

European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages

A reflection tool for language teacher education

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TEFL Methodology I

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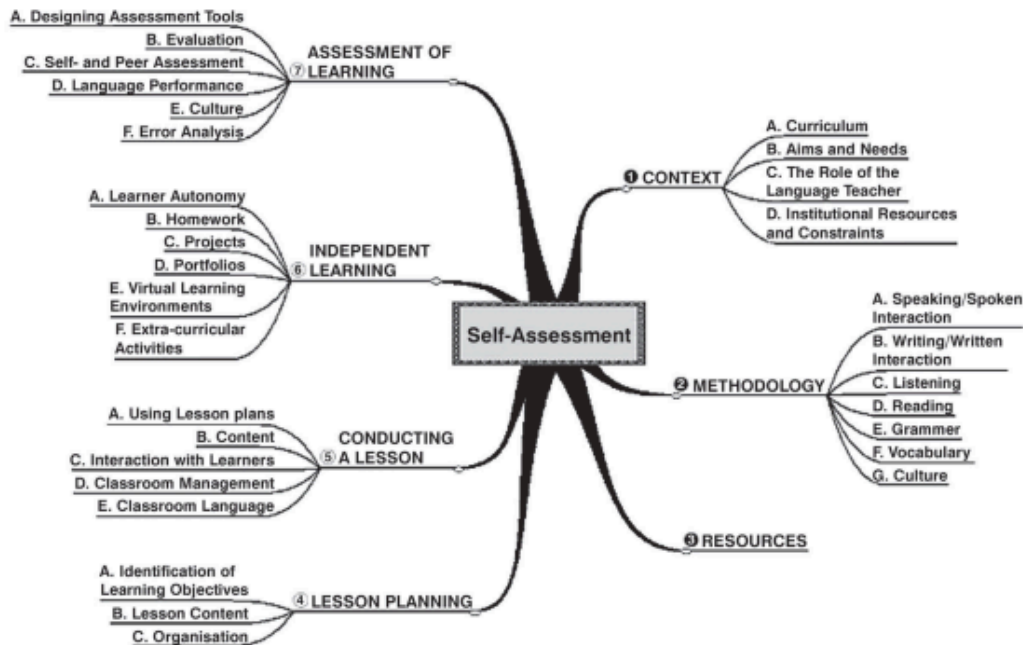
EPOSTL
European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages

The self-assessment descriptors

At the heart of the EPOSTL are the 193 descriptors of competences related to language teaching which comprise the self-assessment section. These descriptors may be regarded as a set of core competences which language teachers should strive to attain.

Categorisation of descriptors

The descriptors are grouped into seven general categories. These represent areas in which teachers require knowledge and a variety of competences and need to make decisions related to teaching. Each heading has been sub-divided as follows:



Self-assessment scales

Each descriptor is accompanied by a bar, which will help you to visualise and chart your own competence. You can colour in the bar according to your own assessment. This may take place at different stages of your teacher education.

On completion of your teacher education programme you may have produced a bar which looks something like this.

1. I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities.



In the above example the student has made self-assessments at three stages of her teacher education, which chart her growing competence. However, she feels she still has some way to go and has therefore left part of the bar blank. She has also added the date on which the self-assessment was carried out. It should be noted that it is not expected that all bars should be filled in at the end of your teaching programme! Learning to teach and becoming a good teacher is a continuous and life-long process!

Although the descriptors provide a systematic way of considering competences, they should not be regarded as a checklist! It is important that they act as a stimulus for students, teacher educators and mentors to discuss important aspects of teacher education which underlie them and that they contribute to developing professional awareness.

Further information about using the EPOSTL can be found in the users' guide.

Context

Introduction

Decisions relating to teaching are strongly influenced by the educational and social context in which teachers work. This context is mainly predetermined by the requirements in the national and/or local curricula. However, there may also be international recommendations and documents, which will need consideration. Institutional constraints are another factor to be considered as they may have considerable impact on the work of teachers.

