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Developing Oracy in the Classroom

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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Aims of the day

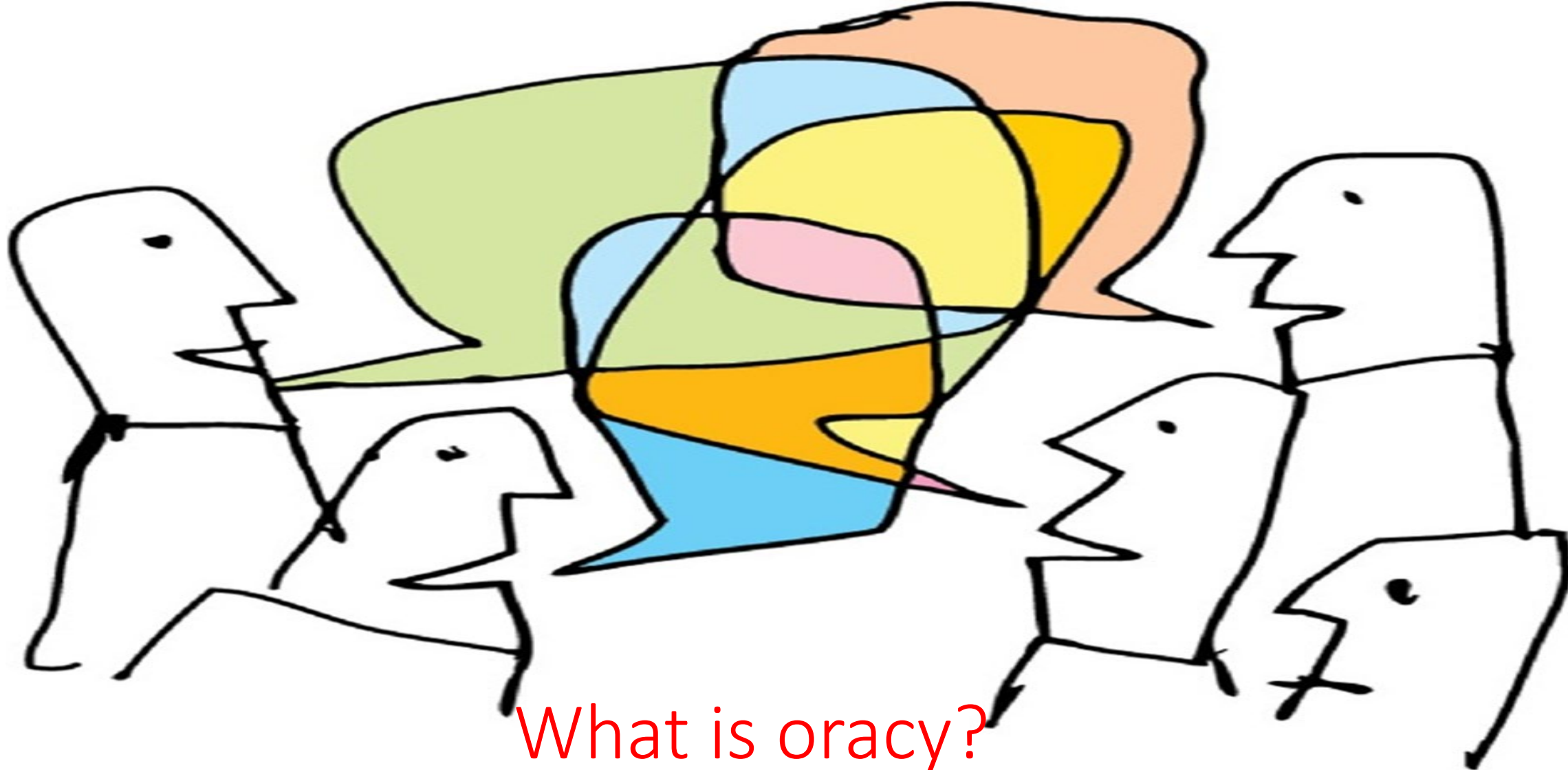
- To understand what oracy is
- Consider the impact of quality talk on pupil learning
- To apply some strategies to develop oracy and thinking skills in our lessons



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What is oracy?



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THINK
(Yourself)



PAIR
(With a partner)



SHARE
(Whole class)



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oracy

/ˈɔːrəsi/ 

noun **BRITISH**

the ability to express oneself fluently and grammatically in speech.

"infant teachers will be urged to concentrate on reading, writing, oracy and numeracy"



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'[Oracy] is what the school does to support the development of children's capacity to use speech to express their thoughts and communicate with others, in education and in life.'

Alexander⁶

"[Talk is] the most powerful tool of communication in the classroom and it's fundamentally central to the acts of teaching and learning"

Professor Frank Hardman⁷

"[Oracy] really represents the set of talk skills that children, that people, should develop, in the same way that we would expect people to develop reading and writing skills [...and] sums up that teachable set of competencies to do with spoken language"

Professor Neil Mercer⁸



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How many different types of 'talk' can you think of?



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Talk to...

