

Developing oracy skills

Some practical ideas for lesson lead-ins

In this session we will...

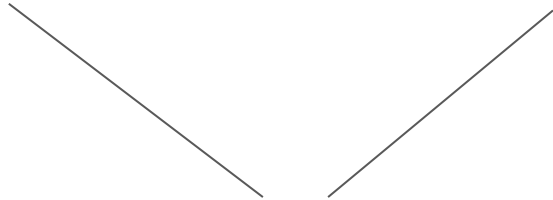
- review our understanding of oracy
- consider some ways we can embed an oracy focus in our lessons, whatever our subject area
- reflect on activities we might like to try in our own classroom

Oracy

Oracy is the ability to articulate ideas, develop understanding and engage with others through spoken language.



Oracy is to **speaking** as **numeracy** is to **mathematics**



Practical application of skills in daily life



The Oracy Framework from Voice 21



Physical



Linguistic



Cognitive



Social & Emotional

The Oracy Framework from Voice 21



Physical



Linguistic



Cognitive



Social & Emotional



Physical

Voice

- Pace of speech
- Tonal variation
- Clarity of pronunciation
- Voice projection

Body language

- Gesture & posture
- Facial expression & eye contact

The Oracy Framework from Voice 21



Physical



Linguistic



Cognitive



Social & Emotional



Linguistic

Vocabulary

- Appropriate vocabulary choice

Language

- Register
- Grammar

Rhetorical techniques

- Rhetorical techniques such as metaphor, humour, irony & mimicry

The Oracy Framework from Voice 21



Content

- Choice of content to convey meaning & intention
- Building on the views of others

Structure

- Structure & organisation of talk

Clarifying & summarising

- Seeking information & clarification through questioning
- Summarising

Self-regulation

- Maintaining focus on task
- Time management

Reasoning

- Giving reasons to support views
- Critically examining ideas & views expressed

The Oracy Framework from Voice 21



The Bell Foundation

SECONDARY SPEAKING

CODE	BAND A	BAND B	BAND C	BAND D	BAND E
	Emerging competence in basic oral expression	Oral competence includes emerging ability to respond verbally in interactions with others	Emerging competence in spontaneous expression and communication	Competence in producing more varied and complex speech in a wider range of contexts	Developing competence in fluent, creative use of English

- action/skill-oriented
- oracy focused
- A mix between basic communication skills and academic language targets (BICS and CALP)

BAND C	BAND D
Can communicate simply in routine tasks to ask for and provide things, get simple information and discuss what to do next	Can summarise in longer utterances, with some cohesion, about subject content (e.g. <i>'When vaccination began number of deaths got lower'</i>)
Can express and respond to feelings such as surprise, happiness, sadness, interest and indifference	Can express opinions and reactions regarding possible solutions or what to do next, giving brief reasons and explanation
Can contribute to informal discussion with friends, provided their speech is clear and/or in locally practised school English	Can use a growing range of subject-specific technical vocabulary and begin to use some imagery (e.g. metaphors and similes)
Can comment briefly on the views of others (e.g. in history lessons or in literature lessons)	Can use both formal and informal English in appropriate contexts

How can we support oracy development in our lessons?

- Collaborative learning
- Include regular speaking opportunities in lessons
- Talk for writing, talk for reading, visible thinking routines
- **Lead with speaking** - set the tone for a communication-focused classroom

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Simple language games can be a surprisingly effective route in!

Idea 1: word chains

Topic: sports / sports equipment:

Student A: tenniss

Student B: swimming

Student A: golf

Student B: football

Choose your category (Year 9 topics)

- chords (music)
- volcanoes (humanities)
- earthquakes (humanities)
- waves (science)
- DNA (science)
- softball (PE)
- Drawing (art)

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 1: word chains

What happens in practice...

Topic: volcanoes

Student A: magma

Student B: ash, like, from an eruption.


Student A: Haiti

Student B: Wait... there was an earthquake in Haiti

Student A: Oh yeah. Er... but that's a natural disaster so... it's kinda connected?

Bell, SD10

Can use a growing range of everyday and specialist vocabulary in all learning areas



Cognitive

Reasoning

- Giving reasons to support views
- Critically examining ideas & views expressed



Linguistic

Vocabulary

- Appropriate vocabulary choice



Social & Emotional

Listening & responding

- Listening actively & responding appropriately

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 2: Think of three...

Tweak for your past topics

Teams of three.

Choose a scribe. The scribe cannot add their own ideas down when scribing - the ideas must come from other team members.

Change scribes every minute

5 minute challenge!			
Name 3 parts of the alimentary canal			
Name 3 words related to nerve cells			
3 parts of a leaf cell			
3 parts of an animal cell			
3 parts of the heart			
3 enzymes associated with the digestive system			
3 parts of the respiratory			

Teams only get points if their answers are different to other teams' answers

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 2: Think of three...

