



Cambridge English

Teacher Development

Reflecting on classroom practices

Aims

- To help teachers develop abilities to reflect on their classroom practices

Materials required

- None

Appropriate for

- Teachers with any level of experience

Reflective teaching refers to thinking critically about your classroom practices to justify why you conduct them. In other words, it is a process of observing and evaluating yourself. It can be done in the form of 'reflection-in-action' (when teachers think about their practice and modify it while in progress) and 'reflection-on-action' (when teachers think about several aspects of the practice after they have completed it). Both kinds of reflection are useful for professional development because the thinking process can give critical and new insights into how the quality of the activities they include in their lessons can be improved. There are also different methods of doing reflection-on-action such as keeping a diary, self-video recording, peer observation, and gathering learners' feedback. However, teachers can find reflection tasks difficult to set up and carry out as a result of factors such as limited time, lack of experience, and little professional know-how. Therefore, this guided reflection task could be of interest and use to teachers who would like to reflect on their in-class practices.

Activity 1

Description of the practice

1. *You are going to do some reflective teaching. First, choose the skill or language point you want to focus on.*
 - a. *Reading*
 - b. *Writing*
 - c. *Listening*
 - d. *Speaking*
 - e. *Grammar*
 - f. *Vocabulary*
 - g. *Other*



2. *Choose the focus of the reflection.*
 - a. *Giving instructions*
 - b. *Classroom management*
 - c. *Time management*
 - d. *Use of the board*
 - e. *Monitoring*
 - f. *Giving feedback*
 - g. *Teacher talking time (TTT) versus student talking time (STT)*
 - h. *Student talking time (STT)*
 - i. *Other*
3. *Now write down some questions about this point which you would like to reflect on.*

For example, giving instructions:

 - a. *Are my instructions always clear?*
 - b. *Do I ever speak too quickly or above-level?*
 - c. *Do all my learners always understand and follow my instructions?*
 - d. *How do I ensure that everyone has understood my instructions?*
 - e. *Are all my learners informing me when they haven't understood?*

Activity 2 Either: Reflection-in-action

1. *When you are in the classroom and teaching the lesson, try to keep in mind the questions you asked yourself in Activity 1.*
 - a. *Do you find yourself doing anything differently from what you had anticipated?*
 - b. *In what ways can you adapt your approach or style in order to improve your lessons?*
 - c. *If possible at the end of the lesson, ask your learners to reflect on your conduct too, as their opinions can provide you with valuable information.*

Activity 2 Or: Reflection-on-action

1. *When you are in the classroom and teaching the lesson, try to keep in mind the questions you asked yourself in Activity 1.*

After the lesson, read your questions through and make notes about the answers. Then, consider:

- a. *How successful were you regarding your teaching and reflection focus?*
- b. *What were the negative and positive points?*
- c. *What would you change or take into account the next time you do this?*

Activity 3

Learner reflection

Your learners can be a valuable source of information where self-reflection is concerned as you may find that they do not perceive you in the same way as you anticipated, and may also be able to make suggestions as to how you can improve your lessons.

1. *To find this out, you should prepare a mini questionnaire related to your reflection task, and ask learners to work in pairs or groups to complete it at the end of the lesson.*



For example, giving instructions:

- a. *Are my instructions always clear?*
 - b. *Do I ever speak too quickly or above-level?*
 - c. *Do all my learners always understand and follow my instructions?*
 - d. *How do I ensure that everyone has understood my instructions?*
 - e. *Are all my learners informing me when they haven't understood?*
2. *Collect the questionnaires and then compare their answers to your own.*
 - a. *What are the similarities and differences?*
 - b. *How do you explain the differences?*
 - c. *Will you make any changes to this aspect of your teaching in future?*

Activity 4

Teacher reflection

1. *How much do you think you have developed your skills to choose a task for which you can do reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action?*
2. *What are the basic principles of setting up a task for reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action?*
3. *What are the ways of evaluating the task in the form of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action?*
4. *How has this reflective experience influenced you?*
5. *How effective is reflection as a professional development tool?*

Further reading

Farrell, TS (2004) *Reflective Practice in Action: 80 reflection breaks for busy teachers*. North America: Corwin-volume discounts.

Freeman, D and Richards, JC (eds) (1996) *Teacher Learning in Language Teaching (Vol. 1)*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lockhart, C (1994) *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, JC and Farrell, TSC (eds) (2005) *Professional Development for Language Teachers: Strategies for teacher learning*. Germany: Ernst Klett Sprachen.

Wallace, MJ (1991) *Training Foreign Language Teachers: A reflective approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



This item is based on material from Cambridge English Teacher, the professional membership that supports teaching excellence. Find out more at www.CambridgeEnglishTeacher.org



© 2015, Cambridge University Press and Cambridge English Language Assessment



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS



CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH
Language Assessment
Part of the University of Cambridge