

— ROS WILSON'S TALK:WRITE —

ORACY

— IS NOT JUST —

**SPEAKING
AND LISTENING**



**The Power of
School Speak Oracy
in a School's Curriculum**

RW

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Oracy Is Not Just Speaking and Listening

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Oracy

I hear and I understand.
I understand and I absorb.
I absorb and I embrace.
I embrace and with practise...
I perform with passion.

When I perform with passion,
my passion reflects that which I embrace,
and thus you too will hear and understand –
and you too will absorb and embrace –
and you too will feel the passion.

Ros Wilson (2024)

About Ros

Ros entered the teaching profession in 1965 and has served continuously in education since. She has wide experience in the field, including: working with pupils with SEND; working with pupils with EAL; Senior Leadership; Head of a large primary department overseas; Local Authority Adviser; Primary Strategy Manager; Independent Consultant; Advanced Skills Teacher Assessor; Ofsted Inspector; Curriculum Designer and author of *The Creative Curriculum*; Creator and Author of *Big Writing* and associated texts (Oxford University Press).

More recently, Ros has worked part time as a consultant and as a guest speaker at events. She has published several books since 2019 and developed the ***Talk:Write programme***.

Ros has lived and worked overseas, including in The Caribbean and Qatar.

Her hobbies are writing and talking.

To find out more, visit:

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Why Oracy?

Oracy has been my passion all my life – I just did not know it!

I often say I was born talking, but clearly that is not quite true. I was the youngest of four children in a family of highly articulate and successful individuals. Sadly, our father had a massive stroke when I was three and died when I was five, leaving the family impoverished and our mother the stressed and over-worked carer for four children and six university students she took in as lodgers to pay the bills. This was in the days when there were no widows' pensions or benefits.

My childhood, both at school and at home, was impoverished, unhappy and with some abuse, but my family gave me the greatest gift they could have bestowed on an individual – *the gift of the gab*! Each evening and for much of the weekends we sat round the kitchen table as a family. My siblings and mother discussed and debated, argued and explained, holding forth with conviction and passion. If I was to be heard in such a scenario, I had to develop the power and persuasion of the public speaker. As a result, I developed the skills of oratory in the most natural and effective of ways. Would that all children had the same opportunities.

When the Speech with No Name Discovered Its Identity

I consider that I was extremely fortunate in returning to England in late 1986, after 17 years of teaching overseas, to secure my first full-time post as head of English in a middle school in Bradford in January 1987. In 1988, Bradford became a participating city in the National Oracy Project. Not having a pre-conceived agenda for the curriculum in England, I embraced the project and learned so much from it.

It was then that I realised that my passion for the power of speech had been officially born and that its name was oracy!

The Impact of Speech on Writing

As the advisor for assessment in Kirklees in the 1990s, moderating both the implementation and marking of Key Stage 1 SATs and Key Stage 2 writing was a major part of my position. The audit of children's unsupported writing in the tests across the 150 primary schools within the authority, discussing performance against the often somewhat vague or misleading criteria provided, taught me a vast amount about children's writing. I saw the skills that were developing well across schools and those that were not. It was during the years dedicated to this work that I realised for myself the huge impact that a child's vocabulary, their quality of talk, their ability to express themselves clearly and articulately, and to use expressive features for description, clarification, persuasion and emotion all had on their ability to write.

Since 1999, my life and work have been devoted to improving pupils' power of speech in order to empower them as communicators and impact their writing.

Introduction

This publication will enable schools to introduce oracy in a simple and effective structure that is developed within the existing curriculum. It will use no more additional time than the percentage of English (subject) time that should already be devoted to speaking and listening.

Oracy is still an emerging concept due to the lack of recognition by the external powers that influence education such as a succession of Secretaries of State, externally imposed tests and the inspection process.

The recent drive on oracy is important and will be impactful. However, it seems that many teachers and leaders still confuse oracy with speaking and listening. Although the opportunities for discussion have increased in many schools, leaders and teachers must ask themselves how the quality of oration has improved and what they are actually aspiring to achieve for their pupils.

Oracy is a powerful and highly important skill that takes the literal hearing, understanding and repeating of much of speaking and listening to a new plane of:

- **Hearing**
- **Understanding**
- **Absorbing**
- **Embracing**
- **Practising**
- **Performing with Passion**

When these steps are fully integrated and implemented, oration inspires, informs and imbues the listener in the same way that the original experience did for the speaker.

Basil Bernard Bernstein (1924 – 2000) was a linguist and researcher at the Institute of Education, University of London. As a British sociologist known for his specialism in the sociology of education, he worked on socio-linguistics and the connection between the manner of speaking and social organisation. Bernstein argued that there are two main language codes that people use when communicating. While everyone uses the *restricted code* in casual speech, the *middle class* can switch with ease into using the *elaborated code*, with complex sentence structures and vocabulary.

Bernstein suggested that *middle-class* and *upper-class* school pupils could automatically switch between the *restricted code* associated with casual speech and the *elaborated code* that is used in more formal situations and is the code associated with the education profession.

In linguistics, *elaborated code* refers to the specially developed manner of speaking among the social middle and upper classes of a society. The adjective *elaborated* stands for carefully formulated, highly developed and nuanced. (*Basil Bernard Bernstein*)

Today, there is a variation on Bernstein's *elaborated code*, a third form or extension of his code that many are fortunate enough to be able to switch into and use to great effect when the occasion demands or allows. That is the powerful form of communication known as oration; the inspirational and emotive form of speech that can embrace and sweep along an audience with its passion.

Andrew Wilkinson's aspirations for oracy when he created the name in the late 1960s, and the subsequent National Oracy Project which was his initiative, was to empower and embed this great skill across schools throughout the country.

We, too, believe that not just the more privileged should have access to choice and the ability to switch codes. Rather, we believe that all children in

our schools should be given that great gift and the choice of whether they wish to deploy it when appropriate – the gift of oration through oracy.

The Birth of Oracy

The term *oracy* was introduced in 1965 by education researcher and lecturer Andrew Wilkinson. He generated the name to bring the practice in line with numeracy and literacy. In other words, to significantly raise the profile of *elaborated speech* to being a focused and taught practice in English, rather than purely enabling wider and more detailed discussion or debate in lessons.

It was Wilkinson who initiated the National Oracy Project (1988 – 1993), a significant idea that should have had huge impact. However, schools and teachers have – for far too long – been overwhelmed by pressures of a grossly overloaded and constantly changing curriculum and the destructive impact of both inspection and testing. Thus, they have been unable to prioritise investment of time and money in what could be seen by outsiders as just *more talk* – not celebrated in academic terms.

Wilkinson's Definition of Oracy

When asked to define his new initiative of oracy, Wilkinson described it as – *The verbalisation of experience*. Dissatisfied with that definition, however, he heard a colleague suggest perhaps it should be – *The experience of verbalisation*. Wilkinson immediately realised that it is both definitions presented as one diametric:

The verbalisation of experience; the experience of verbalisation.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines *verbalisation* as: *To express ideas, opinions, or emotions in words.*

If the experience is verbalised in all its detail, its key features, its impact and its emotive qualities – with passion and persuasion – the audience shares the experience, the emotions and the passion that the original speaker experienced and verbalised.

Equally, if the child is taught to feel those same passionate and persuasive qualities of an experience, including the impact and emotive appeal felt, and to deliver these in their own expressive performance that enables the audience to share the impact of the experience, then the child relives the experience too – through their own verbalisation.

It is amazing and it is humbling when a pupil's performance is truly becoming an oration.

How Is Oracy Different from Speaking and Listening?

There is no doubt that learning the skills of true oracy enriches vocabulary and language structures far beyond the basics of speaking and listening. Currently, however, oracy is often interpreted as speaking and listening, and the two terms are used interchangeably. In reality, oracy brings a quality of language, phraseology, passion and performance that everyday speaking and listening does not often achieve and rarely aspires to.

