

ENHANCING LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH ORACY: DEVELOPING  
SPEAKING, LISTENING, AND COLLABORATIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN THE  
ELT CLASSROOM

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**Abstract**

The article explores the concept of oracy and its relevance to English Language Teaching (ELT). The aim is to teach students to develop their ability to express their thoughts clearly, listen to others while assisting them and offer opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions of spoken language. Oracy is made up of two parallel dimensions, learning to talk, where the emphasis is on how effectively and meaningfully you communicate, and learning through talk, which builds understanding, insight or shared knowledge. There are four key dimensions, such as physical, cognitive, linguistic and social-emotional, that are vital to developing communication expertise.

The article presents the results of a mixed-method classroom-based study in the European University of Armenia. The observations were gathered using observation checklists, peer assessment, student reflection journals and pre and post intervention assessments. Quantitative and qualitative data make it possible to state that all four strands of oracy are steadily improved, and learners become more confident, engaged and willing to contribute their own meaning to meaning-making. The results indicate that the inclusion of structured oracy tasks, including exploratory talk, Think-Pair-Share and guided discussions, in the ELT teaching can substantially improve language proficiency as well as interpersonal competence. Therefore, if oracy was embedded into the daily routines of all of the classes, the teachers would empower their students to express opinions and ideas, negotiate meaning and improve interpersonal skills.

**Keywords:** Oracy, ELT, speaking skills, listening skills, collaborative learning, classroom communication.

**Introduction**

The skill of oracy or the skill of using spoken language efficiently, is now widely regarded as an essential competence for learners in both educational and professional contexts [Alexander, Improving oracy and classroom talk]. Oracy does not only mean the capacity to express ideas properly, but also the capability to listen actively, cooperate and build mutual understanding through a conversation. **Empirical research has demonstrated that strong oracy skills are positively associated with academic achievement, critical thinking and learners' readiness for the communicative demands of the 21st-century workplace** [Mercer]. It has been found that robust oracy skills can improve academic success, critical thinking and equip students with the interpersonal skills of the 21 st -century workplace [Mercer, Littleton]. The importance of oracy has been neglected in language classrooms, where the focus of listening and speaking activities was on structural practice over effective communication strategies [Wellington]. The article discusses the importance of oracy in English Language Teaching (ELT), and the systematic integration of oracy can contribute to not only language proficiency but also collaborative learning. The objectives are: (1) to examine the main aspects

of the oracy skills, which include physical, cognitive, linguistic and social-emotional skills; (2) the study will examine the methods of teaching oracy skills in classrooms, and (3) how the development of oratory skills influences the speaking, listening and interpersonal skills of the students. **The novelty of the present study lies in its empirical focus on an Armenian higher education context, where research on oracy remains scarce. By situating established theoretical models of oracy within this local context, the study contributes new evidence on how oracy-based pedagogy functions beyond commonly researched Anglophone educational settings.**

The importance of the article is that it may offer evidence-based methods by which teachers can develop communicative competence beyond the level of basic language accuracy. An analysis of the literature reveals the difference between learning to talk and learning through talk and the advantages of exploratory talk, collaborative discussion structures and structured peer dialogue. The systematic implementation of oracy in ELT improves the cognitive, social and general language achievement of students. Theoretically, the research is a blend of theoretical study and practical classroom practices, observation in student interaction, introduction of organized oracy activities and evaluation of results by reflection and peer assessment. This study has both theoretical and practical implications: on the theoretical level, it helps understand oracy as a multidimensional set of skills, on the practical level, it provides practical strategies that teachers can implement to embed oracy into daily classroom activities and develop confident, well-articulated and socially conscious learners.

