Thinking Matters

Whole School Metacognition

METACOGNITION AND ORACY

The place of oracy within the Thinking Matters Approach

Thinking Matters

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Introduction

'Oracy' is a relatively new term. Coined in the 1960s by Andrew Wilkinson it was intended to put oracy on a par with numeracy and literacy in schools. Oracy can be defined as:

> 'Our ability to communicate effectively using spoken language. It is the ability to speak eloquently, articulate ideas and thoughts, influence through talking, listen to others and have the confidence to express your views. These are all fundamental skills that support success in both learning and life beyond school. It is purposeful classroom talk which develops children's speaking and listening skills and enhances their learning through the effective use of spoken language.'[1]

In their timely document, Speak for Change, Millard and Menzies set out the history of oracy in schools, analyse the current landscape and make recommendations for the future. What may surprise us, however, is that the report offers no evidence of an improvement in oracy in education since 2017. In fact, Talking about a Generation[2] reported that teachers then generally lacked confidence in tackling oracy and few had specific strategies for doing so. This, despite a clearly overwhelming need and plentiful advice and guidance.

At the same time, Thinking Matters (TM) had also noted an increasing concern surrounding oracy in schools. Those using the term suggested it had meaning beyond the National Curriculum and Ofsted's specific expectations of language[3]. Thinking Matters' research had indicated that student readiness for the future should include the explicit teaching of speaking skills and that this should not be left to chance in the general hum of 'group work,' or 'classroom discussion.'

In his paper Improving Oracy and Classroom Talk in English Schools: Achievements and Challenges[4], Robin Alexander provides a history of the development, success and missteps in our perception of speech and communication in schools over half a century. Alexander's work is notable for:

> '... confirming, from a now critical mass of robust evidence, that the quality of classroom talk is essential to thinking and learning and has a measurable impact on standards of attainment in English, Mathematics and Science.'

[1] Millard and Menzies. (2021) *Speak for Change.* APPG
[2] Gascoine and Gross. (2017) *Talking about a Generation.* The Communication Trust
[3] *National Curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 – 4.* (2014) HM Gov.
[4] Alexander R. (2012) *Improving Oracy and Classroom Talk in English Schools: Achievements and Challenges.* UoC Press

In other words, that high quality classroom talk raises standards, and that talking is a key tool for reasoning, collaborative learning and interaction with a teacher.

Alexander is strong in his criticism of what he calls 'devalued' terms such as 'speaking and listening' and 'communication skills' because of their casual use and lack of definition. Instead he coins the term 'Oral Pedagogy'.

What is Oral Pedagogy?

Alexander defines oral pedagogy as:

> '...the particular kind of talk through which teaching and learning – all teaching and all learning, in all subjects, not just English – is mediated.'

For Alexander, this means **more than**, '.... 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.'

He explains that:

> '... We have analysed prevailing patterns of classroom talk, assessed its impact on children's learning in specific subjects and indeed on their 'oracy', 'oral development' and 'communication skills', and have proposed alternative patterns which appear to be more effective: reciprocal talk, accountable talk, inter-thinking, dialogic teaching and so on.'

- Reciprocal talk – words exchanged between people
- Accountable talk – talk that moves learning forward
- Interthinking – talking together creatively and productively
- Dialogic discourse – conversation to explore meaning'

The term 'Oral Pedagogy' is in keeping with Thinking Matters' work, which aims to develop approaches to improving the metacognitive capabilities of students of all ages and abilities. Within this context Thinking Matters' emphasis is on:

- Student centred learning, (student ownership of tools and strategies shown to support metacognitive activity)
- Visible progress through deliberate practice (small, spaced, purposeful, incremental steps)
- The role of the teacher as 'Cognitive Coach' providing expert and thoughtful mediation to improve the probability of learning.

One of Thinking Matters' objectives is to support teachers in the application of theory. Oral pedagogy is about, 'intervening decisively' and 'using talk to get children to think.'

Alexander is a key proponent of dialogic teaching, defined as a 'pedagogical approach that capitalizes on the power of talk to further students' thinking, learning, and problem solving.'

