

# Observation Tasks

A workbook for student teachers

*Kati Somogyi-Tóth*

[https://www.tttjournal.co.uk/uploads/File/ttj\\_plus/Observation%20Tasks.pdf](https://www.tttjournal.co.uk/uploads/File/ttj_plus/Observation%20Tasks.pdf)

November 5<sup>th</sup> 2012

This booklet accompanies the article in  
The Teacher Trainer Journal on page 7 of Volume 26, Number 3.

This workbook belongs to.....

Name of Mentor:.....

Name of school:.....

Date:.....

# CONTENTS

Guidelines for lesson observation	8
<b>OBSERVATION TASKS</b>	
Class Profile	9
The teacher's action-zone	10
Conditions for learning	12
Classroom dynamics 1	13
Classroom dynamics 2	14
Homework	15
Giving instructions	16
The teacher's questions	18
Wait-time	20
Pacing	21
Student talk	22
Academic learning time	23
Unplanned classroom language	24
The use of the mother tongue	25
Accuracy and fluency	26
Evaluating written work	28
Blackboard work	29
Oral correction techniques	30
The plan and the lesson	31
<b>LESSON PLAN FORMAT</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>SELF-OBSERVATION TASKS</b>	
Guidelines for writing the Teaching Journal	33
General impressions of your teaching on the video	35
Use of voice	36
Giving instructions	37
The teacher's questions	38
Wait-time	39
Blackboard work	40
Oral correction techniques	41
The plan and the lesson	42
When the mentor didn't come in...	43
Self-evaluation	45
Getting student feedback on your teaching	46
Final reflections	47

---

## Introduction

You are about to embark on your teaching practice, where you will meet the day-to-day reality of life in the classroom. Observation of other teachers is an excellent way of helping oneself to become more aware of options and possibilities. This workbook has been designed to aid you in your observation of your mentor and of yourself.

The most significant theories and basic principles underlying teaching were presented to you during your campus course. Theory alone, however, will never produce competent teachers, just as experience alone is insufficient as a basis for development. Theory and practice will have to go hand in hand for you to be able to develop a critically reflective approach to teaching that can be used with any teaching method. This material is therefore intended to serve as a link between the more theoretically based campus course and the hands-on experience of everyday teaching.

Before you start your observations, please read this workbook thoroughly so that you have an idea of the range of sheets you can choose from. *Observation Tasks* does not present tasks in the order you are supposed to do them. You do not have to follow the order of the material, but please note that page 15 and page 24 have been designed to be applicable to a series of lessons. You should start working on these tasks after the first couple of lessons of your observation period.

Your mentor does not necessarily wish to know beforehand which particular points you want to focus on, as that might influence his or her teaching. At the same time, it is a good idea for you to find out about the focus of the lesson you will be observing as this will help you in your choice of an appropriate observation point. (e.g. You will not want to concentrate on the teacher's questions in a lesson predominantly devoted to writing.) You could, of course, invent your own observation task and you are welcome to do so!

In the first two or three lessons that you observe, feel free to write down your general impressions without using these sheets at all. This will help you to orientate yourself within the school and give you more time to prepare for the more focused observation to follow.

---

The first section will set tasks where you observe your mentor or your peers teaching. Later, when you yourself start teaching, you will be required to produce detailed lesson plans. *You should never teach a lesson which has not been carefully planned in written form.* You will find a format for lesson planning on page 32. Of course, you are invited to use any other layout that you prefer. After each lesson that you teach, you should write your reflections on an A4 sheet and attach it to the plan, which you should place in your *Teaching Journal* file.

The second section is intended for self-observation. The key factor of these tasks is that you gain insights into your teaching and find out more about yourself as a person and as a teacher. This will entail recording and, where possible, videoing your own lessons. Always ask both the mentor's and the students' permission first. Setting up the equipment requires a lot of time and the presence of a camera may be disruptive. For this reason, this type of activity can only be applied on one or two occasions. You can then replay and examine the same recording to complete the tasks on pages 35-39.

Your mentor will give you additional guidance and information to help you use the material effectively. Please note that you will learn and develop most from your own reflections and from discussion with your mentor, your peers and your own students.

I very much hope that the tasks in this workbook will help you to become more aware of how you work as a teacher, to develop skills to reflect on your practice and to become the best teacher you can possibly be.

