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SLOWposium Elevate the Pitch

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Oral assessments: Acknowledging the humans in the room.



Image source:
Atmena Goodman, via
Unsplash.com
https://unsplash.com/photos/silhouette-of-elephant-walking-on-brown-field-during-sunset-PB4dNSELi_E

My context

Qualitative researcher

Interactive Oral Assessments in Biopsychology in 2023

PSY115: An Introduction to Research, Ethics and Reasoning

- ❖ Assessment 1: write a 150-word description of a prospective research topic that interests you and is relevant to the field of psychology + reflection
- ❖ Assessment 2: Oral Assessment: Application of Ethical Principles
 1. Discuss three ethical issues that may arise with your proposed research – one related to each of the following three principles: beneficence, justice and respect.
 2. Asked to reflect on any ethical problems that may arise during your proposed research.
- ❖ Protocol of 5 key questions (one intro/'warm up'; one focused on each of the three ethical issues; one reflection question)

Shameless plug #1:

Diaz, C., Sugden, N., Krautloher, A., Grant, L. D., & Greig, J. (2025). Talk the Talk: Reviving Anatomy assessment with Oral Vivas. In *Australian and New Zealand Association of Clinical Anatomists*.

Sugden, N., Krautloher, A., Grant, L., Greig, J., & Diaz, C. (2026). Traditional Versus Innovative Assessment: Engaging Learners with E-Portfolios and Interactive Oral Assessments. *Educational Assessment*, 1-20.

Shameless plug #2: Research Integrity Advisor Network

<https://www.csu.edu.au/research/integrity-ethics-compliance/research-integrity/advice/research-integrity-advisor-network>

What we're juggling

(In no particular order)

- ❖ TEQSA requirements
- ❖ GenAI FOMO
- ❖ Resource constraints
- ❖ Personal commitments to knowledge and teaching practice
- ❖ Students who are individuals
- ❖ Our unique skill set
- ❖ Equity

Josh Johnson: A philosopher of our age



Teaching is difficult. It's difficult in and of itself alone **to be in your head, have the idea, convey the idea in a way that gets through someone else's head**. You got to get you got to get past all the video games and all the crushes and all the just to be like MATH!

... I think what the way that **we look at teaching is as the obstacle as opposed to as the help**, right? Like even now if someone tries to teach you something, there's some reluctance there sometimes. ... I think that a lot of people, myself included, sometimes have a reluctance to learning in general, especially because there's a sort of like hubris around *getting* an idea. When you get an idea, you feel like you got it. ... I went to my friend's house. He built a whole deck. And I was like, "That's incredible. I didn't know you did construction." He's like, "I don't." I was like, "How did you build a deck?" He's like, "Oh, you know, self-taught." I was like, "How did you teach yourself to build a deck?" And he's like, "Oh, I just watched this guy on YouTube for like 75 hours or whatever." ... Then *he* taught you. That's not self-taught at all. 75 hours of listening to some other dude talk, he might as well have been here.

... I think the thing that teachers fall in love with is the is like that light bulb watching someone get something that you understand that you're giving to them and then it clicks and they're like, "Oh, oh." whether they're a little kid, I remember **a teacher at school is who really taught me how to tie my shoes, like really really put it together for me in my head** ... but she was the one that was like, "No, we're going to practice. I'm just going to tie it. We're going to practice ... **We're going to tie them together**." And so for the rest of recess, sat down, tied my shoes over and over again until the last time I tied them and I didn't even notice it. And then for the rest of the time I was in elementary school, every time she saw me and she saw me, shoes tied, she saw that light bulb go off. Oh. And no matter how reluctant someone is to be taught, it's a beautiful thing when that happens. When the idea gets through and you can see it, you see the light bulb go off.

Image source:

<https://www.facebook.com/JoshJComedy/photos/1465099984976246/>

YouTube transcript:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKUvNkNivCM>

23-24 May 2025
Soho Theatre Walthamstow in
London, England

Being a qualitative researcher

- ❖ Collecting data through interviews and focus groups
- ❖ Semi-structured approach
- ❖ Yielding control
- ❖ Starting well and finishing well
- ❖ Dealing with someone's uncertainty and perhaps anxiety
- ❖ Eliciting information that actually belongs to the participant.
- ❖ Understanding shared social meaning

What has worked (for me)

- ❖ Taking time to start well
 - ❖ Normalise a small amount of anxiety, but assure them that it don't want it to overwhelm them
 - ❖ Position myself as "with them" – two humans interacting.
 - ❖ Use formalities ("housekeeping") as an opportunity for them to get comfortable
 - ❖ Explain things you may do as part of the process, and why that is designed to help them
- ❖ Find a joke and use it regularly
- ❖ Creating a small 'celebration' moment when the student's time is finished
- ❖ Debriefing
- ❖ As a non-teaching marker, making a brief guest appearance during the class.
- ❖ Using minimal responses and follow-up questions ("mmm ...", "uh-huh", "can you tell me more about that?")
- ❖ Getting comfortable with silences
- ❖ Be interested in what they are saying (even when it is hard)

Feedback

"That wasn't as scary as I thought it would be"

students who said they preferred being able to "talk things out"

"I enjoyed the heck out of assessment 2"

"That was worse than a job interview, but still better than I thought it would be"

Challenges moving forward

“Holding space” for our students takes a lot of headspace and energy

More time per student is needed to make it a more human experience



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Thank you