Consequently, while oracy is not a separate element of Thinking Matters' work it remains implicit in our approach and *it is inconceivable to us that work in the field of thinking and learning is not also about speaking*.

TM's work is predicated on a whole school approach to the thinking capacities and metacognitive capabilities of all young people. Our philosophy holds that each strategy and tool we promote in primary and secondary schools is a vehicle for the **articulation** of thought, ideas and learning. It is a central element of the Thinking Classroom.

The Thinking Classroom

The Thinking Classroom is one in which students demonstrate increasing management, independence, and joy in their development as learners. Each aspect of the Thinking Classroom is focused on 'thinking students' and the life-time benefits they acquire when equipped with the self-confidence and **skill** to manage their own thinking and, by association, their oracy.

Thinking Matters' practice is based on the work of leading theorists and practitioners in the field. Many approach it from different directions. Each, however, shares the conviction that all young people have the capacity to think, that their thinking can be made more effective, and that the key purpose of schools is to build the confidence of young people so that they may use their thinking capabilities in their own interests as learners.

Thinking, however, remains a locked and private activity until it is harnessed to expressive language. Consequently, the relationships between thinking and language, and between thinking, language and efficient learning are fundamental to good outcomes for the learner.

> 'Where inspectors saw links between oral language, reading and writing in lessons, standards at GCSE English Language were higher.' (Ofsted, 2011)[5]

A classroom without talk, discourse, debate, discussion, enquiry and sharing would be a barren place in today's progressive thinking school. Nevertheless, there are issues to be addressed concerning the quality and form of interactions sometimes taken for granted.

Many teachers will have despaired when listening to the limited speaking skills of some young people. Many will have longed to hear extensive exposition and adventurous vocabulary; will have wanted to say, 'Speak up!' 'Speak clearly!', will have wondered exactly what it is the student is trying to say, or worse, will have wondered if the student actually has something to say. In a world of social media the challenge of encouraging extended speech is even harder and it is easy to see why there is such a surge of interest in oracy

[5] *Modern languages: Achievement and challenge 2007 – 2010.* Ofsted 2011

and its teaching. It explains why Thinking Matters finds Alexander's 'particular kind of speaking' so compelling.

Oracy Across the Welsh Curriculum (Mercer and Manion, 2018)[6] neatly summarises the case for oracy in schools and the interest Thinking Matters has in it.

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

The Voice 21 Oracy Framework

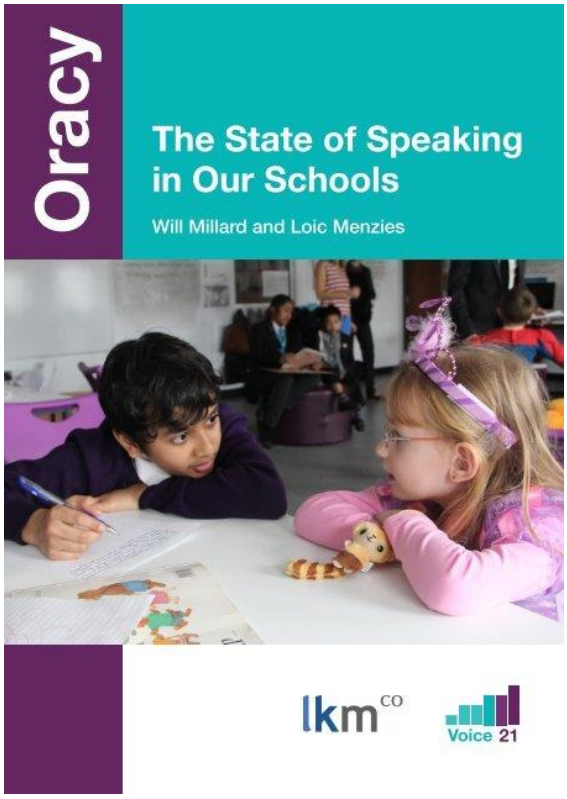
Improved speaking and communication skills are a natural and **inevitable** outcome of the approach Thinking Matters encourages schools to adopt. The tools and strategies with which we work are perfect vehicles for schools wishing to structure their work on oracy around the The Oracy Framework[7]

The Oracy Framework has four 'Strands' - Physical, Linguistic, Cognitive, and Social & Emotional. Each Strand has sub-parts. The Framework allows teachers to be clearer about those aspects of the Strands that require greater emphasis in their own teaching and enables them to identify their instinctive classroom practice in relation to the spoken word.

