



CAMBRIDGE

Meaningful conversations

Developing oracy across the curriculum.

Fay Head & John Marsh

8th – 9th December 2025

Housekeeping

Health and safety

Fire safety

Washrooms



Agenda

Workshop Overview & Objectives

This workshop will help you:

- Understand how oracy improves **engagement, achievement, and outcomes**.
- Reflect on attitudes and barriers to using oracy across subjects.
- Identify practical strategies for integrating guided conversation into teaching.
- Encourage learning through talk to prepare students for future assessments and careers.

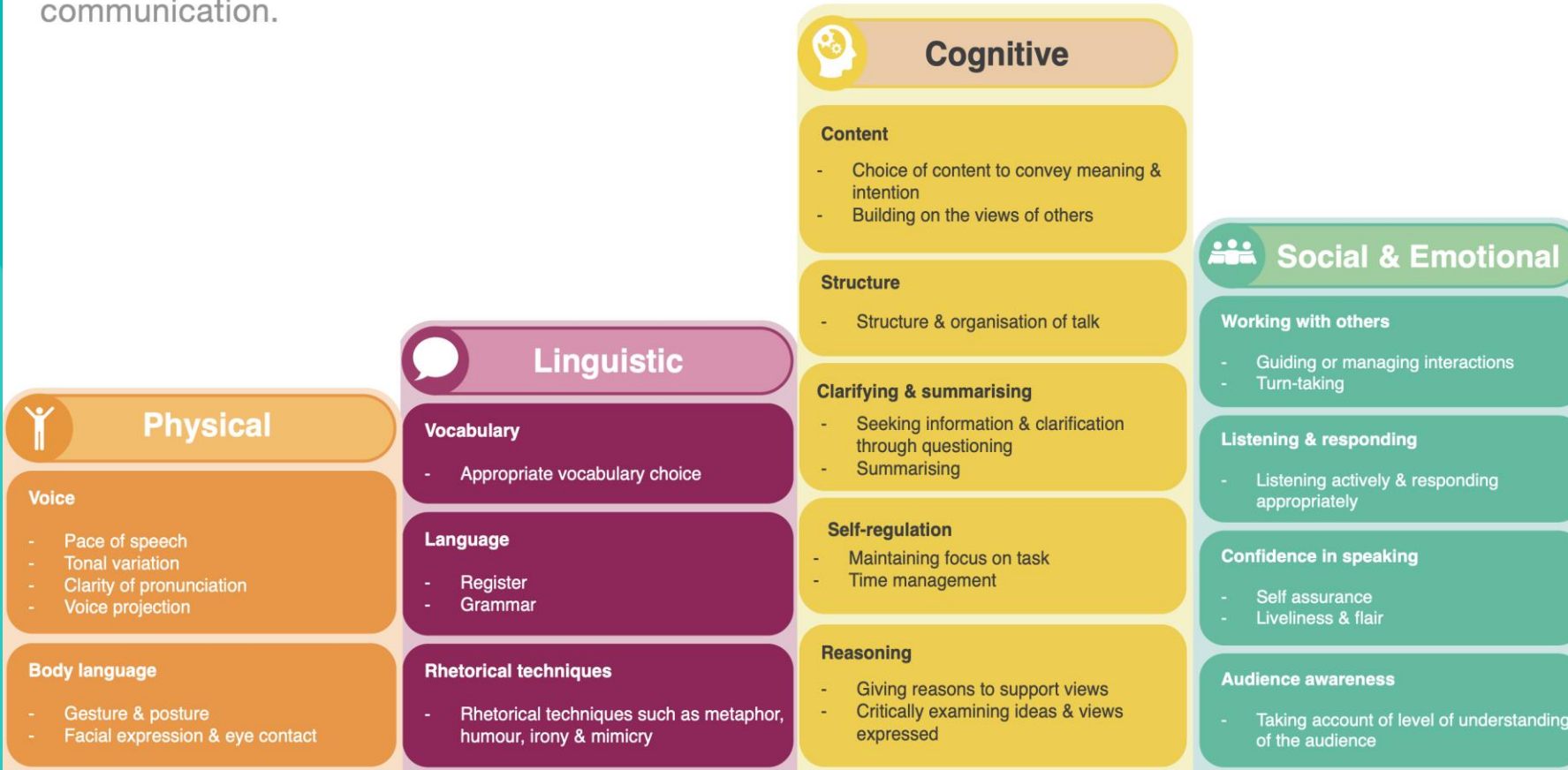
Ice breaker

Oracy in context: What is it?

