It's Good to Talk: Speaking Up for Oracy in the Management Classroom

1. Introduction

Much of the work done to manage relationships and to negotiate knowledge in the workplace is achieved through talk. As such the ability to speak well according to the context is one of the most essential communication skills that graduates should seek to master. Yet, graduates report that they lack competence in sophisticated speaking skills such as articulating their argument (Jackson, 2014), while employers, who consistently rate oral communication as one of the most important graduate attributes, find this skill lacking in new recruits (Brink and Costigan, 2015; Gray,2010). Meanwhile, recent research by the Industrial Strategy Council has predicted that the largest shortages in UK work place skills by 2030 will include critical thinking, advanced communication and negotiation skills (ISC 2019). The requirement for UK Business Schools to develop work-ready graduates, with the ability to network, negotiate and articulate ideas, points to a greater need for training in *spoken* communication in the management curriculum and a redressing of the balance between the teaching and assessment of written and verbal skills.

It is a commonly understood that talk is easy, yet this does not make one an effective speaker. Despite recent interest in the art of oratory, frequently attributed to the rhetorical skills of previous US President Barak Obama, the formal study of public speaking does not usually feature on the management curriculum in UK Business Schools. As educators, there is much that we can do to support students to become excellent communicators and, although there is no agreement on how best to integrate the teaching of these skills into the curriculum, there is at least a general consensus that such communication skills are both "teachable and learnable" (Conrad and Newberry, 2012, p. 119). The teaching culture in UK Business Schools, however, is dominated by a reliance on PowerPoint which privileges a 'sales-pitch' form of communication (Craig and Amernic, 2006) reflective of its early commercial use in business presentations (Yates and Orlikowski, 2007). As a means of student assessment, PowerPoint encourages speakers to rely on a monologic delivery of ideas, structured according to the

logic of sequential bullet-points between which the communication and development of "other critical relationships" remain unexplored (Shaw et al., 1998). While relevant at times, this form of assessment does not equip students with the sophisticated spoken communication skills required to make the most of spontaneous encounters in the workplace which require that the speaker is able to swiftly arrange their arguments and to fluently express ideas. As research predicts future UK workplace skills shortages in advanced communication (ISC 2019), then it is timely that these more sophisticated skills are reconsidered in business and management education.

In recent years, what we teach in Business Schools and how we teach it has come under close scrutiny (Trank and Rynes, 2003) with multiple business crises and scandals leading critics both within and outside the academy to re-evaluate how managers are educated (Wilson, 2015). As the context within which management education is provided has changed, there is an increasing need for a more critical approach which requires "a shift in pedagogical emphasis, prioritising process-based learning, active learning by doing and application, critical scrutiny of models and techniques, the remaking of knowledge by students through reflection and practice and personalizing knowledge" (Catterall et al., 2002, p. 188). However, introducing such critical praxis into the classroom requires that educators furnish students with not only the subject content to be examined but also the skills and techniques needed to critique and to question the content, to articulate their arguments and to form conclusions.

This paper argues that there is insufficient focus on developing these more sophisticated spoken communication skills in management education. The ability to use spoken language effectively (oracy) has to be learned (Mercer 2016) and it is the task of educators to teach students how to use talk to get things done. Oracy, in simple terms, refers to the ability to speak well. Coined by education scholar Andrew Wilkinson (1965) to render spoken language skills comparable with 'literacy' and 'numeracy', the term was introduced to draw attention to the neglect of oral skills in 1960's UK education. In schools, oracy is central to classroom practices for developing speech and communication (Alexander, 2008 and 2012; Dawes et al., 2004; Millard and Menzies, 2016). Until very recently however (see Heron, M. and Dippold, D. 2019, Heron, 2019, below), oracy had not been considered in higher education or, more specifically, within management education. Moreover, policy makers are increasingly recognising oracy as one of the 21st century skills that the education sector needs to support

(Mercer 2018a). Therefore, as Business Schools work to ensure their graduates are work-ready, critical thinkers it is necessary to more firmly position spoken communication as an essential component of critical praxis in management education.