### *Literature Review*

Oracy has been broadly examined in educational research due to its significant importance in learning and socialization. Traditionally, attention in the area of language education was drawn more on reading and writing, while speaking and listening were frequently given second priority. Nevertheless, some researchers has pointed out that successful classroom conversation plays the key role in cognitive growth, cooperative study and knowledge building [Alexander, Towards Dialogic Teaching]. Mercer explores the notion of *exploratory talk* in which students discuss, negotiate meaning and develop ideas together, which he calls interthinking [Littleton, Mercer]. Research identifies two complementary dimensions of oracy, *learning to talk* and *learning through talk* [Mercer]. The first overview of learning how to talk is about the cultivation of communicative strategies, where the correct use of language, voice intonation and body language works, whereas the second overview of learning through talk is that dialogue is a good way to develop an understanding, problem-solving and creativity. According to the recent studies, the combination of the two dimensions does not only assist in language acquisition, but also higher-order thinking and social competence [Alexander, Improving oracy and classroom talk]. Oracy is typically conceived in four main strands, in physical, cognitive, linguistic and social-emotional. Physical oracy is the knowledge of using voice and body language effectively; cognitive oracy is planning, checking and evaluating what one is saying; linguistic oracy involves the use of vocabulary, grammar and rhetorics in communication and social-emotional oracy is the aspect that deals with empathy, cooperation and self-confidence in communication. Research has shown that learners who acquire these strands are in a better position to participate in debates, presentations and team work in solving problems [Alexander, Improving oracy and classroom talk]. The literature on ELT classrooms has emphasized practical methods of developing oracy. Both collaborative learning and reflective practice are promoted by structured infrastructures, such as *Think-Pair-Share*, *guided discussions* and *role-plays* [Wellington].

Notably, the ability of oracy can be applied to any other subject and even other languages thereby increasing the ability of the learners to communicate outside the English classroom. Nevertheless, there are still some difficulties such as classroom dynamics, balancing the priorities of

the curriculum and delivering consistent feedback. This review confirms that oracy development is theoretically based and practically important. It highlights the necessity to develop speaking, listening and communication skills in a systematic way, which may enhance language proficiency, critical thinking and social-emotional competence. The current research is based on this body of literature, analyzing how oracy can be integrated into ELT activities and evaluating the effect of such integration on student engagement, collaboration, and communicative competence in general.

### ***Research Methods***

The research used mixed-method approach to explore how oracy skills could be integrated in English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom. It was based on both qualitative and quantitative study to give a well-rounded sense of the impact that structured oracy activities had on the speaking, listening and collaborative communication abilities of students. Participants were 50 intermediate-level English learners, aged between 18 and 20, in 4 groups of the European University of Armenia. The purposive sampling method was used to choose participants so that there would be a representative sample of both genders, language proficiency levels and their previous exposure to collaboration in a classroom.

**Research Tools and Instruments:** Data were gathered via combination of observation checklists, student reflection journal, peer assessment forms and audio-taping classroom interactions. The use of observational instruments that were aimed at quantifying the four strands of oracy: physical, cognitive, linguistic and social-emotional. Reflection journals gave information about what students thought of themselves in terms of their communication abilities and experiences in collaboration. Feedback on quality of interaction and group dynamics was collected using peer assessment forms.

**Procedures:** The research took place within a 12 week interval. Activities based on oracy were incorporated into regular ELT classes, such as Exploratory talk, Think-Pair-Share and debate and formal discussion tasks. Instructors demonstrated good communication strategies, emphasized on pertinent oracy terms, and asked learners to seek their own performance evaluations at the end of every activity. There were individual and group speaking activities in the lesson to see the progress of oratory in the different contexts.

**Data Analysis:** Qualitative Data of observations, reflections and peer assessment were examined thematically to detect trends in student participation, engagement and collaboration. The improvement in the oracy-related competencies was measured with descriptive statistics after conducting quantitative analysis of pre- and post-activity assessment of oratory skills in terms of speaking and listening. The combination of these data sources through triangulation made these data sources reliable and thus gave a holistic picture of the effect of oracy instruction.

### ***Results***

#### ***Quantitative Results***

Descriptive statistical analysis revealed consistent improvement across all four strands of oracy following the intervention, as summarized in Table 1.