A further dimension of the language learning context includes the overall aims and specific needs of learners, which, when identified, determine what the teacher does.

Language teachers have a number of roles to play. In addition to teaching their subjects they may need to promote the value of language learning among learners, parents and society in general and build on and make the most of what learners bring with them.

Teachers need to ensure ongoing professional growth through self- and peer-assessment, as well as keeping up with information available in the field.



**A. Curriculum**

1. I can understand the requirements set in national and local curricula.



2. I can design language courses around the requirements of the national and local curricula.



3. I can understand the principles formulated in relevant European documents (e.g. Common European Framework of Reference, European Language Portfolio).



4. I can understand and integrate content of European documents (e.g. Common European Framework of Reference, European Language Portfolio) as appropriate in my teaching.





B. Aims and Needs

1. I can understand the personal, intellectual and cultural value of learning other languages.



2. I can take account of overall, long-term aims based on needs and expectations.



3. I can take into account differing motivations for learning another language.



4. I can take into account the cognitive needs of learners (problem solving, drive for communication, acquiring knowledge etc.).



5. I can take into account the affective needs of learners (sense of achievement, enjoyment etc.).



6. I can take into account and assess the expectations and impact of educational stakeholders (employers, parents, funding agencies etc.).



7. I can take into account attainment target levels set in curricula (e.g. deriving from the *Common European Framework of Reference*).





C. The Role of the Language Teacher

1. I can promote the value and benefits of language learning to learners, parents and others.



2. I can appreciate and make use of the value added to the classroom environment by learners with diverse cultural backgrounds.



3. I can take into account the knowledge of other languages learners may already possess and help them to build on this knowledge when learning additional languages.



4. I can draw on appropriate theories of language, learning, culture etc. and relevant research findings to guide my teaching.



5. I can critically assess my teaching on the basis of experience, learner feedback and learning outcomes and adapt it accordingly.



6. I can critically assess my teaching in relation to theoretical principles.



7. I can accept feedback from my peers and mentors and build this into my teaching.



8. I can observe my peers, recognise different methodological aspects of their teaching and offer them constructive feedback.





9. I can locate relevant articles, journals and research findings relating to aspects of teaching and learning.



10. I can identify and investigate specific pedagogical/ didactic issues related to my learners or my teaching in the form of action research.



Methodology

Introduction

Methodology is the implementation of learning objectives through teaching procedures. It is based on principles deriving from theories of language description, language learning and language use.

Specific teaching procedures may be applied to support the learning of aspects of the language system, such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. However, methodology should reflect the fact that these aspects of language are always present when skills are being practised and are therefore inextricably linked to communication. Also, the teaching of culture and its relationship with language will require specific methodological insights.

Methodology may focus on how teachers can deal with the four main skills of speaking, writing, listening and reading, as reflected in the categorisation of this section. However, in written and oral communication in the classroom two or more skills will usually be integrated and are rarely treated in isolation.

It may be the case that sets of principles and teaching procedures together comprise a coherent method or approach. A method refers to fairly fixed sets of teaching procedures (e.g. 'audio-lingual', 'suggestopedia'), in which the teacher's role is closely defined. An approach is 'the theoretical rationale that underlies everything that happens in the classroom.' (H.D. Brown, 2002: 11). It is usually manifested through sets of principles which, in turn, guide the choice of teaching procedures. Examples are 'the communicative approach' and 'task-based learning'.



A. Speaking/Spoken Interaction

1. I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities.



2. I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners of differing abilities to participate.



3. I can evaluate and select meaningful speaking and interactional activities to encourage learners to express their opinions, identity, culture etc.



4. I can evaluate and select a range of meaningful speaking and interactional activities to develop fluency (discussion, role play, problem solving etc.).



5. I can evaluate and select different activities to help learners to become aware of and use different text types (telephone conversations, transactions, speeches etc.).



6. I can evaluate and select a variety of materials to stimulate speaking activities (visual aids, texts, authentic materials etc.).