The language of oracy is complex. Each aspect, however, has meaning and place in Thinking Matters' interpretation of it, i.e., in the spoken word, talk, language, speech, speaking, communication, oral skills. Millard and Menzies' definition of oracy embraces all and is ultimately focussed on oracy outcomes for all children whatever their starting points.

[6] .Mercer, N. and Manion. (2018) *Oracy across the Welsh Curriculum*. Oracy Cambridge
[7] *The Oracy Framework*. Voice 21

The State of Speaking in Our Schools[8] makes a distinction between, 'Learning To Talk,' and, 'Learning Through Talk'. It is the latter that resonates particularly with Thinking Matters, and why oracy pedagogy has a particular synergy with our approach. We also, however, take particular note of Manion's work[9] on metacognition, self-regulation and oracy in relation to a Learning Skills Programme designed to evaluate specific interventions and their impact on learning.



Manion's definitions:

Metacognition: monitoring and controlling your thought processes.
Self-regulation: monitoring and controlling your emotions and behaviours
Self-regulated learning: applying metacognition and self-regulation to learning

Manion reminds us that:

> 'There is now a compelling body of research literature detailing the way in which spoken communication experienced by children impacts on a range of cognitive, social and emotional, and life outcomes.'

He reports on the work of Mercer[10] and others on 'social modes of thinking' which have been summarised as follows:

- Cumulative talk: 'in which speakers build positively but uncritically on what others have said';
- Disputational talk: 'characterised by disagreement and individualised decision making';
- Exploratory talk: 'in which partners engage critically but constructively with each other's ideas'.[11]

Teachers may find Mercer's work useful too as he often poses challenges to the management of classroom discussion. He suggests, for example, that Exploratory Talk is characterised by the following features:

- Everyone listens actively
- People ask questions

[8] Millard and Menzies's. (2018) *The State of Speaking in our Schools.* Voice 21
[9] (2019) *Metacognition, self-regulation, oracy.* A mixed method case study of a complex, whole-school Learning to Learn Intervention. PhD thesis.
[10] Mercer, N. (1995) *The Guided Construction of Knowledge*. Multilingual Matters
[11] Mercer, N. Wegerif, R. & Dawes, L. (1998) *Children's Talk and the Development of Reasoning in the Classroom.* British Educational Research Journal.

- People share relevant information
- Ideas may be challenged
- Reasons are given for challenges
- Contributions build on what has gone before
- Everyone is encouraged to contribute
- Ideas and opinions treated with respect
- There is an atmosphere of trust
- There is a sense of shared purpose
- The group seeks agreement for joint decisions.

Thinking Matters sees Manion's three social modes of thinking as helpful in defining the purposes of the tools and strategies we introduce to schools. The modes also add detail to Alexander's descriptions (reciprocal talk, accountable talk, interthinking, dialogic teaching) As they are implicit in the Oracy Framework there is precision and detail in the terms and they help to plan classroom activities carefully.

Whether 'accountable talk' is the same as 'cumulative talk' or 'interthinking' the same as 'exploratory talk', is less crucial than teachers asking, "When and how do I facilitate this?

The Thinking Matters whole school approach to thinking introduces tools and strategies that address oracy pedagogy.

Thinking Matters' approach - the development of oracy and influences on our work.

The following tools, strategies and methods feature prominently in the Thinking Matters' repertoire:

The Cognitive Coach

Those familiar with Thinking Matters' approach to Thinking Schools will know that in some situations teachers are re-cast as 'Cognitive Coaches'. The essence of coaching requires students to be active in defining their own goals and objectives. Through attentive listening and thoughtful questioning the coach enables students to find ways of reaching their goals. Thinking Matters practical strategies align with Robin Alexander's 'power of talk' in that the teacher who understands metacognition is able to mediate learning.

Mastery of the key skills of coaching are the first steps of Thinking Matters' Oracy Pedagogy.