This paper introduces a teaching and assessment initiative designed to foster students' speaking competence and confidence by combining the critical exploration of the course content with the explicit teaching of oracy skills. Drawing on the philosophy of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1972) with its emphasis on dialogue, the initiative demonstrates that dialogic teaching (Alexander 2008, Skidmore and Murakami 2016), combined with training in oracy skills can encourage students to engage in purposeful talk around course content which extends their repertoire of spoken communication skills relevant to the workplace and beyond.

The paper begins by exploring the need to emphasise spoken communication skills in management education in order to better prepare graduates for management roles. It then links the teaching of oracy skills, such as questioning and argumentation, to critical approaches to management education which rely on the ability to use such skills. An oracy framework (Mercer et al. 2017) is introduced as a guide to the teaching of such skills in the classroom. The case study then documents the four stages of the teaching and assessment approach adopted to build the communication fluency of students as they engage critically with the course content. Tutor and student feedback is considered and some of the challenges of teaching oracy are identified.

2. Spoken Communication in Management Education

The importance of effective spoken communication in the workplace is well recognised. Communication competence is essential for HR professionals to make an impact at a strategic level within the organisation (SHRM). Communication skills are essential in accountancy careers (Morgan, 1997; Albrecht and Sack, 2000) with the specific skills of listening attentiveness and responsiveness being valued by employers (Gray, 2010). Excellent communication skills are a pre-requisite for careers in the communication industry (Tench and Moreno, 2015; Bronn, 2014), with the ability to communicate verbally "clearly,

consistently and convincingly" being a key competency for senior practitioners (Gregory 2008, p.219). Careers in marketing require, first and foremost, spoken communication ability, followed by active-listening skills, persuasion, information gathering, reading comprehension and writing skills (Young and Murphy, 2003). In a world of global competition and knowledge sharing, businesses require graduates to have well developed skills in communicating "virtually, face-to- face, informally and formally on a national and international basis with a multi-cultural and multi-generational audience" (Jackson, 2014, p.23).

Such skills are essential for graduates entering the field of business and management (Robles, 2012; Haslam, 2002). Employers require graduates to be able to communicate orally in a clear manner according to context, to give and receive feedback, to speak well publicly, to participate constructively in meetings and to communicate effectively in writing (Jackson, 2014, p. 27). Many students, however, enter university with insufficient verbal and written communication skills to pursue business curricula (Remington et al., 2000; Doherty et.al. 2011; Jackson,2014:) and higher education programmes are therefore required to close this gap. The pedagogical literature[1] provides numerous teaching strategies for building communication skills: business simulations and role play, discussion groups, in-class presentations, student-led case studies and, in particular, class debates/ discussion and peer assessment/feedback (Jackson, 2014). The intangibility of spoken communication however often makes this skill a difficult one to assess (Stone and Lightbody, 2012). When spoken communication *is* assessed this is most frequently by traditional group or individual presentation, with more limited attempts to assess ability in conversing and listening (Brink and Costigan, 2015). Yet, Jackson's study found that while recent business graduates were satisfied with their ability to *present* information, they were concerned that they lacked sophistication in the wider range of spoken delivery techniques, such as expressing complex ideas fluently, varying language and expression to suit the audience, adopting appropriate delivery techniques, supported by credible evidence and, importantly, in articulating a central argument (2014, p. 28). It is these wider spoken communication skills that business graduates

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[1] Note that the management skills literature offers a variety of terms, including oral, verbal and spoken, to refer to speech communication. The lack of consistent terminology in the management skills literature creates the appearance of a fragmented body of knowledge on the subject. The scholarship on oracy, which exists elsewhere, is rarely drawn into the discussion.

need to possess in order to succeed as articulate and persuasive leaders in business and management.

To develop such skills may require a rethinking of what we teach in Business Schools, moving away from the specialism of much of today's management education and developing a broader curriculum that relies as much on the art as the science of management. Wilson (2015) argues that the focus on instrumental knowledge and the marginalisation of subjects whose relevance to business is not immediately obvious (such as philosophy, linguistics or history) has led to the dominance of a narrowly defined field of expertise that does not help students to connect to future business environments. Returning to a broad-based curriculum, drawing on the liberal arts, teaches students to…

> "…talk about and write about such complex issues so that one can communicate imprecise and possibly nonrational ideas to others. This kind of communication requires intelligent explanation of and support for claims of cause and effect. It requires recognizing the difference between proof and opinion". (Wilson, 2015, p. 31).