*Thank you.*

### **Guidelines for lesson observation**

The observation of classroom teachers is serious business: it should not be approached casually. Learning how to observe in a manner acceptable takes time, careful reflection, personal tact, and creativity. An observer is a guest in the teacher's classroom, who is there thanks to the goodwill of the cooperating teacher. A guest's purpose for visiting is not to judge or criticize the classroom teacher or to offer suggestions, but simply to learn through observing.

#### Procedures:

You should arrive in the classroom a few minutes ahead of time. If something unexpected comes up and you are not able to observe the class, you should notify your mentor as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to keep your mentor informed.

Once you have entered the classroom, you should be as unobtrusive as possible, sitting where directed by the teacher. It is important to bear in mind that you are not a regular member of the class. You should take your written notes as unobtrusively as possible and you should not initiate or pursue a conversation unnecessarily.

Any notes you take during a classroom visit should be made accessible to the teacher if he or she requests. It is imperative that you keep impressions of the class private and confidential. Any direct references to teachers, in either formal or informal situations, must be kept anonymous.

**Class Profile**

1. School:
2. Teacher:
3. Class:
4. Number of children:                      Boys:                      Girls:
5. Age of children:
6. When did they start learning English?
7. Level:
8. Number of English lessons per week:
9. Number of teachers they have had so far:
10. Coursebook:
11. Coursebooks they have used so far:
12. Supplementary materials used concurrently with textbook:
13. Is the classroom a room set aside for English lessons?
14. Usual seating arrangement:
15. Any other relevant information:

## **Classroom management: The teacher's action-zone**

### **BACKGROUND**

*"Jackson & Lahaderne (1967) found that some students are twenty-five times more likely to be called on to speak in class than others. In language classrooms, where students may be of different levels of ability, the fact that some students have much more difficulty answering questions than others, may lead the teacher to call on only those students in the class who can be relied upon to answer the questions in order to maintain the momentum of the class. This reinforces the teacher's tendency to direct questions to only certain students in the class."* (Richards, J.C. and Lockhart, C. 1994)

Another tendency is for teachers to address their questions to the few students within their *action-zone*. This action-zone is indicated by those students with whom the teacher regularly enters into eye contact and who are nominated to take an active part in the lesson. Students seated in the middle front row seats and to the right hand side, girls, students whose names are easy to remember, and brighter students are more likely to participate in the lesson.

Strange as it may seem, the two tendencies tend to occur together. Who are the students who prefer to sit within this zone? Which students choose to sit outside of it? The purpose of the following task is to raise your awareness of these issues.

**The teacher's action-zone**

*Task: Draw a seating plan of the classroom and enter the students' names next to the seats. Put a tick against a student's name every time he or she is addressed.*

*When they are engaged in pairwork or groupwork, put a circle around the names of students who are working together.*



To what extent did the teacher succeed in involving all the students in the lesson?

Where was the teacher's action-zone?

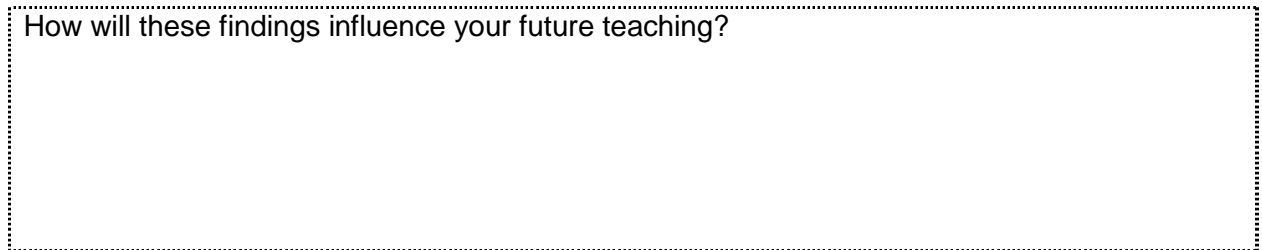
How were the students called upon to respond to questions?

Did any volunteer?

Did the seating facilitate better group dynamics?

*Add any questions you would like to discuss with your mentor.*

How will these findings influence your future teaching?



