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**Speaking anxiety, motivation and grit: reflections on informal, online language teaching and learning.**

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Speaking in their target language is seen by many learners as the ultimate aim of their language studies, and yet it is a skill that is not always easy to develop in traditional classroom settings, or indeed, even less so, at a distance.

Whether teaching speaking as performance, transaction or interaction (Richards, 2009), educators, especially those operating in distance and online settings, need to understand the importance of dealing with affective factors in the language acquisition process, and in particular in the development of speaking. A variety of affective factors have been shown to impact on success in language acquisition, most notably motivation, self-confidence and anxiety (Krashen 1982). More recently, the concept of grit, defined as 'a passion and perseverance to accomplish long-term goals whatever the obstacles and no matter how long it may take' (Duckworth et al. 2009) has also been shown to positively correlate with high achievement.

In this talk, I will discuss three examples of research and innovative practice in developing speaking skills in informal, online, distance settings. The first is a study of speaking anxiety in an informal, beginners' Spanish MOOC; the second is a scholarship project examining the motivation and self-determination of students at level A2 undertaking a voluntary language exchange programme as part of their formal studies, and the third is a research project investigating learners self-determination in the context of a speaking language challenge 'in the wild'.

The talk concludes by suggesting ways in which some of the insights from these contexts can also enhance teaching and learning in more formal settings.