This view of communication resonates with Wilkinson's (1965) definition of oracy, as expertise in everyday talk, incorporating elements of rhetoric (e.g., claims, proof, etc.) that were once features of the classical education which created the successful leaders of the past. Today however, at a time when universities are required to demonstrate the "practical usefulness of the way they prepare students for the workforce and society" (Schoenberger-Orgad and Spiller, 2014, p. 211) there is often "an explicit rejection of subjects whose 'relevance' to business is not explicitly apparent" (Wilson, 2015, p.26). For example, students are increasingly taught how to use a range of digital and social media tools to engage consumers, yet may not be sufficiently familiar with even the basics of effective spoken communication which would enable them to speak well in their professional lives. The teaching of oracy potentially provides such communication knowledge as well as the practical spoken language skills required to develop competence in spoken communication.

3. Pedagogical practices to develop oracy through dialogue and critique.

Business schools adopt numerous pedagogical approaches to support the development of communication skills. Formal competitive debate, for example, is well used as a tool to explore subject content in the management classroom (Roy and Macchiette, 2005), although the ability to engage fully in rational debate requires that students receive sufficient academic preparation and training (Haslam, 2002) which is not always evident. In this debate scenario, students are often "pitched against each other…seeking to win as many votes as possible" (Bonnici and Luthar, 1996, p. 73). However, this adversarial, 'win at all costs' approach does not fit well with contemporary management thinking and indeed can impede class discussion for less confident students. Dialogue and discussion offer the possibility of a more collaborative approach in which selected aspects of formal public speaking and debating (e.g. proposition, case building, proof etc.) are integrated into a more discussion-led teaching approach (Schoenberger-Orgad and Spiller, 2014, Alexander 2008) in which arguments and counter-arguments are continually questioned and revised (Brookfield and Preskill, 1999).

Dialogue is a collaborative form of communication and learning based on dialectical moments, (Allman, 2009 p. 427) where conclusions can be reached through reasoned argument and discussion between parties with different viewpoints. Defined more simply as "conversation with a focus and a purpose" (Peterson, 2009, p. 313), dialogue is essential to Freire's (1972) critical pedagogy (Schoenberger-Orgad and Spiller, 2014). For Freire (1972), dialogue implies a questioning of existing knowledge, a 'critical posture' and a focus on the "the meanings that students used to mediate their world" (Darder, 2009, p. 574). Through critical pedagogy and dialogue, linked back to students' lived experiences, cultures and backgrounds, a teacher helps students to make connections and see relationships between their own lives and broader society and to question why they think as they do. (Peterson, 2009, p. 315). Such an approach can have wide ranging effects in terms of individual freedoms, social justice and business productivity (Belhassen and Caton, 2011) as students develop their own critical conscience and recognise their potential future impact on society. This new knowledge prepares students well for an uncertain future where taught subject knowledge can quickly become obsolete (Peterson, 2009).

Discussion requires a focus on participant engagement and intersubjectivity and emphasises both the form and function of speech where 'what is said' and 'how it is said' equally impact upon shared learning (Vo, 2016). In this way, discussion can support learners in finding their

own voice and respecting that of others, in a form of 'collaborative talk' (Barrera, 2017), while the process and act of speaking contributes to developing clarity of thought as learners search for the best way to articulate their views. This explicit teaching of speaking and listening skills (Mercer, 2018b) therefore additionally contributes to developing underlying thought processes.

Developing sophisticated skills in dialogue and discussion depends on students being confident in their oracy skills. The term 'oracy' is etymologically and intentionally, according to Wilkinson (1965), linked to 'literacy' and 'numeracy' and was originally coined as a term to refer to a general ability in oral skills. Distinct from the more formal 'oratory' as the art of public speaking, oracy refers to "Competence in oral language; the ability to express oneself fluently and grammatically in speech" (OED, 2004).