### Conditions for learning

**Task:** *As you observe this lesson, consider the following questions:*

What is there about the classroom, the activities, the teacher and the students that helps create conditions for effective learning? What aspects of the lesson might hinder learning?

*There may be questions that you yourself would like to ask the teacher about the various decisions taken before and during the lesson. Make a note of these for post-lesson discussion.*

Positive factors	Negative factors
The classroom	The classroom
The activities	The activities
The teacher	The teacher
The students	The students

Note down what you would like to 'steal' from your mentor to incorporate into your own teaching. This could include personal qualities, teaching skills and techniques, activities, the way the teacher creates a good classroom atmosphere, etc.:

**Classroom dynamics 1**

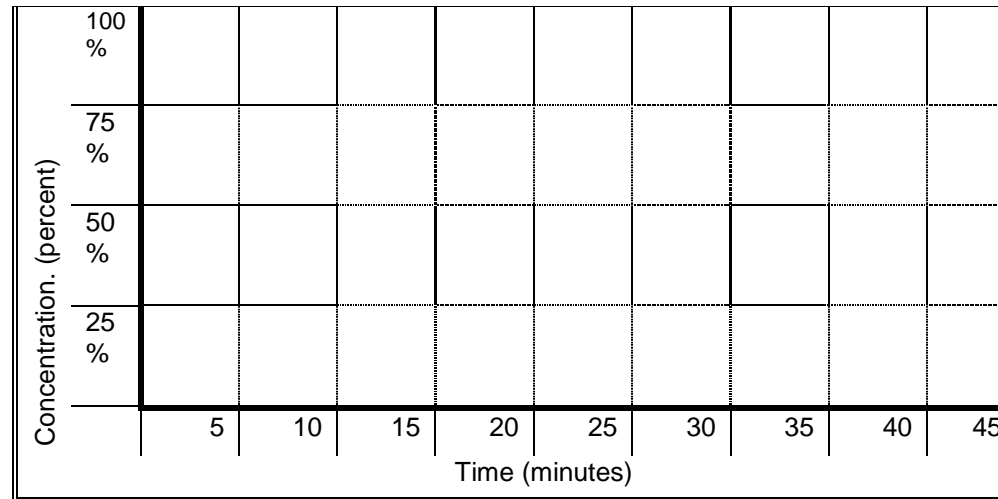
*Task: As soon as you enter the classroom, choose one student to observe closely and try to sit close to this student so that you can see his or her face. Observe this student at five-minute intervals and make a record of what you notice.*

After...	Activity in progress	What is the student saying/doing? Is s/he involved in the task?	Comments and questions to discuss with your mentor
5 mins.			
10 mins.			
15 mins.			
20 mins.			
25 mins.			
30 mins.			
35 mins.			
40 mins.			

What percentage of classroom time did this student spend concentrating on his or her work?  
 What insights into teaching did this observation activity provide?

**Classroom dynamics 2**

Task: Concentrate on a particular student. Sit somewhere where you can watch him or her easily but not too obviously. Mark on the graph below, using a simple wavy line, the degrees of concentration apparently being shown by the student as the lesson progresses. You may wish to watch two students at the same time, drawing two different colour lines.



Try to explain the behaviour you have seen and give any possible explanation for the apparent level of concentration at that time.

Student 1	Student 2

### Homework

This is an ongoing project which you should start after the first couple of lessons of your observation period.

*Task: In each lesson, take notes about the way your mentor gives and corrects homework. Towards the end of your observation period, please write down what you have learnt and how this will influence your own approach to setting homework and providing feedback on it.*

Homework	Time spent preparing students for HW.	Is the task relevant to the students' personal and language learning needs?	How does the teacher prepare the students for the task?	Is the class attentive while the teacher sets the HW? Are they interested?	<i>Next lesson:</i> Observe the form of feedback (oral/written; whole class/individual etc.)
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					

Does this approach produce interesting and valuable results?

How will these findings influence your future teaching?

*Discuss with your mentor any questions you may have about the various decisions taken about setting homework and giving feedback on it.*

## **Giving instructions**

### **BACKGROUND**

The best activity in the world will come to nothing if the students don't understand what it is they are supposed to do.

