

Teaching Note

Preparing For a Language Teaching Job Interview: 10 Tips

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Here's the scenario: You are finishing your language teaching education, preparing for job interviews. Below are several suggestions based on experience both being interviewed and serving on hiring committees over the decades. This list does not include every contingency or skill area but serves as a great way to give you direction to organize your thoughts and responses. Higgins (2014) suggests deploying a model such as STAR (situation, task, action, result) to structure more coherent answers, particularly in the "heat of the moment" when nerves can interfere.

1. Do your homework

Investigate several details about the position and context for the job you seek. Practice *out loud* to guide how you will answer a variety of questions they might ask to help build confidence and fluency. Come prepared with 2-3 specific questions about the job to show your commitment.

2. Control your pacing and voice

When they ask a question, take a brief pause to gather your thoughts. Speak fluidly and as clearly as possible. Avoid rising intonation in statements, which makes us sound unsure. Breathe.

3. Give complete answers and *always* give supporting examples you might share.

Practice structuring your answers using a system such as STAR, where you discuss the:

- Situation: give a brief summary of the context
- Task: what was expected of you
- Action: what specific steps you took
- Result: what was the outcome

Practice answering in this model using the sample questions found in Tips 4, 5, 6 and 10 below.

4. Discuss active learning principles

Come with examples you learned about for discovery learning and challenge-based projects and how you will promote learner autonomy, boost critical thinking skills, and employ student-to-student communication.

5. Sequences for (integrated) skills

You will likely be asked to describe a reading, or other skill area activity sequence. As part of your preparation, write out a detailed plan for a reading, writing, or listening sequence that incorporates multiple integrated skills (speaking pairs with everything) and details the sequence from any initial warm-up or preparation to activate background knowledge all the way through how the material will be assessed. Address how you will:

- incorporate collaborative learning and peer interaction?
- scaffold the entire process, then gently take away the support steps?
- engage learners and allow them to personalize the material?
- build in student autonomy?
- present new vocabulary?
- provide active practice?
- assess formatively? peer assessment? final summative and alternative assessments?
- promote critical thinking skills?
- Deploy available tech tools?

6. Teach pronunciation

Tritch Yoshida (2016) advises both native speaking and non-native speaking teachers should set the pronunciation bar neither too high nor too low through avoidance. Whether you speak English as L1 or L2, make the case for why and how you teach this severely under-practiced subskill and the tools and approach you will use.

7. Be ready to answer: “What is your personal philosophy of language teaching?”

Discuss how “communicative language learning” continues to reign as a *best practices* approach. Tie together your practice with their theoretical underpinnings. Prepare several examples to illustrate.

8. Describe your areas of weakness

Try to frame your answer through an “improvement lens” while being wholly honest, asking yourself, “what is an area you would like to improve? What are some examples of how you have already begun working on this? Some examples I’ve seen:

- I haven’t had much training in teaching pronunciation, so I’m looking forward to doing more professional development in that area. I’ve been attending webinars and watching YouTube videos I find online and at conferences. I check with other teachers to share practical tips. I do peer observation with teachers I know have this expertise and keep notes to try with my own students.
- In my last school (or in my culture’s educational system), the expectation was to give more lectures, so I have been experimenting with more active learning techniques to boost those skills as it’s common practice in the global language learning and teaching world.

9. Build your confidence at interviewing

Apply for everything! Jobs you are interested in, jobs you aren't sure you are qualified for or that you want, jobs you have no intention of taking *because* you will be more confident in that interview. It provides excellent practice developing your interviewing skills, and you might just find unexpected opportunities you didn't think you wanted.

10. Additional questions you might be asked

What teaching tools do you use to engage learners?

Why did you decide to become a language teacher?

How do you keep students motivated and prevent frustration?

How will you differentiate for multi-level learners?

How do you deal with low/high motivated students?

What type of teaching strategies would you use to teach children/teens/adults a language?

What types of assessments would you use and why?

How do you intend to manage behavior in your classroom?

What leadership skills do you have to offer?

References

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Author

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