The oracy framework below, originally designed for use in English secondary schools (see Mercer, Warwick and Ahmed, 2017), identifies the specific skills required for effective spoken communication. Developed alongside practitioners and professionals, the framework moves away from previous approaches to assessing oracy (such as public speaking or group work) towards a wider framework which identifies the skills needed across any social situation. It is this feature of the framework that renders it particularly relevant to Business School teachers tasked with preparing graduates for a fast-changing communication environment.

Table 1: The Oracy Skills Framework (Mercer et al. 2017) (adapted from Heron 2019)

Skills Required	Detailed description of skills required for effective spoken communication
Physical Skills	1. **Voice:** Fluency and pace of speech, tonal variation, clarity of pronunciation, voice projection 2. **Body Language:** Gesture and posture, facial expression, eye contact.
Linguistic Skills	3. **Vocabulary:** Appropriate vocabulary choice 4. **Language Variety:** Register, grammar 5. **Structure:** Structure and organisation of talk 6. **Rhetorical techniques:** Metaphor, humour, irony, mimicry

Cognitive Skills	7. **Content:** Choice of content, building on the views of others 8. **Clarifying and summarising:** Seeking information and clarification through questions, summarising 9. **Self-regulation:** Maintaining focus on task, time management 10. **Reasoning:** Giving reasons to support views, critically examining ideas and views expressed 11. **Audience awareness:** Taking into account level of audience
Social and emotional skills	12. **Working with others:** Guiding or managing interactions, turn-taking 13. **Listening and responding:** Listening actively and responding appropriately 14. **Confidence in speaking:** Self-assurance, liveliness and flair

Heron's (2019) study, one of the first to consider oracy in the context of management education, used this framework to analyse how teachers of undergraduate business modules incorporated oral communication skills in their teaching. In her observations of teaching Heron (2019) found that a restricted view of oracy was evident, both in what was required by the Business School curriculum and in teacher perceptions of oracy. While course content was taught and assessed well, there was little emphasis on building competence in dialogue, using oracy as a tool for thinking, or building skills in questioning, argumentation, clarification and justification (Heron, 2019, pg.9). Thus, in the context of Business School teaching, Heron's exploratory study found that those cognitive skills commonly required in the workplace were largely neglected.

The next section offers an illustration of how such skills can be developed in the postgraduate management classroom, building the critical understanding of course content necessary for postgraduate study as well as the oracy skills required by management graduates and their future employers.

4. It's Good to Talk: Building Oracy Skills in the Management Classroom.

This section outlines the pedagogical approach, trialled on a postgraduate management programme within a UK Business School, which sought to develop student oracy while simultaneously fostering a more critical understanding of course content. In this case a marketing and promotion module served as the context for the study; marketing is one of the

core subjects required for careers in business and management (QAA, 2019). The cohort comprised 25 postgraduate students, from a range of cultural backgrounds. The 12-week module was designed around the key concepts of dialogue, criticality, articulation of personal experience and reflection. The module subject content was explored through these four concepts in a process-based learning approach (Catterall et al., 2002, p.188) which emphasised spoken communication and interaction and incorporated the explicit teaching of oracy skills. The teaching and learning process comprised four components: introductory taught sessions, practice-based oracy workshops, discussion /talking sessions and assessment development.

1) Introducing counter- narratives to foster reflexive knowledge and critical thinking.

The first sessions, delivered in a traditional lecture format to provide a familiar and recognisable structure, introduced counter-narratives which offered alternative perspectives on promotional culture (e.g. Davis, 2013). These introductory taught sessions were designed to encourage students to appraise marketing communications critically and to consider how such activities may have a shaping effect on individuals, groups and societies. Importantly, as mainstream applied marketing (instrumental knowledge) and critical marketing (reflexive knowledge) are "co-dependent and co-constitutive of each other" (Shankar, 2009, p. 693), these students had previous knowledge of the mainstream marketing curriculum from earlier in their programme. Competence in mainstream subject knowledge is required prior to the development of 'counterhegemonic alternatives' (Darder et al., 2009, p. 13) and necessary to Freire's philosophy, enabling students to build and reflect upon rather than replace or dismiss existing subject thinking.

