

Approaches To Embed Oracy And Metacognition In The Classroom

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Who Am I?

- Nathan Burns
- Former Head of Maths/Pastoral Lead/MAT Lead
- Metacognitive researcher and author
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Session Aims

- To develop our understanding as to what oracy is, and its importance
- To develop our understanding of metacognition, and how it relates to oracy
- To consider questioning approaches to support oracy development in the classroom

Write and Discuss

What is oracy?

What Is Oracy?

Voice 21 (2025): "Oracy is the ability to articulate ideas, develop understanding and engage with others through spoken language"

Why Should We Care?

- Spoken communication and interpersonal skills highly valued by employers (NFER, 2023)
- Improved oracy helps to build and sustain positive relationships (NHS, 2023)
- Improved regulation, self-confidence and self-esteem (Trickey & Topping, 2006)
- EEF show oral language interventions have significant attainment benefit (+6 months)

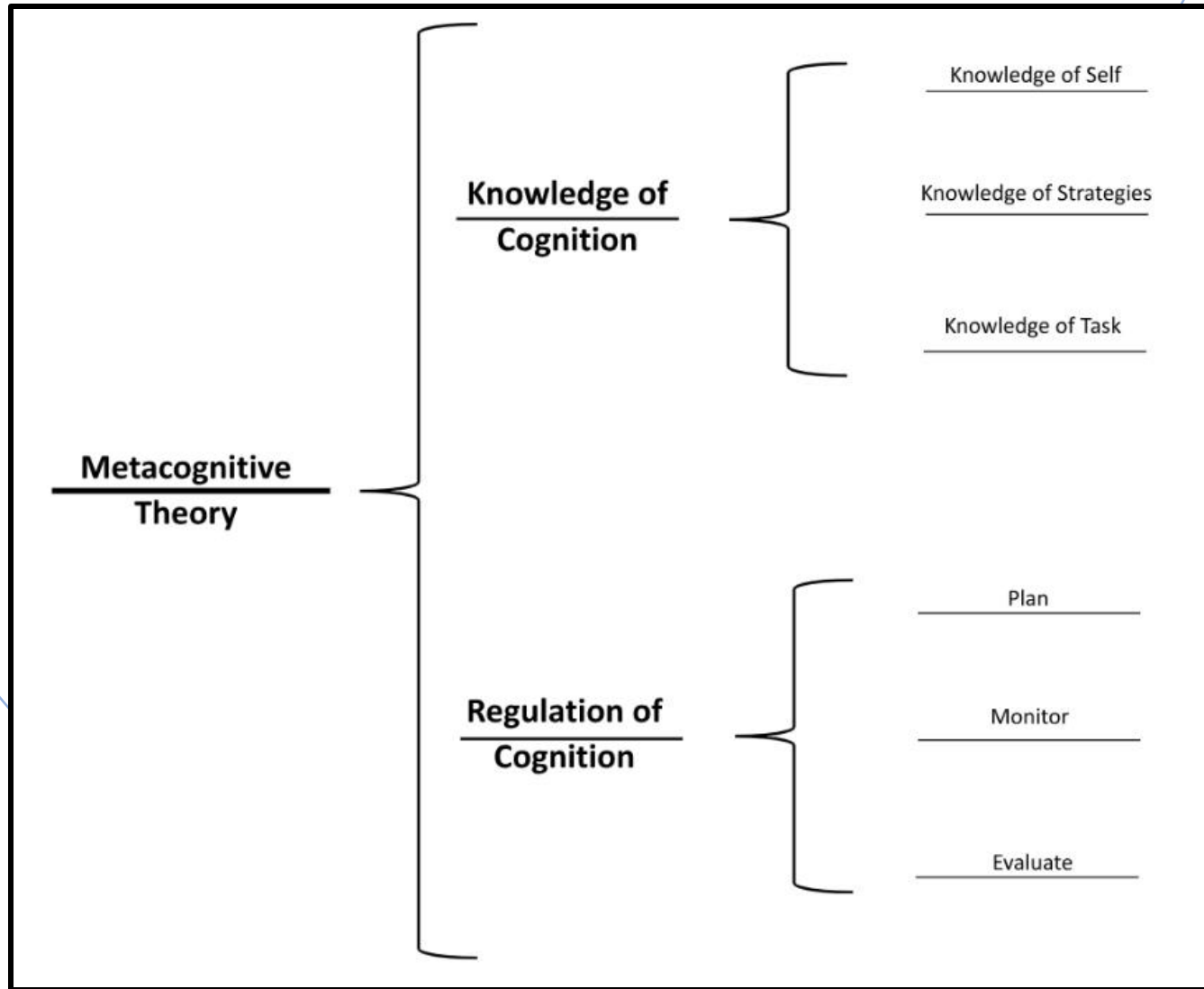
And much, much more

Write and Discuss

What is metacognition?

