

Synopsis

This session provides and explores a series of small speaking tasks that can be incorporated into our secondary classrooms without creating the hype and angst which often accompanies official speaking tasks.

Like stepping into the dark...the greatest fear of public speaking is in the anticipation... that dry feeling in the mouth and surreal sensation that time has slowed down and the whole world is watching you implode. Teachers are faced with the increasingly difficult task of preparing students, who have grown up in the indirect world of digital communication, to communicate with confidence and clarity in a face – to – face world.

Small speaking tasks subvert expectation and bypass the wait time that creates anxiety and task refusal. By creating small incidental hit-and-run tasks within the class, students can improve both their skills and confidence before they are aware that they are actually speaking in public.

These small tasks help to empower reluctant speakers giving them their own voice by lowering the stress threshold involved with speaking to others. As a practising teacher for the past thirty-five years, I have experimented with several tasks that have worked – and just as many that have not. Timed tasks, tasks conducted in unison, others that focus on timing, some using safe primary texts all allowing students to practice the key skills used in public speaking: by reducing the society and removing the emphasis on content rather than delivery.

This workshop will provide a booklet of short tasks: modelling them with the group to show how they can be incorporated within regular English classes.