Instructions must be kept as *simple, short and clear* as possible. A clear voice, appropriate body language, good eye contact, and the use of visual aids all help instruction-giving. In addition, Scrivener (1994) proposes the following steps for giving clearer instructions:

*"Don't say things that are visible or obvious. (eg: I'm giving you a piece of paper.)*

*Don't give instructions that they don't need to know at this point. Separate instructions from other chit-chat. Create a silence beforehand. Make eye-contact with as many students as possible; find an authoritative tone and make sure they are listening before you start.*

*Use silence and gestures to pace the instructions and clarify their meaning.*

*Demonstrate rather than explain wherever possible.*

*Check that they have all understood what to do - don't assume that everyone will automatically understand what you have said. Getting one or two students to tell you what they are going to do is one very simple way of doing this."*

### Giving instructions

**Task:** Observe the instructions the teacher gives during the lesson and complete the table. For each skill, decide how successfully it was achieved, and write your questions for post-lesson consultation in the right-hand column of the table.

Instruction-giving skills	Clear? Not very clear? Unclear?	Discussion points
Signalling start of activity (creating a silence)		
Use of simple language		
Use of short sentences		
Logic and clarity		
Use of target language		
Voice quality		
Eye-contact		
Mime, gesture, body language		
Repeating instruction in a different way		
Not stating the obvious		
Use of visual aids		
Demonstration rather than explanation		
Checking understanding		
Signalling end of activity		

*Evaluate the instruction-giving that you observed.*

*Please use the empty space on the previous page to answer the following questions:*

In your opinion, which three elements made it successful?

Which elements made it less successful?

What are the most important factors for you personally when giving instructions?

What will you incorporate into your own teaching after doing this observation task?

## **The teacher's questions**

### **BACKGROUND**

Questioning is one of the most common techniques used by teachers. In some classrooms over half of class-time is taken up with question-and-answer exchanges.(Gall 1984) For the purposes of examining the role of questions in language teaching, three kinds of questions are distinguished:

*Procedural questions* have to do with classroom routines and procedures as well as interaction between people.

Other questions have to do with the content of learning and are classified into two types by Long and Sato(1983):

*Display questions* are questions that teachers know the answer to and which are designed to elicit or display particular structures or vocabulary. These questions are mostly short and do not engage students in higher-level thinking. Researchers have found that they are much more frequent in ESL classrooms.

*Referential questions* are genuine questions which teachers do not know the answer to. In real life most questions are referential. Answering referential questions prompts a greater effort on the part of the learner and involves a higher level of thinking.

Asking such type of questions also requires a greater effort on the part of the teacher, who also needs to pay attention to the meaning of the answer given. Unless this happens, there is not much point in asking referential questions in the first place!  
(These two question types are also sometimes referred to as convergent and divergent.)



### Wait-time

An important dimension of a teacher's questioning skills is *wait-time*. This is the length of time the teacher waits after posing a question and before calling on a student to answer it, or rephrasing the question, or directing it to another student, or giving the answer.

Teachers often use a very short wait-time (only one second on average), which is rarely sufficient to enable students to respond. When wait-time is increased to three or four seconds, the amount of student participation also increases, together with the quality and the average length of the responses.

Task: *Measure the teacher's wait-time and fill in this table.*

Teacher's question	Length of wait-time	Student's response

What was the average wait-time?

Did anything surprise you?

Are there any types of activities where an extended wait-time might not be desirable?

Can wait-time adversely effect the dynamics of a lesson?

Does one factor exclude the other?

*Please discuss these points with your mentor.*

### Pacing

Pacing is one way in which momentum is achieved in a lesson. Richards (1990) identifies pacing as one of the most significant features of a teacher's lessons. Deciding how much time to allocate to each part of the lesson is an important decision which teachers must make while planning or teaching a lesson.

These are important decisions, since teaching involves monitoring the extent to which students are engaged in learning tasks. Teachers have to decide when it is time to move on to another activity. This should always be before the attention of students begins to fade. Generally it is better to stop an activity when it is going well - provided it has achieved its broad aims - than to let it peter out.

Task: Familiarize yourself with the table below. Write up a lesson report, i.e. a list of the main features of the lesson, and add your comments and questions on pacing.

Activity	Draw arrows from activities to comments	Comments and questions
1.		<i>Students became bored.</i>
2.		
3.		<i>The activity finished at the right time.</i>
4..		
5.		<i>The activity finished too early.</i>
6.		

