

Passages to read for the entrance exam of the English Teacher Training program

- 1 Adolescents are perhaps the most exciting students to teach, but they can also present the teacher with more problems than any other age group. [...] we have to remember that adolescents are often brittle! They will no longer be inspired by mere curiosity, and teacher approval is no longer of vital importance. Indeed, the teacher may no longer be the leader, but rather the potential enemy. Peer approval will, however, be important.
Harmer, J. (1983). *The practice of English language teaching*. London: Longman. (p.7)
- 2 The teacher should never, then, forget that the adolescent needs to be seen in a good light by his peers, and that with the changes taking place at that age he is easily prone to humiliation if the teacher is careless with his criticism. But the adolescent is also highly intelligent if stimulated, and dedicated if involved. At this age, getting the level of challenge right is absolutely vital.
Harmer, J. (1983). *The practice of English language teaching*. London: Longman. (p.7)
- 3 Groups are particularly good at combining talents and providing innovative solutions to possible unfamiliar problems; [...] the wider skill and knowledge set of the group has a distinct advantage over that of the individual.
Blair, G.M. (1991). Groups that work. Retrieved on 25 April, 2009 from:
<http://www.see.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/Management/art0.html>
- 4 One of the major assumptions underlying the learner-centred philosophy is that, given the constraints that exist in most learning contexts, it is impossible to teach learners everything they need to know in class.
Nunan, D. (1988). *The learner-centred curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (p.3)
- 5 All teachers know that classrooms are confusing places, with different agendas being pursued by different participants, with many different activities and thought processes happening simultaneously, and with different needs being addressed in all directions. Few lessons follow plans exactly, and few plans follow principles as precisely as theorists intend.
Brumfit, C., & Mitchell, R. (1990). The language classroom as a focus for research. In: C. Brumfit & R Mitchell (Eds.), *Research in the Language Classroom. ELT Documents 133*. London: Macmillan. (p.10)
- 6 Some years ago I wrote an article which began with the words 'I am not, in principle, in favour of the use of games in language teaching.' This was an obviously provocative statement, but based on a serious argument. Games are essentially recreational 'time-out' activities whose main purpose is enjoyment; language study is serious goal-oriented work, whose main purpose is personal learning.
Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (p.289)
- 7 The most common kind of verbal interaction in the classroom is the teacher-student 'ping-pong' exchange: the teacher asks a question or elicits responses on some other way, a student responds, the teacher approves or corrects and asks again, another student responds and so on. The choral response – where two or more students answer together – is a variation of this, as are the 'performances', where students recite longer given texts or dialogues in response to teacher requests. Essentially, the teacher is the focus of attention, and is in full control of learner responses, largely able to determine what these will be, and in a position to monitor them.
Ur, P. (1988). *Grammar practice activities*. Cambridge: CUP. (p.27)
- 8 Few teachers have the time or opportunity to design their own courses. In the majority of cases a basic textbook is chosen and it is this which provides the practical classroom syllabus. Inevitably, teachers tend to follow the book, deciding in advance how long they can spend on each unit so that they will finish the book in a certain time. But the object of the course is to teach the students, not finish the book!
Lewis, M. & Hill, J. (1985). *Practical techniques for language teaching*. Hove: Language Teaching Publications. (pp.8-9)

- 9 Many factors contribute towards the success or failure of the individual language learner. One of the most important, however, is probably the confidence the learner has in his ability to succeed in the task. [...] Teachers frequently undermine this confidence by emphasising the difficulties the student faces. Probably even more important, however, in undermining the learners' confidence, is the teacher's over-zealous correction of mistakes.

Lewis, M. & Hill, J. (1985). *Practical techniques for language teaching*. Hove: Language Teaching Publications. (p.90)

- 10 Some foreign language students, particularly adults, are learning the language for very specific reasons; others, particularly those learning in a state school system, are doing English because it is part of the system. In all cases, however, students are more likely to enjoy the subject and to succeed at it, if they are involved in the learning process, and as far as possible, have a chance to influence what happens, and how it happens.

Lewis, M. & Hill, J. (1985). *Practical techniques for language teaching*. Hove: Language Teaching Publications. (p.9)

- 11 A principled and professional approach to teaching needs to be based on something more than keeping up with fashion. The relationship between principle and practice is complex. On the one hand, ideas filter through from education, applied linguistics, psychology, neurology and so on, and seem to suggest more or less direct applications to teaching. But we should be wary of embracing any of these ideas wholesale and assuming that by implementing them we absolve ourselves of responsibility for further critical thought and decision-making. Above all, we should be careful not to assume that one set of recipes will work for all learners, all teachers, all contexts.

Bowen, T. & Marks, J. (1994). *Inside teaching*. Oxford: Heinemann. (p.12)

- 12 Different learners will also be motivated in different ways from one another, and motivation can change. Learners may, for example, be quite uninterested in learning a particular language, then meet a teacher who they like so much that they begin to love learning the language. Motivation can change with age, too, with some factors becoming more or less important as learners get older. We can see that motivation needs to be both created and continued.