2) Acquiring knowledge of effective oracy.

Two practice- based workshops, reflecting Mercer et. al.'s (2017) oracy framework, provided a structured approach for the teaching of what to say (content) and ways to say it (delivery) (Vo, 2016), preparing students through the explicit teaching of speaking skills (Mercer 2018a, Haslam 2002). The first of these examined the content of written speeches of business leaders, reflecting on the message and using argumentation theory (Toulmin, 1958) to analyse the structure of arguments. The linguistic and cognitive components of oracy (Mercer et. al. 2017) were developed through a critical and rigorous textual analysis of these written

speeches. This encouraged students to appreciate that language use is rhetorical, prompting students to explore word choices, to recognise speech structures and communication strategies, to question the evidence used to support arguments and to appreciate the difference between 'proof' and 'opinion' (Wilson, 2015). In the second practical workshop, students applied this knowledge to developing and delivering their own arguments. Moving on from the written word, the focus shifted towards analysing spoken language, studying the rhetorical and persuasive techniques used by influential speakers, including storytelling, the creation of mental images, signposting, pauses, silences, pitch, tempo and so on, drawn from the more formal art of public speaking (Fujishin, 2016). This process aimed to develop an understanding of the physical (e.g. body language) and social/emotional (e.g. speaking confidence) aspects of oracy. The inclusion of different genres of speech, such as inauguration speeches, proved useful here to illustrate how effective speakers articulate their arguments, using voice, tone, pause and body language. These sessions were supported by readings (e.g. Cyphert ,2010; Carter and Jackson, 2004), which demonstrated the use of rhetoric in the management context.

3) *Practicing Oracy Skills through Purposeful Classroom Talk.*

Once students were sufficiently familiar with alternative perspectives on marketing and promotion (introductory sessions) and with the rhetorical frameworks and oracy skills and techniques which underpin the content and delivery of effective speech (practical sessions), students were ready to engage in 'purposeful talk' in the classroom. These were organised as structured yet relatively informal discussions (Brookfield and Preskill, 1999; Vo, 2016), on a specific topic. Students researched selected topics or marketing issues and reflected on their own experiences of these issues to develop a view on the topic. Taking a stance in support of or against the issue, students constructed arguments based on research evidence (proof) and were required to articulate and justify their arguments in class. Unsubstantiated arguments or opinions with insufficient evidence were identified and addressed collaboratively by class members. Through dialogue, students were encouraged to engage deeply with information rather than accepting it unquestioningly (Matthews, 2014) and to practice their spoken delivery techniques and articulation of central arguments. Peer feedback in class helped students to critique and refine their arguments to ensure they were sufficiently compelling. Through this process students started to develop the more sophisticated spoken

communication skills which had been previously identified as weak amongst business graduates (see Jackson, 2014).

Positioning these sessions as collaborative, focused and purposeful conversations (Peterson, 2009, p. 313) rather than any form of adversarial or competitive debate was more conducive to a supportive class environment and to achieving the collaboration on which dialogue depends (Freire, 1972). The choice of topic for discussion certainly contributed to learning oracy skills; 'debateable' topics were identified, such as current or contentious issues, which were meaningful to students so that arguments could be lodged in personal experiences (Darder, 2009). This encouraged students to reflect critically on how the topic had impacted their own lives and the lives of class colleagues, enabling deeper engagement with the subject area and deeper learning. For each of these topics the tutor produced 4-5 lecture slides to scaffold the sessions, outlining key issues by topic, recommending appropriate reading and providing a guiding question to prompt discussion. Small groups (3-5 students) were agreed initially, each choosing to speak either in favour or against an issue, as in more traditional public speaking scenario. Arguments were rehearsed within these groups and gradually extended to other groups taking the opposing view. Importantly, students were encouraged to also speak in favour of the counter-argument, in order to be alert and open to opposing views. Discussion would often escalate so that a number of small groups speaking in support of a topic would be actively involved in a dialogue with other groups contesting the point. Students were required to be attentive to the learning community, listening to each other (oracy is as much about learning to listen) and asking further questions designed to clarify or develop ideas (Resnick, 1999). More typically, two smaller groups discussed the issue between them, the class tutor acting as an enabler, encouraging speakers, posing questions and inviting onlooker groups to contribute. In this way, the sessions gradually built towards larger whole class conversations.