What Metacognition Is?

- Flavell (1976): 'I am being metacognitive if I notice that I am having more trouble learning A than B; if it strikes me that I should double check C before accepting it as fact'
- Burns (2023): '[Metacognition is] the little voice inside your head that constantly evaluates and informs your decisions.'



Knowledge

Vs

Regulation

Why Metacognition?

- Greatest positive attainment impact of any intervention - EEF
- OFSTED - suggested area of focus for high-quality PD
- Benefits ALL students (regardless of: socio-economic status; prior attainment; sex; behaviour; SEN status; age)
- Works across age groups
- Complements other areas of focus, such as oracy
- Develops problem solving and skill transference abilities



Education
Endowment
Foundation

METACOGNITION AND SELF-REGULATED LEARNING

Summary of recommendations

1

Teachers should acquire the professional understanding and skills to develop their pupils' metacognitive knowledge

2

Explicitly teach pupils metacognitive strategies, including how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning

3

Model your own thinking to help pupils develop their metacognitive and cognitive skills

4

Set an appropriate level of challenge to develop pupils' self-regulation and metacognition

5

Promote and develop metacognitive talk in the classroom

6

Explicitly teach pupils how to organise and effectively manage their learning independently

7

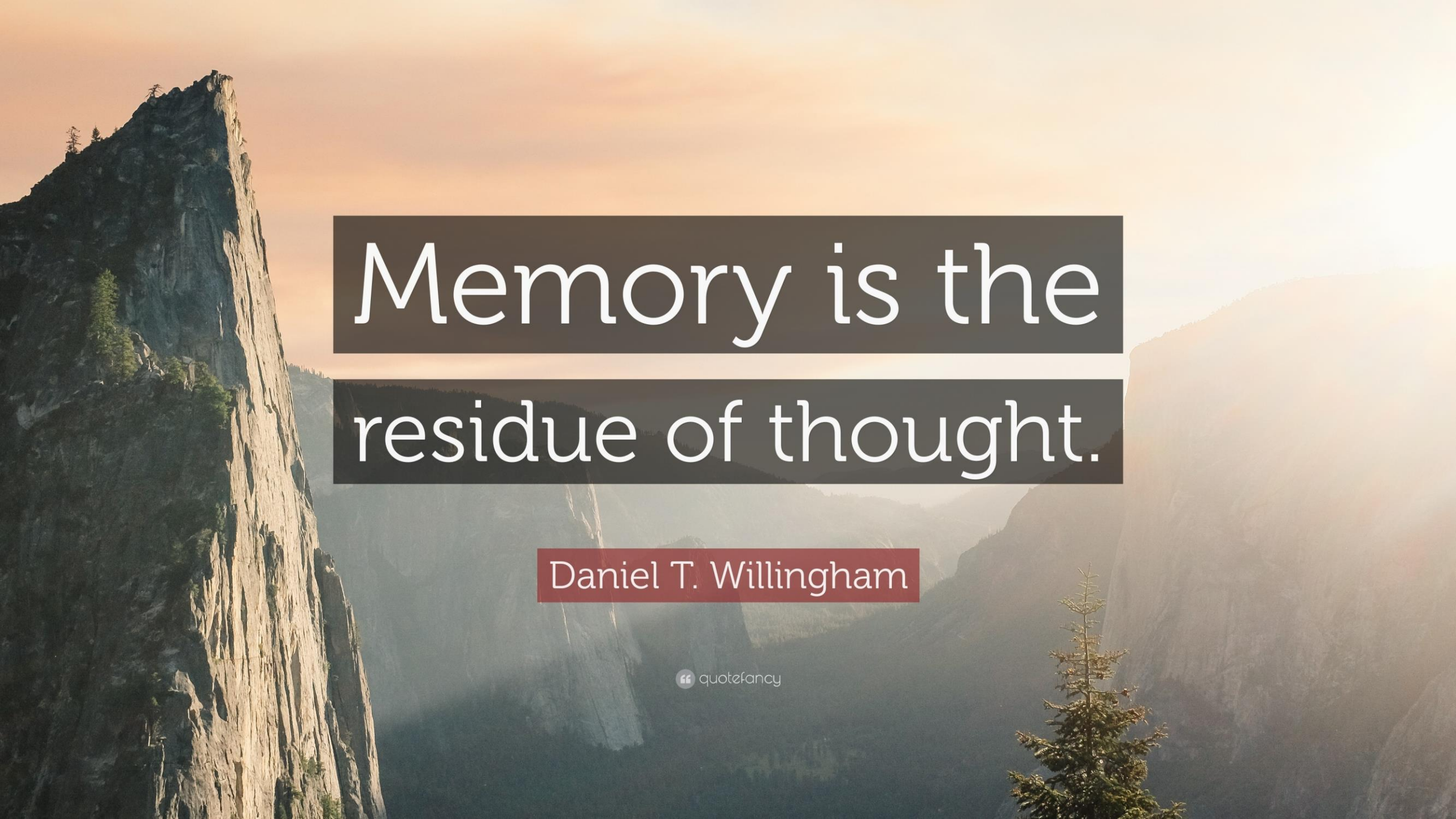
Schools should support teachers to develop knowledge of these approaches and expect them to be applied appropriately

