BLOGS

Passage-Based Questions on English for CLAT UG [Part 18]

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Passage 1 (P.1)

In public debate, certainty travels faster than nuance. A confident assertion, even if thinly evidenced, often outpaces a carefully qualified argument. This is not accidental. Certainty reassures. It offers clarity in a world that feels increasingly complex. Doubt, by contrast, appears hesitant and therefore weak. Yet intellectual progress has rarely emerged from absolute conviction. Scientific revolutions began as doubts about established truths. Political reform often originated in questioning what seemed self-evident. The paradox, however, is that societies reward confidence more readily than curiosity. A decisive tone is mistaken for competence; ambiguity is equated with incompetence.

The modern information ecosystem intensifies this tendency. Social media platforms privilege statements that are brief, sharp, and emotionally charged. Algorithms amplify outrage and conviction, not careful reflection. Over time, this shapes not only what we hear but how we think. We begin to distrust complexity itself. There is also a psychological comfort in certainty. To hold an unwavering position shields one from the discomfort of revision. Changing one’s mind can feel like surrender, even when it is growth. Public discourse, increasingly performative, leaves little room for visible reconsideration.

But certainty carries risks. When leaders refuse to acknowledge uncertainty, policy becomes brittle. When citizens conflate conviction with truth, dialogue collapses into assertion. The refusal to admit doubt does not eliminate uncertainty; it merely conceals it. A mature intellectual culture would treat doubt not as weakness but as discipline. It would recognise that provisional thinking is not indecisiveness but honesty about the limits of knowledge. Such a culture would prize inquiry over applause. In the end, certainty is seductive precisely because it simplifies. But simplification, when mistaken for truth, can distort reality more profoundly than ignorance.

1. The central thesis of the passage is that?

a. certainty is necessary for effective leadership

b. doubt undermines social stability

c. social media has destroyed public debate

d. overvaluing certainty weakens intellectual culture

2. The author suggests that confident assertions are often preferred because they?

a. are usually more accurate

b. provide psychological reassurance

c. reflect superior intelligence

d. discourage disagreement

3. The passage implies that social media influences discourse by ?

a. promoting long-form analysis

b. filtering out extreme views

c. privileging emotionally charged brevity

d. encouraging bipartisan dialogue

4. The phrase “policy becomes brittle” most nearly means ?

a. policies become financially expensive

b. policies lose flexibility and adaptability

c. policies are widely criticised

d. policies are legally unenforceable

5. The tone of the passage is best described as ?

a. reflective and critical

b. sarcastic and dismissive

c. celebratory

d. purely descriptive

Passage 2 (P.2)

Translation is often imagined as a mechanical act, the simple transfer of words from one language to another. In reality, it is an act of interpretation. Every word carries cultural weight, historical resonance, and emotional nuance that cannot be transplanted intact. When historians rely on translated archives, they depend not only on the original author but on the translator’s choices. A

single adjective can soften condemnation into criticism or sharpen observation into accusation.

Over time, these subtle shifts accumulate, shaping collective memory. Consider political speeches rendered into global languages. What is framed domestically as defiance may be translated internationally as aggression. The difference is not semantic alone; it alters perception. Translation thus becomes an invisible participant in geopolitics. Yet complete neutrality in translation is illusory. To choose one synonym over another is already to interpret. The translator must decide which shade of meaning best approximates the original context.

Fidelity, therefore, is not literal replication but contextual judgment. This responsibility becomes heavier when dealing with historical trauma. Words describing violence or resistance are embedded in lived experience. A mistranslation can diminish suffering or exaggerate hostility. Either outcome distorts understanding. The paradox is that translation makes cross-cultural dialogue possible while simultaneously introducing the risk of distortion. It is both bridge and filter. To read translated history responsibly, one must remember that what appears transparent is mediated. Every text carries two voices: the original and the interpreter's.