Do you think a lesson that is fairly rapidly paced is necessarily better than one that is not?  
 Will rapid pacing adversely affect the wait-time after questions?  
 Does one factor exclude the other?

Discuss these points with your mentor and then give your own opinion:

**Student talk**

**Task:** Observe the length of the utterances the students make. Tick a box each time a student says something in English and put a circle round the box when the utterance is meaningful, i.e. real, and not just artificial classroom language.

Utterance ↓	1 word	2 words	3 words	4 words	5 words	More than 5 words
Nr.1						
Nr.2						
Nr.3						
Nr.4						
Nr.5						
Nr.6						
Nr.7						
Nr.8						
Nr.9						
Nr.10						
Nr.11						
Nr.12						
Nr.13						
Nr.14						
Nr.15						
Nr.16						
Nr.17						
Nr.18						
Nr.19						
Nr.20						
Nr.21						
Nr.22						
Nr.23						
Nr.24						

Examine your completed grid. Do any patterns or tendencies emerge? Think about what aspects of our teaching may prompt longer answers and more natural language.

### Academic learning time

The amount of time students spend on classroom activities has been identified as one of the most important factors affecting student learning. The time during which students successfully achieve *high accuracy rates* in completing learning activities is known as *academic learning time*. An important challenge for teachers is to maximize this 'academic learning time' in lessons.

**Task:** *During this lesson, measure the time in which students are fully involved in learning activities. After the lesson, discuss your findings with your mentor.*

Activity	Discussion questions	Academic learning time (mins.)
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
		<i>Total:</i>

What was the rest of the time spent on? Was that time well spent?  
 How much time did the teacher talk relative to the amount of time the learners spoke?(e.g. 50-50%)?  
 Could this be improved? How?  
 What have you learnt from this observation?

### Unplanned classroom language

In the past few years, interest in teacher talk has shifted away from a concern with quantity towards a concern with quality. Cadorath and Harris (1998) argue that chatting, or "social English", is an important kind of teacher talk and has a significant role to play in bringing our classrooms to life:

*"Teachers (and their trainers) should give more priority to chatting in their repertoire of classroom activities. Unplanned situations or unstructured activities can sometimes create more effective, natural, and memorable communicative opportunities than well-planned communicative activities.*

*In the longer term, in most classes, a greater awareness of distinction between real questions and display questions, and a greater capacity for responding to the unexpected, and to student communication, will help to produce a natural balance between planned and unplanned teacher-student interaction."*

**Task:** *Over a number of lessons, collect classroom data about spontaneous language use. Discuss your findings, questions and opinions with your mentor.*

Opportunities for chat		Length of chat	Discussion questions
missed	used		

What have you learnt from this observation?



### Accuracy and fluency

Practice activities have two objectives: precision at applying the system, and automatization of the system. These two objectives are called **accuracy** and **fluency**. The two essential criteria for choosing, designing and evaluating practice activities are the *quantity* and the *quality* factors. Simply put, this means the more practice the better, but with attention to form, in the interest of accuracy.

Task: *Decide whether the activities in this lesson are oriented towards fluency or accuracy and whether attention has been paid to both quality and quantity.*

Activity	Fluency-oriented		Accuracy-oriented		Comments and questions on quality and quantity
	spoken	written	spoken	written	
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					

Please continue overleaf ⇨

Do you think the balance of activities was right or would you like to change it?

Did the accuracy practice activities motivate the learners to want to be accurate?

Did they have enough thinking time available to pay attention to form?

Did the fluency activities attempt to simulate real-life language use and did the learners pay attention to meaning?

Was there any built-in need to interact?

What insights into the lesson did this activity provide?

*Discuss these points with your mentor.*

**Evaluating written work**

Task: *Ask two teachers for permission to collect the students' exercise books. Ideally, the students should be of the same age and language level.*

What do you learn about their teaching style from the quality of the students' written work? What correction/assessment techniques do they use? What do the exercise books tell you about the teachers' own views about teaching?

Class A	Class B

What have you learnt from this observation?

**Blackboard work**

The blackboard is the teacher's most traditional resource. Organised blackboard work is a basic skill which helps students learn and organise their own work.