7. I can evaluate and select activities which help learners to participate in ongoing spoken exchanges (conversations, transactions etc.) and to initiate or respond to utterances appropriately.



8. I can evaluate and select various activities to help learners to identify and use typical features of spoken language (informal language, fillers etc.).





9. I can help learners to use communication strategies (asking for clarification, comprehension checks etc.) and compensation strategies (paraphrasing, simplification etc) when engaging in spoken interaction.

10. I can evaluate and select a variety of techniques to make learners aware of, discriminate and help them to pronounce sounds in the target language.

11. I can evaluate and select a variety of techniques to make learners aware of and help them to use stress, rhythm and intonation.

12. I can evaluate and select a range of oral activities to develop accuracy (grammar, word choice etc.).



B. Writing/Written Interaction

1. I can evaluate and select meaningful activities to encourage learners to develop their creative potential.



2. I can evaluate and select a range of meaningful writing activities to help learners become aware of and use appropriate language for different text types (letters, stories, reports etc).



3. I can evaluate and select texts in a variety of text types to function as good examples for the learners' writing.



4. I can evaluate and select a variety of materials to stimulate writing (authentic materials, visual aids etc.).



5. I can evaluate and select activities which help learners to participate in written exchanges (emails, job applications etc.) and to initiate or respond to texts appropriately.



6. I can help learners to gather and share information for their writing tasks.



7. I can help learners to plan and structure written texts (e.g. by using mind maps, outlines etc.).



8. I can help learners to monitor, reflect on, edit and improve their own writing.





9. I can use peer-assessment and feedback to assist the writing process.

10. I can use a variety of techniques to help learners to develop awareness of the structure, coherence and cohesion of a text and produce texts accordingly.

11. I can evaluate and select a variety of techniques to make learners aware of and use spelling patterns and irregular spelling.

12. I can evaluate and select writing activities to consolidate learning (grammar, vocabulary, spelling etc.).



C. Listening

1. I can select texts appropriate to the needs, interests and language level of the learners.



2. I can provide a range of pre-listening activities which help learners to orientate themselves to a text.



3. I can encourage learners to use their knowledge of a topic and their expectations about a text when listening.



4. I can design and select different activities in order to practise and develop different listening strategies (listening for gist, specific information etc.)



5. I can design and select different activities which help learners to recognise and interpret typical features of spoken language (tone of voice, intonation, style of speaking etc.).



6. I can help learners to apply strategies to cope with typical aspects of spoken language (background noise, redundancy etc.).



7. I can help learners to apply strategies to cope with difficult or unknown vocabulary of a text.



8. I can evaluate and select a variety of post-listening tasks to provide a bridge between listening and other skills.



**D. Reading**

1. I can select texts appropriate to the needs, interests and language level of the learners.



2. I can provide a range of pre-reading activities to help learners to orientate themselves to a text.



3. I can encourage learners to use their knowledge of a topic and their expectations about a text when reading.



4. I can apply appropriate ways of reading a text in class (e.g. aloud, silently, in groups etc.).



5. I can set different activities in order to practise and develop different reading strategies according to the purpose of reading (skimming, scanning etc.).



6. I can help learners to develop different strategies to cope with difficult or unknown vocabulary in a text.



7. I can evaluate and select a variety of post-reading tasks to provide a bridge between reading and other skills.



8. I can recommend books appropriate to the needs, interests and language level of the learners.



9. I can help learners to develop critical reading skills (reflection, interpretation, analysis etc.).





A. Identification of Learning Objectives

1. I can identify curriculum requirements and set learning aims and objectives suited to my learners' needs and interests.



2. I can plan specific learning objectives for individual lessons and/or for a period of teaching.



3. I can set objectives which challenge learners to reach their full potential.



4. I can set objectives which take into account the differing levels of ability and special educational needs of the learners.



5. I can decide whether to formulate objectives in terms of skills, topics, situations, linguistic systems (functions, notions, forms etc.).