Entertain

Analyse and
evaluate

Build
relationships

Reach
consensus

Influence

Share
information

Generate ideas
and opinions

Understand and
reason

Organise and
structure ideas

Gather
information

Acquire new
language

Challenge

Express yourself

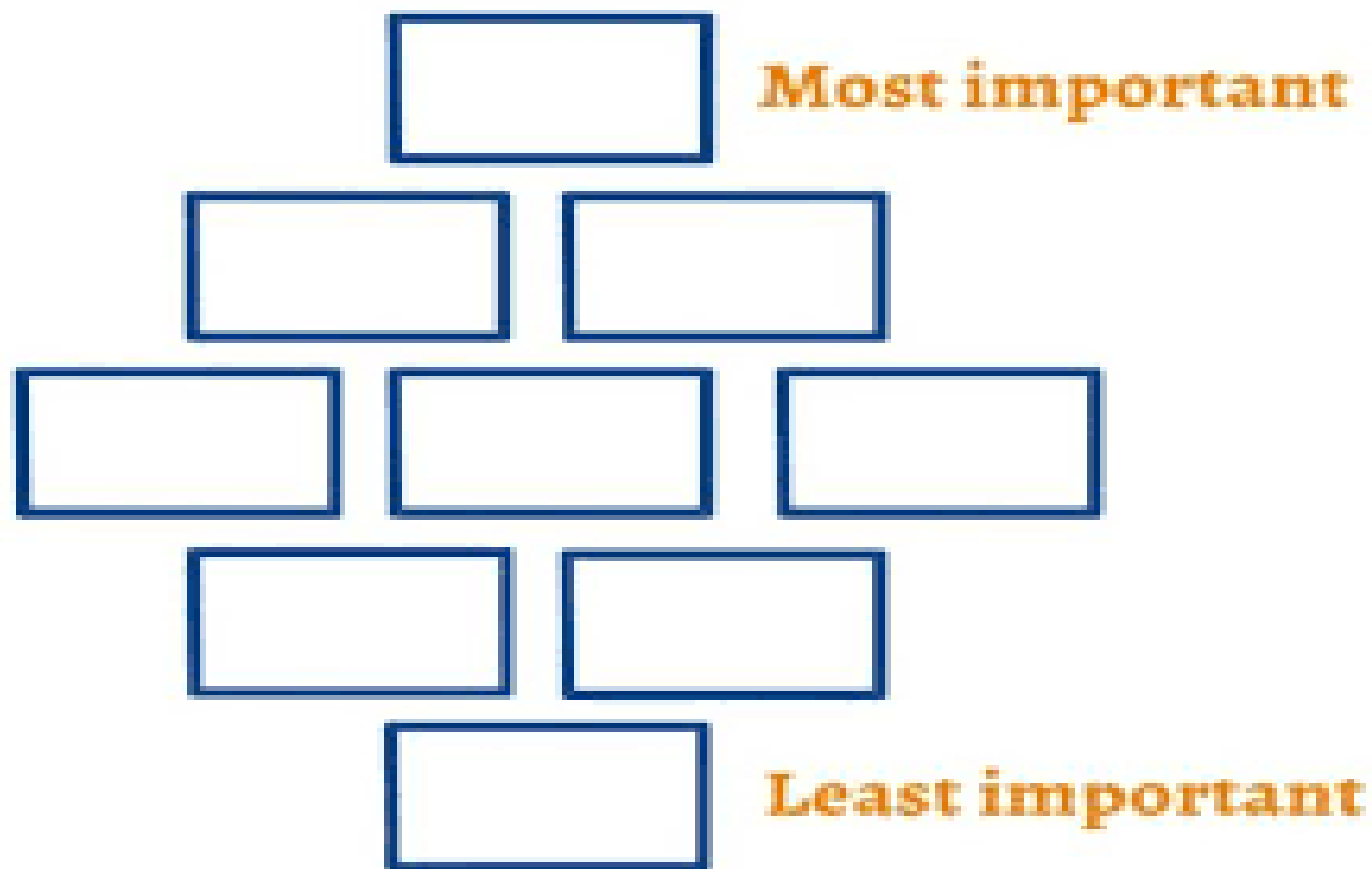
How many different types of talk in the classroom setting?



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What evidence do we have that:

(a) the quality of talk in classrooms matters?

(b) if we change the quality of talk, we can improve the quality of education?



The amount and quality of the dialogue children experience at home is one of best predictors of their eventual academic attainment
(Hart & Risley, 1995).

"Mothers or carers who have an "elaborative" conversational style have children with more organised and detailed memories... Mothers who...seldom use elaboration and evaluation, have children who recall less about the past. Longitudinal studies have shown that it is the experience of verbalising events *at the time that they occur* that is critical for long-term retention."
(Goswami and Bryant, 2007, p. 8)



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*"Reading and writing
float on a sea of talk."*

- JAMES BRITTON



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Speaking up: the importance of oracy in teaching and learning

- Cognitive gains, including English maths and science, the retention of subject specific knowledge, and 'transference' of reasoning skills across subject areas(Jay et al.,2017)
- Personal and social gains, including attitudes towards learning, enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence, and a reduction in anxiety (Hanley,P. et al., 2015); (Gorad et al., 2015)
- Civic engagement and empowerment, increasing young people's ability to debate issues, while also increasing understanding about social issues and ability to manage differences with others