Skilful questioning

Thinking Matters' work shows that the most powerful skill of the Cognitive Coach is skilful questioning. All the tools and strategies TM uses demand Skilful Questioning on the part

of the teacher. Our training takes teachers on a systematic journey through their development as coaches of cognition. From simple questioning techniques designed to develop thinking skills, to the subdivision of questions according to *types* of knowledge and work on student centred questions.

Skilful Questioning, however, is only one strategy in the tool kit of the Cognitive Coach. The Thinking Matters' approach also offers teachers proven, basic tools suitable for teaching to students of all ages and abilities.

Thinking Matters' espousal of a whole school approach to developing thinking capacity draws on Alexander's proposition that, *'educationally productive talk is the responsibility of all teachers.'* Our approach emphasises the Coach's specific responsibility to listen profoundly to the words children speak and emphasises the importance of Coaches offering themselves as models of competence as speakers and listeners. The teacher models oracy.

Habits of Mind

Thinking Matters' approach for schools is influenced by the work of the American educator Arthur Costa and his work on the sixteen Habits of Mind. Habits of Mind are also described as intelligent learning behaviours that can be learned and developed. They are ways of 'being' or the 'ways we are disposed to be.'

One of Costa's sixteen Habits - Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision[12], illustrates why oracy is an essential element of the school curriculum - 'Fuzzy, vague language is a reflection of fuzzy, vague thinking. Intelligent people strive to communicate accurately, in both written and oral form, taking care to use precise language, define terms and use correct names, labels and analogies. They strive to avoid over-generalisations, deletions, and distortions. Instead, they support their statements with explanations, comparisons, quantification and evidence.' These are the goals to which teachers coaching oracy will pay attention whatever the subject or discipline context.

Whilst no Habit of Mind is fully dependent on speaking, it is speech and language that allow young people to **communicate** the ways in which they are regulating and improving their learning behaviours. Suffice it to say that Costa's 'intelligent behaviours' require

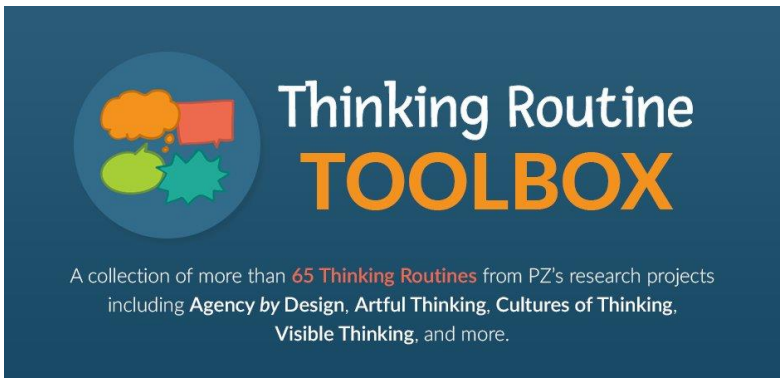
[12] Costa, A.L. & Kallick, B. (2008*) Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind,* 16 Essential Characteristics for Success.

knowledge of self and this, in turn, leads to metacognitive activity in its widest sense - *'Studying how I learn, monitoring my effectiveness in the ways I apply myself and adjusting my approaches accordingly*[13]. Habits of Mind, therefore, provide Cognitive Coaches with vital and specific learning behaviours on which to focus their dialogue with students.

Thinking Matters believes that young people need the opportunity to think about and manage the development of behaviour and attitudes towards learning. Self-reflection can lead to even more sophisticated learning behaviour, a deeper understanding of that behaviour and a vocabulary with which to express more of the self-understanding that is a key component of metacognition.

Habits of Mind are student and child friendly, can be easily understood and enable young people to get better at these key behaviours by articulating their goals and describing the steps they need to take to get there. This is an aspect of oral pedagogy.

Thinking Routines



Thinking Routines are, 'simple strategies for scaffolding thinking and are designed to be woven into a teacher's on-going classroom practice.' The Routines are readily available on the Project Zero[14] website and Thinking Matters offers support to schools wishing to add them to their repertoire of student owned tools.