Spratt, M., Pulverness, A. & Williams, M. (2005). *The TKT – Teaching Knowledge Test Course*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (p.38)

- 13 Research has identified three main ways in which we learn a foreign language. Firstly, experts talk of us acquiring language. This means the same as picking it up. They say that to really learn a foreign language we need exposure to lots of examples of it, and that we learn from the language in our surroundings. We need to hear and read lots of language which is rich in variety, interesting to us and just difficult enough for us, i.e. just beyond our level, but not too difficult. Acquisition takes place over a period of time, i.e. not instantly, and we listen to and read items of language for a long time before we begin to use them (a silent period).

Spratt, M., Pulverness, A. & Williams, M. (2005). *The TKT – Teaching Knowledge Test Course*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (p.41)

- 14 To learn a language we need to use it in interaction with other people. We need to use language to express ourselves and make our meanings clear to other people, and to understand them. The person we are talking to will show us, directly or indirectly, if they have understood us or not. If they have not, we need to try again, using other language, until we manage to communicate successfully.

Spratt, M., Pulverness, A. & Williams, M. (2005). *The TKT – Teaching Knowledge Test Course*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (p.41)

- 15** Research shows that foreign language learners also need to focus on form. This means that they need to pay attention to language, e.g. by identifying, working with and practising the language they need to communicate.
Nowadays, experts generally agree that we do not learn a foreign language best through learning grammar and translating (the grammar-translation method). Nor do we learn by constantly practising until we form habits (the behaviourist or structuralist approach) or just by communicating (the communicative approach). We learn by picking up language, interacting and communicating and focusing on form. But the research still continues, and we do not yet fully understand how foreign languages are learnt.
Spratt, M., Pulverness, A. & Williams, M. (2005). *The TKT – Teaching Knowledge Test Course*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (p.41)
- 16** Human beings are territorial by nature. [...] Territorial instincts are also manifested in language classrooms. Even in classes with no fixed seating pattern, students soon develop marked preferences for certain areas and specific seats within the room. These position preferences can lead to the emergence of rigid, fossilised patterns of ‘private spaces,’ which can negatively affect proximity, contact, and interaction among members and thus can hinder group development and lead to the formation of subgroups and cliques.
Ehrman, M. & Dörnyei, Z. (1998). *Interpersonal dynamics in second language education: The visible and invisible classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (pp.92-93)
- 17** Because of our near monopoly of information, procedures and day-to-day goals, and because of the great power which society invests in the giver of the final grade, the teacher is by far the most powerful figure in the classroom. Therefore she, more than anyone else, sets the tone for the interpersonal atmosphere.
Stevick, E.W. (1980). *Teaching languages: A way and ways*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- 18** As EFL lessons are “only partly about the foreign language, partly they are about the pupils and their ideas, [...] the role of the language teacher is different from that of most other subject teachers. Instead of being sources of information who hand down this information to a largely passive audience, language teachers can be seen as orchestra conductors who co-ordinate and facilitate the work of the group”.
Enyedi (unpublished, 1996)
- 19** Sometimes there is a place in the discourse of the adult second language acquirer, just as there is within the discourse of the child and the native speaker, for learning by heart and repeating, even without understanding. Knowing by heart makes it possible to enjoy speech without the burden of production.
Cook, G. (1994). ‘Repetition and learning by heart: an aspect of intimate discourse, and its implications’. *ELT Journal Volume 48/2*. (p.139)
- 20** Many a time the teaching of English language falls short of fulfilling its goals. Even after years of English teaching, the learners do not gain the confidence of using the language in and outside the class. Their output in the language is limited to writing run-of-the-mill answers to reading comprehension questions and producing grammatically accurate, but isolated sentences.
Chauhan, V. (2004). Drama Techniques for Teaching English. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 10/10. Retrieved on 25 April, 2009 from: <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Chauhan-Drama.html>
- 21** Fluency of speech may be described as the ability to access chunks of language automatically and with ease, to sound ‘natural’, to communicate ideas effectively, all this with continuity, absent from communicative breakdown. Fluency is a top priority for many learners but often tends to remain elusive.
du Mont, J. (n.d.) Movement & Drama in ELT. Retrieved on 25 April, 2009 from: www.developingteachers.com/articles_tchtraining/drama1_juliet.htm

