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ELT—KIT

English Language Teaching Kitchen

FREE Sample Issue

Editorial

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From the Editor,

Dear Colleagues, Teachers and Teachers-to-Be,

On behalf of my fellow editors and Vizetek Publishing House , I would like to extend a warm welcome to all our readers to this first issue of our e-journal. We are a group that considers our role in the academic community not only as researchers but also partners with our fellow teachers in primary and secondary education. The editors and I consider our mission to be of a very practical nature: to provide teachers and teachers-to-be with a wide variety of English language teaching approaches, techniques and activities. Rest assured that we will passionately follow our mission. Like thousands of students we teach on a daily basis, we all have experienced endless struggles as EFL learners through the grammar-translation approach and exercises at the cost of authentic, communicative tasks which could have helped us to learn with ease and in a fun way. We hope that what we share in our articles in this and all future issues will be of great use to our colleagues and students who will be graduating from ELT departments. We believe that our role is to serve as change agents in a challenging world of education which today is defined by change and perhaps creating some confusion and entanglement of ideas over how best to help our learners to learn.

The articles in our journal are intended to be of a practical nature with descriptions of useful activities, with brief theoretical introductions which will help to understand the background for the argument of each of article. We hope that you will enjoy not only reading the articles but also use the ideas shared in your teaching. We would love to have feedback from you , please write to us and share your ideas. You can tell us if and to what extent the activities put forth in the articles work and how they may be modified to serve the needs of various other learners at different levels and in different contexts.

I am proud to introduce our journal “ELT KITCHEN”, in short ELT-KIT. We hope you like this name because we do! I am sure that you will agree on cooking being a great metaphor for teaching. First of all, it brings to mind a cozy kitchen—one that you are happy to be working in. It is also the place where the family members gather together and chat—perhaps not so much different than a classroom where the learners are enjoying learning in a warm atmosphere. The kitchen is also a place where you can create gorgeous dishes. You can use your creativity to prepare delicious meals which everyone will enjoy eating. Being able to make different rmeals also means that you can address different learning styles. Finally, you can serve these dishes at dazzling dinner tables whether in the kitchen or in your dining room—to your learners in your classes.

The articles published in this issue address a wide variety of topics that need attention in the field of English Language Teaching. Here is what we have in store for you. In the first article, “Confident Cooking: Tips for Vanquishing Classroom Phobia”, I elaborate on the kitchen metaphor and give useful tips on how to create an authentic and enjoyable classroom atmosphere by using different recipes, kitchen utensils and ingredients. I then discuss how these important tips can help a teacher become an effective teacher. What are the things that we need to do in order to be an effective teacher? I discuss the ingredients that we always need to use and those that we need to keep in

store, thus creating the ability to teach in a cozy classroom with user-friendly recipes.

The second article by Dr. Kırkgöz, entitled "Enhancing Young Learners' Listening and Speaking Skills" discusses the importance of developing young learners' listening and speaking skills. She first provides an overview of the nature of listening and speaking, followed by a theoretical discussion on the ideas of influential theorists. The article then describes age-appropriate recipes for activities that can effectively be used in young learner classrooms for practising and enhancing young learners' listening and speaking skills.

In the third article, "Scaffolding classroom instructions for activities: Lockhart or Lupin?", Dr. Amanda Ayşegül Yeşilbursa emphasizes the importance of giving instructions while doing communicative activities. After a discussion of the some of the typical problems that teachers may face when they are giving instructions, she suggests a framework for giving effective instructions and offers practical suggestions for planning classroom instructions for delicious communicative activity recipes. Do you want to take on the role of Lockhart or Lupin? Read on and find out.

The next article by Dr. Çelik is entitled "Professional Development and Successful School-University Partnership" and calls attention to the need to establish and nurture strong functional ties between schools and universities in an effort to create better teachers leading to better schools. He discusses the importance of such efforts in an era of constant change emphasizing the expected competencies of teachers. Dr. Çelik provides recipes for resolving the myriad questions and criticism surrounding schools regarding their role in the information age.

The following article called "It is Time We Started Using Alternative Assessment Tools in our Language Classes" by Dr. Suzan Kavanoz explores yet another important aspect of teaching English as a Foreign language: using alternative assessment tools. She first reminds us of the importance of developing communicative skills as emphasized in the new English curricula for primary and secondary levels. Then she presents some practical guidelines and examples of how we can design and use alternative assessment tools and procedures, yet again more nice recipes from our kitchen.

The final article, "Reflective Teaching: A Brief Guide For Foreign Language Teachers And Teacher Candidates" is written by Dr. Merç who begins his article with a description of a person's reflection in the mirror. Following a discussion of what reflective teaching is and the reasons why we should become reflective practitioners, Dr. Merç suggests useful recipes for engaging in critical reflection in our teaching; in fact, a very essential feature of becoming an effective teacher. This comprises the set of recipes from our kitchen.

I would like to thank all the editors who have contributed to this first issue of our e-journal, ELT-KIT, with articles full of invaluable ideas and practical suggestions . We hope that our readers will find all the recipes not only useful but also enjoyable.

Hoping to see you at the release of the second issue in March with more juicy recipes,

Best regards from all of us,

Prof. Dr. Benâ Gül Peker

Editor-in-Chief

Confident cooking: Tips for vanquishing classroom phobia

Prof. Dr. Benâ Gül Peker

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Introduction

As I have already mentioned in the Editorial Note, I believe that cooking and teaching are similar. Let me summarize briefly what I have discussed. The cooking metaphor brings to mind a cozy kitchen—where you are happy to be working; a place where family members enjoy chatting in a warm atmosphere and a place where you can prepare all kinds of delicious meals which everyone will enjoy eating, gathered around dazzling dinner tables whether in your kitchen or dining room

A teacher may be compared to a bad or good cook. A bad cook means that she has classroom phobia and does not know how to use a certain recipe for the class—we may even call this a recipe for disaster! A good cook, on the other hand, has certain recipes that she knows will work and will prepare her activities based on these recipes and uses the right ingredients in the right amounts.

Teaching any of the skills, or even teaching grammar need not become a phobia. You can walk into your classroom with confidence knowing what you can do (what the possible procedures are) and having the confidence that you can work with certain recipes and create gorgeous menus. This is what I would like to discuss in this article.

A Recipe for Disaster



Let us imagine a teacher who comes into class and is about to do a reading or a listening lesson. She gives out a worksheet with comprehension questions. She says “Read /Listen to the text and answer the questions." After the students read or listen, she asks if they have finished, then she starts to check the answers. She always says “yes, that's right." or "No, that's wrong." And that is the end of the reading lesson.

This teacher implements the same procedure for a speaking or writing lesson. We may ask whether it is appropriate to call it procedure. If it is a speaking lesson, she says, “Talk about your favorite holiday.” After students have finished, she asks one or two students to talk about their

favorite holidays. If it is a writing lesson, she says, “Write about your favorite holiday.” She collects the writing papers and that is the end of the writing lesson.

You may want to ask what kind of lesson this is. What has the teacher achieved? What has taken place in the name of learning? I will compare this lesson to *badly cooked* and *badly served* food. Would you agree? Is the teacher in question using the right recipes with the right ingredients? Do you think that the teacher is enjoying teaching her learners? I will argue that this teacher has classroom phobia—fear of teaching. And another important question is whether the students are enjoying learning—in fact learning at all. I doubt if the students in this teacher's class like what she cooks for them and how she serves them. They are most likely to feel bored and unmotivated to learn. Isn't that just like what happens in most English language classes? The learners feel forced to do what the teacher tells them to do--as is the case in the example I shared with you. In short, this example was an example of how to create disaster in the classroom.

Discussion

We may now ask why this lesson resembles badly cooked and poorly served food—in fact, a bad recipe. What are the missing ingredients?

1. No warm-up and lead-in: The teacher started directly with the instructions for the task—if they can be called authentic instructions at all.
2. No pre task: The teacher did not prepare the students for the task. Poor students! They had no clues about the topic of the lesson.
3. No task and no purpose: What was the task? "Read the text" does not announce any task of any sort. Further, in relation to this task, the teacher did not give a purpose for reading.
4. Lack of authentic instructions: "Read the text and answer the questions" is not a set of authentic instructions. Such instructions do not reflect the purpose, either.
5. No timing: The teacher did not tell the students how much time was allocated for each stage of the task.
6. No wrap-up: Did the teacher offer a wrap-up in the end? Unfortunately, she did not.