Oracy is Wilkinson's term to describe Bernstein's *elaborated code* of speech when the focus is embraced and performed with passion. Within oracy, *elaborated speech* becomes a *creative construction of language selected for impact and emotion*.

Oracy is one unique form of the many codes of speaking and listening.

Start with Speaking and Listening

Speaking and listening are key skills that should be taught from the point of birth, until each child who is able can listen attentively and show their understanding by embracing or explaining that which has been heard, or by responding appropriately. There are varied forms of speaking and listening, which may all embrace responses to questioning, explanation, instruction, discussion, debate, performance of role play, drama, poetry and so forth.

All these modes of speech are now to be found in highly effective use in classrooms. All *could* be performed as oratory, which is an advanced and unique form of speaking and listening - *or not* - as the occasion or purpose may not warrant it!

Speaking and listening teaches good communication skills for daily use throughout life. Oracy teaches sophisticated skills selected when appropriate for performance and presentation.

Oration Is a Powerful Choice

The greatest orators did not communicate through oration in their daily life. Their orations were performances planned and prepared for purpose.

So, the most effective speakers can code switch between informal daily speech, effective and clear *elaborated speech*, and actual performance through oration.

Besides impacting on all learning, oracy greatly enriches all forms of communication, including written prowess.

The Benefits of Teaching Oracy

From The English-Speaking Union: *The benefits of oracy skills go far beyond academic achievement and employability however, they boost a whole range of social, emotional and interpersonal skills, including self-confidence, self-awareness, resilience and empathy. Having the skills and confidence to speak up and believe in yourself has also been shown to enhance our sense of happiness and well-being, preventing the isolation that comes from feeling sidelined.*

Oracy Makes a Difference

From the Education Endowment Foundation:

- Children with good communication skills are four times more likely to get five A* - Cs (9 - 5s) at GCSE. (Better Communication Research Programme)
- High-quality spoken dialogue in primary classrooms can significantly improve children's educational attainment, from improving SAT results in maths and science to improving reading, writing and reasoning skills. (The Communication Trust)
- Cognitively challenging classroom talk for children in Year 5 (aged 9 to 10) not only improves their language skills but can also lead to gains equivalent to about two months' additional progress in mathematics and science. (Dialogic Teaching, Education Endowment Foundation)
- Oracy improves literacy, including reading comprehension, spelling and writing. (LKMco & Voice 21)
- Spoken language plays a key role in cognitive development, helping children understand the world around them. (LKMco & Voice 21)
- 97% of teachers, 94% of employers and 88% of young people believe that life skills such as confidence, motivation, resilience and communication are as or more important than academic qualifications. (Sutton Trust)

10 Great Orations

Oracy is the development of a whole *other* extended and expressive language for the purposes of fluent and confident presentation in the agreed *Standard English* form. It is a gripping and often dramatic, expressive, emotive and persuasive performance. The speaker becomes the orator. The performance becomes oratory.

Wikipedia describes an orator as:

A public speaker, especially one who is eloquent or skilled.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines oratory as:

The activity of giving skilful and effective speeches in public.

Many of the great orations from the past are still cherished and quoted today. For example:

Martin Luther King on civil rights (1963):

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.

Sir Winston Churchill on the fight against Nazism during the Second World War (1940):

We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender...

Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address (1863):

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

William Wilberforce on slavery (1789):

A trade founded in iniquity, and carried on as this was, must be abolished, let the policy be what it might – let the consequences be what they would, I from this time determined that I would never rest till I had affected its abolition.

Jane Addams on suffrage (1911):

I don't believe in urging a man to vote against his convictions... But the women should have votes to represent themselves.

John F. Kennedy on going to the moon (1961):

Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.

Nelson Mandela on fighting for an equal, democratic South Africa (1965):

...But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

Margaret Thatcher on sticking to their economic plans (1980):

...I have only one thing to say: *You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning!*

Barack Obama on the need for unity in the United States of America (2004):

...there is not a liberal America and a conservative America – there is the United States of America.

And finally, when still a teenager, Greta Thunberg on climate change (2019):

I shouldn't be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you? You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words, and yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering, people are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairytales of eternal economic growth.

A 16-year-old schoolgirl had made one of the great orations of all time in her second language, not in her home language of Swedish. A true oration!

Part 1 – Introducing Oracy

Launching Oracy

Introducing oracy in the classroom is explained in detail in my **Talk:Write programme**. This publication is an extension to **Talk:Write** as well as a stand-alone initiative.

Whatever the context of a school's launch into oracy, I still recommend that it is introduced as one stage in the process of developing speaking and listening in a school.

Sadly, too many children enter school today with very little ability to speak or listen at their age expectation. Schools are working hard to compensate for this lack of foundation and to enable children to catch up with those already performing at the expected standard.

The following are the stages of development that children will pass through to become confident and effective orators.

The Stages of Development

From Speaking and Listening into Oracy

The ages are guidance only and performance will be affected by prior experience and aptitude.

1. Time invested initially with all young children in the skills of speaking clearly and listening attentively and with understanding. Ideally, this should be a key part of home life and early development for children from birth. It definitely should be (and is) a required aspect of all Early Years education in Early Years settings both in the community and in the school.
2. Empathetic study of the **5 Codes of Speech** from age 6/7. The **5 Codes of Speech** are local accents and slang, dialect (including some forms of English as a second language, American, Australian, patois and street talk), *Standard English*, *received pronunciation* and the clearly enunciated and varied form of *elaborated speech* – without the more affected form of *received pronunciation* – that is also writer's voice.
3. Sensitive use of code switching to instil selection of style of speech for purpose – from age 6/7 – through enjoyable activities. Code switching is moving confidently between different codes of speech for different purposes.
4. Development of the ability to code switch with ease from daily speech / home speech to *Standard English* (if daily speech is other than the standardised form) from age 7/8.
5. Pro-active teaching of some **suave features of language**, to include: **suave words**, **suave connectives**, **suave sentence openers** and inflection in the voice to reflect punctuation, that are ambitious for the age of the child, from age 6/7. **Suave words** are sophisticated or ambitious words for the age of the child; **suave connectives** are sophisticated words or phrases that link or extend sentences; **suave sentence openers** are varied and impactful ways to begin sentences and **suave punctuation** is the sophisticated use of punctuation to

infer inflection and vocal expression and includes the question mark, exclamation mark, the dash, parenthesis and ellipsis.

6. Celebrate understanding and successful use of **suave features of language** in speech and writing from age 7/8.
7. Pro-active teaching of a wide range of **suave features of language** from age 7/8.
8. Pro-active modelling and encouragement in the ability to perform with conviction, passion and persuasion from age 7/8 (key skills of oration).
9. Development of the ability to start code switching from daily speech to **school speak** (see page 27) from age 7/8.
10. Development of the ability to code switch with ease from daily speech / home speech / *restricted speech* to *Standard English* (if the home speech is different) and then into the elaborate form of **school speak** from age 8/9.

In summary, the skills of oracy are experienced though:

- **Hearing:** the ability to sustain listening and reflect on what is said.
- **Understanding:** the ability to interpret what is heard and to react or respond if required.
- **Absorbing:** the ability to internalise what is heard, integrating it into existing beliefs and passions for future purpose.
- **Embracing:** the ability to envelop the new learning with passion and caring.
- **Practising:** the ability to enable a performance that reflects the understanding and passion held.
- **Performing with Passion:** the ability to share passion and understanding so that the listener experiences and embraces that same emotive exposure.

Why English?

Why English Is the International Language

Martin Luther King's most famous oration is generally regarded as the greatest speech of all time. Great speeches may be in any language yet, when researching great performances, most of the examples are in English. This is not surprising – English is now the most widely spoken language in the world.

The first and most important reason for the spread of English is the former British Empire. Prior to that colonisation, English was spoken only by the British. Colonisation is now an embarrassment for many in England, but we need to accept that the history of man has centred around colonisation of one form or another.

Three thousand years ago the first and second Persian invasions of Greece in 492 – 490 BC and 480 – 479 BC were recorded. Since then history is littered with invasions and colonisations of countries around the world.

