DELTEA submission to Oracy Commission Call for Evidence 2024
Links between oracy education and specific subject outcomes.

a. What is your understanding of the links between oracy education and specific subject outcomes?

Oracy framework from Voice 21

My response focuses on oracy within languages education (i.e. Modern Foreign Languages), an area of the curriculum which has oracy at its centre but which is rarely mentioned when cross-curricular oracy is being discussed.

Oracy development, ie the ability to use the language in speech and to understand spoken language, is a key component of learning a second or foreign language and a key aim of both primary and secondary languages curriculum in England (DfE, 2013). Additionally, however, oracy can and should be viewed as a vital component of developing literacy in a second or foreign. This can occur not only through children reading text aloud (important for practising and strengthening oracy) but also through talking about what they are reading and the process of making sense of the text in the foreign language. Our research and that of others (see below) provide evidence that such an approach boosts learners' attainment in vocabulary and reading skills in the foreign language, and also their self-regulation, creativity and confidence in reading.

Furthermore, Modern Foreign Languages can, and should, align closely with the principles outlined in the Oracy Framework of Voice 21, in the following ways:

Physical:

Voice:- Pace of speech - Tonal variation - Clarity of pronunciation - Voice projection Body language: - Gesture & posture - Facial expression & eye contact

In MFL lessons, learners can be shown how to use the above features of speech to help them convey meaning. They can learn how intonation and pronunciation are key to clarity of expression. They can also be taught how to interpret such features in spoken language in order to understand better the language they hear people using.

Linguistic

Vocabulary: - Appropriate vocabulary choice

Language - Register:- Grammar

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

In MFL lessons, learners can learn how to evaluate vocabulary for the most appropriate choice to convey meaning in the foreign language; they can be supported to understand how metaphor conveys complex meanings, and how different metaphors exist in different languages. They can learn how to use and understand different registers and how different languages mark register in different ways, and how that might differ from English.

Cognitive

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

Self-regulation - Maintaining focus on task - Time management

In MFL lessons teachers can show learners how meaning in the foreign language can vary depending on their choice of content, and they can give them opportunities to speak about themes of their choosing. They can be taught how build on the views of others and to express their opinions and views in the foreign language. They can be taught how to use and understand metadiscourse markers such as 'Firstly', 'Most importantly' and their role in structuring speech. Self-regulation is at the heart of effective language learning and alongside the examples given in the Oracy Framework can include strategies such as inferencing, selectively attending to key aspects of language input, comprehension monitoring, etc. All of the latter are teachable within the languages classroom.

Emotional

Working with others: - Guiding or managing interactions - Turn-taking

Listening & responding: - Listening actively & responding appropriately

Confidence in speaking: - Self assurance - Liveliness & flair

Audience awareness: - Taking account of level of understanding of the audience

Over time, MFL learners are given guidance and opportunities to develop the above skills when using and comprehending the foreign language. Listening attentively and responding appropriately are at the core of the Languages curriculum and feature prominently in languages lessons from primary school onwards.

Overall, the aims and objectives of both the National Curriculum for Languages and external examinations (GCSE and A level) align closely with the principles of the Oracy Framework.

b. What evidence and/or examples do you have of this?

Our current research project, Digital Empowerment in Language Teaching (DELTEA), funded as part of the ESRC Education Programme, has successfully trained primary school teachers of languages in developing learners' ability to talk about literacy in their French or Spanish lessons. They have learnt how self-regulatory strategies such as inferencing and comprehension monitoring can be taught to learners to help them understand digital stories that present text, images and sound to convey meaning. At the same time, they are implementing activities with Year 5 learners designed to enable learners to give voice (either in French, Spanish or English, or a combination) to how the stories make them feel, how the characters in the story might be feeling, etc. They are learning how physical cues such as tone of voice in digital stories they are reading and listening to can convey meaning and emotions.

We have also run a classroom-based intervention with teachers to gauge the impact of these approaches, used with the digital stories outlined above, on learners' French/Spanish vocabulary knowledge, their phonological knowledge, their creativity, empathy and language learning motivation. Learners are also working with an AI-pronunciation app to help develop their phonological knowledge as well as their intonation which we anticipate will support other aspects of their learning in French and Spanish. We have found that such an approach improves

learners' vocabulary, reading comprehension, self-efficacy, and creativity (especially flexible thinking, which is also at the heart of empathy).

Our approaches with primary school learners build on our previous research projects with secondary school learners. In the FLEUR French reading project (Graham et al., 2020a; Woore et al., 2018) we worked with teachers of Year 7 learners of French to implement an intervention whereby learners' phonics knowledge and their comprehension strategies were improved as a pathway toward improved reading in French, vocabulary knowledge and self-efficacy for reading in French. Our approaches to literacy teaching were firmly rooted in oracy – for phonics instruction, learners were taught how to sound out words; for comprehension strategy instruction, learners talked about how they were comprehending challenging texts and the strategies they were employing. They also listened to their teacher modelling strategies and thinking aloud how they as a skilled reader went about making sense of words in a foreign language. For both phonics and strategies teaching there was improvement in learners' ability to read in French, their vocabulary knowledge, and their self-efficacy for reading.

Similarly, with Year 9 learners of French and German, we implemented a classroom intervention whereby learners worked with poems and authentic texts (Graham et al., 2024). For half of the intervention they engaged in activities that asked them to relate the themes of the text to their own lives, to discuss the emotional aspects of the text, largely through oracy-based approaches such as reading aloud, paired discussion of points in the text, listening carefully and responding. A focus on tone of voice, sounds of words, choice of vocabulary, as key drivers of meaning-making, was a key aspect of the project. Learners of French saw large gains in their vocabulary knowledge, and there was also growth in learners' ability to think creatively (Graham et al., 2020 and in process).

c. Can you cite any examples of best practice in oracy education?

Please see previous answer.

The role of oracy in the context of rapid technological development.

a. What is your understanding of the role of oracy in the context of rapid technological development?

New technologies are opening up the possibility for learners to be exposed to a wide range of spoken input. For languages, having access to high-quality oral input is essential for learning. Unfortunately, in the primary school, limited curriculum time for languages and gaps in teachers' own language proficiency mean that such input is hard to access, with negative implications for learners' overall language development (Graham et al., 2017). Access to digital stories and AI apps can help overcome these challenges, which have been shown to be especially severe in areas of greater economic disadvantage (Collen, 2020).

What evidence and/or examples do you have of this?

Our DELTEA project is providing high-quality digital stories with images, written and read-aloud text in French and Spanish that generalist primary teachers (ie non-specialists) can use to give learners the type of spoken input they need to make progress. Our AI pronunciation app likewise provides learners with high-quality models which the learner then tries to emulate and gets feedback on the similarity between their pronunciation and intonation and the model. Both approaches have been tested in classrooms and found to be promising approaches for improved learning outcomes.

Oracy and government

What role do you think government and schools should play in oracy education? *

Please share one policy that you think would improve oracy education in England. *
Have oracy as a specific objective within all areas of the curriculum.