4) Assessing oracy

To complete the module, students repeated the above process on their chosen assessment topic. The assessment required each student to produce a digital video in which they critiqued a marketing issue, developed and presented arguments which highlighted how the issue impacted society, articulating their views in a convincing manner, supported by evidence.

Students were encouraged to work collaboratively in the preparation stage, reviewing the assessment topic, developing and trialling arguments, articulating these to class colleagues and receiving peer feedback on their effectiveness. Students subsequently produced a video in which they spoke individually from a particular standpoint, either for or against the issue. The speech delivery method was extemporaneous, allowing for preparation and practice but also a degree of spontaneity and flexibility at the time of speaking (Fujishin, 2016). There were no visual aids permitted, no reading from a prepared manuscript and students were discouraged from attempting to fully memorise the speech. The intent here was to focus solely on the speaker, and their ability to speak well on the chosen topic. The removal of these supportive aids, initially disconcerting for students accustomed to PowerPoint presentations, encouraged speakers to recognise that they could rely upon their own resources (of language, voice and body) to communicate their argument. Additionally, such practice is more reflective of reality in a dynamic business environment.

The assessment required each speaker to achieve a balance between form and content in their speech, being accountable to the subject knowledge base (using specific subject knowledge, evidence and frameworks) and abiding by recognised standards of reasoning (in presenting arguments, drawing conclusions and critiquing alternative views) (Resnick, 1999). The speech was assessed against four main criteria which integrated oracy skills with subject knowledge: 1) The scope and depth of prior research, 2) the content of the speech (identification and use of arguments, integration of research and evidence in support of arguments, critical use of concepts), 3) the delivery of the speech (marshalling of arguments, organisation and structure of delivered speech, language choice and relevant terminology, use of voice, facial expression and eye contact) and 4) the communication of ideas, which included a more holistic assessment of the speaker's ability to engage the audience through the effective communication of complex arguments (Wilson , 2015).

5. Reflection and Evaluation

Student feedback was collected through informal discussions throughout the module and by questionnaire. Questions were designed to elicit student views on both content (what was taught) and delivery (how it was taught). This qualitative data revealed students' initial anxiety about their linguistic abilities and a growing confidence in class discussions as the

module progressed. Asked to reflect on their experience of the module's teaching and assessment approach, students reported that, despite an initial hesitancy over the unfamiliar approach, they had experienced an increased confidence in their speaking ability. Student apprehension had been anticipated as the class comprised a mixed international cohort with differing levels of linguistic confidence. One of the strategies adopted for allaying student concerns was the emphasis on small group discussion, in which each student offered their views to a few colleagues at a time. The class was also encouraged to openly explore any of the difficulties they faced. As group trust developed, students started to explore the variety of different cultural perspectives brought to the discussion, questioning each other about the acceptability of marketing and promotional practices across different cultures. Any potential antagonism that may have arisen from these different cultural beliefs and preconceptions would have been addressed through further critical reflection (Freire 1972). Indeed, reflection in dialogue is itself a form of critical praxis as we cannot "…think critically without an active struggle to do so" (Allman 2009, pg. 427). Requiring students to be equally prepared to argue for both sides of an issue also created a greater understanding of the multi-dimensional viewpoints that their class colleagues brought to the discussion. Indeed, in line with the views of critical educators that knowledge must contribute to social justice (McLaren 2009), one student commented that such discussions enabled her to be more socially aware and more ethical in her approach to marketing. Another common thread in module evaluations was that students had started to actively attend to the speaking style of their class colleagues and had learnt from peer observation. Once students were alert to different speaking styles and techniques and practiced using them (Haslam 2002), they became increasingly observant of how others used spoken language, facial expression and gesture and were able to assess and evaluate how their colleagues built and delivered arguments.