The growth of the British Empire, however, was not the sole reason for English becoming known as the international language of the world. The massive growth of trade between England, Asia and Africa contributed greatly to the spread of English. Indeed, the growth of trade between all countries has required a common language to enable ease of communication, and the parallels in timing decided that that should be English. There are, however, other reasons for the continued growth and spread of the English language internationally.

Why English Continues to Spread

English is the most commonly spoken language in the world. Depending on how you count, in addition to the approximately 400 million native speakers,

English is understood and / or spoken by roughly 1 – 1.6 billion people. In addition, English has long been the official language of business.

It is generally accepted that English is one of the more flexible languages, enabling sentences to be reworded, restructured and recreated for purpose. The words are easy to understand and its relationship to many other languages means that the speaker can understand where the concepts in English come from. Due to its long and complex history of interaction with other nations, the language of English was shaped by the influences of many other languages and cultures. It is therefore a hybrid language, which includes elements of Latin, Germanic and the eight romance languages.

Many countries have taken the flexibility and international strength of English to heart, incorporating many English words into their languages. For example, Singapore has created a totally new form of English called *Singlish* which has also absorbed aspects of other languages, such as Standard Chinese and Malay. Sweden has its own *Swenglish*. Switzerland celebrates *Swinglish*. *Hinglish* is a marriage of Hindi and English, and *Spanglish* amalgamates English into Spanish. Thus, language grows and morphs as people's needs and purposes for communication spread.

Teaching effective and flexible communication in all its senses is a key skill for the adults of tomorrow, as is respect for the many codes of English in birth across the world. If the teaching profession is waiting for the right time to launch a passion for codes of language, including oracy, the time is now.

Evolution of Standard English

Standard English is the agreed form of English established in the mid-fifteenth century. Historically, travel within England was limited to a very few and most of the population lived and died in the area where they were born. This led to the development of speech in different locations that was often unique and sometimes incomprehensible to others. This unique speech is known as either a local accent or a dialect.

In the late fourteenth and the fifteenth century it was determined that an agreed form of language was important to allow communication between all areas, particularly in the rapidly growing field of publishing. The Court of Chancery in Westminster began using English for its official documents in the early fifteenth century. To this purpose, a new, standard form of Middle English (known as Chancery Standard) was developed from the dialects of London and the East Midlands.

The standardised form spread slowly and was increasingly accepted by consensus rather than by imposition by any one sector of the community. This was primarily due to the rapid spread of printing and publication, including such works as those of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (published in print in 1476), the works of Shakespeare (First Folio published in 1623) and *The King James Bible* (published in 1611).

What Is Standard English?

Standard English, the eventual chosen form, is not better than other forms of speech. It is itself rooted in dialects. It is simply the *agreed* form of grammatical structure and spelling that had become essential so that all the country might understand one another and be able to read and understand published works and performances.

The purpose at that time, of one agreed, common form of speech, as it is now known, was to bring people together and enable effective communication between them.

It is not a particular accent, no one style of speech is better than the others, it is purely about the correctness of the agreed form.

Standard English in the Classroom

Supporting One Another in Learning Standard English

All children across a school, from the age of 5/6 upwards, should be involved in the awareness of the importance of having the ability to speak in the agreed, common grammatical forms and with correct pronunciation.

Children should be encouraged to support each other by rephrasing grammatical forms calmly and quietly out loud, with respect and warmth, when they hear their peers and adults make pronunciation slips and grammatical errors. This might be in lessons, assemblies or other curricular time.

Their personal forms of home speech, cultural speech or local accent should always be fully respected and used whenever the standard form is not required.

Styles of Speech and Respect

Schools in the United Kingdom often serve communities that reflect a wide range of forms of English. It is not unusual for this range to include children with the elaborate form of speech, children with the local accent – with or without dialect features, children with other regional accents from the same county, regional accents from across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, accents from families with first languages other than English, and even occasionally from English-speaking countries elsewhere in the world.

Introducing a focus of learning on the different ways that people speak could lead to individuals feeling discriminated against or insulted. It is crucial that the issue of accents is introduced in a way that protects all children and their families.

Model Discussions for Code Switching

The following are a few of the potential stimuli for discussion:

1. Three or more members of the school staff who have different accents or who can code switch into different speech forms, who are happy to put on a short *performance* or a staged discussion on the ways they speak, why they speak that way, and how they are the same and how they are different.
2. Volunteers from the parent body who are willing to take part in a similar activity.
3. Volunteers from the community who are willing to take part in a similar activity.
4. Recordings of three or more famous people who speak with different accents.
5. Three or more clips of television *soaps* set in different parts of the country with characters speaking in contrasting accents.

It is important that the teacher always emphasises the need for respect when we are discussing codes of speech.

Children could discuss how the accents are similar and how they are different. They could start to informally code switch from their daily speech to one or more of those they have listened to. This will introduce all to a potentially sensitive issue in a safe and supportive way. For further explanation, see *page 60*.

Understanding and Embedding Code Switching

When a class has developed their understanding of the reasons why people speak English in different ways, the issue of *Standard English* should be brought into the discussion.

The same models as were used to launch different accents could be used to explore the concept that all accents may still represent *Standard English* if the grammar and pronunciation is correct according to the agreed forms. Children could be helped to detect if any examples are not correct.

Sensitively Extend Code Switching

Teachers could then consciously introduce examples of common phrases that do not conform to *Standard English*. Children could talk together and work out how the same phrase could be standardised.

Throughout all this, children could continue to practise their skills of code switching through short role plays in pairs or threes, where each character speaks in a different way – one of which might always be the way most children in the school speak. One of those characters may not speak in *Standard English* and another character must help that character to standardise their speech. There are examples of both these in our **Talk:Write programme**.

Extending to the Full Range of Codes of Speech

If the elaborated form of English did not arise naturally as one of the speech forms, again it could be introduced through videos or willing role models from the staff or the community. Please note that – at this point – it should not be expected that it will involve all the features of oration (or **school speak**) which have not yet been introduced.

Finally, the concept of *received pronunciation* (refined speech or sometimes considered to be affected speech) may be included in the code-switching games and role plays, through the inclusion of a character with refined or affected speech, a member of the Royal Family or a member of staff who is happy to model this speech form. Recorded examples may be used for exemplification. Again, sensitivity must be stressed throughout.

Now children can enjoy playing **Let's Switch**, led by the teacher calling out a phrase and then calling a mix of accents and codes one by one and the class must immediately call out the phrase in the new accent.

This is just one idea for a fun activity – there are a list of games and activities for speaking and listening – including oracy – on our website.

Teachers know their own children and their own classes. They should adapt, improve or change the games to suit their children's needs.

Whatever the activity – all children should experience a wide range of accents with sensitivity and respect.

Part 2 – Teaching Oracy

What Is School Speak?

Upon completion of a thorough and effective introduction to the different codes of speech, many schools are enjoying success through the launch of **school speak** oracy teaching, performances at **oracy assemblies** and other opportunities.

School speak is an alternative name for *elaborated speech* that is enriched and expressive as well as emotionally and sometimes spiritually evocative. It is a term used to reinforce the concept that this is an alternative code of speech that *all* children can switch into naturally and with complete confidence when they choose to. It is not a style of speech intended to overwhelm or possibly suppress the child's own cultural and family speech style. It embraces all children in a school, involving them in one shared and agreed form of speech to be used when the time and the agenda call for it. Most importantly, it is a new form of speech for all and has no historic or social connotations.

While exploring the differences between *Standard English*, *received pronunciation* (affected speech) and other accents, pupils will enjoy rich and varied opportunities to code switch between their daily speech and the more deliberately enunciated form that used to be called *elaborated speech*.

This should have the following elements:

- All grammar and pronunciation of words should conform to the modes of *Standard English*.
- Clear enunciation of all words.