Task: *At two points during the lesson, copy the board's contents in the tables below:*

--

--

What did the teacher use the board for?

Did he or she use it effectively?

How did he or she organise her work?

What were the students doing while the teacher was writing on the board?

What have you learnt from this observation?

**Oral correction techniques**

Task: Use the chart to help you record data about how the teacher corrects. As you hear a mistake being made, put the sentence in the appropriate column.

Teacher did not correct this mistake	Teacher corrected this mistake automatically	Teacher signalled for self-correction for this mistake	Teacher invited peer-correction here

It is just as important to praise students when they are doing really well as it is to point out their mistakes. Teachers can show their appreciation or disapproval through the use of facial expression and body language. Which of these does your mentor use?

Discuss with your mentor *why* he or she chose to correct in the way she did and write down what you learnt from this observation.

### The plan and the lesson

A plan gives a lesson a framework, but teachers almost inevitably alter their plan as the lesson develops. Are plans, then, made to be changed?

Why plan lessons in the first place?

Task: Before *this observation task*, ask your mentor to give you a copy of his or her lesson plan. You will compare the actual lesson your mentor taught to the original plan. The changes he or she made to the plan will be an important element in the post-lesson consultation with your mentor.

Timing	Activities in the original lesson plan	Timing	This is what happened in the lesson	Discussion points: reasons for changing the original plan

What insights into planning did this observation activity provide?

**Lesson Plan**

Class:

Teacher:

Date:

Anticipated difficulties and solutions:

Timing	Activity	Objectives	What the teacher says/does (e.g. instructions, explanations)	Grouping	Materials needed

By the end of the lesson, I expect the students will be better able to...

Mentor's signature

### Guidelines for writing the Teaching Journal

Now that you have started teaching, you should also start writing your Teaching Journal. This means that after you have taught a lesson, you should attach your afterthoughts and reflections to the lesson plan. The file you build up in this way will be your Teaching Journal. This will serve as a useful record of the important features of your lessons and will help you monitor your own teaching.

**Task:** *The following questions have been provided to help you evaluate your work. You are not required to answer each and every question each time: you can select the most appropriate points and add any that seem relevant.*

#### GENERAL QUESTIONS

- Do you have any feelings about the lesson that you would like to express first?
- How did you feel while you were teaching?
- What problems did you encounter and how did you deal with them?

#### THE PLANNING

- How useful was the plan?
- In retrospect, was your lesson prepared thoroughly?
- What difficulties did you anticipate? Did these areas prove difficult or were there others?
- Did your students learn from this lesson what you expected them to learn or something different? Give reasons for any differences.
- Did you depart from the plan? If you did, why was this necessary?
- Did the timing go according to plan?
- Was there a logical and smooth linking of the stages?
- How worthwhile were the activities? Write down any evidence that your activity was successful/unsuccessful.

Activity	Grade (1-5)	Why was it successful/unsuccessful? How could you improve or replace it?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		

(Adapted from: Malderez, A. and Bodóczy, C. (1999). *Mentor Courses*. CUP: 209-210.)



## THE LESSON

- Was the lesson well-structured? Did it have a clear beginning, a logical procession, and a sense of an ending?
- Was there enough variety in the lesson?
- Did it have rhythm and flow?
- What were the most effective parts? Give your reasons.
- What were the least effective parts? Give your reasons.
- Were your instructions clear?
- What classroom arrangement did you use?
- What will you do next to follow up this lesson?

## THE STUDENTS

- Did the students work well for you?
- Were the students involved? (Who was *not* involved? Why?)
- Did the students have a fair share of time to talk?
- Did you provide a high level of active practice for all learners?
- Write down something(s) that a pupil said where language was used meaningfully.
- Which questions provided a thoughtful answer? Write down the question(s).
- Were the activities at an appropriate level to stretch and challenge them intellectually?
- Were there any opportunities for students to give their own ideas?

## YOU

- How did you keep the students interested and motivated?
- Did you encourage learner participation?
- In what ways were you responsive to the students' needs?
- How did you give learners feedback on their efforts?
- Would you do anything differently if you taught this lesson again?
- What have you learnt?