A well-designed menu



What about a well cooked and well-served meal?

Imagine that this is a reading/listening class. The students will be reading or listening to a text which is about working in England (or you could be doing a speaking or writing task on the same topic).

- As a lead-in, you may start with *personalizing*. You could say: "I have a friend who wants to go to England and earn money working as a waiter." Then you could ask, "Do you think it is easy or difficult to work as a waiter. You know there may be quite a few problems." Elicit responses

from the students.
- Put up and draw attention to *pictures* that show people doing different jobs. One could be a waiter working in a restaurant. You could also show *a video*. This is the pre-task stage.
- *Write* the ideas suggested and discussed by the students on the board.
- *Authentic transition* to activity: "I told my friend that it is not an easy job to work as a waiter. I also showed him a letter that I received from a friend of mine who is living in London. In his letter, he talks about his problems. Would you like to read his letter and learn about those problems?"
- State *purpose* for reading and give *instructions* for the task. A set of authentic instructions for a reading lesson would be as follows: "I want you to read the text for the first time and tell me whether your predictions (ideas suggested by the students and written on the board at the pre-task stage).
- You can also ask students for RBI--*Reflect Back Instructions*. You can ask the simple question "What are we doing?" and expect the students to reflect back to you what they are supposed to be doing.
- *Distribute* the text and activity handouts.
- Students will need to *read or listen one more time* (Note: In my next article, I will be writing about how to work out recipes for a reading class and discussing the stages of a reading lesson, so stay tuned!).
- Do not forget to allocate the *timing* for each task.
- Check the *answers*.
- Do a *post task*. For example you can say, "Write a letter to my friend, Scott" (See article Gül Peker, 2010, for ideas on post tasks)
- Do a *wrap-up*. You can say, "Did you enjoy learning about working in England? What are some of the things that have you learned today? Would you like to share your ideas?

Discussion

So, what did we do differently this time? What are the ingredients that we used for a well-designed menu ?

1. Preparation

We started with a lead-in and did a pre task. Why? Always start with a lead-in (and a short warm-up if you like) to arouse interest. Then you need to give enough background information on the topic. This helps to contextualize the task for the topic of any of the four skills that you may be doing. This is radically different than starting the lesson with direct instructions to read, listen, speak or write. Using visuals at the pre-task also helps to contextualize the text and helps the students to prepare themselves mentally and emotionally for the task at hand.

2. Authenticity

Task

Work with a real recipe. This means that you need to create a task that is real-life or authentic and not just say Read,...; Listen to...Speak about...or Write about. If you give such mechanical instructions, then you are not teaching but testing. In fact, this old recipe only produces and strengthens "learning-for-the-test mentality" which is "less lively, less varied, more repetitive and more anxiety-provoking for the students" (Claxton, 1989, p.21).

The same is also true for asking too many reading comprehension questions as specific reading questions may be overwhelming, monotonous, unvaried and unreal. We should remember that if we

impose too many activities on the students in the name of learning, then we will “spoil the pleasure of reading” by “squeezing the text dry' (Grellet, 1999, p. 10).

Purpose

Always give a purpose for doing a task. As mentioned, never tell the students just to read/listen and answer the questions or speak or write about such and such topic. The aim of doing any skills work is to fulfill the real purpose of language: to exchange information. We usually need to find out something in order to do something with the information we get and the task that we are engaged in is never boring or dull. This should hold true for the teaching of all the language skills.

If there is no authentic purpose for doing any task in the foreign language classroom, then it should come as no surprise that the students have no motivation to read, listen, speak or write. In such a case, the lesson will be “sterile and self-defeating” (Nuttall, 1989, p. 3). We need to keep in mind that in the outside world, people always do tasks for authentic purposes. For example in real life, there are two major reasons for reading: reading for pleasure and reading for information (Dlugosz, 2000). We can create reading tasks that serve both purposes. Similarly, we can create authentic tasks for the other skills .

Instructions

Always give clear instructions. As mentioned, ask students to do RBI or demonstrate yourself. Instructions are particularly important in assigning pair work or group work. (See article by Dr. Yeşilbursa in this issue for juicy recipes on giving instructions). Giving mechanical instructions is no longer valid because the current philosophy of teaching English as a Foreign Language is that language is for communication.

The teacher should give the instructions before starting the task and not after they have started. As students will be focusing on what is written on the handouts, their attention may be distracted as a result of which they cannot listen to the teacher’s instructions. Giving instructions before the task also helps to clarify the purpose for doing the task at hand.

3. Timing

As you know, cooking time is very important. Allocate time for each stage of the task and stick to your timing. This saves you from constantly asking if students have finished or not.

4. Wrap-up

A wrap up allows students to reflect on their learning. The teacher can lead a discussion with the questions I used above or students can do pair work and tell each other about specific points that they have learned. This can help learners to actively construct new knowledge from the perspective of their own realities, based on what they know (Eskey, 2002).

Tips for Confident Cooking: Vanquishing Classroom Phobia

To wrap up, let us summarize the tips for vanquishing classroom phobia in order to cook confidently with good recipes instead of ones that do not work and fall short of our aims in communicative language teaching.



Start with an appetizer. Always start with a kind of lead-in followed by a pre-task to arouse interest and to activate learners' background information on the topic.



Work with a real recipes. You can always find inspiration from the things that we do in real life. This will help you to rediscover the pleasure of cooking or teaching in style.



Keep basic provisions--essential vegetables and herbs like potatoes, onions or spices --in store. In class, your basic provisions are the visuals that you can use— photos, videos and flashcards. Keep in mind that real photos always work better than animated ones.

Never forget salt and pepper-- simple props. When you want to have learners act out dialogs or do

role play activities (such as interviews), simple props like a scarf, hat, microphone or glasses will be of great use and enliven the classroom atmosphere.



Cooking time is very important. We would not want the food that we are preparing to be overcooked or undercooked.



Clean the kitchen when finished. This means a wrap-up for the lesson is well in place. Just like you put things back into place after cooking, students will get a chance to place the information in the right compartment of their brains.



Keep a recipe book.

It is great to keep a recipe book. If you write your recipes in a note-book, you can use them more easily in the future. You can also add comments on what parts of the recipes need to be changed in order to create more delicious menus.

Concluding remarks

In short, keeping the tips discussed in mind, you will find it easy to vanquish classroom phobia and feel able to cook confidently. These tips can help you to become a teacher who is adept, real, resourceful and skilful. You can then enjoy teaching and learning gathered in the classroom just as you would sitting around the dining table with your friends and family.

Good cooking, like effective teaching, is the result of many years of experimentation. I hope that this article has provided tips for the enthusiastic cook or teacher to improve their knowledge and expertise by using new methods with ingredients that we always need to use and those that we need to keep in store, thus creating the ability to teach in a cozy classroom with user-friendly recipes.

Happy cooking to all the chefs out there!

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“Improving listening and speaking skills in young learners’ classes”

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Introduction

During the last decades, many countries around the world have introduced English in their primary school curricula as a compulsory school subject. Developing listening and speaking skills has become a fundamental component of any English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) curriculum for primary school students. In Turkey, teaching EFL has been a compulsory subject in primary school curriculum since 1997. This was when English was first introduced to children at the age of nine. The 2014 foreign language curriculum reform officially endorses the teaching of English to state primary students beginning from Grade 2 (aged around 7). Like many countries around the world, foreign language learning in primary education gives great importance to communicative language teaching in order to develop communicative competence of learners putting an emphasis on the listening and speaking skills. Therefore, ESL/EFL teachers should give priority to the improvement of children’s listening and speaking skills.

This article gives tips on how young learners’ listening and speaking skills can be developed. The term young learners (YLs) refers to children in primary education between the ages 6-12. I will first provide some information about what listening and speaking is. Next, I will offer a theoretical discussion on the ideas of the three leading theorists who have had an influence on how YLs learn. Then, I will describe a variety of age-appropriate activities. These activities will demonstrate relevant techniques that can effectively be used in young learner classrooms for practicing and improving YLs’ listening and speaking skills. Finally, I will give some suggestions to keep in mind to make listening and speaking effective in young learner classrooms.

What is listening and speaking?