- Little trace of local or home accent (if applicable).
- Clearly enunciated consonants at the opening, in the middle and at the end of all words as appropriate.
- The voice is often clearly projected from the chest.
- All pronunciation is crisp and clear.
- All speech is made in a well-projected form, not in a raised voice but able to be heard across a classroom with ease.

This speech should be:

- Enriched with expressive **suave sentence openers** and **suave connectives** to provide clear contexts, purposes and links.
- Enhanced with vocal expression and inflection that reflects the punctuation that would be needed were the speech in written form.
- Enriched with **suave features** and **suave words** for visualisation and enjoyment of the verbalised experience.
- Enhanced with expressive inflection, with appropriate varied expression and intonation in the voice to reflect emotion and mood.

This speech may also contain other **suave features** including:

- alliteration,
- simile,
- metaphor,
- onomatopoeia,
- personification,
- figurative language, and
- passive voice.

Every child, regardless of home culture, environment or tradition, should be helped to develop this speech as an optional alternative code to use, which should become known as **school speak**.

School Speak Is a Choice

This speech has the name '**school speak**' because it is not acceptable to impose this form of speech on children to the detriment of their home speech or cultural speech. It is only to be used in school (except when practising at home) until the child is old enough and able to make a genuine choice to use it for other purposes.

School speak is an alternative form of speech – an oration to be transitioned into with ease when the child is aware that it is appropriate. As the child matures, they may elect to use this form of oracy for pre-determined purposes, not only for in-school presentations, debates, and dialogue and discussion within lessons when agreed, but also for presentations and persuasive exposition outside school, in employment interviews, for recording and writing purposes, and other options as appropriate.

Many schools choose to name their form of **school speak** with the school's individual name to make it a more personal and relevant experience.

E.g. Parklands Speak, St Peter's Speak and High Moor Speak.

Embedding School Speak

Teachers should use lessons across the curriculum as opportunities to practise **school speak**. At first it may be for ten minutes in the opening or plenary – or during discussion in the middle.

Once or twice a week, pupils might also take home their personal written contribution from an activity within a lesson to further practise and develop their speeches into an oration.

Soon, teachers should suggest lessons are conducted in ***school speak*** by everyone in the classroom once or twice a day. For example, today we could use ***school speak*** in history and PE; tomorrow it might be in art and in English; on the third day, geography and maths might be the target lessons; and on the fourth day it could be music and RE.

In some of those target lessons, ***school speak*** might only be used in a 15-minute debate or discussion and in others it might be used for most or all the lesson. Switching into ***school speak*** should be a mainly light-hearted and enjoyable experience.

Within one term, a school should aim to have enabled every child in Key Stages 2 or 3 (ages 8 to 13) to switch confidently into ***school speak***, when appropriate.

Introducing Oracy in School

The oracy performance is initially launched through a weekly focus that celebrates recent learning or experiences. It complements the pupils' involvement and appreciation of their learning or experiences, celebrating success and enjoyment felt in lessons and across the wider curriculum.

Basing the initiation stage upon lessons or learning experienced in the recent past encourages the child to relive the feelings they experienced in the first instance, whilst enabling them to recall detail with ease, to better concentrate on their skills of oration.

The opportunity described in this publication is just one example and is the development of oracy as the key feature in an assembly towards the end of each week, with a significant celebration at the end of every term.

In some schools, and particularly secondary schools, this might be a weekly and termly occasion shared with another class, the year team or another year.

In all events, the enabling of an audience who have not witnessed the preparation stages of that class is essential (although they may have been following the same process in their own class).

The assembly may not be purely dedicated to oracy, but it should involve 20 minutes or more for the oracy focus. It may also include some **suave word** activities for whole school reinforcement which should be fun and at a good pace (see our website and **Top Tips for Teaching Suave Words**, Ros Wilson).

It is important that, for the first term at least, the same chosen focus is maintained every week.

It is the orator's ability to fill their audience with the same excitement, awe or passion as they felt when they experienced that moment that is the confirmation of their success in oratory.

Further Oracy Opportunities

The focus here is pupils remembering their most enjoyed lesson of that week. It could, alternatively, be the pupils' particular enjoyment of a named, specific activity or experience of the teacher's or pupils' choice.

For example:

- the weekly study of a highly stimulating and unusual picture from sources like Pobble or Literacy Shed.
- in response to an enjoyed weekly drama/role play experience.
- weekly learning of a short poem or a verse of a longer poem.
- a weekly experience that evoked great emotion, e.g. learning about a disaster, the excitement of a visitor etc.
- the weekly recall of lessons in one particular subject, e.g. PE, PSHE or art.
- something funny or strange that one or more pupils experience each week.

In our *model* however, it is through children celebrating the learning they have most enjoyed and giving a reason for their choice.

Expression and Gesture

Teaching Expression and Gesture

Having an audience is important in the development of the skills of oratory, particularly the following characteristics:

- **Expressive intonation:** the speaker may vary the tone and quality of speech appropriately for the content. For example, they may open with a warm introduction, switch to a hushed tone for a few moments and then erupt in an explosion of excitement for purpose.
- **Gesture and / or body movement:** the speaker may use clear and decisive gestures for purpose.
- **Position:** the speaker may stand erect, with feet a few inches apart and arms at their sides as they open their speech, but then make occasional sweeping gestures to left or to right, to emphasise a point.
- **Model / actions:** the speaker may use their hands and / or arms to model shapes or actions when appropriate. For example, a raised palm for a stop sign or a beckon when saying *Come here*. Alternatively, they might take steps in the relevant direction according to the content of the narrative.
- **Facial expression:** the speaker may make use of facial expression appropriate to the content of their speech. For example, they may open with smiling eyes, a warm expression and a smile on their lips, but then switch to an angry face with flashing eyes and a scowl, or an expression of fear with quivering lips and frightened, darting eyes.
- **Body language:** the speaker may use body language that matches the mood expressed through the speech. For example, they may stand in an aggressive forward-leaning mode with hands on hips, in a somewhat withdrawn, bent and fearful mode or in an ecstatic open stance with arms outstretched.
- **Fit for purpose:** the speaker's facial expressions, body language and gestures should reflect the content and coherence of the oration. The speaker should use tones that are filled with passion when appropriate but can equally be raised in anger or hushed in a calming and soft murmur.

Practising Expression and Gesture

All the features of the oration will need to be practised in class whenever oracy is being introduced over the first one or two terms. Children can coach each other in pairs or small groups, calling out a voice and facial expression type and then both or all making the agreed short speech in that form.

For example, *an angry man, a scared young child, a puzzled pupil, a worried parent* and so on. Free-standing mirrors may also be helpful for practising facial expressions in pairs.

Equally, an adult might call out emotions and the class could reflect them in their facial expressions and gestures. For example: *anger, fear, hope, joy, anxiety* and so on. The adult may call upon children who portrayed the emotion well to model for the class, who might then have a further attempt.

To embed these facial expressions and gestures, play games such as **Show Me**. The teacher calls out an emotion and children immediately show an appropriate expression or gesture. This may be varied by calling a child's name and they model an expression or gesture of their choice, which the class or teacher or another named child has to guess and call out the name to.

It is important that mainstream children with different needs and abilities are considered in planning and preparation, so that they may be enabled to perform in ways that work for them.

All this should be fun and accompanied by laughter and praise. Children should be encouraged to practise their orations at home, performing them for family members and friends.

The Importance of Passion in Conveying Emotion

The **school speak** oracy event or gathering is a weekly or fortnightly opportunity for the demonstration, consolidation and performance of **school speak**. This event is key to developing all pupils' abilities to fulfil Wilkinson's objectives for oracy:

The verbalisation of experience; the experience of verbalisation.

In summary, this means that the oral performance brings reality to the content, while the content provides the vehicle for a full oracy opportunity.

Both the speaker and the audience are reliving the original experience and are feeling and demonstrating similar emotions to those that the original recipient felt, including in their facial and vocal expressions and body language.

It is for this reason that the orations developed and rehearsed both in class and at home are described as performances with passion.

