in English and a Celtic language (Gaelic) have been found to be better at explaining the meaning of words than monolingual English speakers. Oracy skills can usually be applied across languages.

- Focusing on the development of oracy skills among pupils whose first language is not the school's main language can help them to integrate successfully and appreciate the advantages of bilingualism.

- In general, pupils from economically deprived backgrounds are less likely to have had a rich talk experience in their home environment. As a consequence, when they start school, they are likely to have a more limited talk repertoire.

- If teachers model and guide pupils' use of language for learning, this can be expected to improve achievement. They should ask pupils to give reasons to support their views, engage them in extended discussions of topics, and encourage them to understand what makes discussion productive.

- Teachers can significantly enhance the quality of classroom talk (both in whole class discussions and group work) through the use of 'ground rules for exploratory talk', building on pupils' own awareness of what makes for a productive discussion. Young people benefit greatly from structured programmes where teachers teach and model the skills of effective spoken communication, give pupils clear feedback on their attempts to practice them, and positively reinforce their use.

Practical recommendations for schools

- Spoken language skills need to be taught, just as pupils are taught the skills of literacy, mathematics, science, and so on. Likewise, they need to be provided with knowledge about spoken language, so that their learning and use of those skills is underpinned by an informed awareness of how spoken language works. Teaching oracy should not be viewed simply as a pedagogical concern: rather, it should also be seen as a curricular concern.

- As well as explicitly teaching the skills of effective spoken communication, it is important that schools offer pupils plenty of opportunities to use, practice and further develop their oracy skills.

- Effective techniques for teaching oracy have been developed. As yet, they are not widely appreciated or applied; implementing their use across the Welsh curriculum will require explicit initial and continuing professional development for teachers.

- Effective spoken communication has generic features, as well as subject-specific features. The teaching of generic oracy skills should have a 'home' in the curricular organisation of each school (such as in English, Welsh, learning to learn, drama – or as a timetabled subject in its own right), where an agreed set of skills and techniques are explicitly taught and developed over time. Alongside this, oracy should be embedded in the teaching and learning of all subjects, as is the case with literacy and numeracy.

- The development of a full repertoire of oracy skills depends on pupils being engaged in a suitable wide range of activities. Oracy is not just about public speaking, debate or dramatic role-playing; it also includes the skills involved in collaborative problem solving, guiding or teaching another person, listening sensitively to another's experience, and interviewing (and being interviewed) to share information.

Implementing change

- Available evidence indicates that if all schools were to implement the practical recommendations listed in this report, this would lead to a wide range of positive outcomes for young people, their teachers and families and the wider society. However, implementing such a step-change in the way schools teach and assess oracy across the curriculum, and across all year groups, represents a significant challenge.

- To bridge the gap between the research and practice relating to oracy, we recommend that schools should encourage and enable teachers to conduct small-scale research inquiries to determine which practices and strategies "work" for them, in their context and for their particular pupils. We outline twelve steps that teachers (and school leaders) can follow to systematically improve aspects of their practice (or school), engaging *with and in research* through small-scale practitioner inquiry.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aims of this review

In 2015, Professor Graham Donaldson published an independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales, entitled *Successful Futures*. [3] The Welsh government has taken the decision to implement the Donaldson report in its entirety. In *Successful Futures,* Donaldson stated: "Being able to listen attentively and speak lucidly and understandably or to use non-verbal communication effectively are crucial attributes in learning and life more generally. Developing oracy – the capacity to develop and express ideas through speech – is of central importance to both thinking and learning." [4]

Donaldson proposed that the new national curriculum in Wales should have six Areas of Learning and Experience, of which Languages, Literacy and Communication (LLC) is one: "This Area of Learning and Experience encompasses the progressive development of skills in listening and speaking (oracy), reading and writing in English and Welsh; modern foreign languages; digital communication; and literature. It has obvious connections with all of the other Areas of Learning and Experience". [5]

As part of this wave of reform, the Newport Education Achievement Service (EAS) is working to improve the achievement and attainment of all pupils with regard to speaking and listening. As explained to the authors:

> [*The EAS*] is taking the opportunity to refocus on the pedagogical principles and stages of development of Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing… our cluster is interested in… a list of the relevant research in the development of Speaking and Listening. In the Reading and Writing Scales [*published by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE)*], there is a section called *Research Towards a Comprehensive Pedagogy for Reading and Writing*, and *Key Principles Derived from Research Evidence*. These are excellent and we think that they may help us all to begin to develop something similar for Speaking and Listening. [6]

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[3] Donaldson, 2015

[4] *Op. cit.* (p. 48)

[5] Donaldson, 2015 (p. 50)

[6] Correspondence with Nick Penn, Deputy Head, Pentrepoeth Primary School, Newport.

On a similar note, the working group responsible for implementing the LLC Area of Learning and Experience nationally aims to identify:

- the core of knowledge/concepts and associated skills and competencies deemed essential for all pupils to learn;
- an outline of progression and an indication of what pupils should learn/ experience relating broadly to expectations at ages 5, 8, 11, 14, 16;
- building on the above, suggested 'what matters', key concepts for oracy. [7]

With regard to indicators of progression, there are already some excellent recent publications that outline age-related expectations with regard to speaking and listening in England (from birth to age 18) [8] and Wales (from reception to year 9 and beyond). [9] Instead of duplicating this work, this research-based review of the literature on oracy aims to serve the aims of the LLC and the EAS by:

- carrying out and reporting on a comprehensive review of the relevant research literature with regard to the development of speaking and listening skills in young people;
- producing a set of *Key principles derived from research evidence*, similar to those linked to the CLPE Reading and Writing Scales; [10]
- outlining a set of *Practical recommendations for schools* based on the research evidence and key principles.

1.2 Defining oracy

The word 'oracy' was coined by Andrew Wilkinson in 1965, in a deliberate attempt to place speaking and listening on an equal footing with written forms of literacy and numeracy. Wilkinson defined oracy simply as "the ability to use the oral skills of speaking and listening". [11] Some researchers, policy makers and practitioners readily adopted Wilkinson's term and definition, as in the UK's *National Oracy Project*. [12] However, the term has not yet become embedded as part of mainstream educational discourse, with other terms such as 'communication skills' and 'speaking and listening' being used more widely in the English-speaking world. [13] Alexander has

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[7] LLC Commissioning Brief (p. 3)
[8] The Communication Trust, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c
[9] Welsh government, 2013
[10] e.g. CLPE, 2016 (p. 14-16)
[11] Wilkinson, 1965 (p. 13)
[12] Norman, 1992
[13] DfES, 2003

argued that such terms "have become devalued by casual use" [14] and thus the term 'oracy' represents the best way for educational researchers and practitioners to refer to "children's capacity to use speech to express their thoughts and communicate with others, in education and in life". [15] We agree with those sentiments, and so in this paper 'oracy' is used to refer to the development of young people's skills in using language (first, second or additional) to communicate across a range of formal and informal settings.

It is important to note the inclusion of listening in Wilkinson's definition of oracy, as this important aspect of spoken communication is often overlooked. For example, the Oxford English Dictionary defines oracy simply as "the ability to express oneself fluently and grammatically in speech". This focus on expression is reflected in schools through an emphasis on public speaking and formal debates. While these are important aspects of oracy, the ability to listen attentively to an interlocutor or presenter, or to consider the needs of an audience, are also important features of spoken communication. This paper therefore includes a review of the research relating to listening skills and listening comprehension. Using talk to work effectively with others in a group is also a key aspect of oracy, to which we will give attention.

In the Welsh context, the scope of oracy of course includes the development of spoken communication skills in both the English and Welsh languages. In this review, we will therefore include an account of what is known about the linguistic and cognitive development and educational needs of bilingual speakers.

1.3   The importance of spoken language education

In recent years, researchers in developmental psychology, linguistics and education have emphasised the importance of talk in children's cognitive and social development. [16, 17] This idea was first expressed by the Russian developmental psychologist Vygotsky, who recognised the central importance of interpersonal communication in the cognitive development of individuals. [18] As Vass and Littleton put it: "it is through speech and action with others that we learn to reason and gain individual consciousness". [19]

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[14] Alexander, 2012 (p. 2)

[15] *Op. cit.* (p. 10)

[16] van Oers et al., 2008

[17] Whitebread et al., 2013

[18] Vygotsky, 1962, 1978

[19] Vass & Littleton, 2010 (p. 107)

Some authors have suggested that language is an innate 'instinct', based on the idea that all human language adheres to a 'universal grammar' and has a strong genetic/inherited component. [20, 21] In this view, language is presented merely as an instinctive mechanism for transmitting ideas from one person to another. As expressed by the cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker: "Simply by making noises with our mouths, we can reliably cause precise new combinations of ideas to arise in each other's minds". [22] However, this view has been contested on the basis that misunderstandings and new interpretations are common features of language-based communication, since "the act of reading any text relies on the interpretative efforts of a reader, as well as on the communicative efforts and intentions of the author". [23] Research from neuroscience and evolutionary psychology now supports the view that language evolved as an integrated component of human cognition, rather than as a separate and distinct capacity. [24, 25, 26]

Like many capacities, language development is affected by the quality of experience. Research has shown that the amount and quality of pre-school children's conversations in the home are good predictors of educational attainment in secondary school. [27, 28] A systematic review of research found a positive relationship between the use of extended and cumulative responses in group interactions, and pupils' learning. [29] Furthermore, such positive findings result when pupils are explicitly taught how to use talk effectively in groups. [30]

There is now a compelling body of research literature to suggest that the quantity and quality of spoken communication experienced by (and taught to) children has significant consequences across a range of cognitive, social and emotional and life outcomes. A summary of some of the key findings from this research literature is presented in Table 1.

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[20] Chomsky, 2000

[21] Pinker, 2007

[22] *Op. cit.* (p. 1)

[23] Mercer, 2000 (p. 5)

[24] Goswami, 2009

[25] Mercer, 2008, 2013

[26] Mercier & Sperber, 2011

[27] Goswami & Bryant, 2007

[28] Hart & Risley, 1995

[29] Howe & Abedin, 2013

[30] Dawes, 2008

Table 1. The importance of oracy: a summary of key research findings.

Category	Area of impact	Example citations
Cognitive outcomes	Improved attainment in English, Maths, Science…	• Adey & Shayer, 2015 • Gorard et al., 2015 • Hanley et al., 2015 • Kutnick & Berdondini, 2009 • Mannion & Mercer, 2016 • O-Connor et al., 2015 • Rivard & Straw, 2000 • Wilkinson et al., 2015
	Improved literacy skills	• Bishop & Snowling, 2004 • Dockrell et al., 2015 • Dockrell & Connelly, 2009 • Dunsmuir & Blatchford, 2004 • Maxwell et al., 2015
	Improved verbal / non-verbal / quantitative reasoning	• Alexander, 2008 • Goswami, 2015 • Goswami & Bryant, 2007 • Mercer et al., 1999 • Mercer & Howe, 2012 • Resnick et al., 2015 • Topping & Trickey, 2015
	Enhanced communication for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	• Goatley, 1996 • Maxwell et al., 2015 • Peacey, 2009 • Sheehy, 2009 • The Communication Trust, 2013
	Enhanced communicative and cognitive skills for bilingual pupils	• Akerman & Neale, 2011 • Bialystok & Feng, 2010 • Grosjean, 2010 • Grundy & Timmer, 2017 • Inoue & Nakano, 2004 • Lauchlan et al., 2013 • Sorge et al., 2016 • Schweizer et al., 2012 • Woemens et al., 2017
	Transfer of comprehension, reasoning skills to other subjects	• Adey & Shayer, 2015 • Mannion & Mercer, 2016 • Wilkinson et al., 2015 • Zohar & Nemet, 2002
Social and emotional outcomes	Self-esteem / self-confidence	• Ofsted, 2010 • Trickey & Topping, 2006
	Engagement and on-task focus	• Chiu, 2004 • Kutnick & Berdondini, 2009 • Webb et al., 2015
	Social development / peer interactions	• Howe & Mercer, 2007 • Mannion & Mercer, 2016
	Emotional intelligence	• Alexander, 2008 • Ofsted, 2003 • QCA, 2008
	Greater empathy	• Jensen, 2008
	Ability to handle stress	• Akerman & Neale, 2011
Life outcomes	Overcoming social disadvantage	• The Communication Trust, 2013 • Hart & Risley, 2005 • Locke et al., 2002 • Roulstone et al., 2011 • Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2010
	Fewer exclusions, less juvenile offending	• Bryan et al., 2007 • Clegg, 2004
	Improved future earnings	• Ashley et al., 2015 • De Vries & Rentfrow, 2016

Given the numerous benefits associated with the explicit development of effective spoken communication among young people as outlined in Table 1, it is unfortunate that oracy has often been the 'poor relation' to written forms of literacy and numeracy in schools, being given much less attention in teaching and assessment. [31] On the one hand, it is deeply concerning that people's life chances can be predicted so powerfully by their exposure to and immersion in oral communication as children. On the other hand, it is illuminating to reflect on the fact that schools and teachers are uniquely positioned and empowered to act and teach in ways that are likely to have significant benefits on the life outcomes of future generations.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of the effective use of spoken language in many occupations. Employers commonly say that members of their workforce, especially those engaged in creative activities, management and customer-related roles, need well-developed skills in spoken communication. [32] Employers want people who can make clear presentations, work well in teams, listen effectively and solve problems collaboratively. Moreover, these are the skills that equip young people for full participation in democratic processes and life in general.

