

# Components and Composites: Oracy

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**Abbey Multi Academy Trust**  
*Proud to be a talk-rich Trust*

## The project rationale

Throughout 2025–2026, the Trust Oracy Network shifted its focus from trialling discrete oracy strategies to embedding oracy within the curriculum itself. Previous research established that approaches such as exploratory talk and structured models increased participation and supported vocabulary acquisition. However, these approaches were often implemented as standalone strategies rather than being intentionally planned as part of the curriculum.

This project aimed to explore what happens when oracy is explicitly planned, sequenced and embedded within a unit of learning, with explicit talk knowledge sequenced alongside disciplinary knowledge. The intention was to test whether designing curriculum units with clearly defined oracy components, composites and outcomes would lead to improvements in pupil talk, teacher planning and subject understanding.

This work aligns with current research which suggests that oracy should be:

- Explicitly taught
- Sequentially planned
- Embedded across subjects
- Accessible to all pupils, not left to chance

## Embedding oracy through curriculum design

At the centre of this project was the principle that pupils must be taught:

- How to talk (knowledge and skills)
- Through talk (learning and meaning-making)
- About talk (reflection and metacognition)

Our eight schools used an oracy curriculum planning model to map talk outcomes, sequence knowledge and skills, plan opportunities for practice, feedback and assessment. Teachers designed units which incorporated either exploratory talk, dialogic talk and presentational talk. The intention was to ensure that talk was purposeful, progressive and explicitly taught.

## Enquiry question

What happens when one unit is planned with explicit oracy components, composites and outcomes? How does this affect teaching and pupil understanding?

## Hypothesis

If a unit is designed with explicit sequences of oracy knowledge, skills and outcomes, then:

- Pupils will talk more purposefully
- Teachers will plan for talk more intentionally
- Pupils will become more effective communicators over time
- Pupils will develop stronger knowledge about talk

## Implementation

Academies implemented the project using a structured unit of work-based approach, typically over a 6-week sequence. They chose a unit of work in a subject of their choice that would run over the Spring Term. Where possible, a control group was also monitored.

Key features included using explicit oracy planning tools used to design units taken from V21 and Trust resources, having clear talk outcomes identified from the outset, a breakdown of oracy knowledge and skills into small steps and regular opportunities for feedback on talk.

Impact was measured through several means including pupil voice, teacher reflection, assessment outcomes, observation and video evidence and comparison between cohorts or prior attainment.

## Summary of findings

Across academies, there was a clear and consistent pattern as a result of the projects:

### Increased pupil engagement and participation

Pupils were more engaged in lessons where talk was explicitly planned. Teachers reported fewer low-level behaviour incidents and greater involvement from all pupils.

### Improved confidence and quality of talk

Pupil voice data showed measurable improvements in confidence and enjoyment of learning

### Greater inclusion and equity

For example, SEND pupils were better able to access learning through structured talk and EAL pupils particularly benefitted from oral rehearsal. Quieter pupils became more active participants

### Stronger subject understanding and outcomes

Schools reported that pupils developed deeper reasoning and understanding, increased use of subject vocabulary and improved written outcomes, particularly regarding clarity, structure and reasoning. For example, in one school, 64% of pupils improved in assessment outcomes in one setting with a median gain of +1.5 marks following oracy-focused teaching.

### Impact on teacher practice

As a result of the project, teachers planned more intentionally for talk and had clearer expectations of what good talk looks like. It developed their confidence in teaching oracy explicitly.

### Cognitive overload when combining talk and new content

Pupils sometimes struggled to manage both new subject knowledge and unfamiliar oracy skills simultaneously, requiring additional scaffolding and time.

### Variable depth of pupil talk

Some pupils remained at a surface level of understanding, particularly when asked to develop more nuanced or critical responses.

### Need for sustained practice and modelling

Oracy skills did not become embedded quickly; pupils required repeated exposure, explicit modelling and overlearning to apply strategies effectively.