Listening is a receptive language skill. The development of listening is critical because this skill provides input for the development of other language skills (Linse, 2005). Brewster, Ellis and Girard noted that in order to respond to a message, you have to be able to understand it. While listening, listeners need to make sense of the meaning from the oral input, produce information in their long term memory and make their own interpretations of the spoken language.

Due to this, listeners need to be seen as active processors of information, rather than passive recipients of input. Accordingly, we need to see YLs as active listeners as they select, search for meaning and interpret the incoming messages during listening (Thompson & Rubin, 1996). In order to help children search for meaning, listening skills need to be linked to real-life situations. During a listening activity children need purposes and intentions which they can understand and respond to. This means that we need to be careful in selecting materials and purposes to give authentic meaning to YLs while practicing listening skills.

Unlike listening, speaking is a productive language skill, and active use of language is needed to express meaning. In general, the spoken language is the main source of foreign language learning and communication in young learner classrooms. Through speaking, YLs can communicate to express their ideas, opinions, establish and maintain social relationships and friendships

(McDonough & Shaw, 2003). There is no doubt that listening and speaking are interrelated, and speaking is as equally important in YLs' overall language development as listening. Therefore, we need to give great attention to the development of both language skills in young learner classrooms.

Theoretical perspectives in teaching listening and speaking

The teaching of listening and speaking to YLs has been influenced by the views put forward by three theorists; Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner. I will present brief information on each of these theorists along with some insights that can be gained into developing YLs' listening and speaking skills.

Piaget's views: Children's cognitive development

The teaching of children has been profoundly affected by the works of Piaget concerning stages of cognitive development. Piaget's main contribution to the theory of child development was to view the child as an active constructer of his/her own knowledge. Piaget (1928) believed that a child builds understanding over time. He suggested four cognitive and affective developmental stages in children.

Stage 1: The first is the Sensory-Motor Stage. At this stage children learn through physical interaction with the environment. This stage takes place from ages 0–2.



Picture 1. A child in the Sensory-Motor Stage

Stage 2: The second is the Pre-operational Stage, from ages 2-7. This stage is characterized by the conceptual and language development. Reasoning during this stage is semi-logical, which means that children often focus on a single feature of a situation at a time; they may be able to sort objects by size or colour but not by both characteristics at once.



Picture 2. A child in the Pre-operational Stage

Stage 3: The next stage is Concrete Operational Stage from ages 7-11. At this stage children begin to conceptualize and develop the ability to apply logical thought to concrete problems. Hands-on experiences help children understand new concepts. As children become more social, using language to exchange information becomes important.



Picture 3. Children at Concrete Operational Stage

Stage 4: The last stage is the Formal Operational Stage from ages 11-15 or older. At this stage, the child's cognitive structures reach the highest level of development and they can use abstract thinking. The child becomes able to apply logical reasoning to various problems. Piaget believed that in the child development each new stage is built upon the previous stage.

Vygotsky: Importance of social interaction

Taking the idea of the child as an active learner further, Vygotsky (1978) put an emphasis on the role of social interaction in learning and development. He believed that during interaction, adults function as active agents. This interaction is required for children's cognitive development to occur.

How are Piaget's views different from Vygotsky's?

As we explained above, Piaget suggested that children work through different stages of learning. On the other hand, Vygotsky made a distinction between what children could perform and develop on their own, and what they could achieve when adults interact with them as active agents. With this idea, Vygotsky's views differ from Piaget's ideas.

Vygotsky introduced the term the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which refers to this distance between what a child can do with and without help. The ZPD means that teaching is the co-construction of knowledge between the learner and the teacher, and as a result that knowledge becomes the individual knowledge of the learner.

Bruner: Support by scaffolding

Bruner extended Vygotsky's notion of ZPD. He defined the role of the more knowledgeable adult as someone who is actively involved in the children's learning process (Arnold, 2016). This support given by adults is termed 'scaffolding'. The concept of scaffolding as a metaphor is widely used when teachers provide the necessary support to facilitate the learning process.

Implications for teaching English to young learners

Several implications of the ideas proposed by the theorists presented in the above section can be drawn for teaching English to YLs.

- Firstly, as we know that children learn from the world around them, we need to consider children's age and developmental stages in designing listening and speaking activities (Cameron, 2001; Linse, 2005).
- We also need to ensure that we teach listening and speaking in a meaningful and practical way. This will enable children to interact with 'here and now' or actual, authentic and physical materials. These aspects should be appropriate with children's concrete operational stage.
- Thirdly, as young learners at their primary age (ages 7-11) learn best with concrete experiences, they are capable of developing good oral language, pronunciation and intonation. Therefore, we should be a good model, and ensure that the topics are taught in a meaningful way. Because children have short attention spans, we need to present them a great variety of activities.
- Finally, following Vygotsky's and Bruner's ideas, it is essential to support children's learning by providing scaffolding. To develop listening skills, YLs need considerable support, as they cannot be expected to organize mentally what they hear (McDonough & Shaw, 2003). We can give this support by simplifying the tasks, providing the vocabulary, giving guiding questions or phrases, and so on.

Examples of listening activities

Earlier, I talked about the importance of communicative language teaching. What does it require to gain communicative competence? A further question we need to ask is "Why do children so often find listening and speaking challenging?" There are two main reasons for this: First, as we can understand from the above discussion, listening and speaking are demanding for children. Second, the way listening and speaking is taught may not often be effective. These ineffective ways usually consist of practicing a specific grammar point, which is far from teaching patterns of real communication. So what can we do in the classroom to prepare children for real interaction? This section focuses on listening comprehension activities which we can use in the class to develop YLs' listening skills.

Listen and do

This is a useful and adaptable teaching technique for YLs. In this type of activity, learners listen to their teacher's instructions generally in the form of commands and then follow those instructions. We call this type of activity "The Total Physical Response (TPR) approach" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The following YouTube link provides information on how to make a pizza for children. It is a great example of a 'listen and do' activity. The teacher demonstrates how to make a pizza using toys so that children can listen, follow the instructions and do the actions by making a pizza.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdClLhoH9tc



Picture 4. Listen and make a pizza activity

Listen and repeat

These activities can help children to practice the sounds, stress, rhyme and the intonation to promote effective pronunciation. You can use the following in such activities:

- movements,
- objects,
- pictures

During listen and repeat activities learners can build a link between words and meaning (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). An example activity is listen and discriminate, which aims to get YLs to discriminate between sounds in minimal pairs, such as, boat/about, know/now, beat/bit, and hear/hair. The following YouTube link improves the children's listening and speaking skill by a 'listen and repeat' activity. To teach how to pronounce the names of the jobs, the teacher says the words aloud and children repeat. They also learn how to ask questions like "Where do you work".

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R69YKFmlcnA

Listen and write/take notes/complete

In such activities, learners listen in order to fill in the missing information in forms, questionnaires, or fill in missing topic-related

- words,
- verbs,
- prepositions in songs,
- similar listening materials.

We can also ask children to fill in a timetable, chart, or complete a drawing or a map. The following YouTube clip is about likes and dislikes. It provides the children with information about two different people. The children are asked to listen and complete the blanks.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hL7pYuU-uUQ

Listen and arrange

In these kinds of activities, we can provide children with scrambled pictures of a text or a story, and ask them to arrange the pictures in the accurate order while listening. This helps organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence.

Procedure: The teacher hands out the activity paper like the example below. The teacher reads the text aloud and the students listen and number the pictures 1-6 according to the order in the text.

- Tom wakes up.
- He has a shower.
- He has breakfast.
- He brushes his teeth.
- He waters the flowers.
- He goes to work.



Picture 5. Listen and arrange activity

Listen and draw

This activity can be done to help learners of any age group practice listening and language in context, such as prepositions. The following YouTube link demonstrates and instructs how to draw simple shapes for children. The children listen to the video and try to draw the shapes on their own according to what they listened to.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=difDhyEHIPs

Listen and mime

In this type of activity, the teacher tells a story or mimes with doing some actions. The students are expected to guess the story or what the teacher is miming. Here is a fun activity that you can use in your classrooms.

Procedure:

- Make a list of animals children have learned so far.
- Divide the class into two groups.
- Make the sound of an animal or mime it.

- The one who answers first scores a point for his/her group.
- The one who answers wrong also loses point. In the end, the group who has the most points wins the game and gets a prize.