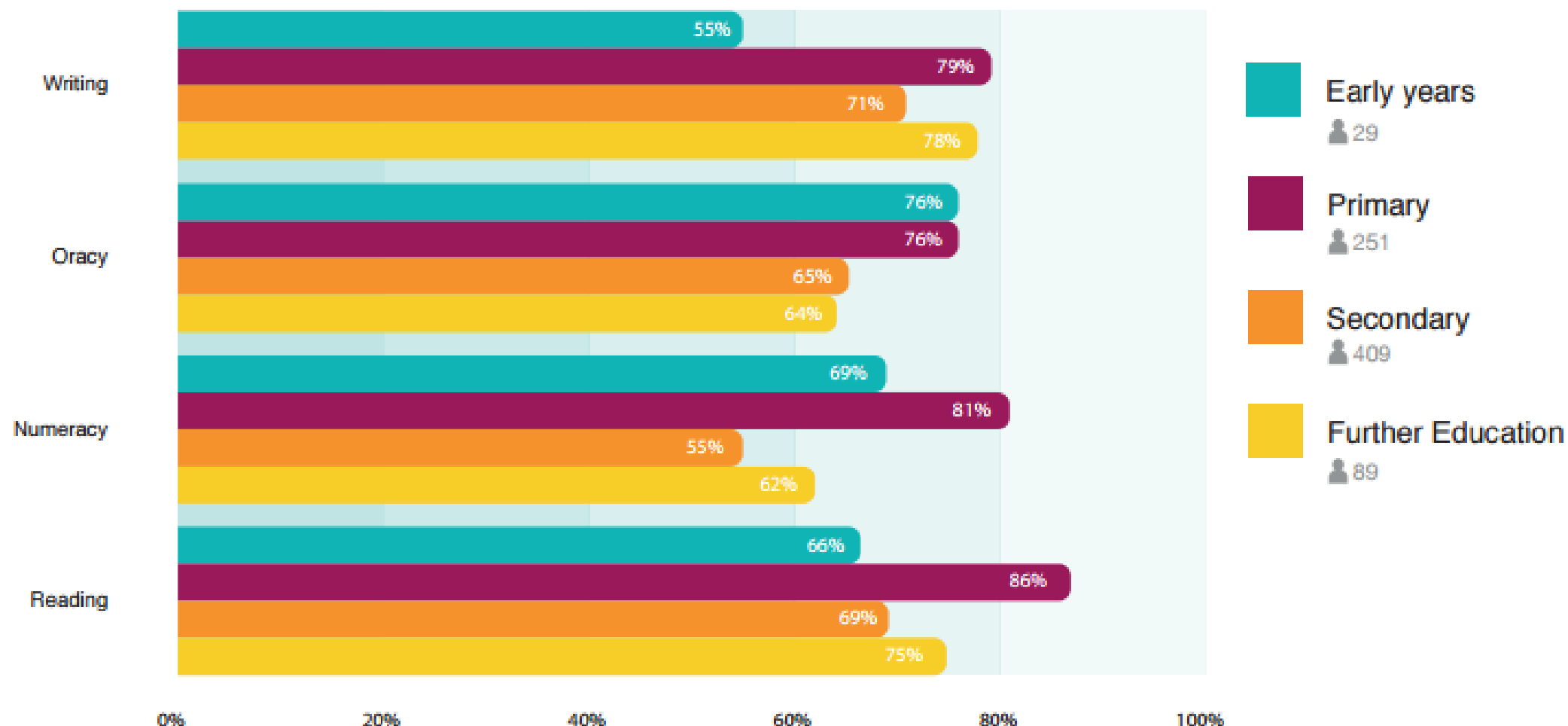


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Proportion of teachers in different phases who feel it is 'very important' they develop pupils' skills in each area during their own lessons



Oracy helps pupils... 👤 906



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Employers rank verbal communication as the most important skill for employees

In areas of deprivation
50% of children start school with below average language skills

“Over 20 major international studies make it clear that the quality of talk within a classroom raises standards”

Prof. Robin Alexander

On average, teachers do 90% of the talking with individual students saying approximately four words per lesson

R. Page 2005

“Our research shows that when students learn how to use talk to reason together, they become better at reasoning on their own”

Prof Neil Mercer

Three in four people suffer speech anxiety



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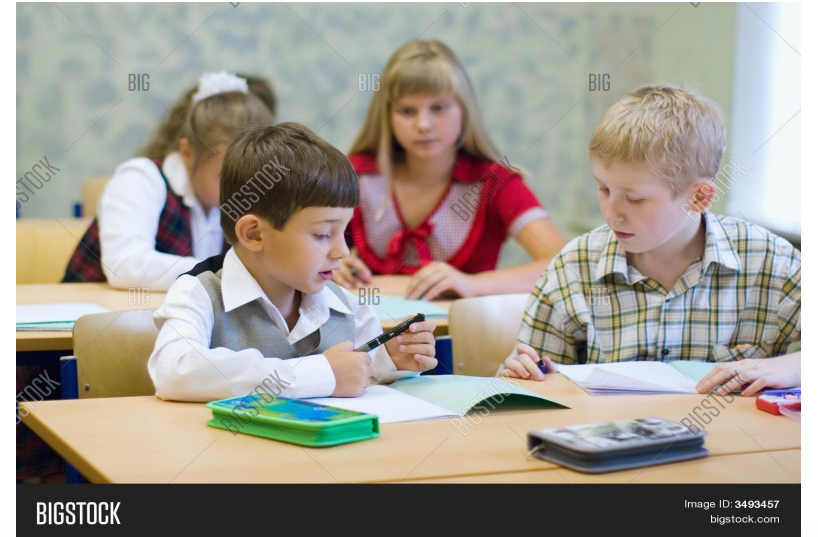


Why is oracy important? School 21



Two main kinds of classroom dialogue:

1. Talk between a teacher and one or more pupils
2. Talk amongst pupils (without a teacher)



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What can teachers use talk to do?

- Instruct
- Check understanding
- Maintain control
- Find out more about what their students know and think at the start of a topic
- Encourage students' *metacognition*: get them to articulate their thoughts and reflect on them
- Help students see a learning trajectory
- Model ways of using language for reasoning and arguing



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What does teacher-pupil talk usually look like?

Initiation

Teacher: Can anyone just remind us what oxygen is? Colin?

Response

Colin: It's a gas

Feedback

Teacher: Yes, that's right.

The IRF exchange



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What does most teacher-student interaction look like?

"In the whole class sections of literacy and numeracy lessons...most of the questions asked were of a low cognitive level designed to funnel pupils' responses towards a required answer."

(Smith, Hardman, Wall & Mroz, 2004)



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Year 7: talking about energy (1)

Teacher: Do you remember the electric bell?

Students: Yes! [*in chorus*]

Teacher: OK! Did any of you notice, did any of you actually hold onto the bell after it had...been working? What did you notice?

Suzanne: Vibration

Teacher: Well, the arm vibrated, yes. Sound. What else did you notice?

Tom: It was loud.

Teacher: That's not quite what I'm getting at.

Teacher: Remember the bell. There's the bell [*holding up a bell in front of the class*]. You did the experiment. If you held onto this bit here where the wires were [*indicating*], did you notice anything there?

Jason: There were sparks there.

Teacher: Heat, did you notice some heat?

Jason: There were sparks from there.

Teacher: There were?

Jason: Sparks.

Teacher: There were some sparks, yes. Let's just ignore the sparks a minute...some heat. There was a little bit of heat there with that one.

Teachers' use of talk is linked to good learning outcomes when...

- ...teachers use strategies other than the usual closed-question IRF exchanges
- ...and they help pupils appreciate the value of dialogue for learning.
- (Kyriacou & Issitt, 2008)



In what ways can teachers improve the quality of talk?



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The most effective teachers...

1. ...use question-and-answer sequences not just to test knowledge, but also to guide the development of children's understanding.
2. ...teach not just 'subject content', but also how to solve problems and make sense of experience.
3. ...treat learning as a social, communicative process.

(Rojas-Drummond & Mercer, 2004)



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Talk about literary texts that promotes students' high-level comprehension has the following characteristics:

- teachers reformulate and summarise what students say, which provides an opportunity for other students to build on these ideas;
- teachers encourage students to put the main idea in their own words;
- teachers press the students for elaboration of their ideas, e.g. 'How did you know that?' 'Why?'.

(Wolf, Crosson & Resnick, 2005)

- teachers ask authentic questions
- students hold the floor for extended periods of time

(Wilkinson & Soter, 2009)



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Talk about literary texts that does *not* encourage comprehension has the following characteristics:

- teachers explicitly ask students a question but do not follow up the question or link their answers to the text;
- teachers merely check students' comprehension by seeking yes-no answers, and leave little room for students to make sense of the text and select appropriate evidence to back up their thoughts;
- teachers frame the question in such a way that the students only have to complete the teachers' incomplete sentence.