Each Thinking Routine is interactive, frequently has a visual starting point and can be applied to any subject, age or ability. Each similarly invites spoken responses at some point leading to conversation and debate.

Thinking Routines are a relatively recent addition to the Thinking Matters' repertoire and are cognitively challenging and motivating. They honour ideas, invite contributions, require critical thought and in so doing provide students with something to say. Routines are built on the desire to ask and respond to questions and allow teachers to guide and manage interactions. They all call upon elements of the Oracy Framework and play perfectly into its Linguistic Strand (Vocabulary, Language and Rhetorical techniques such as humour, metaphor and irony). Perhaps even more importantly, however, they lead into the Cognition Strand (Content, Structure, Clarifying and summarising, Reasoning and Self-regulation.)

[13] *Metacognition and self-regulated learning* : Guidance report EEF February 2019
[14] *Project Zero* at Harvard University, USA, has designed over forty *Thinking Routines*

Each Thinking Routine is accompanied by guidance on its specific function and is differentiated according to the thinking processes it introduces to individuals or groups. Examples are Routines for exploring ideas, for synthesising and organising ideas, for digging deeper into ideas. The Routines are vehicles for the categories of talk identified by Manion - cumulative, disputational and exploratory.

Thinking Routines and Habits of Mind are both designed to generate thinking and speaking and allow students to have confidence in themselves as thinkers and speakers. Each requires thought on the subject in question and on the process of thinking, and each provides opportunities for reflection on one's knowledge of oneself as a thinker, learner and speaker.

Thinking Matters' approach is focused on classroom culture, skilful questioning, the role of the Cognitive Coach, the nature of metacognition, intelligent learning behaviour (Habits of Mind) and the ways in which Thinking Routines enable their practice in the classroom.

We make two main points. The first is that these elements contribute significantly to the creation of a classroom culture **of** and **for** thinking. The second is that they invite the **articulation** of thoughts and ideas, whether focused as part of the teacher's 'instruction' or more widely, as students create schema and concept maps of their own.

Visual Tools

Many of the accredited Thinking Schools[15] with whom Thinking Matters' work, state that Visual Tools make the most significant difference to the development of independent learners. Visual Tools can directly develop oracy skills in all Strands of the Voice 21 Oracy Framework.

Visual Tools introduce students to ways of setting out, arranging and organising their thinking in order to write or speak efficiently. Further, Visual Tools facilitate focussed, collaborative discourse as students generate, analyse and question their research and thoughts. The eight Visual Tools used by Thinking Matters represent specific thinking processes that enable students to be specific in their reading comprehension and in planning their own writing and speaking.

> 'Importantly for classrooms, language also cues action and provides a means to regulate activity. The aim is not just for students to think about the texts they are reading. We want them to make predictions, consider alternative actions, raise questions about the character's motives, and much more. Being

[15] Thinkingschools@exeter

> more specific in our choice and use of language is particularly helpful to students who are struggling to engage mentally. Developing a shared language of thinking helps teachers to cue, promote and make visible the various thinking processes and strategic narratives of learning. Having a language to identify thinking processes is a requirement for us to develop metacognition. If we cannot name the thinking processes, we can't easily and effectively activate them.'[16]

David Hyerle's A Field Guide to using Visual Tools[17] offers numerous examples of the increasingly specific language used by students as a result of using the 'tools' for understanding, constructing and communicating knowledge. By setting their thinking down in Visual Frames, students analyse their thinking and regulate the behaviours of Habits of Mind. They are better able to manage impulses (they are able to think before speaking), be empathetic towards others (listen, develop and negotiate ideas) and remain conceptually flexible as new facts and ideas are added to their thinking in Visual Tools.

In his Field Guide, Hyerle makes the case for a deeper implementation of Visual Tools as a feature of student metacognitive capability and 'mental fluency.'

> 'Students need to feel that their thinking can be safely opened and exposed. Students thus need extensive experiences in being able to think fluently, so that when they are asked to respond ***verbally*** or in writing they have developed automaticity in thinking.'

Students mumbling, rambling, failing to articulate or put thoughts into coherent statements is of primary concern to many teachers and schools. It is what students fluent in Visual Tool methodology will find easiest to overcome.