Some commentators have opposed the idea that schools should prepare young people for the workplace. For example, the education blogger David Didau has written: "I want children to have every advantage they can in order to allow them to choose to do whatever they want to do. But I don't given (sic) a damn about preparing them for work as this is a small, narrow-minded endeavour". [33] While it may be true that schools should not be exclusively concerned with preparing young people for the workplace, it is worth reflecting on the fact that employers have consistently said over a number of years that school leavers are often ill-equipped for the workplace. Employers in Wales, as well as in other parts of the UK, have for some time reported difficulties in finding staff who are skilled in communication, customer handling and problem solving. [34] A report on skills for employability commissioned by the London Chamber of Commerce stated: "Softer skills, such as team working and communication, are an important aspect of an individual's employability, and they will be in higher demand as we move towards a more knowledge-intensive

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[31] Millard & Menzies, 2016
[32] CBI, 2016
[33] Didau, 2014
[34] UKCES, 2010 (p 16)

economy". [35] Although this phrase 'soft skills' is often used to describe things like oral communication, problem solving and the ability to work well with others, it is recognised that these skills have tangible, real-world outcomes:

> "Employers don't just value what people know: they value what they can do. By far the most important 'skills' factor centres on attitudes and aptitudes such as ability to present well. The majority of employers have concerns in these areas, whereas less than a quarter worry about formal qualifications. These soft skills have hard outcomes." [36]

If it is possible for schools to help pupils develop such skills without compromising the other aims of schooling, such as academic attainment – indeed, if such activity can actually *boost* academic attainment, as some of the research presented in this review suggests – then there is a strong moral imperative for teachers to develop ways of teaching, monitoring and assessing the oracy of their pupils so that they can boost the development of these vital skills.

2.   Key concepts for oracy

The *Oracy Skills Framework*, developed by the University of Cambridge in conjunction with School 21 in Stratford, London, identifies four domains of skill in using spoken language: physical, linguistic, cognitive and social & emotional. Within each domain, subsets of skills can also be identified, as illustrated by the exemplars shown in the bullet points in Figure 1.

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[35] Wright et al., 2010 (p. 8)
[36] CBI, 2016 (p. 5)

Figure 1. The Cambridge Oracy Skills Framework. [37]

Physical

Voice
- Fluency & pace of speech
- Tonal variation
- Clarity of pronunciation
- Voice projection

Body language
- Gesture & posture
- Facial expression & eye contact

Cognitive

Content
- Choice of content to convey meaning & intention
- Building on the views of others

Structure
- Structure & organisation of talk

Clarifying & summarising
- Seeking information & clarification through questions/ing
- Summarising

Reasoning
- Giving reasons to support views
- Critically examining ideas & views expressed

Linguistic

Vocabulary
- Appropriate vocabulary choice

Language
- Register
- Grammar

Rhetorical techniques
- Rhetorical techniques such as metaphor, humour, irony & mimicry

Social & Emotional

Working with others
- Guiding or managing interactions
- Turn-taking

Listening & responding
- Listening actively & responding appropriately

Confidence in speaking
- Self assurance
- Liveliness & flair

Audience awareness
- Taking account of level of understanding of the audience

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[37] From Millard & Menzies, 2016; framework created by University of Cambridge and School21.

With very few exceptions, people encounter many different communicative situations in their life, and each requires a different subset of oracy skills. For example, consider the following situations:

- Formal speech or presentation
- Group problem solving task
- Job interview
- Dramatic role
- Telephone enquiry
- Debating
- Guiding or teaching [38]

To take a formal telephone enquiry as an example: 'physical' considerations might include fluency, pace and pronunciation; 'linguistically', register is likely to be important, since telephone conversations cannot rely on body language or facial expressions; 'cognitively', the structure and organisation of talk will take priority on a short call; while 'socially and emotionally', an awareness of turn-taking may be more acute than in social situations. To many adults, such features of talk are often automatic and unconscious. However, even adults vary significantly in their ability to communicate effectively in situations such as these, and while the end result might be unconscious mastery, the research literature is clear that these communicative behaviours can be taught, practiced and mastered to a significant degree.

At any point in time, a child's spoken language skills in different areas, and in dealing with different situations, may be more or less developed because of their aptitude, experience or the teaching they have received. Therefore, we recommend that in any new teaching situation, teachers should assess each child's oracy skills (even if informally), using the *Oracy Skills Framework* to establish which sub-skills might need to be developed further in order for pupils to participate more fully in their learning.

3.   The development of children's language skills

3.1   The relationship between talk, thinking and learning

Vygotsky proposed that once a child has acquired language, their thinking is transformed forever. [39] In the early 20th century, behaviourist theory was widespread

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[38] This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but is simply a range of situations in which different oracy skills might be used.
[39] Vygotsky, 1962, 1978

among psychologists – the idea that human behaviour is primarily a function of past experience, and of responding to external stimuli. While Vygotsky agreed that the environment plays a vital role in the development of the individual, he proposed that the ways in which individuals learn are primarily social and cultural in nature.

> "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals." [40]

In this view, the child's environment is not simply where development occurs, but is the primary source of the social and cultural experience from which the child draws their learning. [41] This idea was revolutionary at the time – so much so that much of Vygotsky's work was suppressed and burned, and was not translated into other languages until some decades after his death. [42] We now know that Vygotsky's central claim is substantially true. Through being involved in spoken dialogues from their earliest years, children discover how other people make sense of the world, how they reason about causes and effects, how they express their emotions and identities. These discoveries, and the structures of language, shape the forms of their own thinking. Our own research has shown strong links between the development of language skills and skills in non-verbal reasoning. This encourages the view that helping children develop better oral language skills can help them become better at reasoning and learning both together and on their own. [43]

Overall, research supports the view that language skills are integrated with non-verbal reasoning skills, and that language experience is linked to the development of those skills. [44] This encourages the view that by helping pupils develop their oracy skills (such as those involved in collaborative group work and making public speeches) teachers will also help them develop the reasoning skills which be valuable for academic study and life in the wider world. [45]

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[40] Vygotsky, 1978 (p. 57)

[41] Bjorklund & Blasi, 2012 (p. 62)

[42] Franklin, 2014 (p. 385)

[43] Littleton & Mercer, 2010

[44] Baker, 2006 (p. 168–9)

[45] Xie & Dong, 2017

From their involvement in dialogues, children also can learn how people can work together to solve problems and get things done. The capability to jointly plan our actions and review them collectively is unique to humans; it is linked to the evolution of language itself. [46] It is our prime tool for thinking collectively. We do not just use language to interact, we use it to 'interthink' – defined as the "everyday process whereby people collectively and creatively use talk to solve problems and make joint sense of the world". [47] However, children are not born with language 'hard-wired' into their cognition: they have to learn it. As with many aspects of learning and development, people have to learn through experience how to use spoken language well – and they can be taught how to do so. We cannot assume that children will pick up all the necessary language skills in their lives outside school. This idea is contested by some. For example, in 2013 Michael Gove, then Secretary of State for Education, dismissed the use of group work in schools as "children chatting to each other" and quoted President Lyndon B. Johnson as saying "you aren't learning anything when you're talking". [48] Similarly, in a recent paper the cognitive psychologists Tricot and Sweller argued that "learning to listen and speak" are "biologically primary" functions that cannot be taught. [49]

The idea that spoken language is "biologically primary", and that it therefore cannot or should not be taught in schools, runs counter to the research evidence summarised in this review. Few people would suggest that written forms of literacy and numeracy are instinctive or "biologically primary", and so writing and reading are taught; but speaking and listening have rarely been taught explicitly, by comparison. The available evidence suggests that far greater attention should be given in educational policy and practice to help pupils develop their skills in using spoken language if they are to be able to achieve their intellectual and social potential.

For bilingual children and adults, although some aspects of their competence in using spoken language will inevitably depend on their knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of a particular language, other aspects – for example, those concerned with taking account of the needs or prior knowledge of an audience or

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[46] Mercer, 2013

[47] Littleton & Mercer, 2013 (p. 115)

[48] Gove, 2013

[49] Tricot & Sweller, 2014 (p. 268)

interlocutor – can transcend particular languages and constitute a more generic set of skills.

3.2   Bilingual development and education

In 1990, the study of Welsh was phased in as a compulsory subject for all pupils aged 5-14, either as a first or second language. In 1999 the study of Welsh became compulsory at ages 14-16 (Key Stage 4) also. [50] As such, the research on oracy as it relates to bilingualism is relevant to this research-based review.

Until around the 1960s, researchers tended to conclude that growing up bilingually causes some problems for children, by 'overloading' their cognitive capacities. [51, 52] However, evidence from more recent research suggests that that there are significant cognitive benefits to bilingualism. [53] For example, bilingual children perform better in non-verbal problem-solving tasks that depend on selective attention or inhibitory control, meaning they are better able to ignore distractions when engaged in a task. It is thought that their abilities to control and select have been enhanced through exercising linguistic choices between different languages. [54] In research that may have particular relevance for Welsh education, children who were bilingual in another Celtic language (Gaelic) were found also to be better at explaining the meaning of words than monolinguals. [55] Bilingual experience is likely to enable children to perceive more easily different ways that reality can be 'modelled' in language, and so see that the meanings of words are created, not given. Translation itself is, of course, a process which requires a creative, cognitive effort. A recent study reported that bilingualism has a significant positive effect on executive functioning (the ability to solve problems and achieve goals [56]) in pupils aged 8 to 11, especially when combined with stronger attention ability. [57] Executive functioning has also been found to be increased among bilingual adults, especially when combined with public speaking experience in the second language. [58] A recent,

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[50] Jones, 2016

[51] Darcy, 1963

[52] MacNamara, 1966

[53] Grosjean, 2010

[54] Bialystok & Feng, 2010

[55] Lauchlan et al., 2013

[56] Elliott, 2003

[57] Sorge et al., 2017

[58] Xie & Dong, 2017

comprehensive meta-analysis also revealed significantly increased working memory capacity among bilinguals, compared with monolinguals, suggesting that "experience managing two languages that compete for selection results in greater working memory capacity over time". [59] These factors may underpin the reasons why bilingual adults have been observed to be more resistant to the effects of dementia, [60, 61] although this finding has been contested. [62] Researchers have also noted some negative effects of bilingualism, such as size of vocabulary for any one language being smaller for bilinguals than monolinguals. [63] However this reduced vocabulary "does not change the normal properties of [pupils'] lexical knowledge nor does it interfere with the verbal skills being developed for academic achievement". [64] On balance, the available research therefore suggests that growing up bilingual confers cognitive benefits that outweigh any disadvantages. [65]

It is important to note, when educating pupils in both English and Welsh, that some higher order, meta-level skills in communicating are not language-specific. Pupils who learn the importance of taking account of a listener's knowledge and perspective when conversing, who have learned some strategies for presenting information persuasively to an audience, and have learned the basic social rules for using talk effectively for working in a team, should see the relevance of what they have learned whether using Welsh or English. However, the research suggests that while such 'far transfer' of skills can happen, it does not always happen automatically; [66] therefore, the common features of speaking situations in English and Welsh may need to be made explicit to learners, to help facilitate the transfer of these higher order communication skills.

3.3   Language for learning in school

Evidence that the quality of children's language experience in the early years is a powerful predictor of their subsequent educational achievement has been available

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[59] Grundy & Timmer, 2017 (p. 325)

[60] Schweizer et al., 2012

[61] Woemens et al., 2017

[62] Mukadam et al., 2017

[63] Oller et al., 2007

[64] Bialystock et al., 2010 (p. 530)

[65] Bialystock et al., 2005 (p. 121)

[66] Mannion & Mercer, 2016

for some time; [67, 68] and more recent research has provided more support for that view. [69] While the precise reasons may not yet be fully understood, it seems that it concerns the collective process of constructing educational knowledge (initially between parent and children and later between teachers and pupils), as well as establishing a larger vocabulary in the vital early years.

Research evidence, as cited above, leaves us in no doubt that children's home backgrounds vary immensely in terms of the opportunities and encouragement they provide for the development of oracy skills. While there is significant individual variation, in general children from economically deprived backgrounds are less likely to have had a rich talk experience at home; and so when they start school, they are likely to have a more limited talk repertoire. [70] They may find their school's 'way with words' alien and off-putting. [71] This can affect their motivation and attitudes to education in ways that can persist for years (and so affect their academic achievement even in the secondary school years). For many children, then, school offers the only second chance for transcending their destinies; but schools will only do so if they provide explicit instruction in the skills of effective spoken communication.

While being bilingual offers certain cognitive and social advantages as outlined above, pupils whose first language is not the main language of school (i.e. English as an Additional Language (EAL) and/or Welsh as an Additional Language (WAL)) are of course likely to encounter problems participating in lessons if they are not fluent in the school's main language. However, there is good evidence from school-based research that focusing on the development of those pupils' oracy skills can help them to overcome any such initial difficulties. The 'Talk Partners' strategy developed in Bradford by teachers and researchers is one example of such an effective intervention. [72]

By its nature, the process of teaching pupils the skills of effective spoken communication must involve induction into reasoned argument. Education often

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[67] Wells, 1986/2009

[68] Hart & Risley, 1995

[69] Roy et al., 2014

[70] Hart & Risley, 1995

[71] Heath, 1983

[72] Kotler et al., 2010

focuses on the transmission and acquisition of facts and skills. However, most teachers would agree that their pupils should also learn how to construct arguments to support their opinions, analyses, solutions and conclusions – and how to spot flaws in the arguments of others. While arguments can sometimes be presented through other communicative modes (such as the use of mathematical notation, and by physical demonstration in science or music), language is essentially involved in this process for all subjects. Equally important for educational achievement is the ability to express thoughts clearly in words. If young children have few opportunities at home to engage in reasoned discussions, or are invited to express their thoughts on experience by adults in the course of extended dialogue, then they will not have developed relevant skills for making the most of their educational experience in school.

