This Eaquals Webinar was presented by Janet Golding (Academic Support Consultant at LangugaeCert) and Chantelle Walsh (Director and Interlocutor at a LanguageCert Test Centre). In this Webinar, presenters briefly talked about why students/candidates underperform in spoken exams and how teachers can help them become more effective oral communicators in spoken exams and outside the classroom.

Firstly, they pointed out the reasons why students underperform in the oral exams. Then they talked about 3 key points to be considered in order to help students learn more successfully. While talking about the ways to help students to perform more easily, they emphasized the importance of knowing our learners.

Here are some highlights from the Webinar:

**Why do learners underperform in spoken exams?**

- Mumble/give very short answers
- Afraid to ask for clarification
- Fail to use a variety of grammatical structures accurately consistently
- Use very limited range of vocabulary
- Remain silent
- Let examiner or other candidate lead all the time
- Unable to sustain talk without hesitating much
- Don’t listen effectively
- Speak for too long
- Find it hard to ask questions
- Find it hard to think on their feet
- Too nervous and panic
- Misunderstand a task
- Not prepared for tasks
- Over prepared for tasks
- Revert to Language of level below
How can we help learners perform better in spoken exams?

They emphasized 3 key areas for classroom consideration in order to help learners to perform better in spoken exams.

1. Memory
2. Motivation
3. Building Confidence

In terms of memory, the presenters shared *Hermann Ebbinghaus’ Forgetting Curve* which was published in 1880’s and is still popular. Ebbinghaus’ forgetting curve describes the decrease in ability of the brain to retain memory over time. In simple words, the forgetting curve is exponential because memory loss is rapid and huge within the first few days of learning. However, the rate of memory loss decreases and the rate of much forgetting are much slower from then on.

![Hermann Ebbinghaus' Forgetting Curve](image)

**In our classrooms…**

Language learners understand and remember better when they

- make more connections,
- experience-emotions-images,
- think of their mother tongue!
How can we make connections?

1. Combine verbal and visual lessons
2. Learning to use multiple senses help increase retention
3. Showing students visual aids while teaching a lesson verbally helps to illustrate and cement the message for students

What actually motivates our students?

- Structure, curriculum, prepared materials, course and class objectives
- Kindness, optimism, positive feedback, encouragement
- Different teaching methods
- Parental involvement
- Peer relationships
- Positive learning environments

How to build confidence for oral exams?

- Breathing techniques
- Practice makes perfect: learner and teacher expectations
- Errors/mistakes /slips of the tongue: how and when to correct evidence
- Conversation gambits
- Showing that you are listening: body language, gestures and intonation
- Passive/active communication: which are you/your learners?

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