

# Talent, practice and bright sparks

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## References:

The Story of the Polgar Sisters: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZiSxfCmOZY>

Outliers, the story of success, Malcolm Gladwell, Penguin, 2009

The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance. K. Anders Ericsson, Ralf Th. Krampe, and Clemens Tesch-Romer 1993

Dr Alexander Arguelles <http://www.foreignlanguageexpertise.com/>

## Institutionalising purposeful practice:

1. Immersive environment – quantity & quality of practice
2. Extensive reading & listening
3. The intensive lesson – the 7 Ps
4. Practise the right things – teaching English as a life skill
5. Challenge & inspiration  
Presentations & plenaries; Videoed assessments; Tasks with creative twist or the unexpected;  
Options and alternatives; An added challenge
6. Coaching & feedback  
“Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire” William Butler Yeats  
Our teacher language builds either fixed or growth mindsets
7. Motivation through association  
Inspiration from role models and near peers  
Lion teams, Team-building, Study-buddy, Whole school events, speeches, awards
8. The learning environment, and the importance of a whole school culture

## Habits of a courageous teacher

A courageous teacher:	Examples
Ensures that there is a relevant learning outcome to each activity and conveys this to students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signposts before, during, and after each activity so students see the relevance and objectives.</li> </ul>
Believes that learners can achieve great things and be sure to convey this to them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell them, “You can do this!”</li> <li>• Have high expectations of students. “This is good, but you can do even better.”</li> </ul>
Has high expectations of the work learners are capable of in the time available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set time limits and <b>STICK TO THEM</b>.</li> <li>• Use the expression “at least” i.e. Say, “please write for at least 7 minutes”</li> </ul>
Stretches everyone in the group by varying the difficulty of the task or intended outcome.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the expression “at least” i.e. Say, “please write at least 3 paragraphs on the subject”</li> <li>• Set more advanced students more complex/longer challenges</li> <li>• Allow students to set goals for themselves based on what they think they can accomplish and then push them one step further.</li> </ul>
Structures situations around output tasks rather than input tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example: start with an improvised role-play. Discuss ways to improve it. Role play the situation again.</li> <li>• This formula can be used in presentations, writing, etc.</li> <li>• Use open-ended activities in which students produce all of the language.</li> </ul>
Emphasizes performance in authentic contexts/situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use role-plays, presentations, etc., based on situations likely to come up in student real-life.</li> <li>• Bring authentic materials such as menus, transportation maps, videos and articles, etc. to class as often as possible.</li> </ul>
Adjusts the environment to increase/decrease the affective experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a comfort zone for students, then provide situations with varying levels of comfort. For example: have students sometimes answer a question alone with a partner and at other times stand in front of the class to present their answer.</li> </ul>
Provides clear, meaningful feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide as much informational feedback as possible.</li> <li>• When students are practising paired conversation, walk from pair to pair giving them feedback (you must listen).</li> <li>• When students write, take the time to indicate their errors and how to improve.</li> <li>• Always provide an area to improve.</li> </ul>
Shows that he/she is very serious about student performance and improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourages tardiness and emphasizes the importance of participation.</li> <li>• Requires all students to do homework and explains the importance of each activity.</li> </ul>

## The language teachers use in class makes a difference

### Building goal clarity?

- What do you need to do to really improve?
- What would your classmates say is your biggest problem? What do your teachers say is your biggest issue?

Other questions:

### Enriching goals/Building a stronger future self

- What would be different if you were fluent/more confident in English?
- Can you see yourself in 10 years time presenting in English at an international meeting/conference?
- I love how you see yourself, but go even bigger than that, what's the most impressive thing you can see yourself doing in English?

Other questions:

### Encouraging effort

- How much work have fluent speakers done?
- Great, and what else do you need to do?
- Offering directed choice: Do you want to write the essay or record the presentation?

Other questions:

### Encouraging improvement

- How can you make that even better?
- I think you can do better than this – what do you think?

Other questions:

### Overcoming obstacles/blocks

- If you did know what to do, what would that be?
- Are you prepared to take a small risk with me?

## **A few twists on normal practice activities...**

(many thanks to Edmund Dudley for these excellent activities from ETpedia Teenagers, English Teaching Professional, 2018)

1. Set (random) time limits for writing, not word limits e.g. 6 minutes 43 seconds

2. Add an (arbitrary) constraint

e.g. write an email to a friend asking for advice

- write precisely 127 words

- use 6 different things you find in a house secretly embedded in the text

3. Random phrases

e.g. in an email to a friend include a random phrase

- “a meeting with Albert Einstein”

4. Creative problem solving – write how to escape from a locked bathroom with a window, when you can only use some of the following items: toothpaste, toothbrush, nail clippers, a loofah, toilet paper, a bathrobe, some hair dye.

5. Collaborative story writing

In groups of 3, with 3 pieces of paper, each writes one paragraph alone, before passing it on. The first paragraph is the scene, the second is the problem, the third is the resolution of the problem.

6. Write the first sentence

Show the cover of a book the class haven't read. Read out the blurb. Speculate about the author, the genre, the narrative, the title. Each student writes the first line of the book. Read them all out, and smuggle in the real first line. Students vote on which is the best first line.

7. Hidden song lyrics

Smuggle 4 lines of a song into a standard text the students are writing. Students read each others and try to identify the 4 lines and the name of the song.

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