Moreover, achieving competence in specific subjects involves learning to use the specialised language of subject disciplines; and those discourses are not mere jargon, but tools designed for pursuing collective scholarship and enquiry. As sociolinguists have shown, they are language varieties, or genres, with distinctive functions. Subject-specific vocabularies are goal-orientated systems for organising particular kinds of culturally based activity. [73] They represent ways that individual thinking is made accountable to the normative rules of collective activity within specific communities of thinkers; and fluency in the appropriate genres is a requisite for full admission to those communities. As one researcher put it: "'Talking Science' does not mean simply talking *about* science; it means *doing* science through the medium of language". [74] This notion that learning is fundamentally a process of language acquisition applies to any academic discipline, and to a great many non-academic activities also. [75, 76]

For this reason, the project to proactively promote the development of oracy skills across the Welsh curriculum should be seen as a complex (i.e. multifaceted) intervention that requires a combination of generic and subject-specific (and language-specific) components. We will return to the theme of implementing complex interventions in the *Practical recommendations for schools* section.

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[73] Christie & Martin, 1997
[74] Lemke, 1990 (p. ix; original emphasis)
[75] Goodman, 1996
[76] Barton, 2009

3.4   The development of children's skills in presentation and debate

Although initiatives to develop children's skills and confidence in participating in public speaking have proliferated in recent years, there has been remarkably little systematic enquiry by researchers into either the effectiveness of the training techniques used, or the effects of that training on outcomes such as improvements in social confidence, articulacy, academic achievement or social mobility. There has been evaluative research on how interventions affect the development of the more abstract attributes of 'emotional intelligence' or 'social competence' rather than oracy skills, from which some inferences can be drawn. For example, a 2003 report commissioned by HM Government, which carried out a review of approaches and methods in use in the UK, drew the following conclusions:

> "There are a number of effective programmes to promote emotional and social competence, which have a useful place within a wider supportive environment. There is clear evidence on the principles that underlie these programmes, for example teaching behaviours and skills explicitly and in participative and empowering ways, using a step by step approach, generalising to real life and making use of using co-operative group work and peer education as well as whole class approaches. It is recommended that the DfES encourages the use of explicit programmes and provides curriculum guidance that outlines these key principles." [77]

The review also concluded that "young people benefited greatly from a structured programme… that not only taught them the skills, but had teachers model them, give them clear feedback on their attempts to practice them and positive reinforcement for using them well. In contrast, approaches which do not include such explicit skills training, but which attempt to teach attitudes and values alone have been shown consistently not to be so effective… A study which compared a range of different approaches to teaching social competences found that only specific skills training made any difference". [78]

From our own experience and from the available evidence, we would strongly agree with that statement; however, we would add that presentational oracy skills need to be taught explicitly, and not just as an implicit part of a more general attempt to improve pupils' emotional sensitivity and social confidence. Indeed, we and others have argued that the causal chain is more likely to be effective the other way round:

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[77] Weare & Gay, 2003 (p. 7)
[78] *Op. cit.* (p. 68)

that by expressly teaching pupils how to use spoken language more effectively, they will develop their empathetic capabilities and social confidence, as well as their thinking and reasoning skills. [79, 80]

Recent publications by the English Speaking Union and Voice21 have gathered considerable evidence and support from researchers, educational practitioners and politicians to argue for the value of training pupils in the skills of public presentation and debate. [81, 82] With regard to enabling social mobility, it is worth reflecting on the fact that the development of presentational and debating skills is prioritised in elite independent schools, [83] whose alumni are disproportionately represented in establishment professions such as politics, media and the judiciary. [84] In contrast, such skills are rarely taught explicitly in the state sector. [85]

There are many methods that all schools can use to help pupils improve their spoken communication skills. These include practices such as philosophical inquiry and structured debate. The research relating to these practices are summarised below. However, it should be recognised that neither of these are methods for *teaching* oracy skills (and so do not obviate the need for explicit oracy teaching). Rather, they are activities that allow pupils to *practice* particular oracy skills in meaningful contexts.

Philosophical inquiry

Philosophical inquiry is an approach to whole-class teaching and learning that was developed at Columbia University by Professor Matthew Lipman in the 1970s. Lipman's approach – known as Philosophy for Children (P4C) – involves the use of a stimulus to elicit questions from the pupils, before one question is voted on to be discussed at length. P4C has been studied fairly extensively, and has been reported as leading to a number of positive outcomes for young people, including gains in

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[79] Mannion & Mercer, 2016
[80] Mercer, 2016
[81] ESU, 2016
[82] Millard & Menzies, 2016
[83] Stanford, 2015
[84] Grice, 2014
[85] Millard & Menzies, 2016

academic learning, [86] cognitive reasoning, [87, 88] and social and emotional outcomes. [89] In the UK, P4C training and accreditation is overseen by The Society for Advancing Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education (SAPERE). [90] There are very good reasons for encouraging its wider use in schools. However, as a pedagogical approach for developing oracy skills, P4C has two weaknesses. First, it does not focus on the use of talk itself, but on the more abstract notion of a community of enquiry. Pupils' attention is therefore not directed to the specific ways they speak, but only to the functions of language. Secondly, P4C sessions are usually kept separate from the study of curriculum subjects. As such, the vital notion of the transfer of skills in enquiry from those sessions into curriculum study is left implicit. This is a problem because research from cognitive science suggests that knowledge and skills tend to remain rooted in the contexts in which they were developed, and do not transfer easily to other contexts unless the process of transfer is made explicitly managed. [91, 92]

Structured debate

Debate has been defined as "a formal discussion where two opposing sides follow a set of pre-agreed rules to engage in an oral exchange of different points of view on an issue". [93] Debate was used as a form of public discourse in ancient Egypt over 4000 years ago, while the use of debate as a teaching strategy dates back at least as far as 411 B.C. in Athens. [94, 95] Roughly half of the research on the use of debates in schools focuses on the use of debate in lessons, while the remaining studies focus on inter-school competitive debating. [96] A large-scale study from the US found that pupils who engaged in a debating programme were more likely to graduate, more likely to meet college-readiness benchmarks, and had greater academic achievement over the course of high school, relative to comparable peers. [97] Similarly, a 2011 UK-based review of the literature on debating found that "debate

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[86] Gorard et al., 2017

[87] Topping & Trickey, 2007a

[88] Topping & Trickey, 2007b

[89] Trickey & Topping, 2006

[90] sapere.org.uk

[91] Willingham, 2007

[92] Goldstone & Day, 2012

[93] Akerman & Neale, 2011 (p. 9)

[94] Huryn, 1986

[95] Combs & Bourne, 1994

[96] Akerman & Neale, 2011 (p. 8)

[97] Mezuk et al., 2011

activities have a practical and meaningful influence on the attainment of young people from diverse backgrounds and, in particular, on the development of literacy skills". [98] This 2011 review also found evidence of links between debating and improved subject knowledge in science, history, art and English as a Foreign Language. In addition, pupils' perceptions indicated that "engaging in debate activities increases engagement and motivation in a subject, improves subject knowledge and helps pupils apply their learning to real-world situations". [99] There are therefore some excellent reasons to encourage the wider use of debate in schools (beyond those in the private sector in which it is already common). However, it has to be remembered that only some speaking and listening skills are developed in that context and that, as with P4C, the transfer of any skills developed through debate into subject-based learning is often left implicit.

Dialogic teaching methods

Dialogic teaching methods are essentially based on a Vygotskian, sociocultural conception of education, [100] in which language is seen as the prime tool for learning and thinking collectively. As an educational approach, it requires school leaders to understand how teachers can best use talk to develop a shared understanding or 'common knowledge' with their pupils, and for all school staff to foster an environment in which high quality teacher talk with children is recognised and put to good use. [101, 102] Teachers are encouraged to ask questions which elicit reasoned, thoughtful answers from pupils, and to use what they hear to assess pupils' levels of understanding and misunderstanding and take those into account in their authoritative presentations on subject matter. A recent, UK-based Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) involving 76 English primary schools evaluated the use of dialogic teaching methods in year 5 (aged 9 and 10). This study found that "children in dialogic teaching schools made two additional months' progress in English and science, and one additional month's progress in maths, compared to children in control schools, on average". [103] Another recent, large scale observational study of 72 teachers of year 6 in similar schools has found that better learning outcomes and

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[98] Akerman & Neale, 2011 (p. 5)
[99] *Op. cit.,* (p. 5)
[100] Daniels, 2001
[101] Edwards & Mercer, 1987/2013
[102] Mortimer & Scott, 2003
[103] Jay et al., 2017 (p. 4)

attitudes to schooling are achieved when teachers make frequent use of some dialogic teaching strategies like asking pupils to elaborate their ideas, and to ask questions to develop their understanding. [104] These studies add to a compelling body of literature to suggest that dialogic approaches to teaching and learning are associated with gains in reading comprehension and written literacy, [105, 106] academic attainment in subject learning such as English, science and maths, [107, 108] and learning about difference, inequality and social justice. [109] The dialogic teaching approach has a number of variants, and only some – such as the *Thinking Together* and *Learning Skills* programmes [110, 111] – include the explicit teaching of oracy skills.

Additional oracy-based teaching methods

Further to the methods outlined above, there are many other ways in which schools have sought to develop pupils' ability to present information, learn collaboratively and debate ideas. For example, the Harkness method is a collaborative approach to learning and problem solving first developed in the 1930s, whereby pupils and a teacher sit around a large round or oval table, in a format akin to a community of inquiry. The approach has been linked to gains in reading and writing; however, the published literature is extremely limited. [112, 113]

Additional dialogic methods that schools have used, but for which there is little or no evaluative research evidence to date, include speech days such as *Project Soapbox*; [114] speaking assemblies; [115] democratic activities such as the model United Nations; [116] inquiry-based pedagogy such as *Mantle of the Expert*; [117] and involving pupils in conflict resolution, such as through the use of trained peer mediators. [118]

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[104] Howe et al., 2017

[105] Wilkinson et al., 2015

[106] Alexander, 2004

[107] Adey & Shayer, 2015

[108] Gorard et al., 2017

[109] Nagda & Gurin, 2007

[110] Dawes et al., 2000; see also thinkingtogether.educ.cam.ac.uk/about

[111] Mannion & Mercer, 2016

[112] Orth et al., 2015

[113] Smith & Foley, 2015

[114] Sherrington, 2016 (p. 45-46)

[115] Earnshaw, 2016 (p. 11)

[116] Engel et al., 2017

[117] Swanson, 2016

[118] Sellman, 2011

Some pioneering schools, notably School 21, [119] have developed practical methods for teaching a range of oracy skills, including those for public speaking and collaborative learning. Available evaluative evidence to date supports the value of such teaching methods. [120]

3.5   The development of children's listening skills

Listening plays a vital role in language learning, [121, 122, 123, 124] and is arguably the most essential language skill. [125] Research on listening dates back to Rankin (1930), who suggested that listening is the most frequently used mode of communication amongst humans. There are four language skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening; of these, historically listening has received the least attention by researchers and teachers, perhaps because it is "the least explicit of the four language skills". [126] Lund suggests that the act of listening is unique because "it exists in time, rather than space – it is ephemeral in nature". [127]

Although listening is widely recognised as an important aspect of learning – especially in the field of second language (L2) learning – it remains one of the least understood processes: "While the other three language skills receive direct instructional attention, teachers often expect pupils to develop their listening skill by *osmosis* and without help". [128]

In the osmosis approach, also known as the *audiolingual* approach, it was believed that if pupils were simply exposed to a target language, their listening comprehension would improve through experience. This idea is rooted in a conception of listening as a passive skill. [129] However, as Rivers wrote more than 50 years ago: "Speaking does not of itself constitute communication unless what is being said is comprehended by

[119] e.g. listen to this clip from the BBC Radio 4 Today programme
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04ft2lv
[120] Maxwell et al., 2015
[121] Anderson & Lynch, 1988
[122] Dunkel, 1991
[123] Rost, 1990
[124] Rubin, 1994
[125] Oxford, 1993
[126] Vandergrift, 2004 (p. 1)
[127] Lund, 1991 (p. 201)
[128] Osada, 2004 (p. 54; original emphasis)
[129] Call, 1985

another person". [130] It was clear, even then, that "teaching the comprehension of spoken speeches is therefore of primary importance if the communication aim is to be reached". [131]

In recent years, researchers have come to understand that listening comprehension is in fact a "highly complex problem-solving activity" that can be broken down into a set of distinct sub-skills. [132] Because of this increased understanding of listening as a multifaceted phenomenon, there has been an increasing understanding that pupils' listening skills can be improved by teaching them explicit strategies to improve performance on these sub-skills. [133, 134, 135] As a result, it has become clear that not only can listening skills be taught, but that when this is done well, pupils learn more effectively.

Evidence for teaching listening

Spoken language differs from written language in a number of important ways. Buck (2001) identified three characteristics of speech that are particularly important for listening comprehension: (a) speech is encoded in the form of sound; (b) it is linear and takes place in real time, with no chance of review; and (c) it is linguistically different from written language. [136] From an educational standpoint therefore, it is clear that the teaching of speaking and listening skills requires a very different approach than written forms of literacy and numeracy.