(Wolf, Crosson & Resnick, 2006)



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Discussion helps conceptual change in science education

- A meta-analysis of research on conceptual change in science education found that the effects of interventions were greatest when hands on activity was combined with some form of relevant discussion.

(Murphy, 2007)



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So what *could* teacher-student talk look like?



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In dialogic teaching the teacher...

- asks questions which encourage students to take extended turns to express their thoughts, reveal their misunderstandings and make relevant comments
- uses talk to create continuity and coherence in children's learning
- helps students understand that talk is useful for learning
- balances authoritative talk with dialogue

(Alexander, 2007)

- Dialogic education means teaching *for* dialogue as well as teaching through dialogue
 - (Wegerif, in press)



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Year 7: Talking about energy (2)

Teacher: Right, let me repeat what Kevin said. Hands down for a minute, you'll get arm ache. Kevin said the person in a hot place would have more energy than somebody in a cold place, because the sun makes Vitamin D. All right that's one idea. Let's hold that idea in our heads. Josh?

Josh: Um I actually think its the opposite of what Kevin said, because the sun's rays um, its just um that its colder, um so they'd be getting the same energy from the sun, but they wouldn't feel the same effect.

Teacher: That's a good point, so they'll get the same energy from the sun but they won't feel the same effect. Yes?

Emma: I'm not sure if this is right but um, say in a place like Africa, they have quite a few trees, and they kind of give us energy; but in this place like the Arctic, they don't have any trees.

Teacher: They don't have any trees, we've got lots of ideas coming out.

Cameron: It's to do with the atmosphere, in a hotter country there's a more dense atmosphere which takes up some of the um, energy, so they get as much as a thinner atmosphere in Antarctica or in the Arctic.

Teacher: OK so the atmosphere makes a difference. Right, let's see if we can take some of those ideas, and try and come up with an explanation?

Whole class talk:



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Some whole-class dialogue strategies that work

- Ask 'why' questions (rather than only 'what' questions)
- Ask not just one, but several students for reasons and justifications for their views before going into a topic
- Ask students to comment on each others' views
- Hold back demonstrations or explanations until the existing ideas of at least some students have been heard (and then, where possible, link what you say to issues they have raised).

(Dawes, 2007)



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But...

- This do not mean teachers shouldn't ask questions
- It does not mean teachers should avoid lecturing or instructing
- It is the strategic balance of **authoritative** and **dialogic** discourse that matters
(Mortimer & Scott; Scott, 2008)



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Oracy

- Oracy can be seen as an **outcome**, whereby students learn to talk confidently, appropriately and sensitively
- Oracy as a **process**, whereby students learn through talk, deepening their understanding through dialogue with their teachers and their peers.



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Read the Digest Five Nations Study

- Summarise the key points

SUMmarise It
Shorter than the text
Use your own words
Main ideas only

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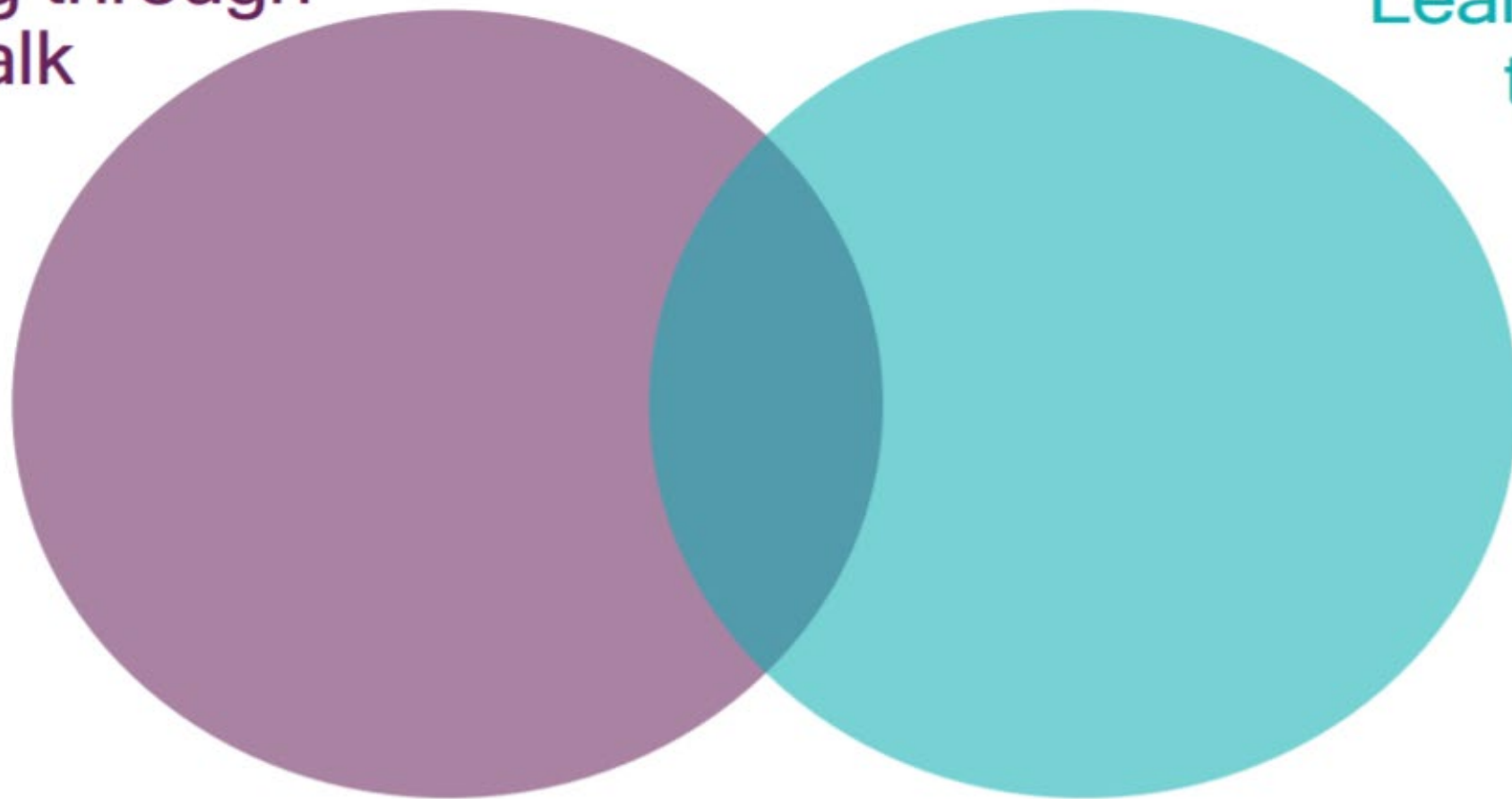
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Learning through
talk

Learning to
talk



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Exploratory talk vs Presentational talk

Exploratory talk

‘exploratory talk which is typical of the early stages of approaching new ideas [...] Exploratory talk is hesitant and incomplete because it enables the speaker to try out ideas, to hear how they sound, to see what others make of them, to arrange information and ideas into different patterns.’

