Assessing Oracy in a National Survey

Can it be done?

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The Scottish Curriculum

• Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)
  – The Scottish Government's lifelong learning strategy aims to ensure that everyone develops the attributes, knowledge and skills they will need for life, learning and work. The curriculum is all the experiences that are planned for learners to support the development of these skills.

• within Curriculum for Excellence, literacy is defined as:
  – the set of skills which allows an individual to engage fully in society and in learning, through the different forms of language, and the range of texts, which society values and finds useful.

Principles and Practice, Literacy and English, Scottish Government 2011
Literacy in CfE

• The literacy experiences and outcomes promote the development of skills in using language, particularly those that are used regularly by everyone in their everyday lives.

• They recognise the importance of listening and talking and of effective collaborative working in the development of thinking and in learning.

Principles and Practice, Literacy and English, Scottish Government 2011
Scotland’s national attainment survey

• The Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN)
  – an annual sample survey which monitors national performance in literacy and numeracy in alternate years, for school children at P4, P7 and S2 (at approximately ages 9, 12 and 14)
  – with the exception of special schools, every school in Scotland is invited to take part
  – around 10,000 pupils are assessed, from over 2,100 schools

• SSLN 2012 - Literacy
Why try to assess listening and talking in a national survey?

- Critical and creative thinking as well as competence in listening and talking, reading, writing and the personal, interpersonal and team-working skills which are so important in life and in the world of work

Principles and Practice, Literacy and English, Scottish Government 2011

- All four language modes assessed in SSLN Literacy (2012): reading, writing and listening & talking

- Why group discussion?
Listening & talking experiences and outcomes

• Tools for listening and talking
  – *When I engage with others, I can respond in ways appropriate to my role, show that I value others’ contributions and use these to build on thinking.*

• Finding and using information
  – *I can select ideas and relevant information, organise these in an appropriate way for my purpose and use suitable vocabulary*

• Understanding, analysing and evaluating
  – *I can show my understanding of what I listen to or watch by responding to literal, inferential, evaluative and other types of questions, and by asking different kinds of questions of my own.*
Assessing group discussion skills in a survey – considerations

• Assessment purpose
• Rating criteria
• Eliciting assessment evidence
• Capturing the evidence
• Rating the evidence
• Assuring assessment quality
Assessment purpose and the rating criteria

- Purpose: to assess a hitherto neglected but vital literacy (and life) skill, and in so doing to provide a baseline for monitoring skills development in the pupil population over time

- Specific assessment criteria, relating to the (then new) Curriculum for Excellence, were developed by Education Scotland staff in collaboration with practising teachers
Eliciting and capturing assessment evidence

• tasks designed to ensure pupil talk – so there would be evidence to rate!
• guidance around administering and supporting the task (issues of standardisation)
• discussions recorded using a webcam and stored online in ‘Glow’
Top Inventions

Start by reading this:

Britons vote for the iPhone as most important invention ahead of flushing loo and space travel!

The iPhone has been voted a more important invention than the washing machine, combustion engine and space travel, according to a survey.

The Chief Executive Officer of Tesco Mobile, which carried out the research said: “All of the inventions included in this list have changed the world forever.”

“Whether it be something as small as a paper clip, to something which changed the face of the universe like the combustion engine, these amazing feats have all been recognized as truly great.”

Your task:
Your group has to decide what you think are the most important inventions.

- Look at the cards, talk about the inventions and decide how important you think each one is.
- Then, arrange the cards in a Diamond 9 pattern on your table from the most important to the least (look at the picture).
- Remember to talk about why you think the inventions are important and to listen to everyone’s opinions and to share your ideas.
Who Will We Choose?

25 - Who Will We Choose?

Start by reading this:

Bill Gates surprises local school with ‘inspiring’ visit

Pupils at Deptford Green School in Lewisham, East London, were thrilled when an unexpected guest speaker arrived on Wednesday – Microsoft founder Bill Gates.

BBC News

Your task:
Imagine that your group has been asked by the Head Teacher to agree on an inspirational speaker to come and give a talk at your school.

- Look at the cards, talk about each of them and decide on which ones you will discard.
- When you are left with nine cards arrange them in a Diamond 9 pattern on your table (look at the picture) from most inspirational to least.
- Remember to listen to everyone’s opinions, to ask questions and to share and explain your ideas.

