Oracy APPG

Written evidence

Members of the Oracy APPG will consider written, verbal and audio-visual evidence and oversee oral evidence sessions. All evidence will inform the final report.

The extended deadline for submitting written evidence is 20th September 2019. We would appreciate if the submissions would follow the following guidelines:

- Be in a Word format
- No longer than 3000 words
- State clearly who the submission is from, and whether it is sent in a personal capacity or on behalf of an organisation
- Begin with a short summary in bullet point form
- Have numbered paragraphs
- Where appropriate, provide references

Please write your evidence below and email the completed form via email to inquiry@oracyappg.org.uk with the subject line of 'Oracy APPG inquiry'

Crista Hazell

Full name:

Independent Thinking Ltd / Association for Language Learning

School or Organisation:

Pedagogy & Pastoral Champion & International Education Consultant, National Council Member for the Association for Language Learning
Published Author of the forthcoming book – Independent Thinking on MFL

Role:

Written evidence:

- The Role of Oracy in registration / tutor time
- The Role of Oracy in MFL
- Barriers

1) I have used Oracy as a tool in my secondary classroom (a state school in the South West) for a number of years to empower all learners therein to harness the power of their voices and use it as a force for good. This has led to an increase in confidence, self-esteem, wellbeing, emotional intelligence, peer to peer conversation, friendship, tolerance, risk taking in the classroom, also with improvement in speech, intonation, complexity and fluency not only in English but also in French. The impact of focusing on Oracy has been dramatic and I am certain that this has benefitted learners greatly in the classroom, socially and beyond our educational establishment.

The Role of Oracy in Registration / Tutor Time.
2) Promoting discussion and peer to peer chat in registration and tutor time is important in encouraging learners to be ready to learn rather than silently reading especially if there is a focus beyond last night's screen watching. We know as adults that we learn from one another yet the insistence that students must be in silence at the start of a school day is an interesting one. I seek to encourage learners to learn from one another – peer to peer learning not only allows learners to share what they know but also reinforces knowledge, skills and understanding. To be able to teach their own peer group is so important, encouraging this in an informal setting within registration / tutor time is a wonderful thing to witness.   Registration can be an opportunity to share what we have learned from a previous day / lesson. It allows learners from different groups to listen to, tutor, support and share knowledge to support their peers and friends. This of course in a safe, caring environment. If learners have a question, concern or misconception they can ask their peers, and this can be discussed, shared and debated until a resolution is found. I adore seeing and hearing this and enjoy facilitating this in classroom settings. As a (former) pastoral and academic school leader, the power of confidence and the ability to ask for help when it is required is highly prized and sought after by employers during Y10 and Y12 work experience but also in the 'real world' beyond educational establishments so developing this as a norm can only be a positive. Encouraging young people to talk, discuss or read to one

another, to develop opinions and share their thoughts and perspectives supports the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) article 12 that every child has the right to be heard, and it is our duty to ensure that this happens. Giving young people the opportunities to be able to use their voice, be acknowledged for the comments, opinions and knowledge they share and to learn the power of their voice is vital.

The Role of Oracy in MFL

3) Oracy is a priority in language learning as a result of many learners struggling with the GCSE and A level spoken assessments. The levels of stress and anxiety in students recorded performances was such that it resulted in learners not fulfilling their potential. Despite my best efforts this was increasingly a feature prior to the introduction of Oracy in MFL lessons. The focus on listening and speaking and prioritising this over reading and writing has proven invaluable. Of course, when overseas, learners will need to speak in the international language to order food, ask directions and request help - they will not be asked to write this down and read from it, so why is this done in classrooms? Within language learning there has perhaps been an insistence about focusing on written language when the importance should have been placed on speaking the language and decoding spoken language. Communication is important and ensuring learners know that spoken language and listening to others to hear and understand the message being communicated play an important part of the language learning journey.

4) The use of target language (the use of the foreign / international language e.g. French, German, Spanish etc) is always a hotly discussed topic. Many teachers believe that language lessons should be conducted solely in the 'foreign' language whilst others state there should be a split (50:50 / 60:40 / 70:30 / 80:20) where English is used to help anchor understanding and comprehension of grammar and instructions to ensure learners know what they should be doing and why they are doing it. Not all teachers do this as a result of :
● Teachers knowledge and confidence in the language
● Confidence in speaking in the language in front of learners
● Accent & Fluency perceived to be not good enough
● Time (so much to get through so little time)
● It's easier & quicker to teach in English rather than in the language

- Teacher's workload & wellbeing
- Concern about extensive use of (foreign) language related to behaviour management issues
- Teacher Identity – I can't be myself if I am operating in the language all of the time
- Group size & ability of the group of learners
- Perceived expectations of the group of learners
- It's exhausting for learners – they need to be gently warmed up in the language as all of their other lessons are in their first language within which they are fluent

5) Of course, a teacher should model the language, accent and intonation to learners so that they can learn this. A good knowledge of the grapheme-phoneme link is also important so that learners can decode words and messages they hear or see to understand the message/instruction/question. In my experience, this does not always happen resulting in learners feeling that they are unable to hear or read the 'foreign' language text in anything other than an anglicised way. Therefore, some teachers need support to ensure they feel confident to model the language they are teaching. This should be addressed in department teams within the school as part of sharing good practice but also CPD.