Presentational talk

‘The difference between the two functions of talk is that in presentational talk the speaker’s attention is primarily focused on adjusting the language, content and manner to the needs of an audience, and in exploratory talk the speaker is more concerned with sorting out his or her own thoughts.’

Barnes, 1992



←

Exploratory talk

→

Presentational talk



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Oracy skills framework – an introduction

A skills framework is designed to organise teaching and learning, rather than to fully describe the phenomenon of speech. Some of its distinctions are artificial; it is not the whole story; like all tools, it will be improved as people use it.

We have divided oracy skills into four categories:



Cognitive

The deliberate application of thought to what you're saying



Linguistic

Knowing which words and phrases to use, and using them



Physical

Making yourself heard, using your voice and body as an instrument



Social

Engaging with the people around you; knowing you have the right to speak

Groupwork



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Collaborative learning activities have been shown to benefit learning and conceptual development (especially for complex tasks)

(Johnson & Johnson 1997: review of 378 studies)



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Most classroom talk amongst peers is not usually productive

- Many observational studies have confirmed this: there is usually very little Exploratory Talk
- (e.g. Bennett & Cass 1989; Galton, Hargreaves, Comber, Wall, & Pell 1999; Blatchford & Kutnick 2003; Wegerif & Scrimshaw 1997).



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Why is children's talk in groups often not creative and productive?

1. Many children may not know how to talk and think together effectively
2. Their teachers assume they do



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What features of peer dialogue are useful for learning?

In the dialogue of children aged 10 to 12 years, working together on science activities, the best predictors of learning gain were:

- groups being asked by the teacher to **seek agreement**
- the expression of **contrasting opinions**
- teachers not intervening very often in the group

(Howe et al., 2007; Tolmie et al., 2007; Howe, 2009)



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Exploratory Talk...

- ...in which partners engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas;
- **everyone participates**;
- tentative ideas are treated with respect;
- ideas may be challenged;
- challenges are justified, **reasons are given** and alternative ideas or understandings are offered;
- opinions are considered before decisions are made and **agreement is sought**.
- Knowledge is made publicly accountable and so **reasoning is visible in the talk**.

(Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Dawes, Mercer & Wegerif, 2000)

Cf. 'Accountable talk' and 'critical discussion'
(Keefer et al. 2006)



Three Children doing the Raven's test

Suzie: D9 now, that's a bit complicated it's got to be

Graham: A line like that, a line like that and it ain't got a line with that

Tess: It's got to be that one

Graham: It's going to be that **don't you think? Because** look all the rest have got a line like that and like that, I think it's going to be that **because** ...

Tess: I think it's number 6

Suzie: No I think it's number 1

Graham: Wait no, we've got number 6, wait stop, **do you agree** that it's number 1? **Because** look that one there is blank, that one there has got them, that one there has to be number 1, **because** that is the one like that. Yes. **Do you agree?**

(Tess nods in agreement)

Suzie: D9 number 1

(Suzie writes '1', which is the correct answer)

- Most teachers do not help students learn how to collaborate effectively.
- Most teachers do not 'model' Exploratory Talk

Teachers rarely encourage students to verbalize their thinking or to ask questions.

Student behaviour in small groups largely mirrors the discourse modelled by, and the expectations communicated by, their teachers.

(Webb et al. 2006)



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One way of preparing children for dialogue

T: Right. Don't talk.

(Teacher is at her desk preparing to start the lesson. She drops a paper.)

T: Can you pick it up Sylvia and Gina? That will be so helpful, instead of just sitting there and going 'yeah right'.

(Students help the teacher pick up paper from the floor)

T: Whose mess is all that? Get it into a neat pile, and two, there should be Helen, a box of compasses in the bottom cupboard, can you get them out for me please? Right this table, Fran's table can we straighten up and move down a bit? This table can to the right a bit.

(Students are helping set up the classroom.)

T: Ok, right. Books away please, let's have a look at you today. Steven we're going to be doing lots of talking today, but we need to be talking about the right things. Everything away. Come on it's a nice sunny day, and we've got stuff to do. OK. You're there so Michael and David can give you a nudge, when you need to focus. Sit next to Helen please Robby. Alright now, today we're moving on a little bit...



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..and another way

- **T:** You all have to co-operate, so it's a group responsibility for completing the task. It's not up to one person, it is a group responsibility. What about if you can't make your mind up? If two people, if things aren't quite going, going as they should be?

S1: Write down both ideas.

T: Write down both ideas, if that's part of the [problem]. And if you've got a real problem?

S1: You could vote.

T: You could vote, good way of sorting it out.

(Various students raising their hands)

T: You still might want to write down this is the majority. Anything else we could do, Alvie?

S1: Explain why you think your answer is right.

T: Right explain, take your time to - don't just say well I think this.

S1: Ask 'Why?'.

T: Which is a word you guys often use.

How can we explain the beneficial effects of Exploratory Talk on children's learning and reasoning?

- Such talk amongst peers generates **socio-cognitive conflict**, which motivates enquiry and conceptual change
(Perret-Clermont , 1980)
- Talk can prime learners to think constructively about events they experience after group task is completed
- *Unresolved contradiction* during conversation particularly primes metacognition

(Howe, McWilliam & Cross, 2005)

How can we explain the effects of Exploratory Talk?