They are reenactments of earlier emotive experiences and have the aim of conveying those same feelings and emotions to the listeners.

The 12-Step Introduction to School Speak Oracy

Step 1

Which Lesson Did You Most Enjoy this Week?

The pupil's ability to identify their own choice of lesson that they particularly enjoyed or found interesting, and to say why that was.

This is taught through a series of quick activities every day, each lasting a few minutes, through a short discussion with their partners to say which lesson they have liked best so far that week and why. This can be in the speech code of their choice. It will not be written down and it will not be presented as a performance. The activity may only need to be practised once or twice before the class can quickly and easily identify a preferred lesson and say why they chose it.

Ask: What lesson have you most enjoyed this week?

Step 2

Make Up a Sentence for Your Favourite Lesson this Week

The pupil's ability to say, out loud, what their favourite lesson was in a complete sentence. Do not introduce the *school speak sentence openers* at this stage.

Ask: Are you pleased with your choice of your best lesson?

Step 3

Add a Second Sentence

The pupil's ability to add a second sentence to their first, saying why they liked a particular lesson best or what they most enjoyed within the lesson.

They should always open with their first sentence naming the lesson they have enjoyed most so far and then add the second sentence to say why they chose it.

Ask: Why was that the lesson you most enjoyed?

Step 4

Improve the Two Sentences

The pupil's ability to edit and improve their own work. This step is challenging for some children and should be practised for a few minutes at a time within several English lessons.

Children should write their two sentences and read them out loud (softly) to see if they can improve them. For this purpose, children should be taught how to use the pupil pamphlet to give their first sentence a strong **school speak sentence opener** (see page 44). They should then add one, or at most two, **suave features** to their second sentence. They should practise *performing* their sentences out loud (softly) and see how else they might be improved, in either language or performance.

Ask: Can you turn your sentences into school speak and practise performing them?

Step 5

Improve the Two Sentences by Working with a Friend

The pupil's ability to consult with a peer or peers, advising and receiving advice, and the ability to coach and be coached in performance. Pupils should read their two oracy sentence models to their partner, who may suggest more edits or improvements which they can try out and discuss.

The two children then practise their oracy performances. One child is the performer, and the other is the coach, suggesting changes in vocal and facial expression if appropriate. They then reverse roles. Important discussions might still arise around the choice of a **school speak sentence opener** to open the first sentence until children become totally comfortable using them.

Ask: Can you improve your two sentences, turning them into school speak?

Step 6

Write Your Two Sentences in Your Oracy Notebook

The pupil's ability to record in writing their intended oracy performance in two sentences in their **oracy notebook**. An easily read print can help later reading. The child should rework these two sentences to present them in their best **school speak** from remembering their work with their friend.

The pupil's own small **oracy notebook** should be provided by the school and should not be larger than 4x6 inches so that it may be held easily in one hand.

Ask: Can you write your two sentences in your notebook, saying which is your favourite lesson this week and why?

Step 7

Turn the Two Sentences into an Oration

The pupil's ability to perform their two sentences in rich **school speak**. This is developed through in-class modelling with their partner, a small group and then the class, and then repeated practise and performance – initially in a short section of an English lesson and then at home.

The two sentences should be performed in full **school speak** repeatedly at home until some or all children know them by heart. This ability to memorise the performance will strengthen as the child continues to practise and perform over the weeks. They will always, however, have their small **oracy notebook** held up – at or slightly below chin level – so that they may glance down to refresh their memory if needed.

The stance, positioning and use of the notebook as a prompt and reassurance should be taught and modelled alongside the skills of oracy from the first week. It takes practise to be able to hold it and refer to it naturally without interrupting their performance, and to enable them to still use hand and arm gesture when appropriate.

Ask: Can you perform an oration?

Step 8

Practise the Oracy Performance at Home

The pupil's ability to practise and embed their performance at home in order to fully master it. On the evening preceding the dedicated assembly, or as close to it as possible, children take their notebooks home for a final practice. They find a private space, if possible, and practise reading their two sentences out loud in their best **school speak**, clearly and with expression, and eventually – passion, over and over again until they know all or most

of it by heart. They will slowly learn to apply facial expressions, gesture and body language when appropriate (see page 33).

Ask: Can you find a quiet space on your own? Can you perform for other family members?

Step 9

Perform the Oration for the Class

The pupil's ability to perform their oration for others. This step is the first performance to show the ability of the class to stand silently, when asked, and then each in turn perform their **school speak** oracy performance without prompting. It usually takes place in registration time on the day of the weekly public performance. Pupils should be standing tall, holding their notebooks before them in case they need to make reference, and should orate – speaking out clearly and proudly in their turn, gradually using appropriate facial expressions and body language with confidence. When all have performed, discussion should take place as to which performance might be the best to represent their class in the **oracy assembly** that week, and why.

Ask: Can you perform your oration for others?

Step 10

Earn an Oracy Certificate

At the **oracy assembly**, all class winners from across the year, key stage or school, line up at the front of the hall and again do their personal oracy performance one after another. The senior leader fronting the assembly will identify the overall winner, explaining their reasons, and that child will receive a small prize. All class winners will receive a certificate.

Alternatively, the winner could be selected by volume of applause, by pupil vote, by staff vote or by another means.

Ask: Was your class ever a winner of an oracy certificate?

Step 11

Celebration

At the close of each term, a final celebration is based on every pupil in the school looking back through their notebooks and choosing their own overall winning lesson presentation for that term. They then work with their oracy partner to refine their speech and rehearse it, editing the language if they so wish, before once again practising it at home prior to performing it for their class or year team.

The class winners will go forward to perform in the end-of-term **school speak oracy assembly** and the overall winner receives a small trophy to keep. Their class is awarded a larger trophy that they keep for one term. All class winners receive a certificate.

Ask: Has your class ever won the oracy trophy?

Step 12

Extend the Oracy Performance over Time

As the children increase in confidence, the two sentences may become three sentences, and then four and so on. They should not be increased in number beyond that which a child can comfortably manage in one presentation. However, the written report could be transferred into their English book and completed there in the same suave form. These skills of expressive language should now be applied in writing produced in lessons across the curriculum.

Oracy Progress Checklist

This list is progressive and is for use with mainstream children *if* they have the abilities to perform the elements. Items that are not appropriate for any child should be ignored. Some points to consider showing adaptations for need have been included, but teachers should apply their knowledge of each child to ensure the experience is meaningful and stress free for all.

The first item is essential for oracy and thus some children may not be able to fully participate in oracy activities due to their personal needs. They may still, however, be able to enjoy learning some of the features and apply them in other forms of communication.

The items are numbered but are not in hierarchical order. They may be achieved in different sequences due to the learning abilities and skills of the child.

Some schools may choose to use this as a record for assessment or for tracking purposes, or to check progress from term to term.

- 1. Is this child able to speak clearly, using appropriate language to convey their message?** Some children may need to sign or use gestures to communicate and thus, although they should still join in the activity if able, should not be assessed against this checklist.
- 2. Is this child able to listen closely and respond appropriately to what has been said?** Some children may need help with translation or *hearing* through signing. If they can perform, they should be encouraged to, according to their own abilities.
- 3. Is this child able to stand still and upright while waiting to perform and for pauses within performance, with feet a few inches apart?** Some children may be unable to stand still or may find it very difficult. They should be encouraged to perform and their need to move when the movement is not complementing the performance should be ignored.