Listen and colour

As we all know, children love colouring. In listen and colour activities, you can let children color the picture. You can also turn it into a language activity (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990), as illustrated in the following sample, which can be used with 7-10 year old learners.

Procedure: Hands out the picture of an object or an animal such as a cat, and tell the purpose of the activity.

Read the instructions:

- Color the eyes blue
- Color the tail white
- Color the body brown
- When the activity is finished, check the pictures together with the students.

Techniques to promote listening and speaking

In this section, I provide some techniques that can be used in YLs' classrooms to improve listening and speaking skills. Naturally, as Becker and Roos recommend (2016) we should provide children with a lot of opportunities which can "support their natural desire to interact with peers and allow them to make use of their rich resources of imagination, creativity, curiosity, and playfulness" (p. 23).

Songs

As a valuable pedagogical tool, songs can make an important contribution to YLs' listening skills, pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence structures and repetition that might otherwise be tedious (Cameron, 2001). As noted by Sharpe (2001), singing songs helps pupils to gradually internalize the structures and patterns of the foreign language and the specific language items. Songs also provide an occasion for real language use in an enjoyable way. The length of a phrase in a typical children's song is short and often uses simple conversational language, which can allow learners to process the language easily (Murphy, 1992).

Yet, we need to be careful when selecting a song. We need to select songs that contain sentence structures typically used in English conversation. The following YouTube link is an example of a great song that you can use in your own classrooms while teaching 'likes and dislikes'.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frN3nvhIHUk

Roleplay and dialogues

Roleplaying can be done either by giving students different identities or giving imaginary situations. When you give your students different identities, they can become anyone they want. This is the joy of roleplaying. There are endless choices to become. On the other hand, providing imaginary situations can be functional for the language. They can practice and activate their language through roleplaying. We should give roleplays and dialogues in our lessons because these activities are fun and motivating for the students, and they offer a wide range of opportunities to use language. Students are given an opportunity to practice their language in a safe environment. For a successful classroom roleplay, you as a teacher should be the facilitator to provide new language when needed,

and use realia and props to bring roleplaying alive. For example, using puppets is a really engaging way to teach young learners. You can create a lesson more spontaneous, and avoid stressful relations.

The following YouTube clip is an animation that is made by using puppets. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uTaz8jTjaE

Storytelling

Storytelling is an effective tool to enhance YLs' interest in English and improve their learning output (Haven, 2000; Linse, 2005). We can see children as natural language learner; therefore, stories can provide a bridge between classroom learning with the outside world.

Storytelling offers YLs numerous benefits.

- The first is the fun elements. Ellis and Brewster (2002) point out that "good stories are 'motivating, challenging, and full of fun" (p. 1-2). They have "interesting characters, clear plots, and element of surprise" (Cameron, 2001, p. 169).
- The next benefit is meaningfulness and authenticity. Good stories can engage children's imagination by their rich, authentic, meaningful uses of the foreign language (Garvie, 1990). Stories also inspire children's speaking skills as they provide meaningful and real-world experiences. Besides, they present grammar, phrases, vocabulary and formulaic speech within a structured context.
- The final merit is that storytelling offers learners an opportunity to develop learning strategies.

We can use stories in many different ways:

- Children can be asked to create a story by putting their thoughts into words.
- Stories can be used to improve YLs' listening and prediction skills. We can stop reading in the story or pausing the tape and ask questions about what will happen next so that children can make their predictions.
- Story completion as a whole-class can be a free-speaking activity. We can start telling a story, but after a few sentences we can stop narrating. Then, each student starts to narrate from the point where the previous one stopped. Each student can add from four to ten sentences. Students can add new characters, events, descriptions and so on.

In the YouTube link given below, there is a story for YLs to listen to and answer some teacher designed questions to check comprehension.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LV3tdG-aGk

Information gap

In information gap activities, students work in pairs. One student has the information that the other partner does not. Each partner plays an important role because the task cannot be completed unless the partners provide the information to each other.

Procedures:

- Give a pair of students a picture of a car. The pictures should be almost the same except two or three elements are different from each picture.
- Ask them to find five differences between the pictures by talking to each other.

They should describe their pictures to each other and try to find what is missing, as in the example:

Student A: There is a big car.

Student B: What color is the car?

Student A: The car is purple.

Student B: Okay

- Make sure that children do not show each other the pictures. This activity can be adapted for any level. As we are working with YLs, we can give an emphasis on colors and shapes.

Suggestions for improving listening and speaking

In this section, I will give some important ideas that you should consider when teaching listening and speaking to YLs.

- You should give the children confidence. Let the children know that you are not expecting them to understand every single word they hear.
- Let children take risks in speaking. Do not correct every single mistake. Error correction can be done after the speaking task has been completed.
- Tell children the purpose of the listening/speaking activity. Make sure the learners understand clearly why they are listening. This will give them a point to do the activity. This is also true for speaking.
- Make sure children develop specific listening strategies. Guessing strategy is really important for children because children are familiar with using their background knowledge to guess the meaning of something they do not know.
- Practice listening in three stages, pre-listening, while-listening and post listening. Also, design appropriate activities that have authentic meaning to YLs for each stage.
- Before a spoken task, give children time to prepare and rehearse. Also give them some simple and effective guidelines to help them with the speaking task.
- Make your input comprehensible and easier to understand, keep sentences short and simple; use effective intonation to keep the child's attention, and stress key words, frequently repeat and paraphrase.
- Make sure that the listening/speaking topics are familiar to children so that they can make connections with real life.

Conclusion

In this article I have defined what listening and speaking is. I have also given theoretical perspectives from the three leading theorists, and discussed the relevance of these ideas in teaching listening and speaking skills in young learner classrooms. As we have seen, effective teaching of English to YLs is a very demanding task. It is important that teachers are familiar with age-appropriate listening and speaking techniques and activities. In the search for developing YLs' listening and speaking skills, I have also provided some useful techniques and activities. I hope that these tips that I have illustrated in this article will give you, as prospective or practicing teachers of English, insights that you can benefit from in your classes to enhance YLs' communicative competence.

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Scaffolding classroom instructions for activities: Lockhart or Lupin?

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Introduction

As English Language teachers, we often spend a lot of time preparing activities and materials to use with our students. We take great pains to ensure that our activities meet the objectives of the lesson, and that they are engaging for the students. Not to mention the portion of our salaries that we set aside for stationery costs. However, no matter how imaginative or appealing our activities may be, if we have not planned our instructions well beforehand, students will have difficulties understanding, and the lesson can fall flat. Then we get frustrated and resort to using Turkish. Is the limited use of LI helpful in monolingual contexts? It may be so as argued by some scholars. However, *limited* use of L1 can be helpful in monolingual contexts only *if it ultimately facilitates the learning of English*. So, creating an 'English atmosphere' in the classroom from the beginning is far more conducive to language learning (Scrivener, 2012). Put simply, if we resort to Turkish at the first sign of a problem, then we are robbing our students of valuable exposure to English.

Often problems are not caused by the use of English as such, but rather the *quantity* and the *quality* of the English we use. We may use over-complicated language or sentences that are too long. Maybe we do not pay attention to pausing or using stress in the right places, or breaking long instructions into more manageable chunks. Fortunately, classroom instructions have a very recognisable structure that can be learned and practised by both student and novice teachers. In this article, I aim to present concrete and practical suggestions for planning classroom instructions for communicative activities. I will first touch upon some of the typical problems that English language teachers face when giving instructions. I will then outline Scrivener's (2012) framework for effective instructions. Finally, to show this framework in action, I will present two observation activities that can be used while watching the first lessons of two professors from the Harry Potter film series: Gilderoy Lockhart and Remus Lupin.

What could possibly go wrong?

Sometimes even the most familiar-looking EFL activities can catch us out. For example, you have been covering the foods and drinks unit with your A2 level Grade 10 students (MoNE, 2018). The speaking activity in the coursebook is a role play at a restaurant. There is a menu. One student is the waiter the other is the customer (see Figure 1). You have seen this kind of activity before so many times you could teach it with your eyes closed. What could possibly go wrong? Let's see.

