

The

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Speaking from the HEART



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With Valentine's day upon us I felt compelled to do just as the title suggests, speak from my heart. Not only to merely show you, our faithful readers and students, my love and gratitude during this fitting time of year, but also to offer you some insight into some of the ideas that could help you become a better speaker, listener, writer, and reader on your language-learning journeys.

Over the years as I have gained experience in both mass communication such as radio, television, film, and journalism, as well as teaching, exam preparation, and training people for interviews in English etc., I have come to the conclusion after intense observation and profound reflection on

the matter that your truth, your inspiration, your HEART shine through.

Let me break it down for you. I have prepared hundreds of students for the Cambridge exams and regardless of the student's level, I can tell if a student possesses an insatiable appetite to learn the language by the way they write, speak, and participate in each of the exercises or activities we do and this is exactly what I try to reiterate and convey to my students. It matters not if the topic at hand is boring or dull, if you treat it as such you will see your mindset reflected in your mark when you take the exam.

What I'm trying to get across is that to beat the system one must start to think like the system. As the old saying goes, "if you can't beat them, join them." However, I am referring to something similar but not exact. My point is to start thinking ahead, logically, and using your logic to your advantage but thinking as if you were an examiner. Let's say we are doing the speaking part of any type of exam, whether it be the Cambridge exams, IELTS, TOEIC, TOEFL, etc. it really doesn't matter because the same idea holds true. Think ahead. Use your logic as if you were a military strategist or leader. Train yourself as if you were the enemy so to speak.

But what does that mean? What does that entail?

As examiners, they see tons of candidates to whom they ask a series of questions and to which I can almost guarantee will respond in the exact same way, and use the same vocabulary and expressions 90 to 95% of the time. After hearing candidate after candidate drone on like robots in the exact same way as the previous one, the examiner more than likely will start to contemplate his career choice.

Until...

That one candidate who sets himself apart from the rest. That one candidate who took the time to replace basic words and commonly used phrases, vocabulary, and sentence structures and learned how to spice them up with stimulating, engaging, delightful, and captivating ideas. That one candidate who arouses the examiner's eyes, ears, and interest by flawlessly engaging the reader or listener, not necessarily with perfect English but by capturing their attention and keeping it. A candidate could have an elementary level and still captivate an audience just by exuding a contagious positive energy and speaking from the heart.

And it doesn't stop there. One of the most overlooked parts is listening. I'm not referring to the listening parts of the exam, even though they should be given the same amount of attention while preparing for the exam, but rather active, proactive, and engaged listening.



Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.

- Stephen R. Covey

As Stephen R. Covey so eloquently put it in the quote below, this also rings true in all aspects of not only language learning and exam taking, but also in life. Think about it. If you went back into your mind and surfed your memories you would probably realize that the majority of people whether your classmates, co-workers, friends, or family are so eager to be heard that they talk over each other in order to make sure that they get their point across. Candidates make the same mistake in the speaking part of the exam and even in the listening part, partially because they are nervous and feel the incessant need to fill up space with careless interjections by failing to realize that they aren't listening to their partners. Much like in romantic relationships when a spouse doesn't listen to his/her partner, miscommunication and misunderstandings arise and a breakdown in communication and flow ensues. One should not only speak from his/her heart, but also listen from the heart. Listen to understand, internalize, reflect, process, and conscientiously ask questions and communicate with one another heart to heart.

Most don't realize either that the same goes for writing. Your level of interest, motivation, passion and desire shine through the paper. Any examiner can tell if the candidate is treating the writing assignment as something they just have to survive or get through, or if they are really digging deep to find the essence of the matter or task at hand and transforming it into something special no matter how boring the topic may be. As I close this article, I encourage everyone to put this into practice not only while preparing to take an exam, but also in your daily life and you will see yourself, your language level and your relationships blossom and flourish.