## Case studies of evidence

### Lightcliffe Academy (Secondary)

Explicit teaching of presentational talk led to notable improvements in pupils' oracy skills, which had not been evident in prior learning. Pupils demonstrated increased confidence, alongside developing resilience and a strong sense of pride in their work.

There was a reduction in passive learners, with more pupils actively participating and being 'seen'. Structured opportunities to plan and deliver presentations supported pupils to use more ambitious vocabulary and communicate more clearly.

For staff, the project promoted more deliberate planning for oracy, including explicitly teaching speaking skills and allowing time for preparation. The work

contributed to developing a culture of oracy, though it required staff to work beyond their comfort zone and prioritise time for talk.

#### Christ Church Upper Armley CE Primary School

Embedding oracy through structured strategies (e.g. talk tactics and concept cartoons) resulted in high levels of pupil engagement. Pupils became increasingly able to participate confidently in discussions, using sentence stems and agreed talk structures. There was clear development in pupils' ability to use subject-specific vocabulary and articulate their ideas with clarity.

Pupils showed improved capacity to justify their thinking, respond to others and build on peers' ideas. Structured and repeated practice supported pupils to manage interactions effectively, including turn-taking and attentive listening.

The research demonstrated that careful, explicit planning of oracy within a unit is key to securing consistent impact on learning.

#### Holy Trinity CofE Academy (Primary)

The research demonstrated that explicit teaching of exploratory talk within a structured sequence led to improved pupil engagement and increased confidence, supported by positive shifts in pupil voice data.

Pupils showed greater confidence in using subject-specific vocabulary and reported increased enjoyment and clarity during talk activities. However, the findings also highlighted that new oracy skills require ongoing practice and overlearning to become embedded, and that some strategies, such as the 'talk detective' role, need further modelling to be consistently effective.

Overall, the project reinforced the importance of structured, sustained teaching of oracy alongside clear feedback and opportunities for practice.

#### Abbey Grange CofE Academy (Secondary)

The research found that placing oracy at the centre of a curriculum unit led to more purposeful pupil talk, increased use of subject-specific vocabulary, and improved confidence, engagement and participation.

Structured talk, supported by modelling and clear success criteria, enabled pupils to develop exploratory, discursive and presentational speaking skills, with clear evidence of transfer from talk to writing, including improvements in clarity, reasoning and vocabulary.

The approach was particularly effective for EAL and SEND pupils, supporting access to complex content through rehearsal of ideas. While some challenges remained around confidence in presentational talk and depth of discussion, the overall

findings demonstrate that explicit, sequenced oracy teaching can positively impact both spoken and written outcomes.

#### Lightcliffe CofE Primary School

The research found that using an explicit oracy curriculum planning tool to structure a unit led to improved pupil outcomes across a range of abilities, with more SEND pupils achieving expected objectives and higher-attaining pupils demonstrating deeper understanding. The planned sequencing of talk supported increased engagement and reduced low-level disruption, alongside stronger participation in lessons. There was also evidence of high-quality written outcomes where an oracy outcome was integrated, suggesting effective links between talk and wider learning.

Overall, the findings indicate that carefully planned oracy opportunities within a unit can positively impact engagement, behaviour and attainment across the curriculum.

#### St. Chad's CofE Primary School

The research found that a deliberately sequenced approach to teaching oracy alongside subject knowledge led to more purposeful, structured pupil talk and improvements across all strands of the oracy framework. Pupils increasingly used sentence stems, subject-specific vocabulary and reasoning to build on one another's ideas, resulting in stronger explanations and more focused discussion.

The progressive teaching of different talk types, alongside rehearsal and defined roles, supported greater confidence, inclusion and participation, particularly for less confident pupils. Assessment evidence showed clear progression in oracy skills across a range of learners, alongside improved use of evidence and justification in historical understanding. However, the findings also highlighted that cognitive demand can be high when combining new content and talk skills, requiring additional scaffolding and time for reflection. Overall, the project demonstrates that explicit, well-sequenced oracy teaching enhances both communication and depth of subject understanding.