STUDENT A: You are the waiter. Take the customer's order for: • Main course • Side • Drink • Dessert	**STUDENT B**: You are the customer. Decide what you want for: • Main course • Side • Drink • Dessert

Figure 1. Role cards for a hypothetical speaking activity

Listen and read a teacher's **instructions** for this activity. Use the checklist provided in Appendix A to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructions.

So, what I would like you to do is this. First of all, I'd like you to imagine you're a waiter. Well, that's Student A. If you were the waiter, what would you do? And Student B, if you were the customer what would you say? Oh, that's right, guys, you'll all need to look at the menu. Actually you both will, OK? So you do that and talk together. All right?

Figure 2. Teacher's instructions



You have probaby ticked the "unacceptable" box for all the criteria. The instructions are unacceptable because the teacher probably did not plan her instructions before the lesson. All English teachers, whether native speakers or non-native speakers, need to plan their instructions. Native speaking teachers may rely on their spontaneity, and their instructions could be too much like everyday speech. On the other hand, non-native speaking teachers may find it difficult to adapt their language to their students' level and use over complicated syntax and lexis. Neither situation helps students to understand what is expected of them, and the teacher resorts to L1. However, keeping this checklist in mind when planning to use a communicative activity in class can help you make the quality and quantity of your English instructions more effective and reduce the likelihood of you having to use L1.

A framework for instructions

It is not just the quality and quantity of English that make classroom instructions effective. We also need to make every element of an activity absolutely clear. Fortunately, classroom instructions follow an identifiable framework. The first step is the *frame*, in which we attract the students' attention and indicate that we are moving onto a different part of the lesson. The second is the *summary of the task and purpose*, in which we inform the students of the type (e.g., role play) and purpose (e.g., to practice ordering a meal) of the activity. This is followed by telling the students about the *organization* of the activity: whether they will be working in pairs or groups, for example. At the fourth step, we explain the *procedure* of the activity, and this is when we must take into consideration the factors that we dealt with in the previous section. After we have explained the procedure, we need to inform the students about the *outcome* of the activity. For example, will they perform their role play in front of the class? Will they video record their role play and upload it onto their vlogs (MoNE, 2018)? At the sixth step, we can give the students some *strategies* to help them do the activity. For example, we could tell them to keep their role cards secret from each other. Or we could tell them to put their pencils and notebooks away so they can focus on speaking rather than reading aloud.The seventh step is giving the *timing* of the activity. The students should know how long they have got to prepare: 30 minutes may indicate that the students have plenty of time to pay attention to detail and to practice, whereas 10 minutes suggests that they have to be quick and think on their feet. Finally, you should give the *cue to start*: make sure that everyone has understood and that everyone starts when you tell them to (Scrivener, 2012).

Having discussed the elements of effective instructions, in the following section I will present an opportunity for you to watch these elements in action.

Observing (in)effective instructions: Gilderoy Lockhart and Remus Lupin



In order to follow these activities, you will need to have access to the Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (Heyman & Columbus, 2002), and Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (Heyman, Columbus, Radcliffe, & Cuaron, 2004) films. Previously, I have described how we can reflect on our classroom interaction patterns in general by observing Hogwarts teachers (Yeşilbursa, 2018). In the following section, I will focus on two teachers, Gilderoy Lockhart and Remus Lupin, and how they give instructions.

Gilderoy Lockhart

Gilderoy Lockhart comes to Hogwarts School of Wizarding to teach Defence Against the Dark Arts when Harry Potter and his friends are in their second year (Heyman & Columbus, 2002). He is quite a celebrity in the wizarding world, and it is clear from his dress, behavior and discourse that he thinks highly of himself.



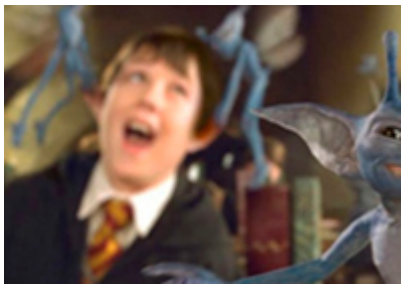
His first lesson with Harry's class starts at around 35 minutes into the film. We watch him walk down a staircase to enter the classroom for all to see. As he descends he is telling the class about his high achievements, and our expectations of his lessons are high. He starts the lesson by attracting the students' attention to a covered cage which seems to contain something alive and possibly dangerous (it turns out there are blue Cornish pixies inside).

So far the lesson is quite effective: the teacher has brought in authentic material, he has attracted the student's attention, and it is clear the activity is going to be 'hands-on'. However, as we watch the scene unfold we see that the lesson turns into a disaster, with Cornish pixies escaping from the cage and causing chaos, Lockhart running away, the dragon skeleton crashing to the ground, Neville Longbottom being hung from a chandelier by the pixies, and Hermione Granger using her intelligence to round up the pixies single-handedly. At the end of the film, we learn that he was a

fraud and that none of his achievements were real.

As general viewers we find this scene amusing, as Gilderoy Lockhart reveals his true incompetence and Hermione saves the day, as usual. However, as teachers, we can analyse the scene in terms of Scrivener's (2012) framework to describe Lockhart's incompetence, and therefore avoid falling into the same trap. So, let's do an analysis.

First of all, to his credit, Lockhart does *frame* the activity effectively with the authentic material and element of curiosity. However, there is no *summary* or *purpose*, he does not give any details about the *organization* or the *procedure*. The students do not know how or why they are doing the activity. We can infer that the *outcome* of the activity is putting all the pixies back in the cage. He does not share any *strategies* with the students to help them succeed. Will they use their wands? An incantation? A potion? Or maybe a combination of these? None of this is clear, and it is difficult to see how the activity might fit the objectives of the lesson. Lockhart does not tell them how much *time* they have to do the activity. He does, however, give a *cue to start* by opening the cage and freeing all the pixies at once. As a result, we could say that the activity fails because Lockhart does not know how to give clear instructions.



To connect this scene with ELT, with my student teachers, I give the example of a hypothetical, well-intentioned teacher who wants his/her students to be able to watch and 'understand' a film in English. S/he plays the film and tells his/her students to 'Just watch and try to understand'. Without a concrete activity or clear instructions, the students 'understand' different aspects of the film to different degrees. As a result, more proficient students may rely on their own resources to make sense of the film, like Hermione. On the other hand, less proficient students may 'understand' very little and feel discouraged, like Neville Longbottom. At then end of the film when the teacher asks 'What did you understand?', which is a vague question with many possible correct answers, it is very unlikely that the students will engage in a lively discussion, and the teacher becomes discouraged as a result.

Teaching is more than telling students to do something and expecting them to do it. The second teacher, Remus Lupin, provides us with an example of how to scaffold a potentially difficult, even dangerous, activity and help the students to feel successful.

Remus Lupin

Remus Lupin joins Hogwarts in Harry's third year (Heyman, Columbus, Radcliffe, & Cuaron, 2004) to teach Defence Against the Dark Arts. His appearance, behaviour and attitude to the students is very teacher-like. The only drawback is that he is a werewolf, and he has to leave the school at the end of the year for the safety of the students.

His first lesson with Harry's class begins around 41 minutes into the film. The beginning of the scene focuses on an old wardrobe that is shaking. Obviously, there is something inside it that is trying to get out. We see that the students are standing up, facing the wardrobe. Lupin is already in the classroom, he is standing behind the students. As he walks to the front of the classroom he is asking the students questions. Can they guess what is inside the wardrobe? Seamus Finnegan answers that it's a boggart. Lupin praises him. Then he asks what a boggart looks like (emphasizing 'look'). Hermione begins to answer, saying that boggarts are shape-shifters. Perhaps sensing that Hermione could give an unnecessarily long and detailed answer, Lupin praises her and finishes off her sentence. Boggarts turn into our deepest, darkest fears.

At this point, Lupin is now at the front of the classroom, between the students and the shaking wardrobe. He tells them that there is fortunately a simple spell to protect them against boggarts, and that they will learn it today. First, he practices the incantation chorally. Then he says that students must try to think of something funny to make the boggart change shape again.



To demonstrate this, he asks Neville Longbottom to come to the front. Neville is obviously nervous as he comes to the front, with Lupin's encouragement. Lupin asks him what he fears most, and Neville replies 'Professor Snape'. The class laughs, and Lupin replies that they were all scared of Snape. Then, he asks Neville to think about his grandmother's clothes. Neville starts to speak, but Lupin tells him that he should just think about them. Then Lupin tells Neville to hold his wand and get ready. Lupin opens the wardrobe, the boggart comes out in the shape of Professor Snape. Lupin stands close to Neville and tells him to think of his grandm mother's clothes. Neville looks at the bboggart, says the incantation, and the boggart turns into Snape wearing Neville's grandmother's clothes. Lupin praises him, and Neville looks happy at his success.