- Participants appropriate successful problem-solving strategies and explanatory accounts from each other (**appropriation**)
- Participants jointly construct new, robust, generalizable explanations (**co-construction**)
- Participation in external dialogue promotes internal dialogue (**transformation**)

(Mercer & Littleton 2007)



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- Consider the impact of quality talk on pupil learning
- To apply some strategies to develop oracy and thinking skills in our lessons

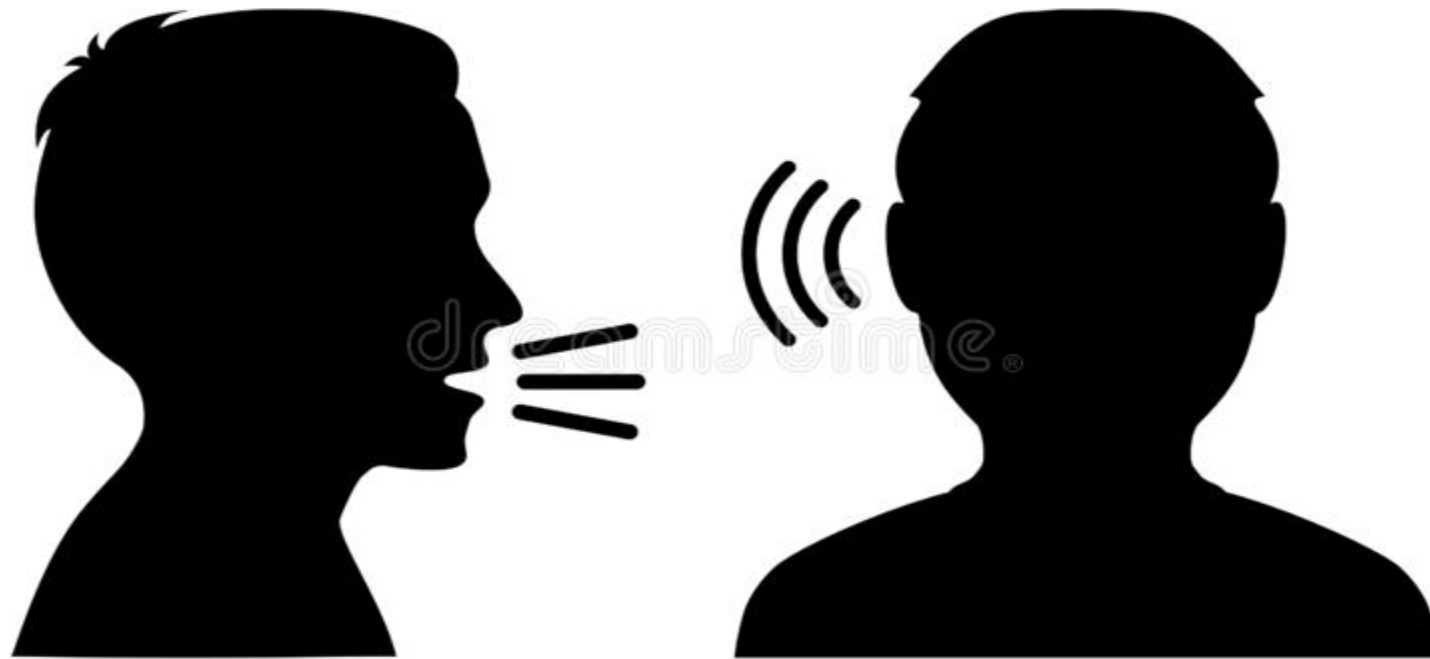


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How can we ensure that oracy skills are developed in every lesson?



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Thunks

- Can being in love be boring?
- Are there more colours than things?
- Does the new leaf come from inside the tree?
- Is the £10 yours before you get it out of the cashpoint?



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Teenage Choices



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Blob Tree

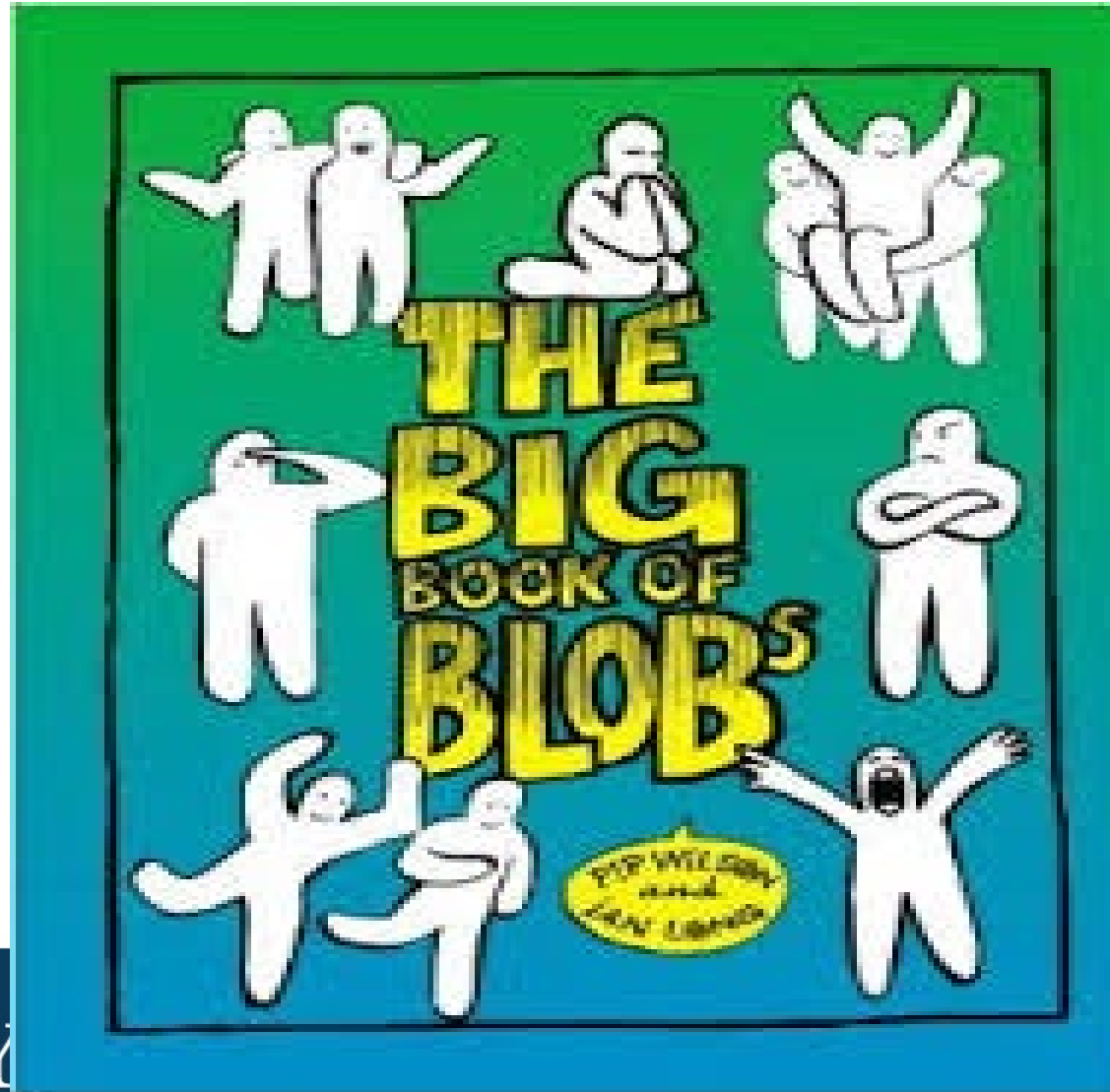


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The Big Book of Blobs



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Would you rather.....

