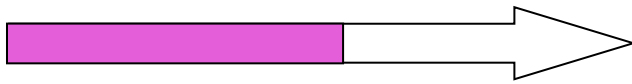


# EPOSTL sample reflections

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## Classroom Management

**1. I can take on different roles according to the needs of the learners and requirements of the activity (resource person, mediator, supervisor etc.) (p.42)**



When I started my Praktikum I only thought about lessons from the teacher's point of view. I saw the teacher in the center of the action, directing everything. Now I am aware of the fact that this is not always the case and that it is not always necessary to play this role. I have learned to look at the lesson from the learner's point of view and I have come to realize that I must focus on what the learners are doing and what is happening in their brains when I plan a lesson.

This experience has helped me see that it is ok if I am not in the center all the time, if I just walk around and help learners during group-work, or if I am not busy at all, because they do not need me for some time. At first I worried about such times in a lesson – but now I see that actually this is an important phase and I can relax in this new role as a resource person who is only active when needed.

I can only guess what the role of a mediator might be in a classroom. I have seen my Mentorin interfere a few times when groups of children were fighting or insulting one another – I guess this is another role that is not directly related to the teaching of the language – but it is also important so students feel taken seriously and feel comfortable in class. If someone is treated badly or excluded, they cannot learn well because these personal issues get in the way.

**2. I can create opportunities for and manage individual, partner, group and whole class work.(p.42)**



I have seen in my Praktikum that learners can work very efficiently in groups when they have clear instructions and materials. I guess the learners I have seen in my Praktikum have got a lot of practice with this type of work. They get a tasksheet (like a Wochenplan) with all the instructions for the project. The teacher explains the main tasks very briefly, sets out the materials (worksheets, games...) and from then on the students work in small groups, pairs or on their own. Only a small number of activities are organized as whole class activities, usually at the beginning of a lesson or when the teacher wants to introduce a new topic. Many students work in the hallways or on the floor – it can get quite noisy but I was surprised by the intensity of the students' work and by the good results at the end.

I have also seen that double periods are really useful because the learners are not interrupted as much and can keep working on one topic in a more focused way.

When I organized my own project (ghost stories) I made sure that the learners would be very active and speak a lot. Therefore I planned several information-gap exercises (info about ghosts... cut up story...) so they had to walk around and share and exchange the information. The lesson looked very

chaotic (I was worried about the noise) but I realized that it was actually very effective because they were all talking in English and using the language from the cards. Nevertheless it was necessary to sum up the story in the end to make sure that all the students had fully understood it.

Group work: When planning group-work I need to provide the learners with clear instructions, otherwise they waste a lot of time before getting started. The instructions should also be written down for the learners (to allow them to re-read the instructions and to keep an overview). When learners are working in groups I give them individual feedback as well as whole group feedback and steer them in the right direction.

### 3. I can make and use resources efficiently (flashcards, charts etc.). (p.42)



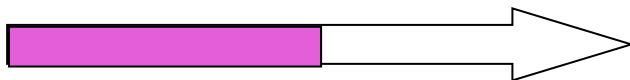
I have to design the handouts very carefully. They should be structured clearly so that the learners can use them easily and effectively. I should always make a good master copy that I can keep for later use. Therefore, I have to put a lot of effort into the materials because the learners should see that I do my work in a responsible way. As a consequence, they should handle their own work in a responsible way as well.

Teaching materials such as cards for specific exercises should be printed on good paper so that the learners can use them effectively (thin paper might tear). In that way I can also use them again (I have to make sure to get them back after the activity). It is also clever to laminate cards that will be used often.

A little technical tip that I learned in my Praktikum is to use different colors for each set of a card game so I can easily put lost cards back into the right pile. Simple, but helpful!

## Classroom Language (p. 43)

### 1. I can encourage learners to use the target language in their activities.



When I was watching the classes I noticed that learners tend to speak German in groups when they get into hot discussions about a topic. In role-plays or information gap activities it was easier for them to keep speaking English because they used the English prompts and that seemed to get them started the right way.

I have also seen the idea of using some form of language police in group work (one learner makes sure that everybody speaks English). The “language police” received a badge (printed and laminated) from the teacher and was responsible that his/her group would speak English in this lesson.

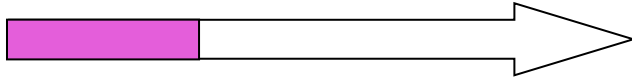
I also noticed that my Mentorin never used any German in class, even when the learners addressed her in English. When young students answered complex things in German she just summed up their request or reply in simple English. She uses lots of gestures with young learners – to help them understand what she is saying. With more advanced learners who address her in German she just answered “We speak English here” in a very factual tone. The students accepted it like a law of nature and switched back to English.

I also noticed that the teacher hardly ever corrected the students’ mistakes when they tried to express something difficult in English. They made lots of mistakes – the teacher let them finish and then just summed up the request/ or comment in correct English. It sounded something like “*Oh, I see, so you couldn’t do your homework because your internet connection wasn’t working and you*

*couldn't watch the video on Moodle. ...*" The students never felt embarrassed about their mistakes -- it seemed very natural and they felt that they had communicated their ideas successfully. I think this is really important, otherwise the learners will not want to speak in front of the class.

## Interaction with learners

### 2. I can keep and maximise the attention of learners during a lesson. (p.41)



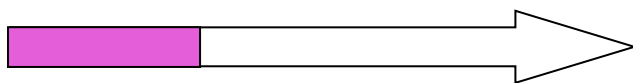
This was one of the most difficult things for me in my first teaching hours. It helped me a lot to use name-cards for the students, because I could call their names if somebody wasn't working. I also noticed that it is difficult to interrupt a class when they are working in groups. This can get quite noisy and I didn't want to shout into the class in order to be heard. My teacher used a little harmonica for this purpose. She played a very simple tune that means "Please listen to me." and raised one arm. The students know that this means that they should stop whatever they are doing in order to get some short instructions or information. Whoever notices this also raises their arm and spreads the information. It worked really well and within half a minute everybody seemed to be listening.

I also noticed in upper school in a literature discussion that the students were all interested and paying attention because the teacher seemed excited about the text and writer herself. This positive energy easily spread to the learners and they had lots of questions

In one of my lessons the students had just had a Spanish test before and were all excited. The teacher gave them an extra five minute break, opened the windows and allowed them to eat their snacks. Afterwards they were more relaxed and I could teach my lesson in a focused way. I see that such important needs of the learners need to be taken seriously in order to work efficiently afterwards.

## Grammar

### 4. I can evaluate and select grammatical exercises and activities, which support learning and encourage oral and written communication. p. 27



When choosing exercises for a present perfect tense grammar workshop, the most difficult thing in the beginning was to select exercises that were appropriate for the notions that had been introduced (e.g. duration, general experience etc.). I found a game that I was sure the pupils would enjoy but then I realized that it didn't fit any of the notions. I decided against it because it would only have confused the pupils. I learnt that each exercise should be clearly connected to a notion and that I shouldn't mix several notions (unless the students are really advanced and are revising things).

By practicing one notion at a time the learners can develop a clear picture of how this tense is used in real life. In the workshop the class practiced "Duration" for a whole hour by playing different games (What are the oldest items in this room? How long have you had all these things...? ) The learners were always using the same tense form for the same notion and just got used to it.

When watching them I noticed that they were getting more and more used to this form and it seemed to sound more normal and automatic to them to use the pres.perf. tense here (rather than the present tense as we would do in German.)

It is still difficult for me to find such exercises. I learned that I can use the "communicative use" tips in the Newby grammar and make up activities around them. This still seems difficult for me.