Listening skills are difficult to observe, and difficult to define. [137] Despite this, a growing body of research has been conducted on listening, mainly in real work classroom or tutorial settings. These studies typically focus on listening comprehension, [138, 139]

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[130] Rivers, 1966 (p. 196)

[131] *Op. cit.* (p. 204)

[132] Byrnes, 1984 (p. 318)

[133] O'Malley & Chamot, 1989

[134] Oxford, 1990

[135] Rubin & Thompson, 1994

[136] Buck, 2001 (p. 4)

[137] Vandergrift, 2004

[138] Hadley, 2001

[139] Lund, 1990

listening strategies, [140, 141] or a combination of the two. [142, 143, 144] Throughout the last 20 years, research has consistently shown that teaching pupils strategies for improving their listening skills has a positive effect on listening comprehension. [145, 146, 147, 148, 149] A recent study also found that critical-analytical listening skills are associated with improved learning in maths and computer science at the undergraduate level. [150] Despite these positive findings however, listening remains relatively overlooked in language teaching, and in education more widely: "Although listening comprehension is now well recognised as an important facet of language learning, much work remains to be done. Unfortunately… listening is still regarded as the least important skill in language teaching". [151]

Mendelsohn (2001) and Berne (1996, 1998) reported that by the turn of the century, the research on listening skills had not yet reached the classroom. Our review of the literature suggests that this situation has not changed dramatically in the interim. Research on listening skills remains limited, and there is little evidence that teachers, school leaders and those who design curricula refer to the research on listening that does exist to inform their practice. As a consequence, teachers typically do not instruct their pupils about listening strategies or model the expectations that they expect from their pupils. [152, 153] We will now outline some practical strategies that schools can use to redress this imbalance.

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[140] Goh, 2002
[141] O'Malley & Chamot, 1990
[142] Zhang, 2012
[143] Chand, 2007
[144] Moradi, 2013
[145] Vandergrift et al., 2006
[146] Moradi, 2013
[147] Zhang, 2012
[148] Thompson & Rubin, 1996
[149] Selamat & Sidhu, 2013
[150] Ferrari-Bridgers et al., 2017
[151] Osada, 2004 (p. 57)
[152] Mendelsohn, 2001
[153] Berne, 1996, 1998

Metacognitive knowledge about listening

Increasing pupils' awareness of learning strategies can have positive influences on language learners' listening development. [154, 155, 156] For example, research on the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ), a 21-item instrument with "robust psychometric properties", [157] found that using the MALQ before and after instruction not only assessed listening over time, but also aided metacognitive reflection:

> "Using the MALQ can enable and empower L2 learners to become self-regulated listeners who can better capitalize on the aural input that they receive. By increasing their awareness of the listening process, students can learn how to become better listeners, which, ultimately, will enable them to learn/acquire another language more quickly and more efficiently." [158]

Following foundational work into metacognition by Flavell, [159] Vandergrift et al. (2006) identified three categories of metacognitive knowledge, representing "key components in the process of cognitive self-appraisal": [160] person knowledge, task knowledge and strategy knowledge. Table 2 gives some examples of these kinds of metacognitive knowledge, as they relate to L2 listening (based on Goh, 2002).

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[154] Bolitho et al., 2003

[155] Victori & Lockhart, 1995

[156] Wilson, 2003

[157] Vandergrift et al., 2006 (p. 432)

[158] *Op. cit.* (p. 454)

[159] Flavell, 1976, 1979

[160] Vandergrift et al., 2006 (p. 433)

Table 2. Metacognitive knowledge about listening. [161]

Category	Metacognitive knowledge	Examples from listening
Person knowledge	Knowledge about how factors such as age, aptitude, gender, and learning preferences can influence language learning. It also includes beliefs about oneself as a learner.	• Self-concepts and self-efficacy about listening • Specific listening problems, causes, and possible solutions
Task knowledge	Knowledge about the purpose, the demands, and the nature of learning tasks. It also includes knowledge of the procedures involved in accomplishing these tasks.	• Mental, affective and social processes involved in listening • Skills (e.g., listening for details, gist) needed for completing listening tasks • Factors that influence listening (e.g., text, speaker) • Ways of improving listening outside class
Strategy knowledge	Knowledge about strategies that are likely to be effective in achieving learning goals	• General and specific strategies to facilitate comprehension and cope with difficulties • Strategies appropriate for specific types of listening • Ineffective strategies

To investigate the impact of metacognitive strategies on listening comprehension, Zhang (2012) adapted the learning strategies framework developed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) with a focus on listening. This elicited a range of metacognitive strategies that pupils and teachers can use to improve listening comprehension; these are outlined in Table 3.

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[161] Based on Goh, 2002

Table 3. Strategies for improving listening skills. [162]

Category	Strategy	Application to listening
Metacognitive strategies	Self-monitoring	Checking and correcting one's comprehension while the listening task is taking place.
	Directed attention	Deciding in advance to attend to the listening task and ignore irrelevant distracters.
	Selective attention	Deciding in advance to attend to specific aspects or situational details that will cue the retention of listening material.
	Self-evaluation	Checking the outcomes of the performance.
	Self-reinforcement	Arranging rewards for oneself when the task has been accomplished successfully.
Cognitive strategies	Elaboration	Relating new information to other concepts in memory.
	Inferencing	Using available information to guess meanings of new items, predict outcomes, or fill in missing information.
	Note-taking	Writing down the main idea, important points, outline, or summary of information presented in the listening task.
	Transfer	Using previously acquired linguistic and/or conceptual knowledge to facilitate a listening task.
Social / affective strategies	Cooperation	Working with one or more peers to obtain feedback, pool information, or model a listening activity.

Strategies for promoting listening

As stated above, much of the research on listening skills has focused on the theory and practice of second language (L2) teachers. In a review of the literature on L2 listening, Berne highlighted nine key ideas about L2 listening comprehension practices to have emerged from the literature: [163]

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[162] Adapted from Zhang, 2012
[163] Berne, 1998 (p. 169-170)

1. Familiarity with passage content facilitates L2 listening comprehension. [164, 165]
2. Lower-proficiency L2 listeners attend to phonological or semantic cues, whereas higher-proficiency L2 listeners attend to semantic cues. [166]
3. The effectiveness of different types of speech modifications or visual aids varies according to the degree of L2 listening proficiency. [167, 168, 169, 170]
4. Repetition of passages should be encouraged as it appears to facilitate L2 listening comprehension more than other types of modifications. [171, 172, 173]
5. The use of pre-listening activities, particularly those that provide short synopses of the listening passage or allow listeners to preview the comprehension questions, facilitate L2 listening comprehension. [174, 175]
6. The use of video, as opposed to audio, as a means of presenting listening passages facilitates L2 listening comprehension, especially with regard to attitudinal and attentional factors. [176, 177, 178]
7. The use of authentic, as opposed to pedagogical, listening passages leads to greater improvement in L2 listening comprehension performance. [179]
8. Training in the use of listening strategies facilitates L2 listening comprehension and L2 learners can and should be taught how to use listening strategies. [180]
9. Due to the complex nature of listening comprehension, L2 listening practice should encompass a wide variety of situations where listening is required as well as different types of listening, different types of listening passages, different modes of presentation (e.g. live, video, audio), and different types of activities or tasks. [181, 182, 183, 184, 185]

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[164] Markham & Latham, 1987
[165] Chiang & Dunkel, 1992
[166] Conrad, 1985
[167] Mueller, 1980
[168] Chaudron, 1985
[169] Blau, 1990
[170] Chiang & Dunkel, 1992
[171] Lund, 1991
[172] Cervantes & Gainer, 1992
[173] Berne, 1995
[174] Herron, 1994
[175] Berne, 1995
[176] Rubin, 1990
[177] Secules et al.,1992
[178] Baltova, 1994
[179] Herron & Seay 1991
[180] Rubin, 1990
[181] Ur, 1984
[182] Rixon, 1986
[183] Anderson & Lynch, 1988
[184] Underwood, 1989
[185] Rost, 1991

The extent to which strategies for teaching listening are effective depends on the expertise of the pupil. For example, a recent study found that novices learn from instruction that combines reading and listening, while more knowledgeable learners benefit from a reading-only approach. This is an example of the expertise-reversal effect, the phenomenon whereby "instruction that is effective for novice learners is ineffective or even counterproductive for more expert learners". [186]

This brief summary of the research on listening skills suggests that there are a number of precise strategies teachers and pupils can use to significantly improve performance on tasks that involve listening. However, it is also clear that there exists a gap between research and practice, since there is little evidence that schools teach listening skills explicitly as a matter of course. This is typical of the wider research-practice gap in education, which has many causes and partly stems from the fact that the kinds of knowledge that researchers produce is often very different from the kinds of knowledge teachers really need. [187] We will return to the question of how to bridge the research-practice gap in the *Practical recommendations for schools* section.

3.6   Age-related expectations

As stated in the introduction, two recent publications outline age-related expectations with regard to speaking and listening in England (from birth to age 18) [188] and Wales (from reception to year 9 and beyond). [189] In 2015, The Communication Trust (a consortium of over 50 not-for-profit organisations) published three booklets under the title *Universally Speaking*: one from birth to 5 years, one from 5 to 11 years and one from 11 to 18 years. There is also a checklist that can be used to assess pupils aged 5 to 11 who are suspected of having additional speech, language and communication needs. [190] These guides, subtitled 'the ages and stages of children's communication development' are available using the links in the references, and there is no need to reproduce this information here.

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[186] Jiang et al., 2017 (p. 1)
[187] McIntyre, 2006 (p. 357)
[188] The Communication Trust, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c
[189] Welsh government, 2013
[190] The Communication Trust, 2015d

In the *Oracy across the curriculum* strand of the Welsh National Literacy and Numeracy Framework, it is stated that:

> "People communicate their needs, feelings, thoughts; retell experiences with others; and express their ideas through the power of the spoken word. People refer to their intentions by asking questions, voicing/expressing opinions and making choices through a variety of media, and by building on previous experiences. Listening and responding appropriately to others and a range of other media are an essential component in the development and use of language and in collaboration and discussion. [191]

In the framework, the *Oracy across the curriculum* strand focuses on one element of oracy – Developing and presenting information and ideas. This is subdivided into three aspects:

- Speaking – communicate ideas and information to a wide range of audiences and a variety of situations;
- Listening – listen and respond to the viewpoints and ideas of others;
- Collaboration and discussion – contribute to discussions and presentations. [192]

An advantage of this design of the framework is that having just three aspects ensures that the approach is of practical use in classrooms. However, the framework does not distinguish between different situations or contexts for speaking and listening, such as public presentation, talk with a teacher or other adult, or talk with peers in a group. As a consequence, we recommend that this framework should be used alongside the age-appropriate *Universally Speaking* booklets, as well as the Cambridge Oracy Skills Framework presented above (Figure 1, page 14).

3.7   Collaborative learning and problem solving

It is not surprising that employers want to recruit young people who not only have relevant technical knowledge and skills, but also are effective communicators and collaborative, creative problem solvers who can work well with others. However, as we discussed in Section 1, employers often complain that school leavers lack such skills. [193] The importance of young people developing these kinds of 'soft' skills is reflected in the recent addition of a 'collaborative problem-solving' test to the

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[191] Welsh Government, 2013 (p. 17)

[192] Welsh Government, 2013 (p. 17)

[193] Wright et al., 2010

international OECD PISA assessments, alongside the standard assessments of literacy, numeracy and science. [194] In a recent editorial, the OECD's Director for Education and Skills Andreas Schleicher pointed out that these skills are likely to become even more vital to people in the future, in a labour market that "is already being hollowed out by automation". [195]

The 2015 PISA results, published in November 2017, reveal that the UK performed above average in the collaborative problem-solving test, ranking between 8th and 12th of the 32 OECD countries that completed the assessment (22nd out of 102 economies globally). Of the 550 UK schools that took part in the assessment, 140 were from Wales. A breakdown of the UK PISA collaborative problem solving results by country can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. Collaborative problem solving PISA results (2015): UK comparison.

Country	Collaborative problem solving (mean score)	Ranking (out of 102 economies)
England	521	22nd
Northern Ireland	514	32nd
Scotland	513	33rd
Wales	496	51st
UK average	519	25th

Here it can be seen that Wales ranked halfway in terms of economies globally (51st out of 102), but was the lowest ranked of the four UK countries. A breakdown of the relative scores of the four UK countries can be seen in Figure 2.

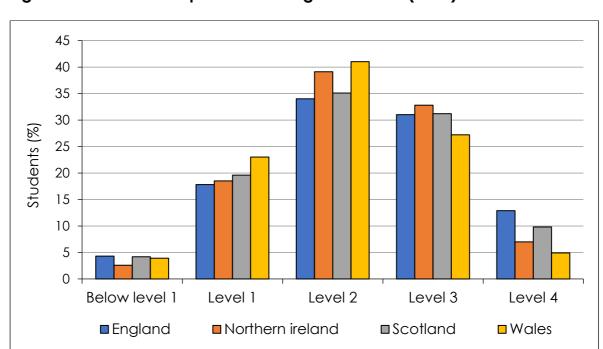[194] OECD, 2017a
[195] OECD, 2017b (p. 5)

Figure 2. Collaborative problem solving PISA results (2015): UK breakdown.