Live in a luxurious
mansion that you are
not allowed to leave....

or

be homeless and roam
wherever you want to in
the world?



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Group Tasks: Collective Writing

- Students should be arranged in a circle
- Appoint a scribe before the exercise begins and make sure they have a pen and paper to note down other students' ideas.
- Give students five minutes to write down their own ideas first before they
- share with the group.
- Students share their ideas with the group in turn, the scribe notes down each idea (10 mins). Encourage students to suggest alternatives
- Once all the ideas have been collected the scribe reads them back to the group to edit and restructure the piece.



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Common Core:
Writing Anchor
Standard 3: Write
narratives to develop real
or imagined experiences or
events using effective
technique, descriptive
details, and clear event
sequences.

TELL THIS STORY:

“KIDS THESE DAYS”

IMAGE VIA TOM WOODWARD: [HTTP://WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/KWERFELDEIN/12833847623](http://www.flickr.com/photos/kwerfeldein/12833847623)



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Philosophy for Children



Rules for P4C.

- * Listen to everyone and never talk when someone else is talking.
- * Put your hand in the circle to speak.
- * Listen to everyone's opinion.
- * Respect and treat others the way you would like to be treated.
- * Treat other people's opinions with respect.
- * What is discussed is to stay in the classroom.
 - * Respect all points of view.
 - * Be well mannered
 - * Obey all rules!

Divide into two groups

- Sequence the cards from good to evil.



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The Lifeboat



Fruit Salad



ROLE OF FACILTATOR

'...the guide on the side not the sage on the stage...'
SAPERERE

In order for pupils to progress as enquirers and to develop as independent learners, the role of the facilitator is a crucial one. It includes:

- establishing ground rules of which pupils have ownership and ensuring that these are adhered to
- choosing a stimulus for the enquiry which suggest themes and concepts that address the 4Cs – *common, central, connecting and, especially, contestable*



Philosophy deals with questions that are:

- Conceptual - they are about 'big' ideas
- Common - they bear on everyday concerns
- Contestable - they elicit many different views and not everyone agrees about the answers
- Central - they are at the heart of how humans think of themselves and their relations with others and the world



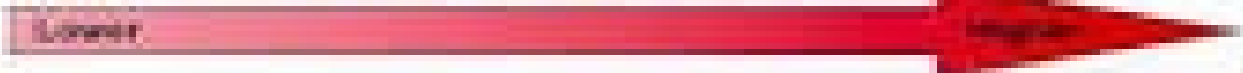
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Questioning

The Question Matrix



	Is	Did	Can	Would	Will	Might
What						
Where/when						
Whose						
Who						
Why						
How						

Q-Chart

Q-Chart questions	is	did	can	will	would	might	should
Who	Knowledge						
What							
Where							
When							
Why	Analytical						
How							
				Synthesis			

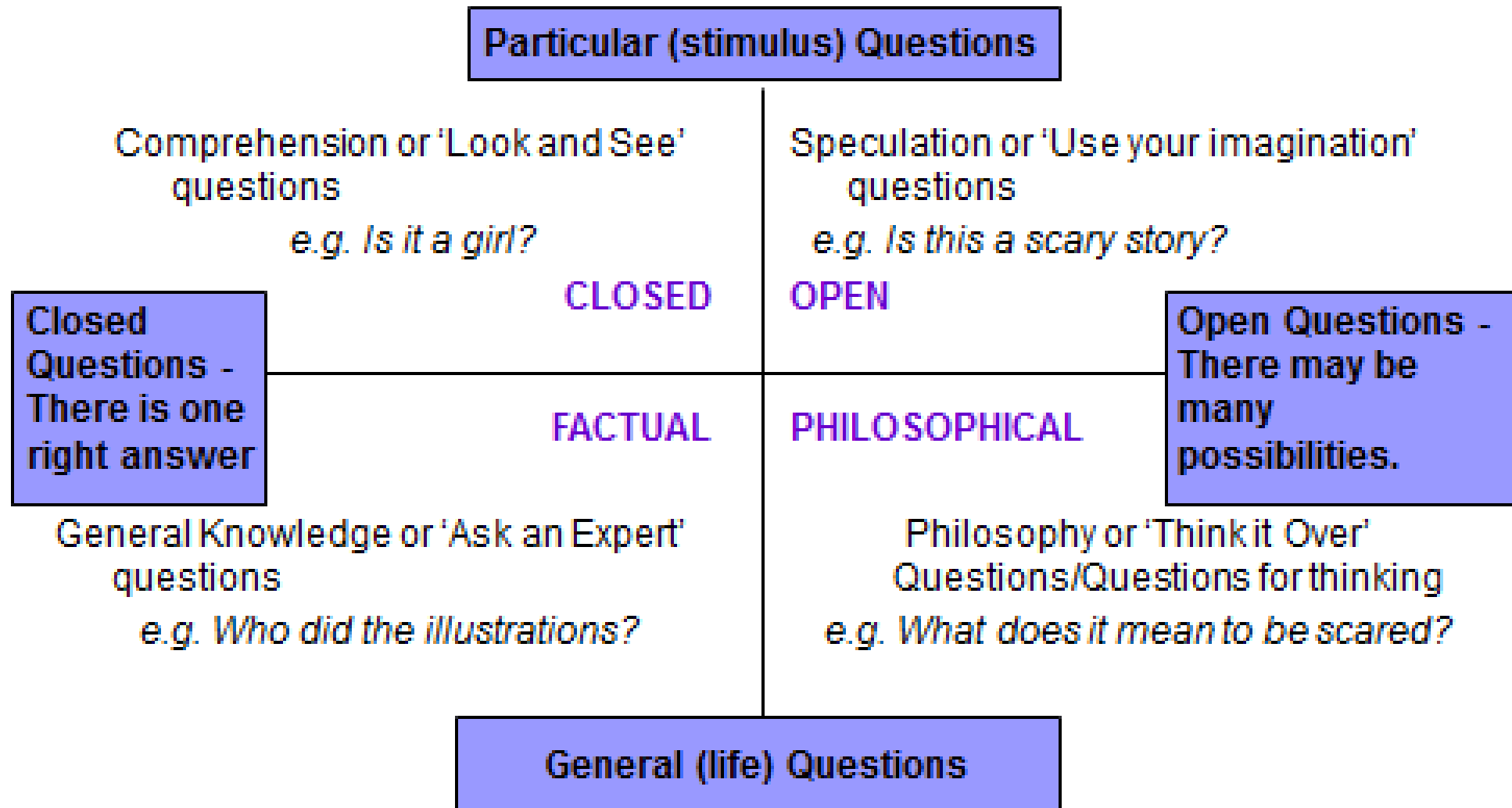
Inference square

What questions could I ask to further my knowledge/understanding?