Having demonstrated the activity successfully with Neville, Lupin gets the class to stand in a line so everyone can have a turn. He plays some lively jazz music on a record player as he calls on the students in turn. He stands at the side of the classroom and gives encouragement and paraise as Ron Weasley and then Parvati Patil come to the front and successfully change the boggart. When it's Harry's turn, the boggart changes into a dementor, a creature that can drain away all the happy feelings and memories from people. Harry stands still, staring at the dementor. Lupin senses something is wrong. He looks up, and before the dementor/boggart can attack Harry, he leaps between Harry and the boggart. The boggart turns into a full moon, Lupin's greatest fear, which he then turns into an untied balloon that flies through the air and into the wardrobe. Lupin slams the door shut, and then dismisses the class.



As general viewers, we watch this scene with some excitement. Will the dementor attack Harry? Will everybody see that Lupin's greatest fear is a full moon, and therefore understand that he is a werewolf?

However, as EFL teachers we can observe this scene at another level. Not only does Lupin look like

a teacher in his old, brown suit; he also actually teaches. Let's go back to Scrivener's (2012) framework for effective instructions.

First, he *frames* the activity by putting the authentic material (the boggart in the wardrobe) at the front of the class. In this way he attracts the students' attention. Unlike Lockhart, he doesn't make a grand entrance into the classroom. He is already there, he is taking ownership of the lesson. He continues the frame by asking students questions that make students think about boggarts. He focuses on the appearance of boggarts, which is important for this particular lesson. He doesn't focus on unnecessary or distracting knowledge.

When he gives the *summary and purpose* of the activity, he reassures the students that the spell is simple. When he teaches the *procedure*, he breaks the spell down into two manageable parts: the incantation and the mind control. They practice each one separately: the incantation chorally, and the mind control through demonstration. These are the *strategies* the students need to be successful. The demonstration in this scene is particularly significant. Lupin chooses Neville Longbottom, one of the weaker students in the class: he has an unfortunate accident in almost every lesson. With Neville, he shows step by step how to change a boggarts appearance just by imagining something amusing. All the time Lupin is close, ready to step in if Neville has difficulty.

When I ask my student teachers why Lupin chose Neville, I get two answers. The first is what I call the 'cynical' answer: Lupin is showing the students that if Neville can do this activity, anybody can do it. The second answer, which is more 'ideal', is that Lupin wants every student to have a turn, but he knows that Neville may have difficulty. By demonstrating with Neville, he can provide maximum scaffolding for him to carry out the activity successfully. Neville's happy face when he completes the activity successfully shows that Lupin had made the right decision. Moreover, the *outcome* of the activity is clear: the boggart changes shape.

For the *organization* of the activity, Lupin has the students stand in a line. This an activity that must be done individually, and everyone will have a turn. He doesn't give the *timing* directly, but his choice of jazz music in the background both helps to keep the pace of the activity lively, and creates a fun atmosphere. His *cues to start* are also clear. He calls on each student by name, and tells them to have their wands at the ready. Moreover, he is constantly monitoring the students and he knows when an activity may get out of control.

In short, Lupin has a good command of both content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. He knows what he will teach, he is aware of the potential difficulties that his students may have, he knows how to scaffold an activity and when to intervene if necessary.

Professor Lupin may be teaching how to deal with boggarts as part of the Defence Against the Dark Arts class. However, the parallel with what we do in EFL classes is striking: authentic materials, authentic 'hands-on' tasks, and effective instructions as part of the scaffolding.

To sum up

In this article, I have discussed ways in which we can improve the quality and quantity of our classroom instructions. I presented a checklist and a framework for effective instructions. Finally, I presented two examples of teachers from films that exemplify the framework suggested.

Over to you

At the beginning of the discussion, I presented an example of ineffective instructions for a role play activity. Based on what we have discussed in this article, can you improve these instructions?

Example instructions given in Figure 3.

Happy instruction-giving!

Table 1. Checklist for clear instructions

Instructions Checklist	Evaluation		
The teacher…	E	A	U
1. attracts students' attention before giving instructions.			
2. uses language at or below the students' level.			
3. uses short sentences: one sentence for each instruction.			
4. speaks slowly and clearly.			
5. pauses after each instruction.			
6. sequences the instructions.			
7. signposts the instructions (e.g., 'First …, second …')			
8. emphasises key words.			
9. checks that the students understand the instructions.			

Note: E=effective; A= acceptable; U=unacceptable Adapted from Scrivener (2012)

• Right, everyone! Look this way. We're going to do a speaking activity now. (*Frame*)
• It's a role play. You're going to order a meal. (*Summary and purpose*)
• You'll work in pairs. Students on the right – put your hands up (Teacher points to students on the right in each row). Let's see you (checks that they have put their hands up). Right, you're the waiter. Now students on the left (indicates the students sitting on the left in each row) – put your hands up. Yes? You're the customer Got it? Let's check – who are the waiters? Hands up! Right. Now the customers? Hands up! Good! (*Organisation*).
• First, waiters – give the customer the menu, yes? Give them time to choose. Second, customers – choose a starter, a main course, and a drink. Place your order. ….(*Procedure*)
• Now, I want you to record your role play. You'll upload it onto your vlog for this unit. So practice it well. Let's see how many likes you get! (*Outcome*)
• Role cards ready… you've got 20 minutes… (*Timing*).
• Off you go! (*Cue to start*)

Figure 3. Suggested improved instructions

Listen here!

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Professional development and successful school-university partnership

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Teacher professional development is any type of individual or collaborative effort we engage in on a systematic manner with the ultimate goal of improving our knowledge and skills to better respond to ever-changing needs of students and, in turn, boosting learner outcomes and achievement. Teacher professional development, as opposed to teacher training, refers to purposeful efforts on your part to build your pedagogical and practical awareness of the teaching and learning process, and can be *top-down* or *bottom-up* in nature. Top-down teacher development refers to mandated in-service training such as required teacher training workshops, while bottom-up professional development denotes efforts you initiate to advance your understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects of the teaching profession to expand your repertoire of know-how.



There are different tools and activities you can take advantage of for that purpose to *polish your skills* and *step up a notch*—self-monitoring, peer-observations, reflective journals, teaching portfolios, action research, teacher support groups, seminars/workshops/symposia/conferences, just to mention a few—which, I am sure, you are already familiar with to some extent from your coursework at universities. However, as one would assume, engaging in these activities is not always straightforward and effortless. Thus, you might rightfully consider it too much of an expectation and pressure on you to be involved in such demanding and time-taking endeavor—professional development, that is—beyond your pre-service teacher training. Some of you might even question the role of all those courses you took, requirements you completed and the teaching degree you subsequently obtained in ensuring confidence and competence as a teacher, and ask "What was all that four-year full of tears for then?"



As a colleague and I highlight in a book chapter, "Completing a teacher training program is only the first step in learning how to teach. Developing the pedagogical and practical skills needed to succeed as a foreign language teacher is a career-long undertaking that requires not only practical experience, but also ongoing critical reflection on one's teaching practice, as well as continued involvement in professional development activities" (Yeşilbursa & Çelik, 2014, p. 451). In that sense, the distinction I make between "*experienced*" and "*aged, but not experienced*" teachers, I believe, is powerful. Specifically, how long you have been teaching does not necessarily tell us much, if anything, about your experience, as teaching wisdom and excellence does not inherently come with years of teaching or age. That is not to say time spent in teaching is irrelevant—as there may be some aspects of professional growth such as emotional regulation that blossom with years and age, but rather it does not guarantee that you will resourcefully use that time to remain as an active learner through continuing professional

development efforts and mature as a critically reflective practitioner who learns from daily events, happenings, doings and living. I actually regard this piece of information as good news and an inspiration for novice teachers. After all the echoes of "you will see when you graduate," "you will understand when you become a parent and have a kid," and "you will realize when you grow old," isn't it great that *finally* someone tells you that years do not have to go by before you can figure out or accomplish something? Also, isn't it exciting to know you do not have to wait for decades to claim expertise, and that you can be an amateur soul adopting a professional and skillful approach along with your youth, enthusiasm and commitment?