The gains observed in all the participants were significant in at least three of the four strands, and this shows a wide influence of the oracy-based instructional methodology. The growth in the physical strand was recorded at an average of 0.5 points (18%), and the growth was in the voice clarity, articulation, pacing and purposeful use of gestures. These improvements indicate that, repeated practice in structured speaking tasks and teacher modeling had the positive effect on the ability of students to control paralinguistic elements of spoken communication. The second-highest improvement of the four strands was shown on cognitive oracy, which increased by 0.6 points (22%). This growth is a sign of improved skill to plan spoken inputs, structure thoughts and manipulate messages according to the feedback of the audience. The results indicate that the presence of dialogic activities that needed justification, clarification and reformulation resulted in the enhancement of metacognitive awareness during the process of spoken interaction. The mean linguistic oracy scores were improved by 0.6 points (20 percent). During spontaneous speech, students demonstrated a higher

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level of lexical range, an increased level of grammatical accuracy and better application of discourse markers. The findings suggest that the oracy-based interaction also offered the possibilities of meaningful use of language when it went beyond the controlled practice and helped to advance the communicative competence. The greatest improvement was seen in the social-emotional strand with the average improvement of 0.7 (25%). This result indicates that a continuous practice of sharing dialogue especially resulted in increased confidence, empathetic abilities of learners, turn-taking ability, and desire to be involved in the group discussions of the students.

**Table 1.**

Oracy Strand	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	Percent age Gain
Physical	2.8 (0.41)	3.3 (0.38)	+0.5	18%
Cognitive	2.7 (0.45)	3.3 (0.40)	+0.6	22%
Linguistic	2.9 (0.39)	3.5 (0.36)	+0.6	20%
Social-emotional	2.6 (0.47)	3.3 (0.42)	+0.7	25%

*Note.* Mean scores were calculated on a 4-point analytic oracy rubric aligned with physical, cognitive, linguistic and social-emotional dimensions.

### ***Pre- and Post-Intervention Mean Scores and Percentage Gains for Oracy Strands (N = 50)***

#### ***Qualitative results***

Qualitative evidence gained by classroom observations was rich and supported the quantitative results strongly and helped to get deeper understanding of the processes involved in the oracy development of students. Physical oracy improvement was noted in all groups of instructions. Learners showed better articulation, stronger control in voice projection and better modulation of intonation when they were talking in small-group and in the classroom. Throughout the intervention, the learners also started relating to their non-verbal behavior, began to utilize eye contact, facial expressions and intentional gestures to add meaning and keep the listener involved.

The growth in cognitive oracy was demonstrated in the manner in which the students arranged and structured their oral submissions. Recording of observations showed that learners began organizing their responses prior to speaking, used a signposting expression to arrange ideas and used clarification strategies like paraphrasing or following-up questions. During the intervention experience, students grew to be very alert to cues of the listener and peer feedback and modified their explanations on the spot to create a common ground. These actions indicate the development of metacognitive regulation of the verbal interaction and the heightened sensitivity of the needs of the audience.

Linguistic oracy improvements were seen in the ability to widen their lexical spectrum, enhance grammatical precision and better structure of their discourse. In activities related to exploratory talk and guided discussion, topic-specific vocabulary and discourse markers and modal expressions to show stance, agreement and uncertainty were more frequently utilized by the students. Reliance on formulaic utterances also decreased significantly, and the learners came out to make longer and elaborated turns which were more communicative and more precise.

Increase in social-emotional oracy was very prominent in group activities. Observations in the classroom indicated that there was increased equal turn taking, higher levels of peer support and increased willingness to include quieter members of the group into discussions. Cases of interruption and overlapping speech reduced and respectful dissent and meaning negotiation increased. These modifications added to the establishment of a more supportive, inclusive and dialogic classroom discourse. In general, the qualitative results are consistent with the existing literature that has focused on the importance of dialogue as a structured interaction in facilitating the linguistic and interpersonal development.

Peer Assessment and Learner Reflections

Table 2.

Peer-Assessed Indicator	Pre-Intervention (%)	Post-Intervention (%)	Change (pp)
Active listening (attention, responsiveness)	56	84	+28
Clarity of spoken expression	60	82	+22
Relevance of contributions to task	58	80	+22
Support for group understanding	54	78	+24
Respectful turn-taking and interaction	62	86	+24

*Note.* Percentages indicate the proportion of students rated positively by peers on each criterion. Ratings were obtained using a standardized peer assessment instrument with a combination of dichotomous and Likert-scale items. Change (pp) = percentage point difference between post- and pre-intervention ratings.