6. The author's primary claim is that translation ?

a. is largely objective

b. functions as neutral transmission

c. inevitably involves interpretation

d. undermines historical research

7. The passage suggests that small linguistic choices ?

a. rarely affect broader narratives

b. can cumulatively reshape collective memory

c. are irrelevant in political contexts

d. simplify international communication

8. The word "fidelity" in context most nearly means ?

a. literal accuracy

b. emotional neutrality

c. contextual faithfulness

d. grammatical precision

9. The paradox of translation lies in its ability to ?

a. eliminate misunderstanding

b. standardise historical narratives

c. connect cultures while altering meaning

d. reduce political conflict

10. The tone of the passage is ?

a. analytical and measured

b. accusatory

c. humorous

d. alarmist

Passage 3 (P.3)

Public apologies by political leaders are rarely spontaneous. They are drafted, negotiated, and timed. Every word is scrutinised, not only for sincerity but for legal implication. An apology may signal moral reckoning, yet it may also serve strategic containment. When governments apologise for historical injustices, they enter delicate territory. Acknowledgment can validate victims and reshape national identity. At the same time, it may trigger demands for restitution or institutional reform. Thus, apology becomes entangled with liability.

Critics argue that many official apologies are rhetorical gestures devoid of structural change. Without accompanying policy shifts, they risk functioning as symbolic closure rather than substantive accountability. The language of regret can pacify public anger without altering power arrangements. Yet dismissing apologies entirely ignores their symbolic force. Recognition of harm, especially when long denied, can carry psychological and political significance. It can alter public discourse and legitimise previously marginalised narratives.

The tension, therefore, lies between symbolism and substance. An apology without reform may be hollow, but reform without acknowledgment may appear evasive. Both elements contribute to meaningful redress. The effectiveness of an apology ultimately depends on whether it reframes collective memory and institutional practice. Words alone cannot repair injustice, but silence can entrench it. In democratic societies, the act of apology reveals how a nation negotiates its past. It exposes the interplay between morality, law, and politics.

11. The passage suggests that political apologies are often ?

a. strategically constructed

b. legally irrelevant

c. purely emotional responses

d. universally sincere

12. The author believes that an apology without reform is ?

a. legally binding

b. symbolically powerful but insufficient

c. constitutionally required

d. politically dangerous

13. The tension discussed in the passage is between ?

a. past and future

b. law and morality

c. public and private actors

d. symbolism and substantive change

14. The author's stance toward political apologies is best described as ?

a. wholly dismissive

b. cautiously balanced

c. entirely supportive

d. indifferent

15. The passage implies that silence regarding injustice ?

a. protects national unity

b. reduces liability

c. stabilises governance

d. perpetuates harm

Answers

1. D – The passage argues that societies reward confident assertions over thoughtful doubt, which discourages inquiry and distorts understanding.
2. B – The author notes that certainty feels comforting because it offers clarity in a complex world and shields people from the discomfort of doubt.
3. C – The passage explains that algorithms amplify brief, sharp, emotionally charged statements rather than nuanced reflection.

4. B – “Brittle” implies that policies become rigid when leaders refuse to acknowledge uncertainty, making them unable to adapt to changing realities.
5. A – The author thoughtfully examines the dangers of excessive certainty while critically analysing how modern discourse rewards it.
6. C – The passage emphasises that translation requires contextual judgment because words carry cultural and historical nuances.
7. B – Small linguistic shifts in translation can gradually influence how historical events and narratives are remembered.
8. C – Here “fidelity” refers not to literal word-for-word translation but to accurately conveying the intended meaning within its context.
9. C – Translation enables cross-cultural dialogue but simultaneously risks distortion because interpretation is unavoidable.
10. A – The author calmly analyses the complexities and responsibilities involved in translation without exaggeration or accusation.
11. A – The passage states that public apologies are carefully drafted, negotiated, and timed rather than spontaneous expressions.
12. B – The author argues that apologies can have symbolic importance, but without policy reform they may lack real accountability.
13. D – The passage explicitly identifies the central tension between symbolic acknowledgement and actual structural reform.
14. B – The author neither dismisses nor fully endorses political apologies, instead recognising both their symbolic value and limitations.
15. D – The passage concludes that while words alone cannot repair injustice, remaining silent about harm can reinforce and prolong it.