What can I infer (guess)?

What can I see?
What do I know?

THE QUESTION QUADRANT



(from Phil Cam, 20 Thinking Tools, 2006)

Stimulus





Texts



Socratic Smackdown



The goals

Students will be able to:

- Prepare for discussions
- Use a variety of discussion skills
- Ask and answer deep questions
- Build on and refute others ideas

Video clip soc smackdown

- [Socratic Smackdown | Institute of Play](#)

Step 1

- Teams of 4 pupils will be given a topic, text or issue to discuss that will be the focus of the Socratic Smackdown, as well as a question set.
- Students will prepare answers to the questions prior to the Socratic Smackdown

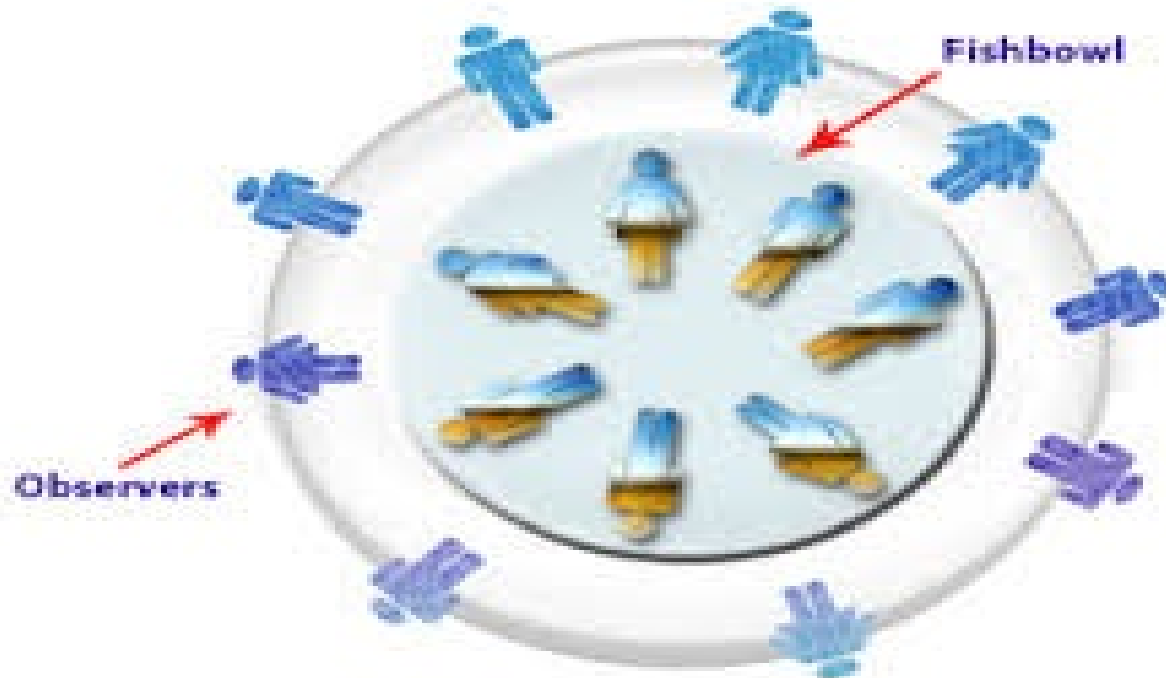
Step 2

- The teacher will reveal which discussion skills strategies will be part of the game.
- The point value of the individual strategies will also be shared.

Put questions for discussion here

Step 3

- When it is time for the Smackdown, the class will set up chairs in a fishbowl arrangement.



Step 4

- Each team will have a 6 minutes discussion (or Smackdown) inside the Socratic Smackdown ring (or Smackdown) based on the topic, text or issue raised earlier.
- During the Smackdown they will earn points for using discussion skills. They can also lose points if they disrupt the discussion.

Step 5

- Using the Socratic Smackdown Scorecard, pupils on the outer circle will track points during the 6 minute Smackdown

Resource List

Books to support teaching Oracy in the classroom

Talking Points: Discussion Activities in the Primary Classroom

Lyn Dawes (2011)

Exploring talk in School: Inspired by the work of Douglas Barnes

Neil Mercer (2008)

Talking, Listening and Learning: Effective Talk in the Primary Classroom

Deborah Myhill (2005)

Towards dialogic teaching: rethinking classroom talk

Robin Alexander 2006

Mercer, N. & Littleton, K. (2007) Dialogue and the Development of Children's Thinking: a sociocultural approach. London: Routledge.

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking

Susan Cain (2013)

Websites

Cambridge University Faculty of Education's website, Thinking Together:

<https://thinkingtogether.educ.cam.ac.uk/>

The ESU & Voice 21 Oracy Network website

<http://www.esu.org/our-network/oracy-network>

National Literacy Trust Resources

http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/our_network/resource

Communications Trust

<https://www.thecommunicationstrust.org.uk/resources/resources/>

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- Hart, B. and Risley, T.R. (1995) *Meaningful Differences In The Everyday Experience Of Young American Children*, New York: Brookes.
- Howe, C.J., McWilliam, D. & Cross, G. (2005). Chance favours only the prepared mind: incubation and the delayed effects of peer collaboration. *British Journal of Psychology*, 96, 1, 67-93.
- Kutnick, P. & Blatchford, P. (2003) (eds). Special Issue on Developing group work in everyday classrooms. *International Journal of Educational Research* 39.

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- Wells, G. (2009). *Dialogic inquiry: Toward A Sociocultural Practice And Theory Of Education (Second Edition)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.