6) Do we teach learners how to listen, what to listen for and the nuances of a message and how to speak? It is a consideration certainly in the languages classroom. We should, but in reality with demands on time and external pressures do we – and if we do, do we do this well? We assume that learners can create sentences which they can then speak in sentences and project their voices, that they can speak with confidence, good intonation and emphasis, articulating thoughts and displaying correct grammar through sentences, paragraphs and spoken pieces in front of an audience of their peers without perhaps teaching them to do this (and in some cases modelling this!). Spending time initially to ensure learners know how to shape new sounds (of foreign language words) with their mouths needs to be modelled and practised so that learners do not fear it. Creating a classroom environment where everyone is involved, there is no opting out of listening and speaking tasks, but we communicate in the language being learned to the best of our ability. Peer to peer spontaneous speaking is an aspiration of the languages classroom but not always a reality as a result of the pressure on time. Again, this has

to be planned for, supported and well scaffolded as well as time given frequently through developing small group work such as pairs and threes in a variety of contexts such as question & answer sessions, interviews, roleplays, dramatisation of dialogues, tongue twisters, poetry recital, song and rap performances, discussion of images or a specific topic resulting in a debate all of which expect and promote learners using the target language. This will develop normalcy of use and thus learners will not be afraid to use it.   Of course, some learners will need the additional support of props, ICT recording equipment etc to allow them to practice their spoken language and hear themselves. I hope that in addition to having an ICT account and school email address that learners will one day have an 'eportfolio' where they can store spoken tasks they have recorded to revisit, improve and develop their pieces. In doing this, we are placing an emphasis on oracy, the importance of oracy and the need to practice, evaluate and develop current oracy skills. Ron Berger's Ethic of Excellence and Austin's butterfly analogy is not wasted here – this can easily be applied to spoken tasks provided there is (digital) space to capture and store these. Learners do not always like to listen to themselves speaking in the foreign/international language, but this is because it is not commonplace or practiced which in my opinion is truly a missed opportunity to develop not only confidence and fluency but also listening skills. If learners were to have an 'e-portfolio' they would be able to collate their oracy work and there would be clear evidence of their work at the start of the year and at stages throughout – promoting continuous oracy development. As a teacher I have worked hard to have a record of learners work to do exactly this, but learners have not had sufficient storage available on the school IT infrastructure. Looking to the future, better Edtech tools could be invested in and adopted in schools which would assist learners in developing their confidence in oracy for example VR headsets where learners are transported from inner cities, faraway villages or distant coastlines to a Francophone or Hispanic country to speak 1:1 with a native speaker would be a superb way to make learning even more engaging and real! This would assist schools whose learners are unable to afford overseas visits but provide a wonderful and realistic opportunity to practice their language skills and oracy.

7) It is interesting to note that at A level and degree level that language lessons are rarely in English. Learners are expected to speak confidently with fluency and articulately in the international language (French, German or Spanish etc) engaging in political or literary discussion, developing and displaying a range of complex and interesting language, which shows solid knowledge of grammar, idiomatic phrases and colloquialisms. In order to effectively achieve this learners must practice the skill of oracy well before Key Stage 5. This cannot be achieved suddenly, it is built upon and carefully crafted over a long period of time.

8) The impact of good oracy in MFL upon learners is palpable. They have a go because they want to and can do it. They are speaking confidently in sentences, 15-30 second blocks of time (and longer), this can be developed further as vocabulary, grammatical knowledge and range deepens over time. Learners do not fear speaking because teaching and the classroom experience creates opportunities for speaking to be carefully developed and crafted. Learners are given ample opportunities to be creative in their spoken work, creating space and time for homework tasks to be a spoken piece of poetry, a song, a rap, a performance or speech showing me their teacher what they know and have learned. Carefully scaffolded mats have been created to provide support for learners that need it as have classroom displays all of which seek to empower the young person to use the language with confidence. From Year 7 learners are encouraged and supported to speak in the target language as well as practice recording themselves on to digital devices to replay to note the positives and areas for improvement. Posture, tone, breathing, projection and clarity of voice all feature in feedback as developmental tools as well as feedback on the content of the language spoken all provide meaningful learning opportunities to develop further. In my experience focusing on oracy has had a dramatic impact on the learners I have taught. In terminal assessment they are more confident, fluent, clear, well-paced and far less anxious because they are no longer worried about how they will sound, they are not fearful of the microphone nor recording as this is commonplace in the classroom tasks we have completed. Learners feel much happier going in to spoken oral assessment even though it is 12-16 minutes long for GCSE and 30 minutes at A level having been appropriately prepared.