- 4. Is this child able to hold their notebook with the top at chin level so that they can see and speak clearly but glance down to self-prompt if needed?** Some children may be unable to hold the notebook up for longer periods or at all. They should be shown how to raise it discretely to check wording if possible and necessary. If they cannot self-prompt, a person may be used as a prompter.
- 5. Is this child able to smile and make eye contact with their audience?** Some children may not be able to make eye contact. This should be respected. Some children may find smiling difficult and should be shown respect and encouragement.
- 6. Is this child able to speak loudly and clearly without shouting?** Some children may struggle with volume control. They should be encouraged to do their best.
- 7. Is this child able to sound the consonants on the start and end of words, and in the middle, where appropriate?** Some children may find this difficult and will need encouragement and patience to progress as far as they are able.
- 8. Is this child able to use good vocal expression and enthusiasm so that the content sounds really interesting?** Some children may find speaking expressively difficult and will need modelling, help and encouragement to progress as far as they are able.
- 9. Is this child able to change their facial expression, when appropriate?** Some children will need modelling, help and patience to achieve as far as they are able.
- 10. Is this child able to use large, simple arm and hand gestures, when appropriate?** Some children may be unable to do this with one arm or both. They should be helped to do what they are able to do.
- 11. Is this child able to pause for effect, when appropriate?** Some children may find this difficult. Please use modelling and signing, if appropriate, to enable the child to make their best effort.
- 12. Is this child able to show passion and enjoyment during performances, when appropriate?** Some children may find alternative ways of demonstrating their passion for their messages, and as long as these are appropriate to the message, this should be accepted.

School Speak Sentence Openers

School speak sentence openers are generally a more complex mix of **suave features** (such as a **suave sentence opener**, a **suave connective**, a **suave adjective** or **adverb**, or a **suave verb**) combined to produce a complex and impactful opening phrase or clause, as opposed to the usual single word or two/three-word **suave sentence openers** taught for speaking and writing in daily life.

In the wider teaching of **suave features**, the teacher should be teaching **suave sentence openers**, which are usually single *ly* words, *ing* words or connectives. **School speak sentence openers** are more complex complete phrases for oratory. For example:

Suave Sentence Opener

Hesitantly... or Anticipating... or Whilst...

School Speak Sentence Opener

Upon reflection, I have concluded that...

The pupil pamphlet is a small, folded leaflet that provides exemplar **school speak sentence openers** for children to use and learn from.

A printable version is available from our website –

www.RosWilsonEd.com/oracy

Each child should receive their own A5 copy along with their small **oracy notebook** (which should not be larger than 4x6 inches) at the launch of oracy.

Using School Speak Sentence Openers

The following openers are examples only. Teachers should expand the range displayed in the classroom. They are graded in degree of challenge from age 7 to 13 plus within each stage and they are divided into three stages by challenge. This should make differentiation easier. Teachers could consider starting all children on Stage 1 and moving older and more able children quite quickly to Stage 2 and beyond.

Children should be encouraged to vary their choices and may move freely across the stages as they wish and as they find comfortable. The stages only indicate complexity but are not intended to be restrictive.

Classes should be taught to *play* with the examples given, changing words to different **suave words** and mixing and matching different phrases.

For example, if the child chooses:

In my opinion, the most amazing lesson we had this week was...

They may change:

- The opening *In my opinion* to *Undoubtedly*.
- The adjective *amazing* to the **suave word** *sensational*.
- The verb *had* to the suave example *experienced*.

resulting in the new opener:

Undoubtedly, the most sensational lesson we experienced this week was...

As pupils share their new suggestions, the teacher might record them and add them to a class display of **school speak sentence openers**. This can significantly increase the potential range in a classroom. Children may add their own new versions to their pamphlets or list them in the back of their **oracy notebooks**.

The display could be a line of openers along a wall above or below display boards or windows to preserve display space, or in vertical lines between display boards or windows.

School Speak Sentence Opener Examples

Stage 1

- The learning I most enjoyed this week was...
- The most fascinating learning for me this week was...
- The most enjoyable learning this week, in my opinion, was...
- My most enjoyable lesson this week was...
- To my surprise, my favourite learning this week was...
- We had so much excitement and fun this week when we learnt about...
- I was amazed to learn about the this week.
- Learning about was exciting this week.
- It was learning about the that I most enjoyed this week.
- I really enjoyed learning about the this week.

Stage 2

- Most of my lessons were enjoyable this week, but the one I enjoyed most was...
- Perhaps my most preferred lesson this week was...
- Upon reflection, my most enjoyed lesson this week turned out to be...
- In my opinion, the most amazing lesson we had this week was...
- I was stunned to learn about the awesome events during the...
- Undoubtedly, learning about was the most fascinating lesson this week.
- To my surprise, I thoroughly enjoyed an unexpectedly interesting lesson about...
- Learning about was truly the most outstanding experience this week.
- An absolutely amazing lesson I thoroughly enjoyed this week was...
- It is with joy and delight that I reflect on a truly absorbing lesson about...
- Truly, I found learning about the awesome wonders of absolutely gripping this week.
- All our lessons were engrossing this week, but if I had to select the most outstanding it would possibly be...

Stage 3

- How could anyone identify one lesson to celebrate the wealth of learning we enjoyed this week, but if I were obliged to it might possibly be...
- Wondrous outcomes of such fascinating investigations will remain an epic memory for me for a very long time to come.
- Superb! I loved our lesson on the wonders of the universe this week.
- Sensational snippets of information about life in Victorian times made our lesson the highlight of my week. Who would have thought that about them?
- Alligators! Who would have thought these incredible creatures could make learning so exciting this week? I was engrossed by their predatory powers – I just don't have the urge to actually meet one!
- Excited? We were overwhelmed by tales of early space flight in America.
- A new introduction to our PE programme has totally replaced all other sports as our favourite. Basketball – it's simply the best!
- Despite a week of much excitement and innovation, my selection as the pick of the crop was maths! Can you believe that? Yes – maths! Exploring five different ways to measure the playground turned out to be so much fun – and not always for the reasons our teacher expected.
- “¿Habla Español?” No, nor I, yet! When we were informed, however, that we were about to learn conversational Spanish, I was absolutely delighted.
- Whilst proving disturbing and a source of deep sorrow, nevertheless our lesson on life in the trenches in the First World War proved inspirational. Such pride! Such bravery! So many sacrifices.

N.B. It is not intended that children should sit and learn all the complex openers. However, they will naturally start to retain much of the vocabulary and phraseology. Pupils should be encouraged to explore and experiment across the pamphlet, rather than using the same one or two openers every week.

Oration for Different Purposes

It is emphasised that the introduction to presentation and performance through oracy should focus on the same theme and type for the first term at least and longer in some classes. In this publication, it is a simple report presentation about the lesson the child enjoyed most that week or term.

No change of focus should be introduced until the children are totally at ease and confident in this activity. Teachers may then broaden the range of theme types and purposes gradually over time. **School speak sentence openers** may be added to displays under a header for which type or purpose they might be helpful for.

The weekly oracy presentation can be adapted to suit any communication purpose once the school have become competent in the original chosen focus. It particularly lends itself to:

- explanations and explanatory oration,
- reports and reporting oration,
- discussions and discursive oration,
- debates and opinionated oration,
- persuasion and persuasive oration,
- instructions and instructional oration,
- diary recollections and historic oration,
- dramatic quotations and oration, and
- poetic oration.

Please remember, children who move onto these alternative text forms for oral presentations will already be confident and articulate orators, having completed one or more terms of **school speak oracy assemblies** or other opportunities with their associated preparation and practise.

The language – which frequently involves **suave features** and **school speak sentence openers** previously used in their presentations – will already be familiar to them and known by heart by many.

These are common writing activities in most schools already but may now be adapted for oral performance once the class are familiar with and confident in performance of the *initiation* activity (*my favourite lesson* or similar). The same openers may be used in both performance and writing and may be focused within all subjects of the curriculum for celebrations and secure demonstration of understanding.

The following are examples only. As before, classes may *play* with the language to create their own openers for purpose. The subjects named in each example are suggestions only, based on frequent usage seen. Depending on the content of the lesson or theme, the type of text or genre might be effective in other subjects.

When the genre is more usually taught to older children (e.g. aged nine and above), the length of examples has been expanded for further demonstration of use of appropriate features. This does not indicate that pupils must always write more.

Explanations

Children in primary schools use explanation text regularly in subjects like English, drama, history, geography and science, explaining events or behaviour to show their understanding, and their causes and effects.