- Active listening
- Tweaking ideas, and justifying why
- Retrieval practice

Bell, LD6

Can follow and understand specialised or subject-specific terminology if it has previously been introduced



Bell, SD10

Can use a growing range of everyday and specialist vocabulary in all learning areas

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 3: This is the answer, what's the question?

Answer

perimeter

area

rectangle

parallelogram

length multiplied by width

by adding the lengths of all the sides together

Where relevant, encourage more than one possible question. Have the group decide on their best question.

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 3: This is the answer, what's the question?

What happens in practice?

Question: What do you call the total length around the outside of a shape?

Answer: perimeter

Teachers often ask display questions like this to review knowledge. Activities like this prime learners for Q and A reviews in class.

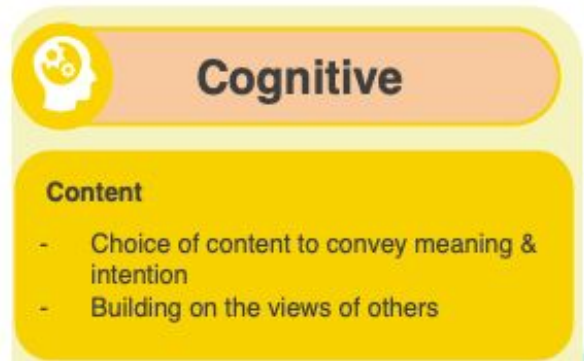
Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 3: This is the answer, what's the question?

What happens in practice?

Question: What do you call the total length around the outside of a shape?

Answer: perimeter



Bell, SD1

Can summarise in longer utterances, with some cohesion, about subject content

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 4: (subject specific) odd one out

Which is the odd one out in each group? Think of add least two ideas. Choose your best idea to share with the class.

Group 1: chord harmony fret

Group 2: pluck strum hammer

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 4: (subject specific) odd one out

In practice...

- Ambiguity is good. It can give you the opportunity to elicit more from learners about what they understand
- Activities like this create the need for functional language, which we can then feed into the activity.



The diagram consists of two stacked rectangular boxes. The top box has a light orange background and a rounded right side. It contains a yellow circle on the left with a white silhouette of a head containing three gears. To the right of the circle, the word "Cognitive" is written in bold black text. The bottom box has a solid yellow background. It contains the word "Reasoning" in bold black text at the top left. Below it, there are two bullet points, each preceded by a hyphen: "Giving reasons to support views" and "Critically examining ideas & views expressed".

Cognitive

Reasoning

- Giving reasons to support views
- Critically examining ideas & views expressed

Bell, SC6

Can express belief, opinion, agreement and disagreement politely (e.g. by making comparisons and contrasts)

A and B are...
whereas C is...

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 5: Retrieval grids

Adapted from Jones (2019)

Retrieval grid – Space

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	comet	meteor	star	methane	galaxy	black hole
2	infinite	solar system	planet	moon	satellite	gravity
3	atmosphere	gas	expanding	constellation	Milky Way	nebula
4	universe	Jupiter	crater	emit	light year	eclipse
5	orbit	axis	astronaut	oxygen	terrestrial	weight
6	rotate	space	travel	aliens	Intelligent life	mass

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 6: Spoken review tasks

- Allow 3 minutes so both partners can practice
- Prime the learners for speaking in front of the class during feedback:
'Amber, I'm going to ask you to complete *this* sentence, okay? Have a practice.'

DO NOW

How would you complete these sentences?

The pH scale shows ...

The pH scale ranges...

A value less than...

A value greater than...

A value of 7...

Share your ideas with a partner.

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 6: Spoken review tasks

What happens in practice?

- A collaborative learning opportunity
- A good opportunity for teachers to monitor and check understanding



Social & Emotional

Confidence in speaking

- Self assurance
- Liveliness & flair

DO NOW

How would you complete these sentences?

The pH scale shows ...

The pH scale ranges...

A value less than...

A value greater than...


A value of 7...

Share your ideas with a partner.

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 6a: Review tasks involving active listening

-

**Linguistic**

Vocabulary

- Appropriate vocabulary choice

**Social & Emotional**

Listening & responding

- Listening actively & responding appropriately

DO NOW

Student A: You have 1 minute. Describe the pH scale to your partner in as much detail as possible.

Student B: Listen to Student A describe the pH scale. Tick any of the following words or phrases they use:

- ☐ ranges from ____ to ____
- ☐ greater than
- ☐ less than
- ☐ indicates (that)
- ☐ acid / alkali
- ☐ mild / strong

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

A performance view of understanding (Perkins, 1992)

Idea 7: Develop understanding of register

Work with a partner. Think of two definitions for the word **migration**.