6. I can set objectives which encourage learners to reflect on their learning.





B. Lesson Content

1. I can structure lesson plans and/or plan for periods of teaching in a coherent and varied sequence of content.



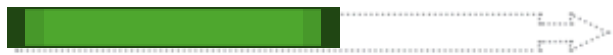
2. I can vary and balance activities to include a variety of skills and competences.



3. I can plan activities to ensure the interdependence of listening, reading, writing and speaking.



4. I can plan activities to emphasise the interdependence of language and culture.



5. I can plan activities which link grammar and vocabulary with communication.



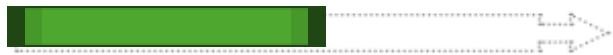
6. I can plan to teach elements of other subjects using the target language (cross-curricular teaching, CLIL etc.).



7. I can identify time needed for specific topics and activities and plan accordingly.



8. I can design activities to make the learners aware and build on their existing knowledge.

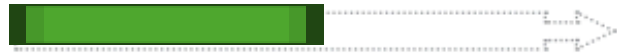




9. I can vary and balance activities to enhance and sustain the learners' motivation and interest.



10. I can vary and balance activities in order to respond to individuals learners' learning styles.



11. I can take on board learners' feedback and comments and incorporate this in future lessons.



12. I can involve learners in lesson planning.





C. Lesson Organisation

1. I can select from and plan a variety of organisational forms (frontal, individual, pair, group work) as appropriate.



2. I can plan for learner presentations and learner interaction.



3. I can plan when and how to use the target language, including metalanguage I may need in the classroom.



4. I can plan lessons and periods of teaching with other teachers and/or student teachers (team teaching, with other subject teachers etc.).





Conducting a Lesson

Introduction

The section on conducting a lesson focuses on what teachers do in Modern Language classrooms and on the skills required. The first of these, expressed as a broad category, is the implementation of a lesson plan. This takes into account an ability to sequence activities in a coherent yet flexible way, to take account of learners' prior learning and to be responsive to individual performances in class.

This section also identifies as significantly important teachers' interactions with the class during the teaching and learning. Within interaction consideration is given to an initial settling down and to maintaining attention, as well as to encouraging learner initiatives and responses, and to working with and being responsive to a range of learning styles and learning strategies. Also identified in detail is the teacher's ability to manage classroom events, organise different ways of working and use a range of resources, instructional media and ICT.

The final group of descriptors focuses on the teacher's use of the target language in class. Experience and research tell us that the skills involved here have to do with deciding when it is most effective in terms of learning to use the target language and for what purposes, and when recourse to the home language might be more appropriate. Also involved is the teacher's ability to help learners understand what is said or written, as well as to encourage them to use the target language when communicating with the teacher and with each other.

**A. Using Lesson Plans**

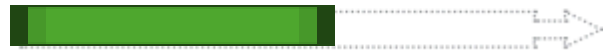
1. I can start a lesson in an engaging way.



2. I can be flexible when working from a lesson plan and respond to learner interests as the lesson progresses.



3. I can ensure smooth transitions between activities and tasks for individuals, groups and the whole class.



4. I can adjust my time schedule when unforeseen situations occur.



5. I can time classroom activities to reflect individual learners' attention spans.



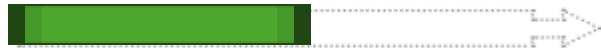
6. I can finish off a lesson in a focused way.





B. Content

1. I can present language content (new and previously encountered items of language, topics etc.) in ways which are appropriate for individuals and specific groups of learners.



2. I can relate what I teach to learners' knowledge and previous language learning experiences.



3. I can relate what I teach to current events in local and international contexts.



4. I can relate the language I am teaching to the culture of those who speak it.





C. Interaction with Learners

1. I can settle a group of learners into a room and gain their attention at the beginning of a lesson.



2. I can keep and maximise the attention of learners during a lesson.



3. I can be responsive and react supportively to learner initiative and interaction.



4. I can encourage learner participation whenever possible.



5. I can cater for a range of learning styles.



6. I can make explicit and help learners to develop appropriate learning strategies.





D. 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.).



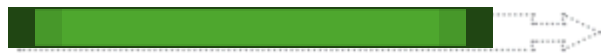
2. I can create opportunities for and manage individual, partner, group and whole class work.