The PISA assessments test pupils individually in a simulation, with a computer agent acting as the other group member/s. This helps overcome the problems of assessing an individual within a group, but removes the normal social elements of collaborating within groups of real people, which may limit the validity of the test. It is also worth noting that taken as a whole, the PISA results overall scores were considered to be low, even for high-performing countries. For example, even in Singapore, the country that performed the highest in the collaborative problem solving, only 20% of pupils were able to achieve the highest level 4. [196] As Luckin has commented:

> "The PISA report… whilst giving cause to celebrate the excellent performance from many students across the world, also gives cause for concern about the lack of high-level collaborative problem-solving skills amongst students from all countries, including those who performed the best. This is something that all societies need to address with some urgency." [197]

The PISA findings reflect the views of employers that the skills of working together in a team are not yet being taught effectively in educational systems throughout the world. The ability to think collectively may be an important and defining characteristic of our species, but that does not mean that children are born knowing

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[196] OECD, 2017a

[197] Luckin, 2017

how to do it well. To make the most of collaborative learning activities, it is necessary for participants to use their social brains and the cultural and psychological tools of spoken language to best effect. As well as developing individuals in a Vygotskian sense, more recently researchers have studied the effects of training pupils in the use of language as a tool for collective reasoning, or 'interthinking', as discussed above.

The value of collaborative, group-based activity in the classroom has been clearly demonstrated, in relation to the study of various curriculum subjects. [198, 199, 200] However, research on classroom-based group work embodies a paradox: it has shown the value of collaborative learning, but it has also shown that much of the group activity which goes on in classrooms has little educational value. The relevant research was mainly carried out some time ago, [201, 202] but no evidence has been offered more recently to suggest that the situation has improved significantly. For example, a 2009 meta-analysis of collaborative learning approaches for developing reading skills concluded that:

> "not all discussion approaches are created equal, nor are they equally powerful at increasing students' high-level comprehension of text… It is one thing to get students to talk to each other during literacy instruction but quite another to ensure that such engagement translates into significant learning" [203]

One finding to emerge from the literature is that in order for group work to be effective, two key conditions must be met: first, there should be a clear group goal; and second, there should be individual accountability within the group. [204] In addition, one of the strongest influences on how pupils talk during group work is the way their teacher talks with them. [205] Yet it seems that in the past, teachers and school leaders have not fully realised their role in guiding and modelling pupils' effective use of talk. [206, 207] Some studies have indicated that the quality of collaboration between pupils can be enhanced to some extent if teachers foster an

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[198] Sfard, 2001

[199] Mercer & Sams, 2006

[200] Slavin et al., 2009

[201] Bennett & Cass, 1989

[202] Wegerif & Scrimshaw, 1997

[203] Murphy et al., 2009 (p. 761)

[204] Slavin, 1988

[205] Webb et al., 2006

[206] Fisher & Larkin, 2008

[207] Millard & Menzies, 2016

atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in the classroom. [208] However, the evidence suggests that the quality of group work, and pupils' skills in collaborative problem solving, are most effectively developed by (a) raising their awareness of how they talk in groups, and how this works well or badly; and (b) teaching them how to engage in the kind of reasoned discussion which is known in the UK as 'exploratory talk', [209] and in the USA as 'accountable talk'. [210]

Exploratory talk is often contrasted with two other modes of interaction, disputational and cumulative talk, which have been described as 'social modes of thinking". [211] These three categories of talk are discussed in more detail on the *Thinking Together* website; [212] for the purposes of this review, this short summary will serve as an adequate definition:

- "Cumulative talk: in which speakers build positively but uncritically on what the other has said;
- Disputational talk: characterised by disagreement and individualised decision making;
- Exploratory talk: in which partners engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas". [213]

These categories are not considered to be distinct or mutually exclusive, and a single conversation can include elements of each; however, it is a useful tripartite model for thinking about the ways in which children (and adults) interact. While it is difficult to see any educational value in disputational talk, cumulative talk can be useful when sharing information or pooling ideas. However exploratory talk is the most powerful tool for promoting learning and development. Exploratory talk is well illustrated in the transcript below of three year 5 pupils working together in the classroom on a science project. They are predicting how many sheets of paper will completely obscure a light source:

Ross   OK. (*reads*)'Talk together about a plan to test all the different
            types of paper.'
Alana   Dijek, how much did you think it would be for tissue paper?

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[208] Kutnick & Colwell, 2010

[209] Mercer & Littleton, 2007

[210] Michaels et al, 2007

[211] Mercer, 1995 (p. 104)

[212] thinkingtogether.educ.cam.ac.uk

[213] Wegerif et al., 1998 (p. 200)

Dijek	At least ten because tissue paper is thin. Tissue paper can wear out and you can see through it… and light can shine through it.
Alana	OK. Thanks. (*to Ross*) Why do you think it?
Ross	Because I tested it before!
Alana	No, Ross, what did you think? How much did you think? Tissue paper. How much tissue paper did you think it would be to block out the light?
Ross	At first I thought it would be five, but second…
Alana	Why did you think that?
Ross	Because when it was in the overhead projector you could see a little bit of it, but not all of it, so I thought it would be like, five to block out the light.
Alana	That's a good reason. I thought, I thought it would be between five and seven because… I thought it would be between five and seven because normally when you're at home, if you lay it on top, with one sheet you can see through but if you lay on about five or six pieces on top you can't see through. [214]

It can be seen that the pupils ask each other for information and opinions; they seek reasons and provide them, and evaluate any proposals that are made. In exploratory talk, all members of the group work towards a joint conclusion. Opinions are treated with respect, and each speaker has the opportunity to develop their ideas. However, most group work in school does not normally contain much exploratory talk – the kind of reasoned discussion that is necessary for successful collaboration. [215] For exploratory talk to happen reliably, research suggests that the teacher needs to:

(1)   model and guide pupils' use of language for reasoning. They should ask pupils to give reasons to support their views, engage them in extended discussions of topics, and encourage them to see what makes discussion productive;

(2)   establish a set of 'ground rules' for generating exploratory talk during group work, building on pupils' own awareness of what makes a good discussion.

A set of 'ground rules for exploratory talk', which a year 5 teacher agreed with her class, can be seen in Figure 3, below. [216]

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[214] Mercer & Howe, 2012 (p. 16)

[215] Littleton & Mercer, 2013

[216] thinkingtogether.educ.cam.ac.uk/resources/Ground_rules_for_Exploratory_Talk.pdf

Figure 3. A 'child friendly' set of ground rules for Exploratory Talk.

<div style="border:1px solid #000; padding:1em;">

Class 5B's rules for Exploratory Talk

1. We will talk together to think about what to do.
2. We will share what we know with each other.
3. We will ask everyone to say what they think.
4. Everyone will listen carefully to others and consider what we hear.
5. We will give reasons for what we say.
6. We will pay attention and try to think of good ideas.
7. We will decide what to do only when everyone has said all they want.
8. We will try to agree about what we think.

</div>

In summary, research has shown that much of the group work that happens in school is not productive. Yet research has also shown that group activity can be a powerful aid to learning, and we can describe what pupils need to do to make it work well. We also know, with some precision, how teachers can help them to develop the oracy skills needed for talking and working productively together. [217, 218]

4.   Assessing oracy

4.1   The challenges of assessing oracy

This review of the research evidence supports the view that the development of children's spoken language skills is at least as important for their future lives as the development of written forms of literacy and numeracy. Teachers need to assess the strengths and weakness of their pupils' spoken language skills if they are to provide suitable guidance and instruction; and they need to be able to assess the effects of their teaching on pupils' skills. It is also arguable that oracy is more likely to be recognised as an important part of the school curriculum if it can be assessed. As with written literacy and numeracy, oracy can be taught and assessed. However, there are a number of challenges associated with assessing spoken language skills. In this section we will outline some of those challenges, and consider some practical ways in which they may be overcome.

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[217] Dawes & Warwick, 2012
[218] Dawes & Sams, 2017

Douglas Barnes originally addressed issues relating to the difficulty of assessing spoken language competence resulting from the social situation in which it is embedded. [219] He argued that what should be tested are 'situated speech strategies' in order that the assessments have validity for life as well as in the classroom. Howe described three main challenges for the assessment of oracy: 1) the fact that spoken language is ephemeral (i.e. it does not leave a paper trail in the way that written work does); 2) the restriction on the number of pupils that can be assessed at a time; and 3) the context specificity of speech acts (that is, a person may be a competent speaker in one situation but not in another). [220] Following Barnes, Howe argued that to assess fairly, we need to provide pupils with a wide range of contexts in which to gather evidence. Related to this, several researchers have pointed out the importance of any talk task having a genuine purpose, in contexts where pupils progress by "gaining increasing control over... language to a wider range of audiences, for a greater variety of purposes and in different settings". [221]

The rationale and methodology for teaching and assessing oracy are rarely given sufficient treatment in teacher training courses; as a consequence, teachers often feel less confident about what constitute oracy skills in comparison with literacy skills. For example, a study of Australian teachers in 13 secondary schools concluded that the teachers had a narrow conception of oracy, mainly identifying it with the ability to make formal public presentations. [222] In the assessment of such performances, they focused on a small number of oracy-related behaviours such as body language, eye contact and voice tone. Other talk-based activities, such as group work, were considered to be "peripheral to performance", [223] despite initiating other uses of oral language, for example negotiating, persuading and refusing. Teachers did see these as necessary communicative skills for their pupils, but overall felt that they "do not have the skills to assess oral language". [224]

One study of collaborative tasks for assessing oracy identified a number of problems, including: the amount of time it takes; the social interactions, motivations and expectations of teachers and pupils; and questions of group composition when

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[219] Barnes, 1976, 2008

[220] Howe, 1991

[221] Cinamon & Elding, 1998 (p. 220)

[222] Oliver, Haig & Rochecouste, 2005

[223] *Op. cit.* (p. 218)

[224] *Op. cit.* (p. 212)

assessing group work. [225] An additional challenge in oracy assessment is that, in many situations, talk involves the integrated activities of two or more people; as such, reliably assessing the performance of individuals can be difficult to achieve. To assess talk in group tasks, it has been suggested that each individual's performance should be based on the aggregate of their performances over many groups and over multiple contexts, as well as using feedback from all group members about each individual's contribution. [226] While this represents an ideal, in reality it is impractical since teachers are unlikely to be able to carry out multiple assessments of every individual in their class across a range of contexts. It is therefore clear that other, more school-facing approaches have to be found.

4.2   How can oracy be assessed?

In the UK, the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) language survey monitored thousands of pupils aged 11 and 15, and included tasks designed to assess their oracy skills. [227, 228] The tasks were designed to reflect experiences the pupils may come across in school or everyday life, and most required both the interpretation and production of talk. The main conclusions of the APU oracy survey were that it is indeed feasible to monitor speaking and listening performance on a national scale; that the marker reliability was satisfactory; and that the assessment materials had communicative validity. It was noted that "almost all 11 year olds can modify their speaking strategies appropriately in accordance with the demands of different tasks and different audiences". [229] In a similar but smaller-scale study in the Netherlands, the oracy skills of 200 10-12 year-old pupils were measured. [230] Six tasks were constructed and the study concluded that the assessment of oracy is feasible for this age group, with only 13% of the pupils failing or responding at a 'doubtful' level.

Although there were criticisms of the APU methods, they did demonstrate that it is possible to carry out reasonably robust and valid assessments of oracy. [231, 232] More recently, test developers have attempted to design more interactive tasks, such as

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[225] Hayes, 1991

[226] Wilson et al., 2012

[227] APU, 1985a

[228] APU, 1985b

[229] APU, 1985a (p. 64)

[230] van den Bergh, 1987

[231] Maybin, 1988

[232] Brooks, 1989

the Speaking and Listening Profile that was designed to help teachers implement the English National Curriculum. [233] In 2008 the Assessment of Pupil Progress (APP) framework was launched as a diagnostic in-school assessment scheme for teachers in the UK to use to track progress and identify targets. [234] It contained four assessment foci for speaking and listening as part of its English framework: talking to others, talking with others, talking within role-play and drama, and talking about talk. Following this, the UK Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) described four strands of relevant oracy skills: listening and responding; speaking and presenting; group discussion and Interaction; drama, role-play and performance. [235] Progression was measured by whether pupils could:

- Judge their own and others' skills in spoken language and listening;
- Sustain talk and strive for certain effects in formal situations;
- Sustain and develop discussion for particular purposes;
- Think through issues and problems;
- Appreciate and articulate implied meaning;
- Apply their learning to complex and unfamiliar demands.

In a mark of the changing fortunes of oracy in England, in 2013 Ofqual, the examinations regulator, announced that the speaking and listening component would no longer count towards the final General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grade for English; this followed "concerns about the effectiveness of the moderation of controlled assessment in the speaking and listening component". [236] Outside of the English school system there are organisations offering assessments of oracy skills. The English Speaking Union (ESU) Centre for Speech and Debate gives guidelines for judging debates at Key Stage 2 (aged 7-11); the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) provides assessments of communication; and the Communication Trust (2013) has a set of 'Speech, language and communication progression tools' for use at various ages. These, however, are to be used as a screening tool with the aim of enabling teachers to identify pupils with specific language needs and address spoken language, understanding and using vocabulary, sentences storytelling and narrative, and social interaction.

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[233] Latham, 2005
[234] QCDA, 2008
[235] QCDA, 2010
[236] Ofqual, 2013 (p. 2)

Internationally, a similar mix of approaches adds to a picture of varied practice. For example, the Scottish Survey of Literacy includes an assessment of Listening and Talking using Group Discussion tasks at ages 8, 11 and 13. Each pupil is assigned one of 5 performance categories around participation and engagement. [237] Oracy Australia provides oracy assessments in which the tasks of oral presentation, reading aloud, memorised oral interpretation of literature or improvisation, and listening and responding are rated. [238] In the USA, the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts, adopted by most states, are a set of guidelines for teachers and parents showing the expected standard at the end of each grade of schooling. [239] These standards include a speaking and listening component which requires 11-year-olds to engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners; presentation of knowledge and ideas is another of the strands, and there is an emphasis on the ability to adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks. However, none of these schemes include a framework which identifies the full range of skills involved in meeting the assessment criteria.