In the UK the evidence that Visual Tools lead to greater oral fluency is anecdotal. There is evidence, however, that metacognitive activity in the classroom leads to improvements in student progress[18] and we can conclude that by asking more profound, forensic questions, Cognitive Coaches who understand oracy pedagogy, draw even more from students in

their exploration and construction of meaning. Students with good oracy skills are articulate and confident, and when they work with an effective Cognitive Coach they are able to explore factual, procedural and conceptual knowledge to the full.
Simply put, Visual Tools provide students with the time to think and order the ideas for what they want to say. Furthermore, since every Visual Tool is related to a thinking-process, students are able to construct elegant sentences that explain their thinking. With multi-use of visual tools, students can also create concept schema that encourage them to elaborate verbally on 'big ideas'. All key skills not only in the classroom but vital to interviews that increasingly come as part of the selective school and university application process but of course to securing employment.

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[16] Tyack, P. (2021) *Four Ways to Build Back Better* Thinking Matters
[17] Hyerle, D. (2000) *A field guide to using Visual Tools*
[18] *Metacognition and self-regulated learning Guidance* report, EEF 2018

Fluency of mind precedes fluency of language and helps to avoid stabbing at answers. Talk drives neural connectivity, builds the capacity to think and aids memorisation.

Teachers who have mastered Visual Tools see them as the basis for executive processing. Hyerle describes preparing students to be proficient problem solvers who can think systematically, investigate options, test mental models, develop and ask relevant questions, make informed decisions, evaluate their processes and apply knowledge to real world situations. These skills provide the basis for productive interaction with the cognitive coach, need to be taught explicitly and are best done in subject specific contexts. When students keep portfolios of their prior thinking in the form of visual tools then revision, recall and systematic thinking processes are easier to re-engage and deepen the act of metacognition.

Visual Tools allow students to achieve greater accuracy and precision in thinking and speaking with facts, procedures and concepts, and facilitate the transfer of knowledge, concepts and skills, which, in turn, creates more knowledge.

Before leaving Visual Tools we need to refer briefly to Thinking Matters' work with Thinking Maps or Thinking Frames and, in particular, to the meta-tool - the Frame of Reference or Reflective Lens.

The Reflective Lens

The Reflective Lens is the lens through which the student and Cognitive Coach consider a student's current construction of knowledge. It is the lens that focuses questions designed to raise and extend that knowledge and the lens through which the student and Coach enter into 'accountable talk', 'reciprocal talk' and dialogical, and what facilitates inter-thinking. It is the lens that encourages teachers to give feedback and asks more of students than filling in visual tool templates.

The Reflective Lens invites generative questions by both teacher as Coach and student.

Additionally, it takes note of the work of Ron Ritchhart[19] and identifies three types of question:

- Questions that model interest in the ideas being explored (by teacher and learner together)
- Questions that help students to construct understanding
- Questions that facilitate the illumination of the student's own thinking to themselves.

These three categories of question allow teachers to plan Reflective Lens questions carefully but they also allow for spontaneity when working with students. They facilitate oral pedagogy.

[19] Richart, R., Church, M. & Morrison, K. *Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners.*

Thinking Matters' work with Habits of Mind, Thinking Routines and Visual Tools develops teachers' powers of questioning and generates deeper thinking. The Reflective Lens is a constant reminder that visual tools are compatible with the ways in which the brain works constantly to refresh, restore, strengthen and extend neural pathways.

Habits of Mind, Thinking Routines and Visual Tools are vital elements in the development of cognition and oracy.

Oracy and future proofing

Recruitment and assessment strategies within FE and HE continue to undergo radical reform. Portfolios, digital media recordings, subjective evaluation, performance, presentation, vivas, speculation and anticipation at all levels are now commonplace. HE students may not be asked to write an essay but to ..

> 'Explain to us what *you* learned... by way of teaching it to others, without using technology...Then convey to us what *you* have learned from the second process.'

or to

> 'Lead the discussion in such a way that I am able to determine what everyone in the group now knows.'