9) The work of School 21 and the team at Cambridge University in creating the oracy framework and the research surrounding it has had a dramatic impact on how I teach. I believe using this research and framework has improved the learners experience, confidence and wellbeing in the languages classroom where the expectation is that we shall all speak the language with increasing fluency, consistency and improving intonation and accent which is fantastic. Learners enjoy speaking in language lessons amazingly which is another positive because they believe they can do it. I have shared my experiences amongst languages teachers to ensure they maximise the impact of developing speaking and listening skills in MFL by harnessing the power of the oracy framework and the research behind it. Imagine the impact of oracy being a focus in every subject, across all stages of school life in every single school. We would be creating learners who share their knowledge, experiences and opinions freely, openly and engagingly. It would revolutionise the world within which we all live and perhaps improve mental health, wellbeing, a sense of community and productivity because we would talk openly about solutions to improve systems if people weren't happy with them.

Barriers
- Lack of training, knowledge of Oracy and availability to attend training sessions are a huge barrier when the reality for many secondary schools are that 'if the training course is not exam or Ofsted related' teachers requests are refused.
- Publishers of MFL resources, textbooks and language learning materials do not offer a good quality range of listening and speaking resources in courses and textbooks. These do not focus on the range of oracy skills and develop key listening strategies and techniques preferring to focus on the reading and writing skills. This is well known and although there are newer provisions for the development of listening skills there is not yet an oracy focus on any language learning resources.
- I believe a cultural shift is required to change the perception of oracy and to place real value upon this. This will come with training and competence as increasingly more teachers are aware, become knowledgeable and confident in understanding and using oracy in their subject areas and classrooms. However, we must ask the question can we wait that long when we can see a dramatic impact upon learners when it is used as a tool in the classroom.

- Employers request young people who can communicate who are emotionally and orally literate to come into the workforce. Could oracy become a feature of KS5 education and early employment to support learners departing secondary education for the world of work?
- Exam systems place priority on written work - this must change. Valuing the students voice throughout the examination stage will raise the profile of oracy and thus drive the oracy agenda in schools. Since the demise of the speaking and listening exams informing part of the GCSE English grade in 2014 it is my understanding that the only oracy based assessments are in MFL and Music. Why is this when oracy is a vital skill for life not just school?

  Interestingly learners think faster than they can write, learners can think fast and speak fast. The brain to mouth communicative action is faster than brain to hand therefore are we penalising learners by not creating an oracy based option and forcing exams to be written? Should we be differentiating for learners with dyslexia / dyspraxia and mobility issues by offering speaking exams?
- In affluent schools public speaking and debating are commonplace due to the requirement that learners are expected to take part in extracurricular enrichment. This is not expected in many state schools. Expectation is everything however this then would have to be funded and this is a separate issue.

Additional guidance:

Value and impact

1. Given many teachers recognise the importance of oracy, why does spoken language not have the same status as reading and writing in our education system? Should it have the same status, and if so why?

2. What are the consequences if children and young people do not receive oracy education?

3. What is the value and impact of quality oracy education at i) different life stages, ii) in different settings, and iii) on different types of pupils (for instance pupils from varied socioeconomic backgrounds or with special educational needs)?

4. How can it help deliver the wider curriculum at school?

5. What is the impact of quality oracy education on future life chances? Specifically, how does it affect employment and what value do businesses give oracy?

6. What do children and young people at school and entering employment want to be able to access, what skills to they want to leave school with?

7. What is the value and impact of oracy education in relation to other key agendas such as social mobility and wellbeing/ mental health?

8. How can the ability to communicate effectively contribute to engaging more young people from all backgrounds to become active citizens, participating fully in social action and public life as adults

Provision and access

1. What should high quality oracy education look like?

2. Can you provide evidence of how oracy education is being provided in different areas/education settings/extra-curricular provision, by teachers but also other practitioners that work with children?

3. What are the views of teachers, school leaders and educational bodies regarding the current provision of oracy education?

4. Where can we identify good practice and can you give examples?

5. What factors create unequal access to oracy education (i.e. socio-economic, region, type of school, special needs)? How can these factors be overcome?

6. Relating to region more specifically, how should an oracy-focused approach be altered depending on the context?

Barriers

1. What are the barriers that teachers face in providing quality oracy education, within the education system and beyond?

2. What support do teachers need to improve the delivery of oracy education?

3. What accountability is currently present in the system? How can we further incentivise teachers to deliver more oracy education to children and young people?

4. What is the role of government and other bodies in creating greater incentives and how can this be realised?

5. What is the role of assessment in increasing provision of oracy education? What is the most appropriate form of assessment of oracy skills?

6. Are the speaking and listening elements of the current curriculum sufficient in order to deliver high quality oracy education?

7. What is the best approach – more accountability within the system or a less prescriptive approach?

8. Are there examples of other educational pedagogies where provision has improved and we can draw parallels and learn lessons?