Definition 1: define the word in general terms

Definition 2: define the word as a geographer

How could you make these sentences sound more scientific. What could you add or change?

1. Bile is **made** in the liver.
2. **Things we don't need** pass through large intestine to...

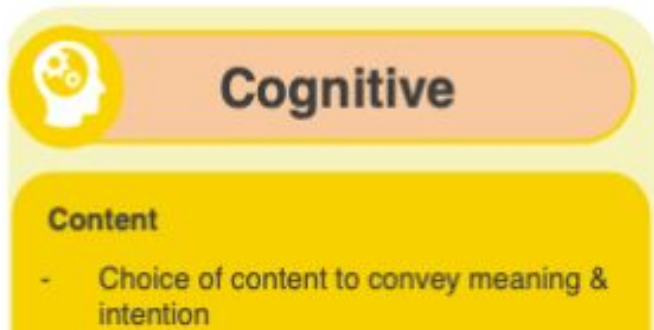
Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 7: Develop understanding of register

Bell SD4

Can use both formal and informal English in appropriate contexts

A performance view of understanding (Perkins, 1992)



Audience awareness

- Taking account of level of understanding of the audience



Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 8: Word inquiry

 **Linguistic**

Vocabulary

- Appropriate vocabulary choice

Language

- Register
- Grammar

These words appeared in our last lesson about issues in society. For each word:

1. Discuss the meaning with a partner, and give an example from the last lesson.

Inequality means... We discussed inequality between...

2. Highlight or circle the prefix in each word.
3. Discuss what each prefix means.
4. Think of another word that includes this prefix.

antisocial

inequality

unemployment

impossible

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 9: Lead with a topic-related discussion

Our new topic is population (the number of people in a certain area). Discuss these questions with a partner.

- What's the population of your country? How does this compare to neighbouring countries?
- Have you heard any news stories recently about population growth/decline around the world?
- What factors might affect the population of a country or region?
- What do you think overpopulation means?
- Do you think governments should be allowed to control population growth? Why/Why not?

Don't just harvest knowledge, harvest opinions/experiences

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 9: Lead with a topic-related discussion

- Respecting learner funds of knowledge / assessing prior knowledge
- Great opportunity to assess level of interest and engagement in a topic from the start
- Opportunities to feed in functional language



Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 9: Lead with a topic-related discussion

- Respecting learner funds of knowledge / assessing prior knowledge
- Great opportunity to assess level of interest and engagement in a topic from the start
- Opportunities to feed in functional language

Backchannelling
Clarifying
Hedging language

Asking follow-up questions
Extending your speaking turn
Fillers



Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 10: Commenting on the views of others

Bob: I'd hate to live in the countryside. Life in rural areas would just be so dull!

Brenda: I think it would be amazing! Living in big cities feels exhausting - the pace of life, the cost, the crowded public transport. Plus, most urban areas in my country are really polluted.

Who do you most agree with and why?

What would you say next if you were Bob?

Which synonyms of 'countryside' and 'big cities' did you notice in the dialogue?

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 10: Commenting on the views of others

Bob: I'd hate to live in the **countryside**. Life in **rural areas** would just be so dull!

Brenda: I think it would be amazing! Living in **big cities** feels exhausting - the pace of life, the cost, the crowded public transport. Plus, most **urban areas** in my country are really polluted.

Elaborated input: embedding definitions or synonyms within texts.

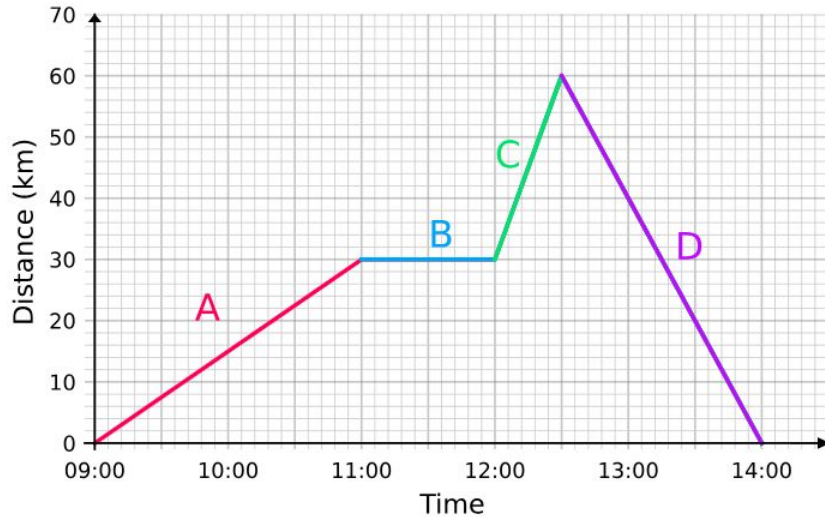
Bell SC4

Can comment briefly on the views of others (e.g. in history lessons or in literature lessons)