#### Bishop Young CofE Academy (Secondary)

This project investigated how explicit teaching of oracy within Year 10 PSHE could improve students' confidence and effectiveness in spoken communication. A targeted group of disengaged boys explored the theme of stereotypes through a structured sequence of discussion, speech writing and presentation. Using approaches such as the Harkness Model and scaffolded speech writing, students were supported to develop and deliver persuasive speeches on topics relevant to their experiences.

Over the course of the term, students demonstrated increased engagement, improved subject understanding and greater confidence in presenting their ideas.

While some initially struggled to develop more sophisticated responses, sustained opportunities for structured talk enabled them to build on peers' ideas and improve over time. The project will now be scaled across all year groups, embedding oracy through planned speech outcomes within the PSHE curriculum.

#### Manston St. James CofE Primary Academy

This project examined the impact of embedding explicit oracy outcomes across the curriculum. It was hypothesised that carefully sequenced talk tasks would lead to more purposeful pupil discussion, improved communication skills and more intentional planning for talk by teachers.

Across subjects, oracy outcomes were mapped into curriculum plans and lessons were adapted to include structured talk tasks leading to a final outcome. Pupils were explicitly taught the vocabulary and skills needed to succeed, with progress assessed through observations, video evidence and pupil voice.

The project led to increased pupil engagement, improved use of subject-specific language and greater confidence in discussion. Pupils demonstrated a clear understanding of the purpose of oracy and were able to reflect on how it supports their learning.

Next steps focus on refining progression, strengthening staff expertise through CPD and further embedding oracy consistently across all subjects and year groups.

#### Next steps

- **Establish consistent curriculum expectations**  
Embed clearly defined oracy outcomes, progression and assessment criteria within all subject curriculum plans to ensure consistency across schools. Use the finding of this research project as a spring-board.
- **Strengthen staff expertise through targeted CPD**  
Provide ongoing training focused on modelling high-quality talk, sequencing oracy alongside subject knowledge and giving effective feedback on talk. This may be through a CPD programme for instructional coaches.
- **Develop shared planning and exemplification**  
Create and share high-quality model units, talk tasks and video exemplars across the Trust to reduce variability and support teacher confidence.
- **Build in structured rehearsal and scaffolding**  
Ensure all sequences include planned opportunities for rehearsal, sentence stems and gradual release to support pupils who struggle with confidence or cognitive load.

- **Implement robust monitoring and evaluation**

Use pupil voice, lesson visits and talk outcomes to track impact, identify gaps and refine implementation over time.

#### Further reading and resources

*Mercer, N. (2025) Oracy: The Transformative Power of Finding Your Voice*

A key contemporary text arguing that oracy should sit alongside literacy and numeracy, highlighting its role in cognitive development, attainment and social mobility. [[penguin.co.uk](https://penguin.co.uk)]

*Alexander, R. (2020) A Dialogic Teaching Companion*

A foundational evidence-based guide explaining how structured classroom talk improves engagement, thinking and understanding across subjects.

[[taylorfrancis.com](https://www.taylorfrancis.com)]

*Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) – Oral Language Interventions*

Summarises strong evidence that structured talk approaches can lead to around 6 months' additional progress, emphasising the impact of explicit teaching and modelling of talk. [[educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)]

*Cambridge Assessment – Oracy Education Brief*

Provides a clear research overview linking talk to cognitive development, emphasising that spoken language is central to thinking and learning.

[<https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/Images/661428-education-brief-oracy-.pdf>]

*Mercer, N. & Littleton, K. (2013) Interthinking: Putting Talk to Work*

Explores how collaborative talk ('interthinking') enables pupils to reason, learn and construct understanding together.