- 22** When you teach a new grammar item (e.g. superlatives) don't just teach model sentences as 'idealised' examples - try putting the grammar into realistic and memorable everyday sentences with some real feeling such as anger, excitement, amazement etc (e.g. "This café's the worst I've ever seen!"). Say each sentence yourself and get learners to repeat it, encouraging them to really 'do it with feeling'.
 Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning teaching*. London: Macmillan.
- 23** Children today are much more exposed to the screen, they have multimedia flashing up and bombarding them at the touch of a button. Perhaps this is inducing a reduction in attention spans compared with kids who spent more of their childhood reading books in the old days. So should schools use technology and give children even more screens and even more buttons to touch? Or should education be about helping students to rediscover the whole world of learning with books and with other people? (adapted from BBC News)
 Retrieved on 25 April, 2009 from : http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/4926496.stm
- 24** A group is capable of more than any one member thinks. One+one+one+one = 5 or more. This is the equation of synergy. We really have no idea what we can achieve in a group. Maybe we can achieve almost anything in the world as a group. But it may take some ingenuity to discover how we can achieve it.
 Hunter, D., Bailey, A. & Taylor, B. (1992) *The Zen of groups*. Aldershot: Gower House. (p. 71)
- 25** I have learned so much by observing the child I identified as 'fast-paced'. By calling him 'fast-paced' I was already setting up an expectation that got in the way of my ability to really see him, or receive feedback from him. And then I saw him once totally absorbed in some work in the garden and this was a real breakthrough for me. I have just been able to see so much more of him. I can see the connections he is making in his comments, the puzzled expression on his face when he reads something that doesn't make sense, see him sticking with a clay project even when he is frustrated with not being able to manipulate the medium to his own satisfaction. I suspect that he was doing this sort of thing all along, but I just couldn't see it because of my own expectations. I expected to see him zooming through things superficially, so that's what I saw.
 Personal communication from a primary school teacher from the USA
- 26** While ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) is a real, documented problem for a handful of people, in practice it is an overused, often imaginary syndrome invoked by laxist parents in the US to excuse their undisciplined children from the necessity of paying attention in class. At least according to a lot of online discussion.
 From an electronic discussion list for teachers, Retrieved on 28 April, 2009 from:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ttedsig/message/358>
- 27** There is evidence that Einstein didn't speak until he was four years old and didn't read until he was seven. One of his teachers described him as 'mentally slow, unsociable and adrift forever in his foolish dreams'. Isn't it fascinating that it was his ability to have these 'foolish dreams' that eventually made it possible for him to formulate the theory of relativity? Einstein, by the way, is not the only great mind who was regarded as not very capable, to say the least, by teachers or parents.
 Puchta, H. (2005). Making the most of multiple intelligences. *English Teaching Professional*. 41. pp.4-7.
- 28** Obviously, being a fluent, accurate English speaker is a great help, but this alone does not make you into a successful teacher. Indeed, many really good teachers of English are people whose own command of the language is quite limited. This is because they frequently understand their students' difficulties better than native speakers of the language do.
 Underwood, M. (1987). *Effective class management*. Harlow: Longman (p.7)
- 29** Students are likely to differ quite widely in the way they learn - what educationalists call their *learning styles*. The way a teacher teaches - and the way a textbook is designed - should take differences in the students' learning styles into account.
 Grant, N. (1987). *Making the most of your textbook*. Harlow: Longman (p.11)

- 30** Students don't like doing pairwork for some of the following reasons.
- They are afraid of picking up mistakes from their partner.
 - They feel the teacher is being lazy and not doing their job.
 - They don't understand what pairwork is supposed to be for.
 - They want to speak to and find out about the teacher.
 - They want practice of speaking out in front of a group of people.
- Adapted from: Case, A. (2008). Why your students don't want to do pairwork. Retrieved on 25 April, 2009 from:
<http://www.usingenglish.com/teachers/articles/why-your-students-dont-want-to-do-pairwork.html>
- 31** Pairwork involves students working in pairs simultaneously. The reasons for the use of pairwork are similar to those of groupwork. Pairwork allows more students to get more practice. It also provides a change of pace to a lesson and helps to sustain motivation. [...] Students working in pairs are able to share ideas and help each other.
- Adapted from: Cambridge English for schools online: Pairwork. Retrieved on 25 April, 2009 from:
<http://www.cambridge.org/elt/ces/methodology/pairwork.htm>
- 32** "Success depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analysis, and more on what goes on inside and between people in the classroom."
- Stevick, E.W. (1980). *Teaching languages: A way and ways*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House. (p.4)
- 33** [Teachers should] divide the whole of the English language into manageable bite-sized chunks, and then introduce these to the students, one grammar structure per lesson, so that they gradually and systematically accumulate a complete picture of the language.
- Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning teaching*, London: Macmillan. (p.114)
- 34** Teachers should create an environment where a lot of language, known and unknown, is met mostly through speaking and listening tasks. The students are helped with new language structures only when they already have some awareness of it, and have curiosity or questions about it.
- Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning teaching*, London: Macmillan. (p.114)
- 35** A number of case studies have shown that language can be separated from general intelligence. Brother John and Genie could think clearly even when they were unable to speak their thoughts. Laura, Christopher and others can talk fluently, even though they are severely handicapped in other respects. This suggests that language has its own specialized circuit within the brain.
- Aitchison, J. (1996). *The seeds of speech*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (p. 46)
- 36** Culture has been defined in a number of ways, but most simply, as the learned and shared behavior of a community of interacting human beings.
- Useem, J., & Useem, R. (1963). *Human Organizations*, 22(3). (p.169)
- 37** Groups can be a fundamental source of motivation for its members to learn the target language: they serve as reference groups providing guidelines and standards for their members to enable them to evaluate themselves, to measure themselves, to adjust their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour.
- Dörnyei, Z. & Malderez, A. (1999). Group dynamics in foreign language learning and teaching. in Arnold, J. (Ed.). *Affective Language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.155-169