Many of the problems outlined above can be overcome using the methods developed in conjunction with the Cambridge *Oracy Assessment Toolkit*, which has three components:

1. the *Oracy Skills Framework*;
2. a set of oracy tasks, which provide the basis for assessment; and
3. a rating scheme for assessing performance on the tasks and giving feedback to the pupils.

The *Oracy Skills Framework* was devised in consultation with a range of academic and professional experts, including some who were involved in earlier initiatives on assessing oracy in the UK. Those experts agreed that such a framework did not exist, but would be of potentially great value to assessors and teachers (and probably to pupils also). The framework differentiates the various skills that are required for effective spoken communication. These range from the 'physical' (voice projection, gesture and so on), 'linguistic' (using appropriate vocabulary, choosing the right register and language variety for the occasion), 'cognitive' (such as organising content well, taking account of the level of understanding of an audience) and

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[237] SSLN, 2014
[238] Education Department of Western Australia, 1997
[239] CCSI, 2015

'social and emotional' (such as managing group activities, taking an active role in collaborative problem solving, etc). A visual representation of the *Oracy Skills Framework* can be found in Figure 1 (page 14). [240]

The *Oracy Assessment Toolkit* was created through a partnership between the University of Cambridge and School 21, funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). It is designed for use in schools to assess pupils aged 11-12 arriving at secondary school, in year 7 of the English system. It is available for free, with all its component parts, on the University of Cambridge website. [241] The *Oracy Assessment Tasks* cover three important types of spoken communication: (1) a formal presentational speech; (2) an instructional activity whereby one pupil enables another to complete a specific task; and (3) a group discussion in which three pupils are asked to reach joint conclusions about a specific topic. A *Rating Scheme* enables teachers to give pupils a rating for each of the skills relevant to each task. This information can be used by a teacher to draw skill profiles of individual pupils and to plan relevant teaching on the use of spoken language. By using the toolkit to make baseline and post-instruction assessments of pupils, a teacher can judge the progress pupils have made over a period of time. Video examples of pupils performing the tasks, with the ratings they received, are also available on the website. Although designed for year 7, the *Oracy Toolkit* can be adapted fairly easily for use with pupils aged 10-14.

5.   Oracy across the Welsh Curriculum

5.1   The four purposes of the Welsh curriculum

The Donaldson report *Successful Futures* recommended that "the purposes of the curriculum in Wales should be that children and young people develop as:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world

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[240] Also available as a poster: https://twitter.com/voice21oracy/status/939438232558886912
[241] https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/oracytoolkit/

- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society". [242]

By embodying the key principles and implementing the recommendations outlined in this report with regard to embedding oracy across the curriculum, Welsh schools would meet these four purposes in the following ways:

- By becoming skilled in using spoken language to acquire, share, present and develop ideas and information, pupils will become able at learning, reasoning, problem solving and developing new knowledge in different contexts;
- By becoming skilled in using speaking and listening skills for working collaboratively with others, pupils will become effective members of groups and teams in workplaces and the wider society;
- Through developing skills in communicating effectively across a range of social situations and types of task, pupils will be better able to contribute to efforts to improve the everyday lives of people in their local and wider communities. They will be able to take more active roles in making their voices, and those of their communities, heard in the wider world;
- Through gaining confidence and competence in expressing their ideas clearly and persuasively, pupils will become able to take part actively and effectively in their own education, as members of families and communities, and in the democratic processes of their society.

In addition to this, in a recent submission to the Curriculum and Assessment Group by the LLC Area of Learning, the five strands below were identified as 'what matters':

1. To use languages effectively we must understand that they are constructed, connected, and evolving.
2. Using languages effectively helps us to belong, contribute, create and communicate.
3. As capable communicators we use and adapt languages for different audiences, purposes and contexts.
4. Communicating accurately with others contributes to how we understand, sympathise, empathise, connect and share experiences and work with others.

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[242] Donaldson, 2015 (p. 29)

5. Experiencing and enjoying literature promotes critical and creative thinking, stimulating our imagination and develops our understanding of the world.

An additional concept was also referred to as integral to all the above: "We adapt our language for different contexts". [243] If one accepts the idea of oral literature, each of these points are squarely addressed in the key principles and practical recommendations outlined in this report.

5.2   A narrative of progression

Because large scale, systematic surveys have never been carried out, and because of the methodological issues with assessing oracy outlined above, there is no equivalent to the concept of 'reading age' in relation to oracy. However, research has provided some relevant information from which we can make inferences about what might normally be expected.

In the Statutory Guidance for the Literacy and Numeracy Framework for the Welsh Curriculum, [244] a set of 'learners are able to' statements' are presented for each year of schooling, from nursery through to year 11 (with an 'extension' specification beyond that). [245] In general terms, those statements are consistent with what is known from research on children's language development and are reasonable expectations for what a child (who does not suffer from specific language impairments or other relevant learning difficulties) should be able to do if they are given the appropriate teaching, guidance and opportunities to practice. We therefore endorse what is presented here, and recommend its use by classroom practitioners teaching and assessing oracy, and by pupils for reflecting on their oracy skills in different contexts.

Rather than duplicate that set of statements, below we offer a brief research-informed commentary on age-related expectations in relation to the main types of oracy tasks or situations in which pupils need to learn to be competent. This is intended to augment existing documentation such as the Welsh 'Oracy across the curriculum' framework, and the Communication Trust's *Universally Speaking* booklets. Please note that these are generalised statements, to be read with the caveat that

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[243] LLC, 2017 (p. 5)
[244] Welsh Government, 2013
[245] Welsh Government, 2014

pupils can vary significantly in what they are capable of achieving at any age.

Public presentations and debates

From their first year in school, pupils should be encouraged to share their thoughts and report on what they have done to the teacher, and where possible to their classmates. They will benefit from sensitive feedback from their teacher about how well they do this, with regard to clarity of content and vocal presentation.

By the time pupils are in the later primary years, unless they have specific spoken language difficulties, they can be expected to take responsibility for reporting back from group work. For this reason, all pupils should be asked to report back sometimes, rather than the most confident and articulate always being allowed to self-select. By the age of 10, all pupils should have experienced a range of opportunities for oral presentations to the class on topics of their choosing. However, a recent visit to School 21 suggests that pupils as young as year 3 (aged 7-8 years) are capable of presenting 5-10 minute speeches from memory to a hall of adults, using a range of effective rhetorical techniques.

Whilst primary age pupils should be introduced to simplified debates where appropriate, teaching them the procedures of formal structured debate is probably best left until the early years of secondary school, since debate requires a certain maturity of reasoning and grasp of formal language norms. At secondary level, pupils should be provided with opportunities to make public speeches to larger audiences, taking on board more sophisticated rhetorical techniques and levels of understanding of particular audiences.

Working collaboratively in groups

Research has shown that even pupils in the first years of school can be taught how to work well in groups. As with older pupils (and adults), this is should begin by asking them to reflect on how they talk and work together (successfully or otherwise), and by teachers setting up and agreeing with pupils an appropriate set of 'ground rules' for how they will use talk to carry out collaborative tasks. [246, 247] As described in

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[246] Kershner et al., 2012
[247] Whitebread et al., 2013

Section 3, this has been shown to lead to significant improvements in the quality of group work and learning outcomes. [248]

Older pupils can also be asked to take on particular roles within groups (such as scribe or chair); and they can also take the role of assessors or 'talk detectives' by observing and constructively criticizing the ways their peers talk and work together. Useful resources for teachers for pursuing this are available on the *Thinking Together* website, [249] and on the Voice 21 and English Speaking Union websites. [250, 251]

Moving from dependence to independence

When seeking to develop pupils' presentational or group working skills, teachers should seek to move pupils from dependence to independence. This is best done by focusing on the development of one skill at a time, using tried and tested teaching methods such as:

a) modeling the skill – what a given skill looks like in practice, either through the use of video or role-play;

b) explaining the skill – providing a rationale for the use of a particular skill and when it should be used; this might also involve deconstructing the skill into its constituent parts, or considering what might happen if that skill is not used, or if it is used badly or in an inappropriate context;

c) providing opportunities for deliberate practice – it can be a good idea to let pupils work together in pairs or threes at first, with people with whom they are familiar (joint construction), before moving on to using the skill independently in more challenging contexts;

d) combining the use of different skills over time, in a range of contexts, once individual skills have been practiced and mastered;

e) providing plenty of rich, formative feedback at each stage, using a combination of peer, self and teacher assessment.

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[248] Mercer & Littleton, 2007
[249] thinkingtogether.educ.cam.ac.uk/resources
[250] voice21resources.org/
[251] esu.org/our-work/esuresources

6. Key principles derived from research evidence

6.1 The importance of oracy

- Oracy can be defined simply as "the ability to use the oral skills of speaking and listening". [252]

- Researchers in developmental psychology, linguistics and education have emphasised the importance of talk in children's cognitive and social development. [253, 254]

- The importance of interpersonal communication was first recognised by Vygotsky; "it is through speech and action with others that we learn to reason and gain individual consciousness". [255]

- The act of reading any text relies on the interpretative efforts of a reader, as well as on the communicative efforts and intentions of the author. [256]

- Research from neuroscience and evolutionary psychology now supports the view that language evolved as an integrated component of human cognition, rather than as a separate and distinct capacity. [257, 258, 259]

- The amount and quality of pre-school children's conversations in the home are powerful predictors of educational attainment in secondary school. [260, 261]

- There is a positive relationship between the use of extended and cumulative responses in group interactions, and pupils' learning. [262]

- Learning outcomes improve when pupils are explicitly taught how to use talk effectively in groups. [263]

- Instructing pupils in effective spoken communication is associated with improved:

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[252] Wilkinson, 1965 (p. 13)

[253] van Oers et al., 2008

[254] Whitebread et al., 2013

[255] Vass & Littleton, 2010 (p. 107)

[256] Mercer, 2000 (p. 5)

[257] Goswami, 2009

[258] Mercer, 2008, 2013

[259] Mercier & Sperber, 2011

[260] Goswami & Bryant, 2007

[261] Hart & Risley, 1995

[262] Howe & Abedin, 2013

[263] Dawes, 2008

- o learning in traditional subjects [264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271]
- o literacy skills [272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277]
- o cognitive reasoning [278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284]
- o communication for pupils with SEND [285, 286, 287, 288, 289]
- o communication for bilingual pupils [290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298]
- o transfer of comprehension and reasoning skills to other subjects [299, 300, 301, 302]

- Instructing pupils in effective spoken communication is associated with social and emotional gains:

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[264] Adey & Shayer, 2015

[265] Gorard et al., 2015

[266] Hanley et al., 2015

[267] Kutnick & Berdondini, 2009

[268] Mannion & Mercer, 2016

[269] O-Connor et al., 2015

[270] Rivard & Straw, 2000

[271] Wilkinson et al., 2015

[272] Bishop & Snowling, 2004

[273] Dockrell et al., 2015

[274] Dockrell & Connelly, 2009

[275] Donaldson & Cooper, 2013

[276] Dunsmuir & Blatchford, 2004

[277] Maxwell et al., 2015

[278] Alexander, 2008

[279] Goswami, 2015

[280] Goswami & Bryant, 2007

[281] Mercer et al., 1999

[282] Mercer & Howe, 2012

[283] Resnick et al., 2015

[284] Topping & Trickey, 2015

[285] Goatley, 1996

[286] Maxwell et al., 2015

[287] Peacey, 2009

[288] Sheehy, 2009

[289] The Communication Trust, 2013

[290] Akerman & Neale, 2011

[291] Bialystok & Feng, 2010

[292] Grosjean, 2010

[293] Grundy & Timmer, 2016

[294] Inoue & Nakano, 2004

[295] Lauchlan et al., 2013

[296] Sorge et al., 2016

[297] Schweizer et al., 2012

[298] Woemens et al., 2017

[299] Adey & Shayer, 2015

[300] Mannion & Mercer, 2016

[301] Wilkinson et al., 2015

[302] Zohar & Nemet, 2002

- o Increased self-esteem / self-confidence [303, 304]
- o Increased engagement and on-task focus [305, 306, 307]
- o Enhanced social development and peer interactions [308, 309]
- o Improved emotional intelligence [310, 311, 312]
- o Greater empathy [313]
- o Increased ability to handle stress [314]

- There is strong evidence that the amount and quality of spoken communication experiences in the early years of childhood is linked to outcomes later in life:

  - o Social disadvantage [315, 316, 317, 318, 319]
  - o Exclusions, juvenile offending [320, 321]
  - o Future earnings [322, 323]

- Helping pupils develop better oral language skills can help them become better at reasoning and learning both together and on their own. [324]

- Language skills are integrated with non-verbal reasoning skills, and language experience is linked to the development of those skills. [325]

- By helping pupils develop their oracy skills (such as those involved in collaborative group work and making public speeches) teachers will also help pupils develop the reasoning skills which be valuable for academic study and life in the wider world. [326]

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[303] Ofsted, 2010

[304] Trickey & Topping, 2006

[305] Chiu, 2004

[306] Kutnick & Berdondini, 2009

[307] Webb et al., 2015

[308] Howe & Mercer, 2007

[309] Mannion & Mercer, 2016

[310] Alexander, 2008

[311] Ofsted, 2003

[312] QCA, 2008

[313] Jensen, 2008

[314] Akerman & Neale, 2011

[315] The Communication Trust, 2013

[316] Hart & Risley, 2005

[317] Locke et al., 2002

[318] Roulstone et al., 2011

[319] Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2010

[320] Bryan et al., 2007

[321] Clegg, 2004

[322] Ashley et al., 2015

[323] De Vries & Rentfrow, 2016

[324] Littleton & Mercer, 2010

[325] Baker, 2006 (p. 168–9)