- **PE / PSHE / English:** Despite our thorough planning, regrettably we have been obliged to cancel the summer sports event. Please let me explain why this has become necessary...
- **Geography / science:** Recently, we have been studying the causes of the extinction of some life forms in the rainforests on our planet. My explanation for this tragedy is as follows...

- **English / PSHE:** It is with deep regret that I must inform you that I shall be unable to attend school tomorrow, due to very unusual circumstances in our family. Please allow me to explain the situation to you...

How to adapt an example:

- **Science:** Yesterday was a significant day in our investigations. Please allow me to explain to you what occurred...

Could become:

- Significant findings occurred in our science investigations yesterday when... I can only explain these events by suggesting that...

Reports

Children in primary schools use reporting text regularly in subjects like English, drama, history, geography and science to show their understanding and recollection of events in the past, around the earth or in investigations and studies.

- **Science / geography:** Following our enjoyable visit to the zoo last week, I have planned the following report for our newsletter. *It was the last week of April when the children of Swallows' Class boarded a coach to travel to...*
- **PE / English / PSHE:** Last Friday, the 12th of June, was our annual sporting highlight of the year when athletes from across the school gathered to celebrate their impressive abilities. The day was attended by dignitaries from the local area as well as many parents and friends of the school...
- **English / PSHE / history:** It is my great pleasure to share with you all today the following article that appeared in our local newspaper this week. *Monday, October the 5th, saw a visit to Perfection Primary School by the internationally famous historian, ...*

How to adapt an example:

- **English / PSHE:** In my opinion, the most amazing school visit I have ever made was last week's trip to the zoo. We all grumbled about the extremely early start to our journey, but it was well worth it...

Could become:

- In my opinion, the most amazing school trip ever experienced occurred last week – it was to Chester Zoo! Despite grumbling about the appalling time of the morning that we were required to arrive at school, the day was amazing and so worth it...

Discussion

Children in Upper Key Stage 2 commonly use discursive text in subjects like English, drama, history, geography, PSHE and science to show their understanding that there are two or more ways of considering an event or behaviour, causes and effect of behaviour on this planet, findings in scientific study or physical, social, health or emotional issues.

- **English / science / PSHE:** An issue that has caused a lot of discussion in our class this week is whether we believe that aliens exist. This conundrum has been researched widely on the internet and the class appear to have divided naturally into two groups with differing opinions...
- **History / geography / English:** In our studies of the voyages of discovery during the sixteenth century, we found opinions divided as to whether the world would have been a better place had they not happened. The following are some of the areas of disagreement amongst us as we discussed the main outcomes...
- **English / PSHE:** Following our suggestion that school uniform should be reviewed, we have been considering whether all pupils should wear long trousers all year round. This has divided opinions as many girls like to wear skirts in summer, whilst short trousers are still popular with some boys...

How to adapt an example:

- **History / English:** Most of my lessons were enjoyable this week, but the one I enjoyed most was the debate we held with Green Class, when each class took a different side of the argument. We were discussing whether Henry VIII was a good king or not. I was surprised to find that – although I think he probably was – I could argue fiercely for why he was not...

Could become:

- Unanimously, my peers and I agreed that the sensational debate we held this week with Green Class proved to be the most enjoyable lesson in a week of mainly enjoyable lessons. To my surprise, I found that – although I think he probably was a good king – I could argue fiercely for why Henry VIII was – in fact – not...

Persuasion

Children in Upper Key Stage 2 commonly use persuasive text in subjects like English, drama, history, geography, science and PSHE to attempt to influence or change opinions.

- **English / PSHE:** May I say what a pleasure it is to meet you all as potential new pupils at our magnificent school. I know that if you decide that this is the school you will be attending in the new academic year, you will not regret that decision – so let me share with you some of the wonderful things you will experience here...
- **Art / D&T / English:** My friends, let me persuade you all to step inside my tent at this exceptional summer gala. If you invest just £2, you will find yourself entering an amazing environment rich in wonderful art and sculpture – an environment you would dream to experience...

- **English / PSHE / D&T:** Ladies and Gentlemen, may I welcome you to this special feast we have prepared in your honour as we invite you to be the first parents to enjoy the privilege of paying for their children to attend our scintillating summer school. Not only will your children enjoy a wonderful experience on our beautiful eastern coastline, but you will have the reassurance that for two weeks your children will be cared for, safe, happy and away from home!

How to adapt an example:

- **Science / geography / English / PSHE:** To my surprise, I thoroughly enjoyed an unexpectedly interesting lesson about why, due to climate change, we should only bathe once a week. Let me persuade you that this is a very important decision you should make.

Could become:

- Having thoroughly enjoyed a lesson about why, due to climate change, we should only bathe once a week as a result of the impact of fuel use, let me persuade you that our behaviour as humans involves some very important decisions that we could make to improve our planet's environment and future.

Instructions

Children throughout primary schools commonly use instructional text in subjects like English, drama, geography, PSHE, PE and science to show their understanding of how to organise and conduct experiments, make models or food, grow plants or undertake other activities relevant to their studies.

- **English / PSHE:** On behalf of the staff here at Perfection Primary School, I have been asked to advise all parents on the pathways all children in this school are following towards becoming great orators – and their role in the process. In the first instance, nursery and reception children experience a lively and colourful curriculum set entirely around developing and consolidating their skills of speaking and listening...

- **D&T / science / English:** Further to the response of all parents to the delicious cake children took home last week, I have been asked to advise you all on how it is made. Please assemble the following products in your kitchen before taking the first steps – flour, butter, sugar, icing sugar, syrup and water...
- **English / PSHE:** In order to improve the standard and quality of homework brought back to school by children in Years 5 and 6, I have been asked to give all parents certain points to check before signing off their children’s efforts. Firstly, has your child presented their work neatly and with good layout and organisation, with a margin ruled to the left side, the date and a title...

How to adapt an example:

- **D&T / art / English:** Upon reflection, my most enjoyed lesson this week turned out to be learning to make this stunning window decoration. Let me take you through the steps needed to make something as beautiful as this...

Could become:

- Having reflected carefully, I have concluded that my most enjoyed lesson this week turned out to be learning to make this stunning window decoration. Please allow me to describe to you the steps you must take to make something as beautiful as this...

Diary Items

Children throughout primary schools commonly write diary items in subjects like English, drama, history, geography and PSHE to show their understanding and recollection of events in lives in the past, in other places or within their own community.

- **Maths / English:** It is with great delight that I stand before you and quote the opening lines of the wonderful diary item that I wrote yesterday. It began like this: *Dear Diary, what a day of joy and delight I have had when Mr Sums told me I could complete an additional fifty calculations in mathematics this morning – I can't wait to tell you about all the fun I enjoyed...*
- **English / PSHE:** *Dear Diary, welcome to my very first entry in a diary in my entire life. I am somewhat nervous about what I should say. My teacher tells me that I may share my hopes, my dreams and my secrets with you, my diary, and no one will see them... oh I do so hope that is true...*
- **English / PSHE / geography:** *Monday 15th: what a wearisome day that was! Despite my best efforts to arrive at school on time, I was unavoidably delayed when aliens snatched up the school bus – complete with a passenger total of twenty children – and carried it away to another place, leaving me bereft in the rainforest of the Amazon...*

How to adapt an example:

- **PE / drama / music / English:** *Perhaps my most preferred session this week, dear diary, was yesterday when the amazing Spinning Tops performed on our school stage – YES! On our school stage...*

Could become:

- *When expressly asked my preference of activities undertaken this week, dear diary, I must confess that it has to be yesterday when the amazing Spinning Tops performed on our school stage – YES! On our school stage! Understandably, this proved to be – for me – the most amazing lesson of the entire week!*

The above are examples only. Although they have been steered slightly towards a particular text type, with very small changes they will work for most texts. They will always work in a similar way when the communication is through writing.

Using Drama and Role Play

Drama and role play can be excellent vehicles for introducing code switching and alternative forms of speech, for motivating and exciting reluctant pupils and for coaching or modelling **school speak**.