Accordingly, while I, too, believe our professional teaching careers depict different stages where we may potentially switch between diverse goals, attitudes and perspectives, I differ from Huberman (1989) and Garton and Richards (2008) in that I do not see *professional development* or *experimentation* as a work or product of a specific stage—mid or mid-to-late career—only. This does not have to be the case—unless it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for you. Thus, I advocate that associating early years of teaching with *survival* and late-career years with *disengagement and inactivity* is not fair and does us no good. Instead, it is critical that teachers, particularly pre-service and novice, are alerted to the need to improve, maintain and expand their knowledge and skills on a regular basis (Çelik, Bayraktar-Çepni, & İlyas, 2013) from the first to the last day of their careers, and they make professional development a priority regardless of the career stage they are in.

Professional development certainly entails a lot of hard work, but it sure is doable and totally worth it with all the potential benefits. It helps you become familiar with new resources and teaching tools, construct new knowledge, advance your teaching practices, maintain contact with peers and establish a supportive community of practice, promote your self-efficacy, and sustain and nurture a sense of satisfaction with your teaching career. The only prerequisite, as I see it, is respect and love for teaching and a strong commitment to career development—and I am sure you all have it, or else you would not be getting a teaching degree, applying for teacher certification, or simply reading this article. At this point, some of you might be wondering, or perhaps even a little worried about, your chances of successfully accomplishing this all—so a general guideline to help you tackle this challenge would be accommodating.

Five things you can do to show and exercise your commitment to career development

I will now mention some suggestions as to how you can use and organize your time around professional development activities to build *genuine experience* in the abovementioned sense. The list below has been compiled and adapted from Richards (2017) and include tips about different tasks or activities related to various aspects of professional development to assist you in your long, but rewarding, journey to professional growth.



1. **Create your professional development plan:** Determine specific, measurable, realistic, applicable and timely goals for your professional development; decide the kind of teacher you want to become and determine the steps that will be needed to get you there; consider the support you might call for and the potential sources where you could obtain it; take action to achieve your goals and plan; review and assess your progress in meeting these goals; see what your current qualifications are and decide what new qualifications you wish to attain; analyze your strong areas of teaching and decide which areas of teaching you would like to get better at and think about what activities you think could help you develop expertise in these areas; think about your main responsibilities at your current school or institution and decide what responsibilities you would like to focus on more in the future; determine what professional development activities you make use of; periodically examine the changes in your teaching practices; revise your plan or goals as needed.
2. **Get to know your students better:** Identify and monitor your students' learning needs; keep track of their progress; designate some time for engaging them in conversations; show interest in their well-being; use class time, instruction and classroom activities to connect better with them (e.g., use their names, create common goals, use team-building games); interact with them outside of the classroom; make yourself available to them via email or office hours; find out about their families and get in touch with them from time to time; actively listen to them and make them feel valued and appreciated.
3. **Plan and monitor your teaching:** Prepare lesson plans; identify the features of an effective lesson and develop lesson observation forms; keep teaching journals (i.e., written or recorded personal accounts of your day-to-day teaching practice; write lesson reports describing the main features of the lessons; use a questionnaire or survey to collect information on a particular aspect of your teaching or students' learning; record (video or audio) and watch or listen to parts or whole of your lessons; cooperate with other teachers to observe each other teaching; keep teaching portfolios (i.e., personal records of reflections, activities and materials); carry out classroom/teacher/practitioner/action research to uncover and address problem areas in your teaching practice, with succeeding monitoring of the effects of the action plan designed and implemented to bring about change); review your classroom discourse (i.e., language you use, your questions, feedback, teacher talk and action zone).
4. **Improve your pedagogical content/field knowledge and extend your teaching and research skills:** Read books and articles to stay current and informed about new practices; take advantage of online teacher education opportunities such as online courses and webinars; watch videos of teaching; join professional organizations and association in our field (e.g., TESOL, ACTFL, IATEFL, AAAL, INGED); subscribe to academic journals (e.g., TESOL Quarterly, Foreign Language Annals) or teacher magazines (e.g., English Teaching Forum, ELT-KIT); consider pursuing a graduate degree; attend conferences, symposia, workshops, seminars; join online teacher support groups, forums and other online communities and collaborative efforts for teachers to share knowledge and solve mutual problems; make use of new technologies; do not hesitate to ask or consult with experts and knowledgeable others when you need help; learn how to review course texts and materials; use classroom/teacher/practitioner/action research to explore aspects of your teaching that need enhancement; take part in lesson-studies in which you plan, observe and reflect upon a teacher's lesson.
5. **Share your knowledge and skills:** Think about others and not just yourself; learn to apply your knowledge and skills to benefit others; collaborate with other teachers through different means such as peer coaching, mentoring and team-teaching; teach and learn from others by collaborating on ideas, lesson plans, practices that work; use existing social networks or build your own to chat with colleagues, to post questions and answers, and to share recourses; schedule regular get-togethers, especially with teachers in a given grade or school to discuss issues of common interest; keep your door open and encourage others to come to you with

questions; write articles for magazines or articles; give seminars, talks or presentations; write blog posts; share information and materials on forums, online discussion and support groups; contribute to open source projects: volunteer to help others, especially the underprivileged; be open to new ideas; take advantage of potential opportunities to make a difference for your school, community or the public good.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it gives some ideas on strategies you can adopt to navigate any uncertainty regarding professional development. I have already emphasized in the opening part of my article that classroom practice (i.e., instruction) is not sufficient to ensure your professional growth and needs to be reinforced by other means. It is equally important for you, however, to note that no activities –formal (e.g., attending conferences) or informal (e.g., reading a book in your field)—and regardless of whether it was mentioned here or not, will guarantee your cognitive or practical transformation to a better teacher, unless you learn how to engage in *critical reflection*, and practice it on a daily basis. Ali Merç, in the last article in this series, tackles the role of reflection for teachers, so I will not discuss it further here, but will only reiterate that professional development is *not* a combination of isolated actions that are *ends in themselves*, but rather involves a prolonged interaction of a sequence of interrelated activities, purposeful and mindful deliberations, multiple follow-ups and dedicated implementations—all of which you need to perform with a *critical lens*. Only then will it be possible to successfully integrate your prior knowledge, skills and current practices in a way that impacts your conception and pursuit of better teaching, and your future classroom performance.

Barriers to professional development

There is not a single day that goes by that we do not witness a negative public view or report of teachers' quality or status. The representation of teachers as lazy is never a fair assessment and cannot be justified, nor can taken-for-granted statements regarding declining teacher quality be backed by substantial research. Likewise, there is a common misconception that we, as teachers, resent or even resist change at our workplaces, and therefore, are not big fans of professional development. The reality, however, is that we often encounter poorly organized professional development activities that do not center around our contextual needs, and thus, are far from being relevant, meaningful or applicable to us. Moreover, they are not focused around clear and consistent goals; they are not offered in a vibrant and effective manner; they do not provide effective follow-up, feedback and support cycles; they comprise unfeasible expectations regarding application and outcomes; and finally, we, the teachers as the real agents of change, often have no power over or involvement in decisions concerning their implementation (e.g., timing and location). Consequently, we may be inclined naturally to think that professional development rarely leads to actual improvement or change in our teaching practices or our students' learning. This, when coupled with other barriers holding us back in our professional development efforts, such as unsupportive environments lacking resources, difficult working conditions negatively affecting our identity, efficacy and professionalism as teachers, and systemic and institutional obstacles working as demotivators, we may be quick to judge all that work to be useless and not to our best interest. After all, we have busy schedules as teachers and do not want to waste our time with efforts that we deem unpromising. Thus, it is critical that both schools and universities renew themselves to create sufficient conditions and opportunities for teachers to create a positive culture of teacher development and cherish trust in and devotion to professional development opportunities. That is also where I think successful school and university partnerships may have a huge role to play.