[326] Xie & Dong, 2017

- The capability to jointly plan our actions and review them collectively is unique to humans; it is linked to the evolution of language itself. [327]

- We do not just use language to interact, we use it to 'interthink' – defined as the "everyday process whereby people collectively and creatively use talk to solve problems and make joint sense of the world". [328]

- 'Soft skills', such as team working and communication, are an important aspect of an individual's employability, and they will be in higher demand as we move towards a more knowledge-intensive economy and increased automation. [329]

- Employers commonly say that members of their workforce, especially those engaged in creative activities, management and customer-related roles, need well-developed skills in spoken communication. [330] [331]

- Despite the compelling evidence that teaching pupils how to speak and listen effectively has a positive impact across such a wide variety of outcomes – and despite longstanding complaints from employers that school leavers are ill-equipped for the workplace – oracy has often been the 'poor relation' to literacy and numeracy in schools, especially within the state sector, being given much less attention in teaching and assessment. [332]

6.2   Oracy and bilingualism

- Evidence from recent research suggests that that there are significant cognitive benefits to bilingualism. [333]

- Bilingual pupils perform better in non-verbal problem-solving tasks that depend on selective attention or inhibitory control (i.e. they are better able to ignore distractions when engaged in a task); it is thought that their abilities to control and select have been enhanced through exercising linguistic choices between different languages. [334]

- Children who are bilingual in a Celtic language (Gaelic) have been found to be better at explaining the meaning of words than monolinguals. [335]

- Bilingualism has a significant positive effect on executive functioning (the ability to solve problems and achieve goals) in pupils aged 8 to 11, especially when combined with stronger attention ability. [336]

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[327] Mercer, 2013

[328] Littleton & Mercer, 2013 (p. 115)

[329] Wright et al., 2010 (p. 8)

[330] CBI, 2016

[331] UKCES, 2010 (p 16).

[332] Millard & Menzies, 2016

[333] Grosjean, 2010

[334] Bialystok & Feng, 2010

[335] Lauchlan et al., 2013

[336] Sorge et al., 2016

- Executive functioning has also been found to be increased among bilingual adults, especially when combined with public speaking experience in the second language. [337]

- There is strong evidence of significantly increased working memory capacity among bilinguals, compared with monolinguals, suggesting that "experience managing two languages that compete for selection results in greater working memory capacity over time". [338]

- Bilingual adults have been observed to be more resistant to the effects of dementia, [339, 340] although this has been contested. [341]

- On balance, the available research suggests that growing up bilingual confers cognitive benefits that outweigh any disadvantages. [342]

6.3   Language for learning in school

- The quality of children's language experience in the early years is a powerful predictor of their subsequent educational achievement. [343, 344, 345]

- In general, children from economically deprived backgrounds are less likely to have had a rich talk experience at home; and so when they start school, they are likely to have a more limited talk repertoire. [346]

- There is good evidence that focusing on the development of oracy skills among pupils whose first language is not the school's main language (i.e. EAL, or WAL) can help them to overcome any such initial difficulties. [347]

- The vast majority of academic learning in schools can usefully be viewed as a process of language acquisition. [348, 349]

- Subject-specific vocabularies are goal-orientated systems for organising particular kinds of culturally based activity. [350]

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[337] Xie & Dong, 2017

[338] Grundy & Timmer, 2016 (p. 325)

[339] Schweizer et al., 2012

[340] Woemens et al., 2017

[341] Mukadam et al., 2017

[342] Bialystock et al., 2005 (p. 121)

[343] Wells, 1986/2009

[344] Hart & Risley, 1995

[345] Roy et al., 2014

[346] Hart & Risley, 1995

[347] Kotler et al., 2010

[348] Goodman, 1996

[349] Barton, 2009

[350] Christie & Martin, 1997

- The quality of collaboration between pupils can be enhanced if teachers foster an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in the classroom. [351]

- Teachers should model and guide pupils' use of language for reasoning. They should ask pupils to give reasons to support their views, engage them in extended discussions of topics, and encourage them to see what makes discussion productive. [352]

- Teachers can significantly enhance the quality of classroom talk through the use of 'ground rules for exploratory talk', building on pupils' own awareness of what makes for a productive discussion. [353]

- "There are a number of effective programmes to promote emotional and social competence, which have a useful place within a wider supportive environment. There is clear evidence on the principles that underlie these programmes, for example teaching behaviours and skills explicitly and in participative and empowering ways, using a step by step approach, generalising to real life and making use of using co-operative group work and peer education as well as whole class approaches." [354]

- Young people benefit greatly from structured programmes where teachers model the skills of effective spoken communication, give pupils clear feedback on their attempts to practice them, and positively reinforce their use. [355]

- Teaching pupils how to use spoken language more effectively enables them to develop their empathetic capabilities and social confidence, as well as their thinking skills. [356, 357]

- There is considerable evidence and support from researchers, educational practitioners and politicians to argue for the value of training pupils in the skills of public presentation and debate. [358, 359]

- Once the skills of effective spoken communication have been taught, there are many ways schools can provide pupils with opportunities to practice them. These include:

    o Philosophical inquiry (also known as community of inquiry); [360, 361, 362, 363]

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[351] Kutnick & Colwell, 2010

[352] Weare & Gay, 2003

[353] Mercer & Littleton, 2007

[354] Weare & Gay, 2003 (p. 7)

[355] *Op. cit.* (p. 68)

[356] Mannion & Mercer, 2016

[357] Mercer, 2016

[358] ESU, 2016

[359] Millard & Menzies, 2016

[360] Gorard et al., 2017

[361] Topping & Trickey, 2007a

[362] Topping & Trickey, 2007b

[363] Trickey & Topping, 2006

- o Structured debates; [364, 365]
- o Dialogic teaching methods; [366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372]
- o Harkness discussion tables; [373, 374]
- o Speech days; [375]
- o Speaking assemblies; [376]
- o Democratic activities such as the model United Nations; [377]
- o Enquiry-based pedagogy such as Mantle of the Expert; [378]
- o Conflict resolution using peer mediators. [379]

6.4   Listening skills

- Listening plays a vital role in language learning, [380, 381, 382, 383] and is arguably the most essential language skill. [384]

- In recent years, researchers have come to understand that listening comprehension is a "highly complex problem-solving activity" that can be broken down into a set of distinct sub-skills. [385] Pupils' listening skills can be improved by teaching them explicit strategies to improve performance on these sub-skills. [386, 387, 388]

- Three characteristics of speech are particularly important for listening comprehension: (a) speech is encoded in the form of sound; (b) it is linear and

[364] Mezuk et al., 2011

[365] Akerman & Neale, 2011 (p. 5)

[366] EEF, 2017 (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/dialogic-teaching)

[367] Jay et al., 2017 (p. 4)

[368] Wilkinson et al., 2015

[369] Alexander, 2004

[370] Adey & Shayer, 2015

[371] Gorard et al., 2017

[372] Nagda & Gurin, 2007

[373] Orth et al., 2015

[374] Smith & Foley, 2015

[375] Sherrington, 2016 (p. 45-46)

[376] Earnshaw, 2016 (p. 11)

[377] Engel et al., 2017

[378] Swanson, 2016

[379] Sellman, 2011

[380] Anderson & Lynch, 1988

[381] Dunkel, 1991

[382] Rost, 1990

[383] Rubin, 1994

[384] Oxford, 1993

[385] Byrnes, 1984 (p. 318)

[386] O'Malley & Chamot, 1989

[387] Oxford, 1990

[388] Rubin & Thompson, 1994

takes place in real time, with no chance of review; and (c) it is linguistically different from written language. [389]

- Throughout the last 20 years, research has consistently shown that teaching pupils strategies for improving their listening skills has a positive effect on listening comprehension. [390, 391, 392, 393, 394]

- Despite these positive findings, listening remains relatively overlooked in language teaching, and in education more widely. [395] Teachers typically do not instruct their pupils about listening strategies or model the expectations that they expect from their pupils. [396, 397]

- Increasing pupils' awareness of learning strategies can have positive influences on language learners' listening development. [398, 399, 400]

- Nine key ideas about second language (L2) listening comprehension practices have emerged from the literature: [401]

  1. Familiarity with passage content facilitates L2 listening comprehension. [402, 403]

  2. Lower-proficiency L2 listeners attend to phonological or semantic cues, whereas higher-proficiency L2 listeners attend to semantic cues. [404]

  3. The effectiveness of different types of speech modifications or visual aids varies according to the degree of L2 listening proficiency. [405, 406, 407, 408]

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[389] Buck, 2001 (p. 4)

[390] Vandergrift et al., 2006

[391] Moradi, 2013

[392] Zhang, 2012

[393] Thompson & Rubin, 1996

[394] Selamat & Sidhu, 2013

[395] Osada, 2004 (p. 57)

[396] Mendelsohn, 2001

[397] Berne, 1996, 1998

[398] Bolitho et al., 2003

[399] Victori & Lockhart, 1995

[400] Wilson, 2003

[401] Berne, 1998 (p. 169-170)

[402] Markham & Latham, 1987

[403] Chiang & Dunkel, 1992

[404] Conrad, 1985

[405] Mueller, 1980

[406] Chaudron, 1985

[407] Blau, 1990

[408] Chiang & Dunkel, 1992

4. Repetition of passages should be encouraged as it appears to facilitate L2 listening comprehension more than other types of modifications. [409, 410, 411]

5. The use of pre-listening activities, particularly those that provide short synopses of the listening passage or allow listeners to preview the comprehension questions, facilitate L2 listening comprehension. [412, 413]

6. The use of videotape, as opposed to audiotape, as a means of presenting listening passages facilitates L2 listening comprehension, especially with regard to attitudinal and attentional factors. [414, 415, 416]

7. The use of authentic, as opposed to pedagogical, listening passages leads to greater improvement in L2 listening comprehension performance. [417]

8. Training in the use of listening strategies facilitates L2 listening comprehension and L2 learners can and should be taught how to use listening strategies. [418]

9. Due to the complex nature of listening comprehension, L2 listening practice should encompass a wide variety of situations where listening is required as well as different types of listening, different types of listening passages, different modes of presentation (e.g. live, videotape, audiotape), and different types of activities or tasks. [419, 420, 421, 422, 423]

- Instruction that is effective for novice learners is ineffective or even counterproductive for more expert learners. [424] As a consequence, teachers may need to amend their teaching methods depending on the expertise of the pupils,

6.5 Collaborative learning and problem solving

- Internationally, even high performing countries performed relatively poorly on the PISA collaborative learning test. [425, 426]

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[409] Lund, 1991

[410] Cervantes & Gainer, 1992

[411] Berne, 1995

[412] Herron, 1994

[413] Berne, 1995

[414] Rubin, 1990

[415] Secules et al., 1992

[416] Baltova, 1994

[417] Herron & Seay, 1991

[418] Rubin, 1990

[419] Ur, 1984

[420] Rixon, 1986

[421] Anderson & Lynch, 1988

[422] Underwood, 1989

[423] Rost, 1991

[424] Jiang et al., 2017 (p. 1)

[425] OECD, 2017a

[426] Luckin, 2017

- The value of collaborative, group-based activity in the classroom has been clearly demonstrated, in relation to the study of various curriculum subjects. [427, 428, 429]

- In order for group work to be effective, two key conditions must be met: first, there should be a clear group goal; and second, there should be individual accountability within the group. [430]

- One of the strongest influences on how pupils talk during group work is the way their teacher talks with them. [431] However, teachers commonly give little priority to their role for guiding and modelling pupils' effective use of talk. [432, 433]

- The quality of collaboration between pupils can be enhanced to some extent if teachers foster an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in the classroom. [434]

- The quality of group work, and pupils' skills in collaborative problem solving, are most effectively developed by (a) raising their awareness of how they talk in groups, and how this works well or badly; and (b) teaching them how to engage in the kind of reasoned discussion which is known in the UK as 'exploratory talk', [435] and in the USA as 'accountable talk'. [436]

- Research has shown that group activity can be a powerful aid to learning, and we can describe what pupils need to do to make it work well. We also know, with some precision, how teachers can help them to develop the oracy skills needed for talking and working productively together. [437, 438]

6.6   Assessing oracy

- There are three main challenges for the assessment of oracy:

  1. The fact that spoken language is ephemeral (i.e. it does not leave a paper trail in the way that written work does);

  2. The restriction on the number of pupils that can be assessed at a time;

  3. The context specificity of speech acts (that is, a person may be a competent speaker in one situation but not in another). [439]

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[427] Sfard, 2001

[428] Mercer & Sams, 2006

[429] Slavin et al., 2009

[430] Slavin, 1988

[431] Webb et al., 2006

[432] Fisher & Larkin, 2008

[433] Millard & Menzies, 2016

[434] Kutnick and Colwell, 2010

[435] Mercer & Littleton, 2007

[436] Michaels et al, 2007

[437] Dawes & Warwick, 2012

[438] Dawes & Sams, 2017

[439] Howe, 1991

- Teachers often report that they "do not have the skills to assess oral language". [440]

- Several researchers have pointed out the importance of any talk task having a genuine purpose, in contexts where pupils progress by "gaining increasing control over… language to a wider range of audiences, for a greater variety of purposes and in different settings". [441]

- Almost all 11 year olds can modify their speaking strategies appropriately in accordance with the demands of different tasks and different audiences. [442]

- It is possible to carry out reasonably robust and valid assessments of oracy. [443, 444] For example, this can be done using the Cambridge *Oracy Assessment Toolkit,* which has three components:

  o The *Oracy Skills Framework*;
  o A set of oracy tasks, which provide the basis for assessment; and
  o A rating scheme for assessing performance on the tasks and giving feedback to the pupils.