*N.B. Remember to include positive aspects of your teaching as well as your thoughts about how you would like to develop. Ask your mentor whether he or she agrees with your self-evaluation.*

## SELF-OBSERVATION TASK

## Focus: The Teacher

**General impressions of your teaching**

Audio and video recordings are invaluable sources of accurate information on the actual teaching process as they provide objective first-hand data for analysing individual teacher behaviour. They can be used to obtain general impressions or alternatively to focus on specific concerns such as teacher talk, naturalistic interactions and verbatim utterances.

Although the presence of the video recorder is intrusive and may contribute to substantial changes in regular behaviour patterns, we would strongly recommend its use for teacher training purposes.

Task:

1. Ask for permission from your mentor and the students to make a video recording of your teaching.
2. Video 20 minutes of your lesson on a tripod. No camera operator need be present.
3. Review the tape in private and ask yourself the questions in the table below.
4. Recapture how you felt when you were teaching during the recording.
5. Ask your students for their views on that part of the lesson.

Points to consider	Reflections/suggestions
Do I look like the person I think I am?	↩
Do I look like the teacher I think I am?	↩
Am I behaving in ways I think I behave?	↩
What mannerisms are evident?	↩
Do I want to modify the image I have of myself?	↩
Did I learn anything unexpected?	↩
What things have I learnt from this analysis?	↩

### Use of voice

One of the teacher's chief tools is the voice. The way we speak has a crucial impact on our students.

**Task 1:** *Listen to a recording of your lesson and assess the quality of your speech. Use some of the following questions to guide you in your evaluation:*

Points to consider	Reflections/suggestions
<i>General impression:</i> How did I sound? Clear? Expressive? Lively?	↩
<i>Pronunciation:</i> Did I have problems with any vowels or consonants?	↩
<i>Rhythm:</i> Was I too slow or too fast?	↩
<i>Audibility:</i> Was I too loud or too soft?	↩
<i>Intonation:</i> Did I sound interesting or dull?	↩
<i>Variation:</i> Did I vary the pace and volume of my voice where appropriate?	↩
<i>Stress:</i> Did I have any problems with stress in individual words or sentences?	↩
What do I need to improve?	

**Task 2:** *Discuss the above points with your mentor. What is her opinion?*

**Giving instructions**

Task: *After tape-recording or videoing a lesson, evaluate your own instruction-giving skills in the same way as you did when you observed your mentor. Remember to note the positive aspects of your lesson as well as those you would like to improve.*

You may wish to do this task both at the start and at the end of your teaching practice, so that you can evaluate the progress you have made.

Instruction-giving skills	Clear? Not very clear? Unclear?	Comments and questions
Signal for start of activity(creating a silence)		
Use of simple language		
Use of short sentences		
Logic and clarity		
Use of target language		
Voice quality		
Eye-contact		
Mime, gesture, body language		
Repeating instruction in a different way		
Not stating the obvious		
Use of visual aids		
Demonstration rather than explanation		
Checking understanding		
Signalling end of activity		

*Ask your mentor to fill in the same table for you and compare his or her evaluative comments to your own, then answer the following questions:*

Which three elements made your instruction-giving successful?

What do you need to work on?

How has this task helped your teaching?





**Blackboard work**

Task: *After a lesson you have taught, copy the board's contents in the table below:*

--

*Now assess the quality of your blackboard work. Use the following questions to guide you in your work:*

- What did I use the board for?
- Did I use it effectively?
- Did I use it randomly or systematically?
- Did I prepare in advance how I wanted the board to look?
- Did I use the board for unpredictable notes? Where did I put these?
- Was the boardwork clear, rather than muddled or disorganised?
- How did I highlight important points?
- Was my writing legible?
- Did I put anything on the blackboard before the lesson began? If so, why?
- Did I write on the board with my back to the class for long periods?
- What were the students doing while I was writing on the board?
- Did the students write on the board?
- Did I check that everything I put on the board was correct?
- Did I clean the board at the end of the lesson?

*This is how I think I can improve my boardwork:*

*This is how my mentor thinks I can improve my boardwork:*

---

**Oral correction techniques**

**Task:** *Before you do this task, please study the sheet you filled in when you observed your mentor's correcting skills. Now do the same task for your own teaching, based on a video recording of your lesson. Complete the table and ask your mentor to make some evaluative comments.*

I did not correct this mistake. Why not?	I corrected this mistake automatically. Why?	I signalled for self-correction for this mistake. How?	I invited peer-correction here. How?