Are we preparing our students for such assignments? In so many cases the answer is no since students have too little agency in their learning.[20]

The outcome for schools that work with Thinking Matters is to enable students to **think** which allows them to **talk.**

> "Talk allows you to construct and then reconstruct ideas, which is the major way in which we learn." (Galton, 2021)

Conclusion

The Thinking Matters' concept of whole school metacognition reflects a philosophy of education, a conceptual understanding of thinking and learning and a vision for future-proofing our learners which is ambitious.[21]

Our work on metacognition as a whole school enterprise is built on the premise that the evaluation and modification of learning is strengthened when understanding is articulated to someone able to mediate that learning.

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[20] Curnock, M. (2021*) How can we better prepare students for university?* Schools Week Opinion
[21] Gardiner, L. (2021) *Beyond Rosenshine*. Thinking Matters

Our focus is on the Linguistic, Cognitive and Social Strands of the Oracy Framework. Habits of Mind, Thinking Routines and Visual Tools provide the means by which the .

informed teacher can govern the development of oracy in systematic, student friendly ways.

TM's face to face training includes activities for classrooms designed to promote students' collaborative, focused discourse in ways that allow the teacher to observe and monitor the development of oracy skills. TM's training techniques - Envoys, Slow and Fast Dates, Group Jigsaws, Elevator talks, Turn Taking and Card Sorts have long been known for their effectiveness. These are now enhanced by the inclusion of Thinking Routines.

Thinking expertise in oral pedagogy inspires Cognitive Coaches and other teachers to focus on their own oracy skills and understand exactly how to build effective oracy skills in their pupils and students.

The outcome of oracy pedagogy is oral efficiency in pupils – it is vital to all our futures.

Available Resources:

- The Oracy Assessment Toolkit – Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge
- Talk the Talk - A charity since 2013 providing practical oracy workshops
- Oracy CPD pack for teachers – Chartered College of Teaching
- Oral Language Interventions – EEF (News> EEF Blog>Making use of TRUST talk)
- Noisy Classrooms
- Communicating in the Curriculum
  Communications Trust
- 'Speaking Up: The importance of oracy in teaching & learning' in the Chartered College of Teaching (CCT) magazine 'Impact.' Will Millard May 2018
- *A Generation Adrift*, available here

National Curriculum

In the primary National Curriculum for England (2014), the Spoken Language Programme of Study[22] is broad – covering all ages from years 1 - 6. Schools are required to develop their own progression points for children across year groups, based on the 12 statements which make up the Programme of Study. There are no longer levels of attainment for monitoring children's progress. The development of spoken language skills is a core part of development throughout childhood and adolescence:

- Having good spoken language skills supports thinking and reasoning skills crucial to learning across the curriculum.
- Spoken language skills underpin literacy development, for example in decoding letters and sounds, and the development of vocabulary to support reading fluency and comprehension.
- There are strong evidenced links between other aspects of spoken language (e.g. vocabulary and narrative skills) and achievement.
- Building relationships and emotional development also rely on the ability to communicate.

[22] National Curriculum. (2014). *Spoken Language in Years 1-6 National Curriculum,* England

- Many children and young people at risk of under-achieving have weaker language skills. A focus on spoken language can help to reduce the gap in attainment.

The vast majority of learning, especially in the primary years, relies on spoken language. The primary curriculum provides a wealth of opportunities for developing language, for example predicting in science investigations, giving instructions in computing or explaining points of view in history.

Spoken Language in Years 1-6 National Curriculum England 2014

Pupils should be taught to:

- listen and respond appropriately to adults and their peers
- ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge
- use relevant strategies to build their vocabulary
- articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including for expressing feelings
- maintain attention and participate actively in collaborative conversations, staying on topic and initiating and responding to comments
- use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas
- speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English
- participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play/improvisations and debates
- gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s)
- consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others
- select and use appropriate registers for effective communication

The National Curriculum in England states that pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 should develop skills in 'spoken language' as part of their English lessons, including the ability to:

- Articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- Participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role play, improvisations and debates
- Gain, maintain and monitor the interest of the listener(s)
- Select and use appropriate registers for effective communication.
- Speak audibly and fluently with an increasing command of Standard English

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