

Pilgrims™

English Language Courses

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Dear Colleagues,

I think this is the first time in my training experience that I have worked with a group of agreges teachers training students to jump through the hoops of the Grandes Ecoles entrance exams. Since I have no direct experience of working with your sector/ sub-group/mindset, all I can do is to remember the things I have been told and embroider the rest.

Maybe Prepas teachers are among the best linguistically qualified teachers of foreign languages in France.

Maybe people have fought long and hard to get into this area of teaching

Maybe love of the language is stronger among some of you than interest in the HOWS of teaching (an aversion to Anglo-Saxon style psycho-babble?)

Maybe you have to teach large classes (up to a Japanese size of 45?) of students who do not find language to be a primarily motivating topic.

Maybe the students' successful entry to the Grande Ecole of their choice, depends, all the same, on the marks they achieve in secondary subjects like English.

Maybe you somehow, unconsciously, mirror the class-ridden anxiety of these students to do well, to get into the place they want to get into, not to disappoint their 16th district families.

Maybe you sometimes feel swamped by the amount of marking and correction that piles up round you at the week-ends?

May we should start this session with you correcting the above fantasies of mine. I am eager to learn, to be put right and so to get a sense of who I am working with on how to deal with hard texts. Sure, I realise, that this a broad-brush approach to you as a sociological group, rather than a sensitive approach to each of you as wondrous and separate individual identities. Please, at first, just think of me as an alien from outer space who needs to get a sense of you in professional role.

(By the way, do you sometimes write letters to your classes? I would suggest that such texts, as they build up over a term and a year become major sources of language learning for their recipients, the students.

I use my regular letters to my advanced students to a) introduce new grammar, new ideas on collocation and colligation, new ideas on pragmatics etc....

above

b) to introduce a topic for debate, as I have done

c) to revise stuff from previous lessons

d) to express my own feeling and opinions etc...

I will sometimes also use these letter texts as an excuse for vocabulary enrichment... I will show you what I mean when you have finished reading this.

A text from one's teacher has a fullness and richness that is different, very different from the richness even of master writing by the Greats, eg Shakespeare etc... Basically it is different because one is exposed to the teacher's idiolect just in the same way as the child suckles from the mother's.

Warmly yours,
Mario, (Rinvoluceri)

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