Write down what you learnt from this observation.

## SELF-OBSERVATION TASK

Focus: The Teacher

**The plan and the lesson**Task: *Fill in the table below in the same way as you did when you observed your mentor.*

Timing	Activities in the lesson plan	Timing	This is what happened in the lesson	Reasons for changing the original plan

What have you learnt? Write down how you would like to develop your teaching.

**When the mentor didn't come in...**

Task: *After teaching a lesson unobserved by your mentor, evaluate your own performance. Please answer the following questions in as much detail as possible.*

Questions about my teaching

- What difference did being alone in the classroom (i.e. without a mentor) make to my teaching?
- How did I feel while I was teaching?
- Did I do anything differently than usual?
- What did I set out to teach?
- What teaching materials did I use? How effective were they?
- What grouping arrangements did I use?
- Was my lesson teacher-dominated?
- Did the students work well for me?
- How did I respond to the needs of different students?
- What kind of teacher-student interaction occurred?
- Did anything amusing or unusual occur?
- Did I have any problems with the lesson?

- Did I depart from the lesson plan? If so, why? Did the change make things better or worse?
- What went best in the lesson?
- Which parts of the lesson were least successful?
- How did I modify my language to facilitate teaching and learning?
- Did I discover anything new about my teaching?
- Would I teach the lesson differently if I taught it again?

#### Questions about the students

- Did the students behave differently when my mentor/their teacher wasn't observing the lesson?
- Did the students contribute actively to the lesson?
- Were the students challenged by the lesson?
- What opportunities did they have for authentic language use?
- What did the students really learn from the lesson?

**Self-evaluation**

Task: Towards the end of your teaching practice evaluate your own performance according to the following criteria:

- My personal repertoire:

Respect for my students:	1	2	3	4	5
Empathy:	1	2	3	4	5
Authenticity:	1	2	3	4	5
Open-mindedness:	1	2	3	4	5
Enthusiasm:	1	2	3	4	5
Self-confidence:	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

- My knowledge of English: 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

- My knowledge of ELT methodology: 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

- My pedagogical knowledge: 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

- My ability to read a situation, respond to it, and improve: 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

Key: 5 = excellent

1 = very poor

Ask your mentor to fill in this table for you and then compare his or her findings to your own.

Acknowledgement: Fiona Balloch gave me the information this task is built on.

### Getting student feedback on your teaching

Getting feedback from students is an important, though daunting part of your teaching. It is also an excellent opportunity for you to develop. You might like to photocopy this questionnaire and ask your students to fill it in at the end of your teaching practice. This may provide very interesting and valuable insights. Below are some questions you can ask your students. You may wish to translate this questionnaire into the students' mother tongue.

#### What is your opinion of my lessons?

*Please fill in this questionnaire about my teaching so that I can learn from your feedback. Your opinion is important to me.*

1. Which lesson do you remember best?
2. What were your favourite types of activities?
3. What is it you liked most about my lessons?
4. How do you think I could improve my teaching?
5. Do you think you were challenged appropriately?
6. Can you speak better English now? How much progress do you think you have made ?
7. What is your most important piece of advice to me?

*Thank you for sharing your impressions and observations with me.*



### Final Reflections

Task: *Towards the end of your teaching practice ask yourself the following questions and answer them in the space below.*

1. What do you feel are the most important things that you learnt during your teaching practice?
2. What kind of relationship did you establish with your pupils?
3. What kind of relationship did you establish with the staff?
4. To what extent did you take part in the school's activities, other than your English lessons?
5. To what extent were you reliable, punctual and well-organised?
6. Was your command of English sufficient?
7. What was the high point of your teaching practice for you?
8. What are your strengths as a language teacher?
9. What do you feel are your limitations at present?
10. Do you think there are any inconsistencies in your teaching?
11. Which aspects of teaching did you particularly enjoy?
12. To which aspects of teaching do you need to give special attention in order to improve?
13. And finally, quietly ask yourself: Did I love teaching?

Source: Richards, J.C. and Lockhart, C. (1994): *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. CUP

**Thank you for working through *Observation Tasks*.  
We wish you good luck.**