

Stay calm and carry on speaking!

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Speaking is intrinsic to the teaching and learning of modern foreign languages. It is the essence of our subject; the element that sets us apart from other subjects and gives us a distinct identity. Beyond the classroom, it is the core foreign language skill that learners will most need in the future.

Secondary school students will enjoy and commit to the challenge of language learning when lessons are rooted in target language interaction. Speaking in the classroom provides the motivational moments and sense of achievement that are vital to good linguistic progress.

A confident speaker will see any oral assessment as a chance to gain easy marks; where success depends on a communicative ability, nurtured carefully over time, and there is little need for revision or rote learning. Speaking is the most inclusive of skills, where learners of all abilities, including those with low literacy levels, can thrive.

And even if we are to contemplate some absurd model of assessment where speaking is sidelined, target language interaction should continue to drive our classroom dynamic. Speaking the language creates young learners who feel more confident in their general linguistic ability. Regular speaking ensures the ongoing circulation of vocabulary and key structures.

It is often the Listening component of the GCSE examination that causes most anxiety and difficulties for students. We must never forget that speaking and listening are two inextricably linked skills. Regular speaking practice will inevitably improve performance in the GCSE Listening test.

Exam or no exam, the voices of young learners must always be heard in the modern foreign languages classroom. To forsake the key skill of speaking would be to undermine the whole language learning process.