Student perception of the required reading for the module was interesting. These journal articles, including Cyphert (2010) and Carter and Jackson (2004), were chosen to provide scholarly insights into communication skills at a postgraduate level. These readings challenged students both conceptually and linguistically, being perceived as *'too academic'* and using terminology which was *'too technical'* (student comments). Drawn from relevant journals (including Journal of Management Studies and Journal of Business Communications), these articles constituted *'new knowledge'* (student comment) not previously encountered

and consequently many struggled to see their direct relevance. Such challenges reflect Wilson's (2015) observation that the narrowing of the management curriculum to the most obviously relevant topics selectively excludes features of the wider curriculum from which such beneficial 'new knowledge' can derive. Class analysis and synopsis of each article at the start of each session helped to ensure that students were familiar with the relevant knowledge and, if necessary, the terminology that supports it.

The success of adopting a critical pedagogy to building oracy depends on developing trust between both parties. Trust can emerge to some extent as the group works towards achieving dialogue (Freire, 1972, p. 137). In promoting dialogue, a tutor must adjust the balance of the relationship in class, being prepared to relinquish the 'expert' position and to adopt a more collaborative, dialogical approach which recognises that both tutor and student has something valid to contribute and also something to learn. New knowledge is constructed through dialogue, rather than being the property of the 'expert' lecturer. Body language, tutor location within the room and an open discussion about independent thinking and respect for speakers can all contribute to creating a supportive environment, which gradually builds trust and rapport, reducing the perceived power difference as well as the physical space between tutor and student group.

The choice of final assessment, a monologic delivery of speech, admittedly diverged from the ideal of dialogic pedagogy and this decision requires further explanation. Oracy-based activity can be uncomfortable for less confident students who may be reticent about speaking up (Millard and Menzies, 2016) or those for whom English is an additional language, who may be concerned about their linguistic ability and fluency. Assessing oracy through peer interaction alone potentially puts these students at some disadvantage. Allowing for a preceding period of preparation in which students argue, reason, challenge, question, present and evaluate cases (Alexander, 2008, p. 37) enables oracy to develop without the additional anxiety of assessment. The subsequent video assessment then is able to focus on oracy as an output: an opportunity for students to demonstrate their skills through a medium which can be edited and repeated until students are satisfied with their performance. In addition, removing the need for the speech to be delivered in public, at least for assessment purposes, allows each student a chance to excel.

Table 2 below indicates how Mercer et al.'s (2017) oracy framework was adopted in the current initiative to structure the teaching content and to develop the assessment. In the *teaching* of oracy, the framework helps to widen tutor understanding of communication skills (Heron, 2019) and ensures a focus on the cognitive, emotional and social aspects often less well covered in business courses (Heron, 2019) and in more traditional forms of competitive class debate (Roy and Macchiette, 2005). In *assessment*, the specific skills identified in the framework help to overcome the perceived intangibility of spoken assessment (Stone and Lightbody, 2012), by providing detailed assessment criteria.

Table 2. Using the Oracy framework as a Checklist for Teaching and Assessment

Key oracy skills	Stages of the teaching and assessment approach
Physical skills	Use of voice and body language is learnt through the analysis of written and spoken texts (stage 2), practiced and developed further through class talk (stage 3) and finally assessed (stage 4).
Linguistic skills	Linguistic skills, including structure and organisation of talk and the use of rhetorical techniques, are learnt through the analysis of written and spoken texts (stage 2), practiced and developed further through class talk (stage 3) and finally assessed (stage 4).
Cognitive skills	Knowledge of content and the ability to build further on the views of class colleagues can be developed through understanding of counter-narratives (stage 1). The cognitive skills of clarifying and summarising, reasoning and audience awareness are developed through class practice (stage 3) and finally assessed (stage 4).
Social and emotional skills	Working with others, managing interactions and turn taking, listening and responding appropriately, lacking in a traditional competitive debate format, is a feature of this dialogic approach and is developed through class talk (stage 3). Confidence in speaking is developed though practice and feedback (stage 3) and finally assessed (stage 4).