5 Promote and develop metacognitive talk in the classroom.



Making These Positive Changes

- Three main ways to embed metacognitive oracy in the classroom:
 - Teacher talk
 - **Questioning**
 - Group work/discussion



Memory is the
residue of thought.

Daniel T. Willingham

A 'Good' Question

Provides us with information that we didn't otherwise have around student understanding...

AND

Provides a student with new information to help them more forward...

Getting Cold Call Right

- Teacher-led cold call rather than lollipop sticks/random name generators etc.
- Choose questions to suit the current attainment of students
- No-opt out (come back to students)
- Consider process/metacognitive questions to aid engagement
- Pose, pause, pounce, bounce to increase participation ratio
- Develop a culture of error

Getting Think-Pair-Share Right

- Clear questions, that require discussion
- Provide individual thinking time first
- Then allow for writing time
- Then provide talk time
- Consider:
 - Modelling the process
 - Providing scaffolds for the conversation
 - The feedback method
 - Positioning in classroom
 - Student feedback on process

Getting MWB Use Right

- Ensure that a consistent routine is used.
- Ensure that all MWBs are raised at the same time
- Find a suitable viewing spot to allow quick skimming
- Consider the balance between method/longer form answers and answer selection (a/b/c/d)

Getting MCQs Right

- Need (3 or) 4 reasonable choices.
- Ideally the 3 incorrect answers draw upon common misconceptions
- Students ought not just be able to guess the correct answer.
 - *But they may be able to deduce the correct answer, and hence:*
 - *You may wish to ask for justification for an answer choice*
- Consider if the topic is suitable for an MCQ

Metacognitive, Not Cognitive, Questions

- Typically, we ask 'cognitive' questions
 - What do I do next?
 - What is the answer?
 - How much do you need to write?
- Instead, we need to direct *some* attention to metacognitive questions

Supporting Effective Answers

- Consider the wait time that we provide students with
- Ensure a climate where verbal answers can be messy, incoherent and colloquial

Connections

What?

- Utilise questioning to draw connections with previous tasks
 - Conceptual variation... 'What is the same'; 'what is different?'
- Can become embedded in every lesson

Why?

- Learn from previous experiences
 - (Both positive and negative)
- Develop student schema; draw links between ideas and learning episodes

Example

$$3 + 4 - 5$$

$$3 - 4 + 5$$

$$3 \times 4 + 5$$

$$3 + 4 \times 5$$

What varies between each question?

How does this impact the resulting answer?

What mistakes may be made?

What could we do to make sure our answers are correct?

Example

Explain the formation of an ox-bow lake

as compared to...

Explain the formation of a waterfall

What is similar with these two questions?

How would your responses vary?

What did you learn from your previous response that must be included in your next response?

Strategy Comparison

What?

- Questioning around the relative strengths, weaknesses, appropriateness of alternative strategies.
- Potentially better once students have a better awareness of content and strategies available to them (cognitive load).
- Not appropriate where there is no reasonable alternative approach.

Why?

- Strengthen student knowledge of strategy appropriateness
- Improves problem solving and learner flexibility
- Deepens topic understanding

Example

Calculate 8×0.3

Example

Consider the benefits and drawbacks of...

*List all
benefits, then
all drawbacks*

*Interlink
benefits and
drawbacks for
'smoother'
prose*

Comprehension

What?

- Comprehension - what is the task requirement?
 - How long do you have? What do you need to do? How do you know that? Does it matter what method you use? (etc.)

Why?

- Improved comprehension = improved planning
- Improved planning = improved outcomes
- Comprehension often the biggest barrier to task success

Example

AC

The right-angled triangle was placed onto a coordinate grid repeatedly to form the diagram on the right. Find the coordinates of the labelled points.

What are you being asked to find? In what form?

What are the key words? What do they mean?

What are you going to have to calculate?

Why is the information you have been given important/relevant?

Example

AQA Past Paper,
2023

Which of the following achieved more in the 1960s and early 1970s:

- campaigns to improve the rights of African-Americans
- campaigns to improve the rights of women?

Explain your answer with reference to **both** bullet points.

[12 marks]

How long do I have?

What are the key words? Why?

What is the key command word, and what does it mean?

What points must you make to hit the marking criteria?

Stay In Touch!

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