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



4. I can manage and use instructional media efficiently (OHP, ICT, video etc.).



5. I can supervise and assist learners' use of different forms of ICT both in and outside the classroom.





Assessment

Introduction

This category is concerned with the choices which the teacher has to make when assessing learning processes or outcomes of learning. These choices relate to broad questions such as what to assess, when to assess, how to assess and how to use the information provided by the assessment process to support learning and to improve one's own teaching.

Assessment may consist of tests and examinations, which take a snapshot of the learner's competence or performance. They may focus on a student's knowledge of language or culture or on performance, the ability to use language in realistic contexts. When designing tests, teachers will need to consider how valid a particular test is in terms of the aims and objectives of learning a language and will need to pay attention to the reliability of grading procedures. It is also worth taking into account how practical a test is to design and administer and how to avoid a washback effect, which may adversely influence teaching.

Forms such as portfolio assessment will provide a continuous picture of the learner's ongoing progress and may be used both by the teacher and the learner. An instrument such as the European Language Portfolio provides a valuable tool for self-assessment.

Assessment procedures may be used mainly for the purpose of summative evaluation - for example, for end-of-term grading or certification - or for formative evaluation - for example, to provide information on the learner's strengths and weaknesses and to help the teacher and/or learner to plan further work.



A. Designing Assessment Tools

1. I can evaluate and select valid assessment procedures (tests, portfolios, self-assessment etc.) appropriate to learning aims and objectives.



2. I can negotiate with learners how their work and progress should best be assessed.



3. I can design and use in-class activities to monitor and assess learners' participation and performance.





B. Evaluation

1. I can identify strengths and areas for improvement in a learner's performance.



2. I can assess a learner's ability to work independently and collaboratively.



3. I can use the process and results of assessment to inform my teaching and plan learning for individuals and groups (i.e. formative assessment).



4. I can present my assessment of a learner's performance and progress in the form of a descriptive evaluation, which is transparent and comprehensible to the learner, parents and others.



5. I can use appropriate assessment procedures to chart and monitor a learner's progress (reports, checklists, grades etc.).



6. I can use assessment scales from the Common European Framework of Reference.



7. I can use a valid institutional/national/international grading system in my assessment of a learner's performance.



8. I can assign grades for tests and examinations using procedures which are reliable and transparent.





C. Self- and Peer Assessment

1. I can help learners to set personal targets and assess their own performance.



2. I can help learners to engage in peer assessment.



3. I can help learners to use the *European Language Portfolio*.





D. Language Performance

1. I can assess a learner's ability to produce a spoken text according to criteria such as content, range, accuracy, fluency, appropriacy of register etc.



2. I can assess a learner's ability to produce a written text according to criteria such as content, range, accuracy, cohesion and coherence etc.



3. I can assess a learner's ability to understand and interpret a spoken text such as listening for gist, specific or detailed information, implication etc.



4. I can assess a learner's ability to understand and interpret a written text such as reading for gist, specific or detailed information, implication etc.



5. I can assess a learner's ability to engage in spoken interaction according to criteria such as content, range, accuracy, fluency and conversational strategies.



6. I can assess a learner's ability to engage in written interaction according to criteria such as content, range, accuracy and appropriacy of response etc.



**F. Error analysis**

1. I can analyse learners' errors and identify the processes that may cause them.

2. I can provide constructive feedback to learners concerning their errors/interlanguage.

3. I can deal with errors that occur in class in a way which supports learning processes and communication.

4. I can deal with errors that occur in spoken and written language in ways which support learning processes and do not undermine confidence and communication.