(based on Mercer et al. 2017)

Unlike Heron's (2019) study, the current initiative involved the explicit teaching of oracy skills in practice-based workshops (stage 2) in order to enable critical discussion of course content. Although the linguistic dimension of oracy (e.g. the use of business terminology) was indeed emphasised by teachers in the previous study, Heron (2019) found that there was no support for developing oracy skills in either module content or pedagogy and no practice

presentations or formative feedback. As such, the opportunity for students to receive greater preparation and training (Haslam, 2002) and to develop more sophisticated oracy skills through active learning (Catterall et al., 2002) was limited.

A key difference in the current initiative was that building oracy skills was an inherent component of the module, rather than an analytical tool used retrospectively to assess existing pedagogical practices as in Heron (2019). However, as one of Heron's respondents implied, staff may be unwilling the change their teaching practices to incorporate oracy and may lack confidence in teaching oracy skills. Nevertheless, given the prediction that one of the largest shortages in UK work place skills by 2030 will be in critical thinking, advanced communication and negotiation skills (ISC 2019), the argument that Business Schools should afford greater attention to oracy, which provides all of these skills, is strong.

6. Conclusion

This paper maintains that oracy, the ability to simply 'speak well', could be better integrated into management education, providing a counter-balance to written work and contributing to preparing graduates for the changing realities of the workplace. Employers need management graduates who can communicate well, able to adapt their communication style to different contexts, who can speak publicly and participate effectively in workplace meetings (Jackson 2014). Graduates need to be competent in all aspects of communication including writing, speaking and listening. By actively developing oracy skills in the classroom educators can help students to find their voice and to use it well. Moreover, verbal discussion and argumentation has the potential to influence underlying reasoning and ways of thinking (Horowitz, 2017) leading to greater clarity of thought and more precise articulation of ideas. Through practice, students can become good communicators, able to marshal their arguments to make a point and knowing not only what to say but how to say it.

Oracy and the associated skills of rhetoric and public speaking may seem to belong to a past era of education, one ill-equipped for training managers for today's workplace. These skills however provide the foundations of communicative competence and are essential resources for the education of articulate management graduates. Oracy contributes to the development of decision-making ability as the verbal articulation of ideas helps to clarify and refine those ideas while the need to provide both arguments and counter-arguments encourages students

to see both sides of an issue. Ultimately the study of oracy provides a more holistic understanding of all aspects of communication.

Oracy however can only be developed through doing. It is the spoken articulation of an argument, the 'thinking on one's feet' in order to respond to counter-arguments, decisions on how best to present an idea, that builds competence. Learning how to understand and use one's own personal resources, voice, expressions, gestures and so on, instead of relying on external pre-prepared visual aids, helps to develop that individualised, personalised command of language and communication which good speakers possess. Ensuring that graduates are articulate speakers requires a management curriculum that encourages critical dialogue and discussion and critical educators who can support students to find their voice through learning and practicing oracy skills.

As this approach to building oracy was trialled with a small postgraduate class, there are likely to be additional challenges for teaching larger numbers, not least the management of group discussion in the talking sessions. However, the underlying principles remain the same and many of the techniques suggested can be adapted for a larger cohort. While this trial was undertaken in a marketing class, oracy techniques could be embedded in other subject areas within business and management as a pedagogical approach which combines the teaching of the subject content (whether finance, operations or leadership) with the critical workplace skills of communication, negotiation and critical thinking. At the very least the inclusion of a spoken assignment increases the diversity of the assessment portfolio and draws attention to the importance of speaking well.

Final thoughts for educators interested in adopting this approach include ensuring that a pre-reading schedule is emphasised. It is essential to the quality and depth of discussion that speakers are familiar with the arguments and evidence around a topic. Lack of reading before discussion results in little more than the expression of unsubstantiated opinion and a superficial level of discussion. Providing guidelines for analysing academic papers and asking students to summarise the arguments and provide a critique of each paper prior to the full discussion can prove useful. To create a supportive environment, locating oneself amongst the class (rather than in front of the class) symbolises a more equal relationship and supports dialogue. Emphasising the idea of a safe environment, where all views are explored equally in

the spirit of collegiality is a starting point. Most importantly, given that the aim is to encourage student oracy, a tutor should know when to remain silent and to be prepared to do so.

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