Examples of role play scenarios that lend themselves to the application of different codes of speech for different characters within one scene – or to characters code switching within one scene – might include:

- multi-cultural classroom scenarios,
- busy airport scenarios with announcements, processes and conversations in different languages and codes of English,
- market scenarios with conversations in different languages and codes of English,
- travel scenarios, e.g. a train, a cruise ship, an aeroplane or a coach, with conversations in different languages and codes of English,
- family scenarios with code switching between first language and English,
- family scenarios with code switching between different forms of English, and
- family scenarios with visitors of other codes of English and/or languages.

In the early stages of introducing oracy, drama and role play can be a very effective method for encouraging and enabling pupils to develop their ways of speaking, code switching and **school speak**, as explained in more detail in the **Talk:Write programme**.

Example Activity

Consider pairing pupils and telling them that they should plan, prepare and practise a *conversation* or an *argument* between themselves about either an aspect of PSHE of their choice, or about an aspect of learning they have recently experienced. They should take opposing views as to how good or enjoyable or safe it was. They might develop an argument for performance to the class.

Both partners should then work together to write a script within which one character speaks in a local accent or dialect of their choice and the other character speaks in **school speak** with **suave features**. They should practise performing both sides of the discussion in both forms of speech and then choose the version they enjoyed most to perform for the class.

Some performances may be enjoyed in assembly to demonstrate the delight code switching and oracy in role play may bring.

Oracy in All Aspects of School Life

Throughout the school year, there are many opportunities for pupils to perform orations in their best **school speak** style. As pupils become confident and effective orators, performances should become a natural part of the school's daily life.

Using popular occasions such as sports and celebrations to demonstrate oracy and the powers of oration can be a significant motivator for more reluctant pupils and for changing the culture in a school, should that be necessary.

For example, if the captain of a successful or highly regarded school team makes a powerful and passionate speech about the sport or the team in an assembly and/or at a celebratory event, this can have a tremendous influence on other pupils.

Equally, the entire team could prepare a two- or three-sentence oration, perhaps using the **school speak sentence openers** (see page 44), about how they felt about a game, match or tournament. They could practise their oration both in school and at home. They could then line up in a celebratory assembly or other occasion and perform their orations in turn as pupils do in the **oracy assembly**.

Other opportunities for oratory performances may include:

- assemblies,
- visits from important people to class or assembly,
- sports events or results,
- votes of thanks to visitors, leaders or others who help the school,
- cultural or religious events,
- celebrations of achievements, performances or important events,
- leaving speeches,
- staff leaving occasions,
- celebrations such as special birthdays, and
- reporting on interesting or important events in the holidays.

Informing and Involving Families and Pupils

Families and pupils may misunderstand the purposes and reasoning behind teaching them to speak with what might be construed as just a *posh accent*.

It is crucial that, before time is spent on code switching and embedding the standard form of English, all families and children understand that this is to be an agreed practice for everyone in school – *all pupils and all adults* – and that it is not because there is anything to be changed in the way any one person speaks. It is because there will be occasions, mainly in school, when they all wish to speak the same way. In addition, for the sake of agreed consistency and understanding of speech and writing, we must all be able to perform in the standard form of English.

The time spent on preparation for readiness before introducing the different codes of speech and particularly ***school speak***, if this is very different to children's daily speech, is important and is covered widely in the **Talk:Write programme**. The sensitivity of discussing the way different people speak should be emphasised to families.

Consider:

- explaining how different dialects and accents developed in this country,
- discussing the way different characters talk in TV programmes,
- showing excerpts from movies / TV programmes to promote discussion,
- asking teachers with different accents / dialects to come in and model / talk about how people talk in their home locality,
- asking if any family members would like to demonstrate their accent or dialect and say where it is from, and
- explaining how the codes will be introduced, starting with one code at a time and only adding a new code when all children are comfortable with using that code.

Some families may object to their children speaking with a different style to their natural, home or cultural style. The time spent on induction of families to the oracy programme and the purposes of it is very important. Every precaution should be taken to ensure they do not feel offended by it.

Consider:

- inclusion on the schedule for the initial family meeting attended before the child starts at school,
- a dedicated family meeting before the main oracy programme is launched (possibly around pupil age 6/7),
- oracy performances by adults and children in family meetings to demonstrate how it is the same and how it is different from other speaking and listening,
- oracy influence in speeches, drama and other performances for families and friends, and
- family invitations to **oracy assemblies**.

Finding Quiet Space

Pupils may find it hard to identify a quiet space at home to practise. Discussion should take place with families at pre-meetings to prepare them for the need and to make some manageable suggestions if needed.

Consider:

- a bedroom before it is needed for someone to sleep,
- the bathroom for 30 minutes or more,
- the stairs,
- the shed, or
- the back seat of a vehicle.

Children with Additional Needs

The focus on oracy may draw unwarranted attention to pupils with specific needs or abilities. Always show total respect and empathy for the child. Ideally the school will already have a culture of warm support for all needs and abilities.

Consider:

- private pre-discussions with the child and with their families before the launch,
- private pre-discussions with pupils and families about the specific needs of a child, involving the child,
- inviting families to oracy sessions, and
- during oracy sessions, involve the child in the same way that all children are involved, and provide support from friends in a natural, warm and relaxed way.

Motivating Reluctant Pupils

Some children may feel intimidated by oracy or be indifferent to it.

Consider:

- the types of role play described earlier (*see page 57*) have been proved to be an effective motivator for more reluctant pupils providing it is always made to be enjoyable,
- seeing older role models they admire in oratory performance can be a huge motivator,
- older children may be used very effectively with younger pairs to coach and support them in developing short performances that involve pupils code switching or speaking in different codes, and
- school productions, such as plays for festivals and celebrations, also provide enjoyable opportunities for some characters to speak in other codes.

Practise and Preparation

Consider:

- provide desktop stand mirrors for practising facial expressions in a warm, non-judgemental but fun way,
- record the class and groups speaking in different codes and particularly in **school speak**. Play back to the group or class for positive discussion,
- ensure no one ever gets singled out for negative reasons,
- in *hall time* and / or PE and / or drama, record body language and physical gestures as the class practise them. Play back and discuss, and
- suggest they use a mirror for practise at home, if able.

Conclusion

**Speaking and listening is not oracy;
oracy is not just speaking and listening!**

To speak is to say something out loud that has meaning or sense to someone who understands that language.

To listen is to pay attention when someone else speaks, and to comprehend as much as possible – subject to understanding of the language and / or vocabulary.

We also listen to noises for different reasons – the joy of music, of song or of nature and the alert of imminent threat as in weather or transport.

There are a range of codes of speech in English, which include: accents, dialects, *restricted speech*, *received pronunciation*, slang, street talk, *elaborate speech* / oracy (may now be known as **school speak** in schools).

Oracy is one code of speech – it is not all codes of speech.

Oracy is the code of speech that gives us the power of oration – the ability to use language in a powerful performance (whether in speech or in writing) that sweeps the listener along, holding them in its embrace and sharing the original emotive experience with them.

It is the right of all children to have the skills of oratory within their repertoire so that they may chose to use them for purpose, when appropriate.

Speaking and listening is not oracy; oracy is not just speaking and listening!

This book gives pupils the gift of oracy and the powerful choice of different modes of communication. These tools enrich experiences and enhance opportunities for all.

Part 1 is a study of the origins of accents and the growth of Standard English. It explores the roots of oracy and its naming. It clarifies the differences between oracy and the other many varied forms of English.

Part 2 explores introducing children to different ways of communicating and to the cruciality of respect for this sensitive issue. It defines oracy for use in a range of cross-curricular school situations and opportunities. It provides teaching ideas and advice that empower pupils to become articulate and passionate orators when the occasion is appropriate.

This approach is aimed at pupils from 6 to 13 plus in English-speaking schools. It is a stand-alone approach to teaching oracy as well as an additional element to the Talk:Write programme.

Find out more and access resources:
www.RosWilsonEd.com/oracy

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