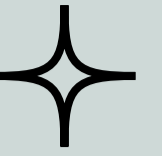# Oracy and Confidence

## How can strategies used to improve oracy also help to build confidence in the classroom?

| INTRODUCTION | RESEARCH | CONCLUSION |
|---|---|---|

## Introduction

### Background and Key Literature

The development of oracy skills, especially in the context of international schools where there are high levels of ELL and EAL students, is crucial for both academic and social success.

**What is oracy?**
- Oracy is the development of speaking and listening skills, encompassing the ability to express oneself clearly, listen attentively, engage in meaningful conversation, and participate effectively in verbal communication interactions within various contexts. (Mercer, 2018)

**What are the key theories surrounding oracy in the classroom?**
- Oracy as fundamental to student confidence and progress (Gaunt & Stott, 2018)

- Creating a dialogic classroom culture (Gaunt & Stott, 2018)

- Debate as a learning tool to facilitate oracy development (Newman, 2019)

### Research Questions

- **RQ1** – What impact do debate strategies have on oracy?
- **RQ2** – Is there a correlation between secure oracy skills and confidence?
- **RQ3** – Can this confidence be maintained over time as coaching becomes less explicit?

## Research

### Research Action

#### What will happen?

| |
|---|
| 1) Initial student questionnaires circulated and strategy one introduced during enrichment (gesticulation). |
| 2) Debate one takes place using initial strategies. |
| 3) New strategy (Pace) is introduced, and students use this in debate.  This step may be used 2 further times (Intonation and eye contact). |
| 4) Competition data is analysed. |
| 5) Final student questionnaire is completed to evaluate impact of the strategies. |

### Methodology

Sample = 5 students across Year 10 to Year 13.

Debate enrichment is held weekly – one strategy introduced every fortnight and utilised within the next debate.

Data collection was a mixture of qualitative and quantitative.

Scores awarded for 'manner' within the competition.

Surveys of the participants at the beginning and end of the competition.

### Results

#### Qualitative data

| Question asked | Response before intervention |
|---|---|
| What is the most confident aspect of your oracy skills currently? How did you develop this skill? (Linked to RQ1) | "I grew up with parents who themselves were very articulate and have careers centred around oracy. They encouraged discussion and hearing them talk helped me articulate myself more clearly." (Student A) |
| What area of oracy are you least confident with? How do you think you could go about improving this aspect? (Linked to RQ2) | "Pace, I tend to talk too fast, so it becomes harder to understand me despite still talking clearly. I want to be able to use it for impact and learn to control it." (Student B) |

| Question asked | Response after intervention |
|---|---|
| What is the most confident aspect of your oracy skills now? Do you think this developed within the competition? (Linked to RQ2) | "What's been most important for me is POI exchanges -- they've allowed me to build oracy skills on a more spontaneous, natural basis. Responding to & asking POIs in a way that was confident, structured and clear has helped my overall articulation." (Student A) |
| Has the competition and skill coaching helped you to develop your overall oracy confidence? (Linked to RQ1, 2 and 3) | "Yes, it has helped me articulate my views on a topic quickly and communicate said views effectively." (Student B) |

#### Quantitative data

| Student | Manner score in debate 1 | Manner score in debate 4 |
|---|---|---|
| A | 3 | 5 |
| B | 2 | 4 |
| C | 3 | 4 |
| D | 2 | Eliminated |
| E | 4 | 5 |

### Analysis

The analytical discussion of results will be considered via the findings of key literacy from part one.

- Oracy as fundamental to student confidence and progress (Gaunt & Stott, 2018)
  → Both qualitative and quantitative data prove this to be true.
  → Notable observational shift in students as well as an improved score in 'manner' and their reflective responses highlight an improvement in skills and confidence.

- Creating a dialogic classroom culture (Gaunt & Stott, 2018)
  → Interesting assertions from student A who identified dialogue as important in both questionnaires: family discussion and POI exchanges.
  → Developing definition of oracy to include speaking and listening opposed to just the former.

- Debate as a learning tool to facilitate oracy development (Newman, 2019)
  → An excellent 'low-stake' way of developing oracy and confidence.
  → Structured debating and skill coaching has the potential to facilitate progress in both oracy and confidence.

## Conclusion

Oracy is crucial for building confidence in students. We should be explicit in discussing the real-world application of oracy and how this is not only a skill that is used in activities such as debating but in the wider world – building relationships and developing social skills. Debating as a low stake and fun method to prioritise oracy skills and this in turn naturally built confidence.

### Reflections

How can this research shape the work of teachers and other professionals?
→ Dialogic classrooms and opportunities for oracy in curriculum planning.

What are the limitations of your research?
→ Confidence as subjective to different students which makes it challenging to measure.
→ QA of judging and marking – can the data be a trusted measure to evaluate progress?

How can research in this area continue to be developed?
→ Further exploration into RQ3 - Can this confidence be maintained over times as coaching becomes less explicit? How can we measure the impact in a more tangible way?

### References

Gaunt, A. & Stott, A. (2018) Transform Teaching and Learning through Talk: The Oracy Imperative. 1st ed. Maryland: R&L.

Mercer, N. & Dawes, L. (2018) The Development of Oracy Skills in School-Aged Learners. https://languageresearch.cambridge.org/images/CambridgePapersInELT_Oracy_2018_ONLINE.pdf [date accessed - 20th February 2025]

Newman, D. (2019) The Noisy Classroom: Developing Debate and Critical Oracy in Schools. 1st ed. London: Routledge.