This is a Diamond 9. The card at number 1 would be the one that you agree is the most important.

You can move the cards around as often as you like!
New Trainers

4 - New Trainers

Start by reading this:

Kids to wear trainers as uniform

Children across Wales could soon start wearing trainers as part of their school uniform.

Your task:

Imagine you have been asked by a sports shoe company to help design a pair of trainers that people your age might wear.

- Talk about why trainers have become so popular that they may even become part of the school uniform.
- Look at the cards, talk about each of the features your trainers might have, and decide how important you think each one is.
- Then, arrange the cards in a Diamond 9 pattern on your table, from the most important to the least (look at the picture). Remember to talk about why you think they are important and to listen to everyone’s opinions and to share your ideas.

This is a Diamond 9. The card at number 1 would be the one that you agree is the most important.

You can move the cards around as often as you like!
Rating the evidence

- each pupil recording was independently rated by three assessors (practising teachers)
- assessors trained by SQA (online and face to face)
Assessor training

• “It was a thorough experience ... in general, I was concordant with my group and the SQA's levels. Only the S2 clips were a bit harder to assess - my initial feeling of the high standard which they are looking for was confirmed.”

• “It was useful assessing the clips, especially working with a group of teachers and having professional dialogue. Sometimes, I was convinced I had assessed correctly, only to alter my opinion after discussion.”
Assessing the pupils

Each sampled pupil is assessed and assigned to one of five performance categories:

- **Not yet working within** the level (pupils are not yet meeting any of the CfE outcomes of the level assessed)
- **Working within the level** (pupils are meeting some of the expected outcomes for their level, but they are not yet meeting the others)
- **Performing well at the level** (pupils are meeting most of the outcomes at that level)
- **Performing very well at the level** (pupils are meeting almost all the outcomes at that level)
- **Performing beyond the level** (pupils are demonstrating skills at the next level)

**Extract from the assessment criteria – Participation**
- asks relevant questions/encourages
- builds on other's contributions
- shares ideas, opinions, information

**Engagement**
- gives reasons for ideas/opinion
- summarises main points
- listens when others are talking
- speaks clearly and audibly
- uses appropriate body language
- displays confidence
Extract from the assessment recording sheet

1. View the group discussion once. In your initial judgement how did the pupil perform at the level?
   - Not at the level
   - Within the level
   - Well at the level
   - Very well at the level
   - Beyond the level

2 and 3. Rate the pupil on each of the criteria over leaf.

4. Please now enter your final judgement for this group discussion.
   - Not at the level
   - Within the level
   - Well at the level
   - Very well at the level
   - Beyond the level
Findings from SSLN 2012

The report –

- Fifty six per cent of P4 pupils, and 58 per cent of P7 pupils were performing well at, very well at or beyond the relevant CfE level for their stage. Performance was lower in S2 at 46 per cent. The percentage of pupils not yet working within their respective levels rises notably by stage: About five per cent in P4, nine per cent in P7 and about 17 per cent in S2.

Caveat -

- The achieved response rate for the listening and talking assessments was lower than intended. Feedback from some schools during and after the survey indicated that there had been difficulties in administering ... due to hardware, software or other technical or practical issues. As a result, it has not been possible to produce reliable estimates broken down by gender or deprivation.
Problems in 2012

• “... trying to assess the poor quality sound and visuals from the schools was extremely hard. Compounding this with teacher interference, or pupils being placed in rooms in front of other children so that they clammed up, or teachers not supervising pupils, or indeed clips of only a minute or two length, or even the group discussion having taken place prior to the video camera being switched on”
• ‘In your classes, how good do you think you are at listening?’
  – 52% of P4 pupils thought they were ‘very good’, compared to 34% in P7 and 28% in S2.

• ‘In your classes, how good do you think you are at talking?’
  – 58% of P4 pupils thought they were ‘very good’, compared to 53% in P7 and 43% in S2.
Moving on to 2014

- Decision made to modify model for 2014
  - important that listening and talking continue to be seen as an integral part of literacy

- 2014 model
  - builds capacity in the system
  - supports schools/lessens burden on staff
  - does not depend on technology
  - ‘support assessors’ visit schools to administer and assess pupils taking part in group discussions
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So, can it be done?

Yes

but …
For more information-

SSLN information and exemplification: http://www.ssln.org.uk/

SSLN reports: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/SSLN


Curriculum for Excellence: http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/

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