



Building Confidence for Oral Exams

PODCAST #S1E17: Welcome to this new episode of “The Deep Dive”. In today’s episode, Dan and Mary will give some tips on how to build your confidence when facing oral exams. We hope you enjoy it!!

D: Hey, everybody. Ready to tackle oral exam anxiety? We're diving into a guide today all about how to build confidence for these things, especially for language learners.

M: Yeah. It can feel like a lot. Right? You've gotta know the material, think on your feet. Material, think on your feet. A-N-D, manage those nerves all at the same time.

D: It’s almost like you're prepping for a big game. Like, the guide says, you can't just know the plays. You gotta be ready to perform under pressure.

M: Exactly. It's a different skill set for sure.

D: So how do we go from fumbling the ball to, you know, like, scoring the winning touchdown? What does the guide say about getting ready for this kind of exam?

M: Well, the guide really emphasizes active practice, you know, not just passively studying the material. It suggests things like flashcards with sample questions in the target language, really focusing on active recall.

D: Oh, and recording yourself answering potential exam questions.

M: Yes. That's a great one. It's like having an instant replay to see where you might be stumbling or using too many filler words.

D: I love that. So it's just like you could actually pinpoint where you need to improve, kinda like watching game film.

M: Exactly. And the guide also suggests practicing with a language partner or a tutor, someone who can give you feedback in real time and even simulate the exam environment.

D: Oh, that's a great idea. Like, having a coach in your corner giving you those pep talks and pointers to refine your game.

M: Absolutely. Now, of course, there's the mental game too, you know, that pregame anxiety. The guide talks about visualization.

D: Visualization. It's a powerful tool, but I feel like it can be tricky. Right?

M: Yeah. How do you find it works for you? Does it help or sometimes make things worse?

D: I think it really depends. For me, if I focus on visualizing a successful outcome, you know, really seeing myself doing well, it can actually boost my confidence. But if I get too caught up in, like, imagining every possible scenario, every little thing that could go wrong

M: Oh, yeah.

D: It can totally backfire.

M: Definitely. I get that. The guide also mentions deep breathing exercises to help with those pregame nerves. Have you tried that?

D: Oh, yeah. Deep breathing is a lifesaver.

M: Yeah.

D: Even just taking a few deep breaths before the exam can make a world of difference. It's like hitting the pause button on that anxiety spiral.

M: Yeah.

D: You know? It gives you a chance to just refocus.

M: Right. Right. So helpful. So besides visualization and breathing techniques, what other strategies does the guide recommend for managing those pre exam jitters? It talks about shifting your mindset. Like, instead of looking at the exam as this big scary test...

D: Yeah.

M: It encourages you to see it as an opportunity.

D: Oh, I like that.

M: Yeah. To, like, showcase your skills.

D: Like, reframing the whole thing instead of it being a test where you're being judged.

M: Yeah.

D: It's a chance to share what you know.

M: Yeah. Exactly. And that can make a huge difference.

D: For sure.

M: And, you know, especially for language learners, the guide also gives some good tips about speaking clearly and fluently.

D: Oh, yeah. That's always a challenge for me. I tend to get stuck in my head, like, translating word for word.

M: Oh, yeah. I know that feeling.

D: And then I totally lose my flow.

M: Yeah. The guide talks about that. It suggests focusing on communicating meaning in chunks instead of getting hung up on individual words.

D: Oh, so, like, thinking in phrases.

M: Right? Like, complete thoughts instead of worrying about every single word.

D: That makes so much more sense. It's about getting the message across

M: Yeah.

D: Not being perfect grammatically.

M: Exactly. And it also reminds us that it's okay to use fillers. You know?

D: Oh, like, "um" and "ah"...

M: Yeah. Especially when you're learning a new language, everybody uses them.

D: Even native speakers.

M: Even native speakers. The key is to just not let them take over. You know?

D: Right. So use them strategically.

M: Exactly. Find a balance.

D: Got it.

M: The guide also talks about clear enunciation.

D: Oh, that's so important.

M: Especially during an oral exam.

D: Yeah. The examiner needs to understand you.

M: Exactly. Make sure you're speaking clearly.

D: No mumbling allowed.

M: Right. And the last thing is to try to mix up your sentence structure.

D: Oh, that's a good one.

M: It shows off more of your skills.

D: Makes you sound more interesting too.

M: Yeah. Exactly. So we've talked about preparation, practice, mindset, and even how to speak clearly and fluently. What about giving good answers? You know how to really make an impact.

D: Yeah. What does the guide say about that?

M: It has a whole section on structuring your responses, and it all starts with understanding the question.

D: Oh, that makes sense.

M: Yeah. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification if you need to.

D: It's like making sure you're answering the right question.

M: Right. You don't wanna go off on a tangent.

D: Exactly. So once you get the question what then?

M: Then the guide recommends taking a moment to organize your thoughts.

D: Oh, yeah.

M: You can even jot down a few notes if that helps you.

D: So it's like you've got your game plan. You know, before you actually start talking.

M: Right. And then, like, in a game, you wanna make every word count. So the guide says, don't ramble. Don't go off on tangents. Just get to the point.

D: Okay. Keep it concise.

M: Yeah. Answer the question directly. It's all about showing what you know.

D: Right. Making those answers count. It sounds like this guide has a ton of great advice.

M: It really does. And I think the biggest takeaway is that oral exams, especially for language learners, they don't have to be so scary. You know?

D: Yeah. I can see that.

M: With the right prep, the practice, the mindset, they can actually be a chance to shine.

D: Oh, I love that. It's like turning it around. Instead of dreading the exam, it's your time to show off what you can do.

M: Exactly. And remember, everyone makes mistakes. You know, even if you stumble over a word or two. It's not the end of the world.

D: Right.

M: Just take a breath, refocus, and keep going.

D: I like that. So just to recap for everyone listening out there.

M: Yeah.

D: You got this. Practice, visualize success, and don't be afraid to ask questions if you need to.

M: Right.

D: And most importantly, see this exam as a chance to show off your skills and have a conversation. Not just a test you have to be afraid of.

M: Exactly. And those pregame jitters, they're totally normal.

D: Yeah. We all get it.

M: The key is to use those nerves to, like, fuel your performance.

D: You know

M: Okay.

D: So channel that nervous energy.

M: Yeah. Give it your best shot.

D: Alright, everybody. Go out there and knock it out at the park.