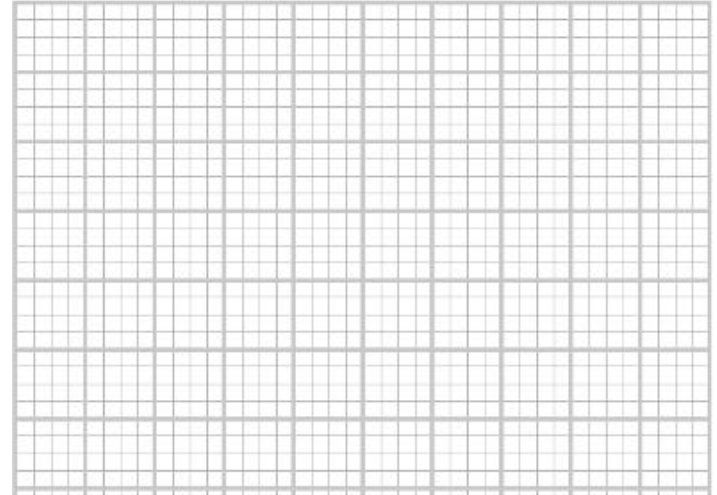
Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 11: Barrier activities / information gap activities

Student A has this...

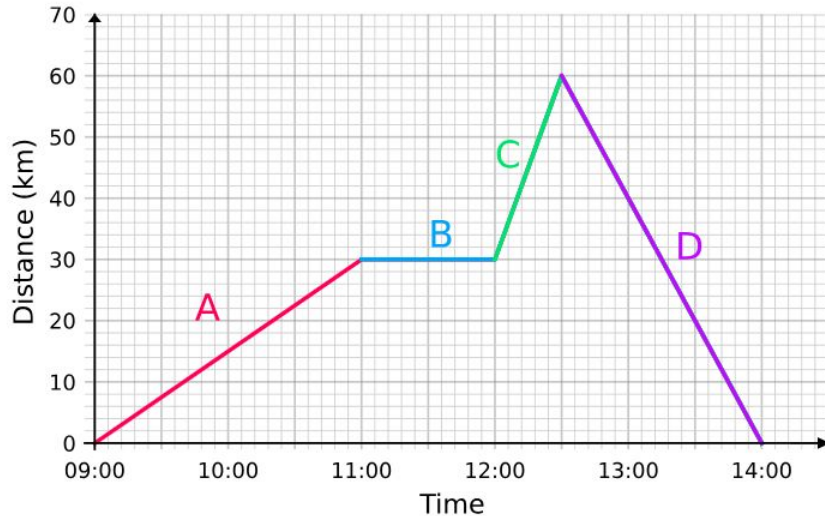


Student B has this...



Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 11: Barrier activities / information gap activities



Give Student A some language support

- The y-axis shows the distance. It ranges from ____ to ____, and the label reads '____'.
- The journey begins at _____. Between _____ (time) and _____ (time) the car travels _____ (distance) at a constant speed.

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

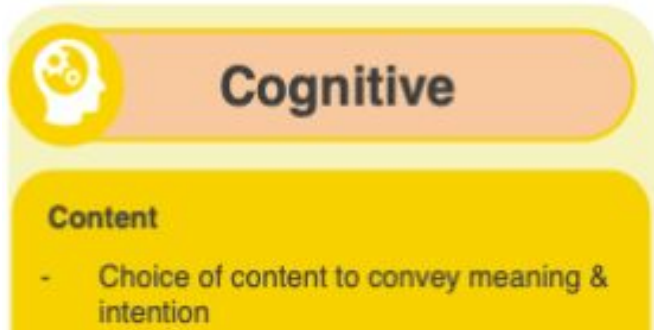
Idea 11: Barrier activities / information gap activities

Learners gather key information about two historical events:

Event	Attack on Pearl Harbour	The bombing of Hiroshima
Type		
Location		
Date		
Executed by		
Casualties		

Suggestion: lead with speaking activities

Idea 11: Barrier activities / information gap activities



Ideas

Which might you try?
Which wouldn't work for you?

1. Word chains
2. Think of three
3. This is the answer, what's the question?
4. (subject specific) odd one out
5. Retrieval grids
6. Spoken review tasks (including tweaks for active listening)
7. Develop understanding of register
8. Word inquiry
9. Topic-related discussions
10. Commenting on the views of others
11. Barrier / info-gap activities