The Oracy Framework

Use the Oracy Framework to understand the physical, linguistic, cognitive, and social and emotional skills that enable successful discussion, inspiring speech and effective communication.

Oracy
Cambridge



© Voice 21 2020 developed in partnership with Oracy Cambridge. Voice 21 is a registered charity in England and Wales. Charity number 1152672 | Company no. 08165798

A curriculum rich in oracy will provide opportunities for:

- Learning *to* talk
- Learning *through* talk

Improving **engagement** through oracy

Engagement

Research base:

Oracy-rich environments encourage **dialogic teaching** where teachers and students engage in purposeful discussion rather than one-way instruction. Dialogic classrooms enhance students' **thinking, reasoning, and understanding**, leading to deeper engagement with the subject matter.

Alexander, A Dialogic Teaching Companion (2020)

Case study: History

Students **debate key figures' decisions, role-play scenes or debate different interpretations of sources.**

Engagement spikes because students are actively involved, thinking critically, and using their voices to explore complex ideas.

- Active participation (Physical)
- Deeper thinking (Cognitive)
- Social connection (Social & Emotional)
- Confidence building (Social & Emotional)



A male teacher in a dark suit and white shirt stands at the back of a classroom, smiling. In the foreground, several female students in school uniforms (white shirts and dark vests) are seated at desks, smiling and looking towards the camera. The classroom background features a bulletin board with various colorful papers and a large whiteboard.

Improving **achievement** through oracy

Achievement

- Improved understanding and retention (Cognitive)
- Higher-order thinking skills (Cognitive)
- Support literacy (Linguistic)
- Reduces disadvantage and performance gaps (Social & Emotional)

Research base:

Pupils who participate in dialogic teacher and learning in science lessons do not only do better on standardised tests of science, but of tests of mathematics and English too [...] Dialogic discussion can support growth not only of specific disciplinary knowledge but also broader capabilities [...] which children can put to use in other subjects.

Snell, Dialogic Teaching & Learning, The Talking Point (2025)

Case study: Maths

In advance of a lesson, the teacher considers possible answers that may be given in response to a central problem. They also consider the specific misconceptions that may lead to incorrect answers. They use this pre-planning to inform a classroom discussion of the answers given by students and the concepts underpinning them, encouraging students to articulate their views and arrive at a consensus on the solution. In actively listening to multiple explanations from peers, students are more likely to achieve mastery of the key concepts rather than simply hearing that solutions are right or wrong.



Improving **outcomes** through oracy

Research base:

- Oral language interventions can result in an additional 6+ months of progress, especially in literacy-related outcomes.

Education Endowment Foundation (2025)

- Multiple studies have linked meaningful classroom talk to increased attainment in maths attainment.

Multiple sources

- 94% of employers value communication skills more than academic results when recruiting.

Confederation of Industry Report (2023)

Case study: Future-ready learners

- Clear correlation between students' communication skills and their employability status.
- Evidence of a wage premium of around 15% for school leavers with 'essential skills'.

Outcomes

- Improved literacy assessment outcomes
- Cross-curricular academic attainment
- Oral assessment
- Enhanced employability

Employability

- Being able to demonstrate knowledge orally is a key characteristic of someone who is well prepared for the world of work (APPG, 2019: 22)
- Universities may incorporate oral tests into their assessment approach because there are few concerns about plagiarism (Dobson 2023)
- 'When you go into networking opportunities ... there is a culture that you should be able to articulate yourself well' (APPG, 2021: 22)



Barriers (and solutions) to cross-curricular oracy

“Oracy can be defined as articulating ideas, developing understanding and engaging with others through speaking, listening and communication.””

Oracy Education Commission

2024

Thank you!

Cambridge Schools Conference, December 2025
Future-ready: preparing learners to thrive