  For more details, see pages 44-45, or visit the *Oracy Assessment Toolkit* website. [445]

7. Practical recommendations for schools

For teaching and learning the skills of effective spoken communication, the following general principles apply:

1. Spoken language skills need to be taught, just as pupils are taught the skills of literacy, mathematics, science, and so on. Likewise, they need to be given knowledge about the spoken language, so that their learning and use of those skills is underpinned by an informed awareness of how spoken language works. In essence, teaching oracy is not a pedagogical concern: rather, it should be seen as a curriculum concern.

2. As well as explicitly teaching the skills of effective spoken communication, it is important that schools offer pupils plenty of opportunities to use, practice and further develop their oracy skills.

3. Effective techniques for teaching oracy have been developed. As yet, they are not widely appreciated or applied; implementing their use across the Welsh curriculum will require explicit initial and continuing professional development for teachers.

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[440] *Op. cit.* (p. 212)

[441] Cinamon & Elding, 1998 (p. 220)

[442] APU, 1985a (p. 64)

[443] Maybin, 1988

[444] Brooks, 1989

[445] educ.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/oracytoolkit

4. Effective spoken communication has generic features, as well as subject-specific features. The teaching of generic oracy skills should have a 'home' in the curriculum organisation of each school (such as in English, Welsh, drama, learning to learn – or as a timetabled subject in its own right), where an agreed set of skills and techniques are explicitly taught and developed over time. Alongside this, opportunities for developing pupils' oracy skills should be embedded in the teaching and learning of all subjects, as is the case with literacy and numeracy.

5. The development of a full repertoire of oracy skills depends on pupils being engaged in a suitable wide range of activities. Oracy is not just about public speaking, debate or dramatic role-playing; it also includes the skills involved in collaborative problem solving, guiding or teaching another person, listening sensitively to another's experience, and interviewing (and being interviewed) to share information.

Beyond these general principles, there are a number of steps that can be taken by school leaders and support staff to ensure that oracy is truly embedded across the curriculum. In the final section of this report, we will outline these practical steps and explain how school leaders, teachers and support staff can implement these changes in ways that are sustained over time.

7.1   School leaders

1. Make oracy visible in your school. Have an oracy display or 'talk wall' to showcase and celebrate how oracy is developed and recognised.

2. Consider appointing a senior leader with responsibility for developing oracy across the school. Voice 21 and Oracy Cambridge run a one-year national Oracy Leaders Programme for people with this responsibility, and there are regional versions also where clusters of schools work together to pool resources.

3. Make clear that it is the responsibility of all year/phase groups (if primary) or subject areas (if secondary) to develop oracy, in the same way that all subjects / phases have a responsibility for developing literacy and numeracy.

4. Adopt a 'tight but loose' approach to implementation: as well as setting whole-school expectations and practices, consider allowing each department (or year group/phase if primary) to develop their own oracy policy, to enable them to take ownership over how they will develop spoken communication skills in their context.

5. As well as developing oracy through lessons, consider setting up whole-school oracy initiatives such as speech days, debating competitions, talking assemblies or training all teachers in the use of 'Philosophy for children'. Speech days can be done with each year group, getting incrementally more challenging each year – e.g. size and make-up of audience, length of speech, speaking without notes/slides etc. Speaking assemblies are also a great way to alternate from the usual format where a teacher talks from the front of the room. Consider how this might look in your setting, and seek advice on how to train colleagues in this approach. To get started with structured debates, you may wish to contact the

English Speaking Union [446] or DebateMate. [447]

6. Schools should be aware of age-related expectations, such as the Welsh Government *Oracy across the curriculum* framework, and The Communication Trust's *Universally Speaking* booklets detailing age-related expectations with regard to speaking and listening. [448] Make sure these are accessible in school, for example in the staff room or on display. Keep in mind however that schools should not feel limited or constrained by such guidance: as with any aspect of learning, young people's oracy skills develop at different rates.

7. Secondary schools might wish to consider all pupils studying a speaking and listening qualification, such as the *LAMDA Level 2 Award in Speaking and Listening Skills*. This is most commonly taken by year 9 pupils. We recommend that such qualifications are taken by all pupils, preferably in mixed ability sets, rather than viewing it as an activity for pupils with higher prior attainment in other subjects.

8. Work with pupils and teachers to develop a shared whole-school language of learning, that pupils can use to discuss how they learn in different contexts. You may wish to consider subject-specific languages of learning also. Set the expectation that in all subjects, pupils should have regular opportunities to talk about *how* they are learning, as well as *what* they are learning.

9. Ensure that all teachers are trained in developing young people's oracy skills, including strategies for effective listening. There are many organisations that can help with this – the Communication Trust, the National Literacy Trust, Oracy Cambridge and Voice 21 are a good place to start. Start small with a team of teachers who are dedicated to developing oracy, and build your way up to whole-school coverage over two or three years.

10. Consider including regular speaking and listening assessments as a part of the assessment regime for each subject. The *Oracy Assessment Toolkit* can help you with this. [449]

11. Ensure that all classrooms have a set of 'ground rules for exploratory talk' displayed permanently. These should be large and well placed, so that pupils can read them from anywhere in the room. The ground rules should be co-written with each class, rather than imposed by the teacher, and reviewed regularly. Teachers should remind pupils of the ground rules whenever there is a discussion task. Pupils should review and amend the ground rules as necessary. There are some excellent resources on the University of Cambridge *Thinking Together* site to help with this. [450]

12. Ensure that there is an oracy display or 'talk wall' in every classroom. This might include drafts of speeches, sentence starters, the whole-school language of

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[446] esu.org

[447] debatemate.com

[448] Available here: thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/resources/resources/resources-for-practitioners/universally-speaking.aspx

[449] Available here: educ.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/oracytoolkit

[450] Available here: thinkingtogether.educ.cam.ac.uk/resources

learning, any subject-specific terminology that is relevant to current learning and a copy of the *Oracy Skills Framework* (as seen in Figure 1). [451]

7.2   Teachers and support staff

1.   Make oracy visible in your classroom, and in your practice. Make sure there is an oracy presence on your classroom walls. This might include drafts of speeches, sentence starters, the whole-school language of learning, any subject-specific terminology that is relevant to current learning and a copy of the *Oracy Skills Framework* (as reproduced in Figure 1). [452] Make sure pupils are familiar with this framework; you may need to amend the language for younger pupils.

2.   Work with your pupils to co-create a set of 'ground rules for exploratory talk'. These should be displayed permanently, large and well placed so that pupils can read them from anywhere in the room. The ground rules should be co-written with each class, rather than imposed by the teacher, and reviewed regularly. Remind pupils of the ground rules whenever there is a discussion task. Pupils should review and amend the ground rules as necessary. There are some excellent resources on the University of Cambridge *Thinking Together* site to help with this. [453]

3.   Consider including speaking and listening assessments as a part of your regular assessment regime. The *Oracy Assessment Toolkit* can help you with this. [454] The toolkit is designed to be used either formally or informally – it is best done in the context of a lesson. As far as possible, allow pupils to set their own short-term targets with regard to how they can improve their speaking and listening. These targets should be specific, realistic and achievable within a short time frame. Work with pupils to devise exercises to practice their skills.

4.   Consider the range of ways in which you can promote oracy in your practice – philosophical inquiries; structured debates; extended discussions; modeling talk skills and providing pupils with time for specific practice and feedback; questioning pupils in ways that enable them to make extended contributions to classroom discussions; and creating oracy skills learning intentions to be taught in parallel with curriculum learning intentions, so that oracy is taught, practised and reviewed as an everyday activity.

5.   Model and guide pupils' use of language for reasoning. Ask pupils to give reasons to support their views, engage them in extended discussions of topics, and encourage them to see what makes discussion productive.

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[451] Available as a poster here https://twitter.com/voice21oracy/status/939438232558886912
[452] Available as a poster here https://twitter.com/voice21oracy/status/939438232558886912
[453] thinkingtogether.educ.cam.ac.uk/resources
[454] educ.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/oracytoolkit

7.3   implementing change

The evidence suggests that if all schools were to implement the practical recommendations listed above, this would lead to a wide range of positive outcomes for young people, their teachers and families and the wider society. However, implementing such a step-change in the way we teach and assess oracy across the curriculum, and across all year groups, represents a significant challenge.

Although the word 'oracy' has been around for 50 years, it has not yet achieved parity with literacy and numeracy. Part of the reason for this is that talk is ephemeral, and difficult to account for in a culture of high accountability. In addition, in the past, the idea of pupils talking has often been associated with poor behaviour management, with quiet classrooms being perceived as most productive. However, as with most things, there is good talk and bad talk, and silent classrooms do not guarantee that the pupils are learning effectively. Once pupils have been taught how to discuss things in groups, and once they understand their responsibility to one another as learners, talk becomes productive and group work becomes more effective. Teaching talk skills and creating class ground rules for group talk help ensure the productive use of talk-based activities in classrooms.

Problems in embedding oracy also include constraints imposed by lack of time or insufficient funding. Teachers may need new training: there is every opportunity to integrate structures for the teaching of oracy into teacher training and development programmes. We have also mentioned the problem of the 'research-practice gap'; partly, this gap exists because the kinds of knowledge and texts created by education researchers may not be accessible or applicable to teachers. This could change.

The obstacles facing the vision of oracy across the curriculum are significant and multi-faceted, meaning that solutions must be similarly multifaceted, and they must be implemented in ways that are sustainable over time. The emerging field of 'implementation science' seeks to overcome the problems involved in translating research evidence into social policies and social practices that have the desired effect with implemented at scale. Partly, this involves implementing top-down policies and practices, setting clear expectations and ensuring that people understand and can implement initiatives, and will be accountable for doing so. However, in school settings, the most effective changes are made by teachers who are motivated and

inspired by relevant professional development. A powerful way to implement change is through practitioner inquiry in schools where all staff and management are committed to new approaches.

A rationale for small-scale practitioner inquiry

As Dylan Wiliam has suggested: "everything works somewhere, and nothing works everywhere"; for education, therefore, the question is not "what works", but rather "under what conditions does this work?" [455] In the absence of some form of systematic inquiry, a school or a teacher cannot know whether any given aspect of practice is having a positive impact, having no effect – or making things worse. [456] For example, the EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit suggests that providing feedback to pupils is the most effective thing schools and teachers can do, leading to "high impact for very low cost". [457] However, in a meta-analysis of 607 feedback interventions (FIs), in 38% of the cases studied the FI actually made things worse than if the schools had just done business as usual. [458] Researchers refer to this phenomenon as 'the Bananarama effect': "it ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it – and that's what gets results". [459] To bridge the gap between the research and practice relating to oracy – or indeed, any area of professional development or school improvement – schools should encourage and enable teachers to conduct small-scale inquiries to determine which practices and strategies "work" for them, in their particular context. Here are 12 steps that teachers (or leaders) can follow to systematically improve aspects their practice (or school).

12 steps of practitioner inquiry

1. **Reflect**. Think about your professional development to date. What are your strengths? What problems do you face currently?

2. **Focus**. Choose an area of your practice that you would like to investigate or develop. Keep the focus small and manageable.

3. **Formulate a research question**. Research questions should be defined as tightly possible. A useful question frame is: 'To what extent is… effective as a method for improving…?'

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[455] Wiliam, 2014
[456] Mannion, 2017
[457] EEF, 2017
[458] Kluger & DeNisi, 1996
[459] Mannion, 2017

4. **Read around the topic.** There's no need to carry out an exhaustive literature review, but if possible, try to read at least two opposing pieces of research about your area of interest.

5. **Choose a research method**. There are many methods – attainment data, observations, interviews, questionnaires, pupils' work... It's a good idea to combine two or three different methods and triangulate findings – but make sure you keep it manageable.

6. **Take a baseline (optional).** Not all inquiries lend themselves to a 'pre vs. post' evaluation. However, if you wish to get a handle on whether your practice is improving over time, some form of initial baseline measure will provide a useful point of comparison. You might also consider collecting data about pupils not involved in the study (a control group).

7. **Plan and carry out your intervention (optional).** Not all inquiries are intervention-based; you might simply wish to find out more about an aspect of your existing practice. However if your aim is to evaluate the impact of a particular strategy, take the time to plan how to implement your intervention in a way that maximises the possibility of success.

8. **Take a post-intervention measure (optional)**. If your research method involves a 'pre vs. post' comparison, how long will you wait before collecting the data – a day, a week, a month?

9. **Analyse your findings**. Once you have collected your data, take the time to sit with it. Try to understand it as deeply as possible. Discuss it with your colleagues. What does it tell you? What does it not tell you? Did you find what you expected? What conclusions can you draw?

10. **Evaluate your inquiry**. How did it go? What went well? What aspects did you find challenging? What would you do differently if you did it again? Can you use the findings to inform your practice in future? If so, how? If not, why not?

11. **Write up and share your findings**. You may wish to produce a poster that you can display in the school. Alternatively, teachers can share their inquiries at praxis-teacher-research.org.

12. **Plan your next inquiry**. What's next? Do you wish to repeat the same inquiry but do it differently this time, or in a different context?

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