**Peer Assessment Results Before and After Oracy-Based Intervention (N = 50)**

Data of peer assessment also supported the identified improvement in the oracy abilities of students. Peer assessment form analysis showed that there was a significant growth in active listening behaviors, the percentage of students who were rated as active listeners increased significantly, as at the start of the study, the percentage of active listeners was 56, but by the last weeks of the intervention, it was 84. Also, peer ratings of clarity of expression and relevance of contributions and effectiveness in helping members understand the group improved steadily as time went by. These findings imply that students had formed an increased responsibility in communicative sense and increased awareness of group and audience dynamics. Learner reflection journals were useful in gaining some insights on the subjective experience of the students on oracy development. A substantial number of participants have mentioned a tangible decrease in speaking anxiety, as well as a greater readiness to share the idea in English, especially in a small-group setting. This change was often explained by students by the fact that it was organized using orality activities that provided students with time to prepare ideas, rehearse and support each other before discussing them in the whole-class. Another insight was that more attention was paid to listening as the part of an effective communication. Learners observed that with good listening skills, they could learn more on complex issues, react more constructively to students and develop stronger and more coherent persuasion. A number of learners directly mentioned that negotiating meaning with the help of discussing assisted them in perfecting their thinking and enhancing conceptual understanding. Combined, the overlap of quantitative and classroom observations, peer assessment and learner reflection give great weight to the idea that systematic integration of oracy-based pedagogy facilitates the use of meaning in language, cooperative knowledge building and learner confidence in ELT classrooms.

**Discussion**

The article indicated that the systematic implementation of oracy-based pedagogical activities in ELT classrooms could result in significant changes in the speaking, listening and collaborative communication proficiency in terms of improving learners. The quantitative data analysis, peer assessment scores, classroom observations, and learner reflections give a wholesome outlook of the dynamics of oracy development that goes through four interrelated strands, which include physical, cognitive, linguistic and social-emotional.

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Physical oracy which includes voice modulation, articulation and use of gestures acquired tremendous gains during the intervention. There was better clarity and assured projection and intentional body language when presenting and role-plays and guided discussions. Observations in the classroom revealed increased confident posture, proper eye contact and intentional meaning-supporting hand actions. Reflection journals also established that learners got to recognize how non-verbal communication can be used to improve interaction and understanding. These gains were reinforced by teacher modeling and repeated structured speaking activities and offered learners practical strategies to enhance their performance in physical oracy.

There was also an improved cognitive oracy. Students showed improved skills in making their contributions, organizing information and making strategic explanations in discussions. It was found that more signposting, elaborating, and real-time adaptation of messages according to the feedback of peers was used. The more complex activities like Think-Pair-Share and guided discussions encouraged the students to think more deeply and interthink with each other, as they stated that explaining their ideas helped them make sense and construct knowledge together. Quantitative analysis revealed that there was a 22% measurable improvement in the cognitive oracy scores indicating the success of dialogic tasks in enhancing metacognitive awareness and critical thinking abilities.

The evolution of linguistic orality was manifested in the increased use of vocabulary, better grammatical correctness, and a more organized discourse. The peer assessment marks showed a gradual effect on the precision of expression and applicability of contributions, which showed that students took an increased awareness of the effect of their language selection on group comprehension. The correct use of modal verbs, hedging expressions, and discourse markers were also observed which also pointed that the learners were using linguistic resources in an effective manner in interactive situations. These advances affirm that the structured oracy activities offer significant chances to both fluency and accuracy, strengthening the communicative competence beyond the practice designed in a controlled manner.

The most eminent area of development was social-emotional oracy. Students became more emphatic, cooperative, and confident in the collaborative activities. It was noted during the observation that turn taking was balanced, and disagreements on different views were negotiated respectfully and that more encouragement was given to the quieter peers. These trends were supported by peer assessment data where active listening went up to 84% and effective contribution to group understanding went up significantly (Table 2). The reports on learner reflections noted that there was decreased anxiety about speaking, more willingness to participate, as well as the appreciation of the importance of listening in collaborative learning. These results demonstrate how sequential oracy interventions contribute to improving interpersonal competence, motivation and self-efficacy which leads to a conducive classroom atmosphere which facilitates individual and group learning.

The peer evaluation was significant in strengthening oracy. The assessment of listening behavior, clarity, and contributions of each other helped students to understand better the requirements of the audience, communication responsibility and dynamics of productive collaboration. The peer feedback helped to reflect on the performance of other individuals as well as one own and reinforce social-emotional skills and help to sharpen the cognitive and linguistic abilities. The combination of peer ratings with observation and reflection data confirms the triangulation of peer ratings with observation and reflection data as affirmative indicators of both formative and developmental roles of collaborative evaluation in the oracy teaching. Even though these were positive, a number of challenges were noted. Striking equilibrium between orality activities and the requirements of the curriculum, dealing with noisy classes, and making the participation of each student fair necessitated prudent planning and directive instructions of teachers. Certain learners were unwilling to talk in the beginning and scaffolding and prompts were required. These difficulties demonstrate the significance of systematic placement of tasks, expectations, and modeling that will facilitate the greatest level of engagement and skill acquisition. Generally, the findings are consistent with the current body of literature and this proves that oracy is a multidimensional ability which transcends the conventional teaching and learning of speaking and listening (Alexander, 2008; Mercer and Littleton, 2007). The systematic, guided oracy instruction is integrated to enhance language competence, cognitive processing, interaction, and reflective interaction. An intentional, organized way will provide the learners with the capability of engaging in meaningful interaction,

co-constructing the knowledge, and social and emotional skills required to engage in fruitful collaboration in both academic and professional settings. This argument highlights the importance of the oracy in ELT classes in creating confident, articulate, and socially sensitive language users.

### ***Conclusion and Recommendations***

In this article, it was shown that oracy is an essential aspect of English Language Teaching (ELT), which leads to the language proficiency as well as social, cognitive and emotional growth of the students. The inclusion of structured oracy practices in the classroom including exploratory talk, Think-Pair-Share, debates and guided discussions will improve physical, cognitive, linguistic and social-emotional skill sets among students. The results show that oracy does not only enhance speaking and listening skills, but also enables further involvement in ideas, learning in groups and introspective thinking. Students testified they felt more confident, more sense of agency, and of the value of listening and negotiating meaning in a group setting. Problems in the practice of oracy, such as classroom noise management, facilitating equitable participation and balancing oracy and curricular requirements were also discussed in the study. These obstacles can be curbed by planning well, communicating what is expected, modeling of effective oracy practices by teachers and regular use of feedback and reflection.

According to the results, the following recommendations can be offered: 1. Embed oracy in curriculum: It is important that teachers make oracy part of all lessons, rather than only specific speaking activities, so students have practice and use. 2. Apply organized collaborative structures: Think-Pair-Share and exploratory talk are the techniques that invite students to participate, think, and build social-emotional skills. 3. Model and reinforce effective communication: Educators are expected to model oracy techniques and explicitly instruct pertinent vocabulary in order to make students more aware of the technique and its learning. 4. Promote reflection and peer-reviewing: Directing students to assess self-performance and giving feedback is a method of increasing self-awareness and facilitating skill improvement. To conclude, oracy is a transferable multidimensional skill that helps students to express themselves well, think critically and work successfully. Its organized application into ELT classrooms can not only enhance language learning, but also equips learners with the needs of the 21 st century in terms of interpersonal and professional skills.

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### ***Appendices***

**Appendix A: Observation Checklist Template** - Voice clarity and modulation - Use of gestures and facial expressions - Planning and organizing spoken content - Use of appropriate vocabulary and grammar - Empathy and listening skills - Participation in collaborative tasks

**Appendix B: Sample Peer Assessment Form** - Did your partner listen actively? (Yes/No) - Did your partner clearly express ideas? (1–5 scale) - Did your partner contribute to group understanding? (1–5 scale) - Comments:

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**Appendix C: Reflection Prompts for Students** - What did you learn from explaining your ideas to a partner? - How well did you listen to others during the activity? - What strategies

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