School-university partnership



We, as teachers, often refer to the gap between our students and us when things go sour, but there is an even wider gap in education that needs to be bridged—one that exists between schools and universities. The existing exchanges between schools and universities through a number of courses during pre-service teacher education—e.g., *Community Service Practices* and *Teaching Practicum* that you take as teacher candidates in your junior and senior years, respectively—and occasional opportunities of seminars, workshops and/or in-service teacher trainings university faculty offers for teachers at schools are what I consider *pretentious* attempts at cooperation that are of little value to either party, and definitely not an exemplary school-university partnership with significant returns for effective teacher development, better teaching practices or improved student outcomes.

The altered realities, roles and functions of schools and universities are to blame for the lack of significant connection and collaboration. After all, one prioritizes everyday practice in the classroom, while the other values research and academic scholarship. Universities are no longer considered *schools*, as they have long moved away from practice; university faculty became more interested in carrying out research and publishing in prestigious journals with high impact factors to achieve recognition, while teachers—and others in the community—tried to focus on understanding the complexities of the teaching and learning process, the classroom dynamics and students' experiences to improve schooling. Academic research began to gradually depart from the actual issues and problems surrounding practitioners, and not only did it become irrelevant to teachers, but it started to hold them responsible for the problems at schools including academic failure. Teacher education faculty became increasingly isolated and distant from the classroom and the very realities of teachers and schools. Schools, on the other hand, neglected their responsibility for ongoing development of their professional staff and failed to provide ample opportunities for teacher growth and leadership; nor did they take appropriate measures to provide incentives for teacher initiatives to better themselves (Gitlin, Bringhurst, Burns, Cooley, Myers, Price, Russell, & Tiess, 1992).

Logic tells me, if we want a better education system and improved outcomes, we have to invest more in our teachers, as better teachers will lead to better schools (Goodlad, 1994). It is imperative that we seek out and act on all viable options for cooperation and partnership between schools and universities for real transformation to occur in the lives of pre-service and in-service teachers through experiential learning opportunities.

One such effort to bridge the gap and eliminate the tension between schools and universities was the creation of *Professional Development Schools* in the United States in 1980s and 1990s to reform teacher education and restructure schools through superior teacher preparation, professional development, inquiry and research, and student learning. These schools used an innovative approach—namely, intensive clinical practice, like that of a teaching/university hospital—to prepare professional teachers who were not only skilled in their subject area, but also demonstrated high-level of informed decision-making, effective communication and teamwork with colleagues, an orientation to problem solving and inquiry, accountability for enhanced learning outcomes. Through this partnership, school faculty explored ways to make university-generated knowledge more accessible to teachers to bridge the gap between research and practice, and professional preparation and actual practice/real world of schools (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Goodlad, 1990;

Holmes Group, 1990; Hunzicker, 2018; Levine, 1992).

Just to make it clear, I am not necessarily advocating the replication of professional development schools in Turkey, as I anticipate structural difficulties and potential resistance from a policy-making and institutional perspective. However, I see no reason why we cannot model this initiative between schools and universities and realize some of the working principles in the operation of such schools to turn our existing schools, in practically, into professional development schools.

I will now briefly mention what schools and universities should understand and do to cultivate the type of partnership that will lead to enhanced professional development and educational change.

Establishing effective professional development partnerships

As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001) argue, professional development is a process of "culture-building, not skills training" (p. 46). Therefore, the first step to build a functional tie between schools and universities should be to create an institutional culture of professional development that encourages collaboration, knowledge sharing, and teamwork through taking part in different professional development activities. Promoting professional development plans for all faculty and staff members will stimulate workplace best practices. In this engagement, both parties should take ownership of the responsibility for the quality training of teacher candidates, professional development needs of teachers and improved learner outcomes at schools. Sharing responsibility for the learning of everyone involved—adult or children—and committing time and resources for that purpose is essential. Effective collaboration requires the parties to accept liability for learning outcomes and do all they can to boost them for the benefit of teacher candidates, teachers, faculty and students.

Schools should serve as the dynamos of this partnership though. They should adopt standards for professional development to guide the design and evaluation professional learning provided to their teachers. They should increase opportunities for professional learning and collaboration (anything from peer observations to workshops) in the workplace and across schools through careful timing and scheduling. They should conduct needs assessments for their staff to identify areas of professional learning most needed by them. By paying attention to the teachers and teacher surveys and other relevant data and rewarding—even if it means simple appreciation, schools can effectively support and motivate their academic personnel in their professional development efforts.

Universities, on the other hand, should hold a facilitator role in the process. It is often reported that pre-service teachers graduate with a low awareness of the concept of professional development and lack knowledge of how they can engage in continued professional development as part of in-service teacher training. Therefore, teacher education coursework should include a conscious effort to emphasize the role of continuous, life-long professional development for teacher candidates. Faculty members can provide specific examples of professional development activities in the courses they teach and actually require candidates to have hands-on practice with some of these activities as part of their course requirements (e.g., keeping teaching journals). Teacher education faculty should also provide critical insights into how teacher candidates can bridge the gap between the theoretical courses and actual teaching through carefully selected professional development activities. When this is not done, we often get to hear the common criticism that teaching is nothing like what we see at the university. However, you should realize that there is never going to be a perfect match that you wish to have between your coursework and what you get to practice as a teacher on a daily basis. It is your job to find that meaningful connection, but universities and teacher education faculty should be actively involved in your careers as teacher education graduates by providing you with systematic support, follow-up and assistance as needed.

Alternative recruitment patterns or official new job descriptions and assignments might not be applicable, but a stronger practicum system could be established, where teachers are also routinely trained for their roles as mentors and supervisors. It is important that teacher education institutions and their faculty assume their role as specialists and make sure that practitioners understand what quality teacher professional learning looks like, while they themselves continue learning. Currently, university faculty rarely visits the partnered schools and spends a limited number of hours there each semester only to watch teacher candidates teach. Faculty should spend sufficient time in the school setting *not* working with candidates only, but also supporting staff development and engaging in collaborative research with teachers. It is through this collective inquiry and implementation process that adult learning occurs and children's needs are met. Besides, the criticism about academic research not finding its way to the schools and not being related to the problems of teachers and schools could be partially resolved in this way, and the findings and outcomes of such research connection could be made accessible to teachers and schools for addressing and improving schooling concerns and practices. Unfortunately, such involvement of teacher education faculty in effective field work and service is rarely rewarded in higher education in decisions regarding promotion and tenure. Thus, policy changes and regulations might be needed to maintain their interest and enthusiasm in this process.



So where should you stand in this allocation of responsibilities for professional development and school reform? It is important to remember that you play a key role in the successful implementation of the professional development activities at schools and should remain at the core of the process as the main actors. As I endlessly repeat to teacher candidates in my courses, teachers should be proactive, rather than reactive—it is a choice between moaning and being miserable versus taking steps and being hopeful. It is your responsibility to take charge of your professional life and learning—whether in the form of bottom-up development efforts or by means of top-down line of actions and strategies. You might experience resistance or receive no support or incentives for your own efforts, but do remember this is what you do for yourself and your students, and trust me it is fight worth having.

You should keep in mind that effective teacher professional development that works *is* possible when carefully planned and organized. Now, I will briefly discuss some important steps of organizing productive professional development and some considerations for you to make the most of your professional development to drive positive change. These can be applied to both top-down and bottom-up opportunities and in cases where you have no direct control they should still give you an idea about what the procedure should be like so you can manage them better to benefit from the activities or events more.

1. Setting professional development goals with all parties involved is crucial and input you provide, as teachers, during this stage is particularly important to have a chance to address issues that are relevant to you. Starting with issues you are having and would like to resolve in your own classes or at your school will always be a good idea; it will be even better if the professional development is reflective of larger teaching pedagogies and linked to the strategic goals of national school system or the curriculum. Determining too many goals or having several competing goals and priorities will be discouraging and tiring, and will jeopardize your success.
2. Effective teacher professional development must be ongoing and requires a course of actions and follow-ups (e.g., instructing, coaching, and applying). Independent one-shot activities (e.g.,

a workshop you attend) are of little to no value if not pursued with additional undertakings that draw from or link back to it. Thus, you need to have a limited number of tasks or instructional practices to focus on each semester or school year to give yourself ample time to absorb and implement them effectively.

3. Professional development is more likely to bring about expected results when it is engaging and provides tangible *hands-on* That is one of the most important reasons why traditional in-service teacher trainings organized in Turkey fails. I would not blame you for not wanting to listen to a traditional PowerPoint presentation or a lecture that lacks substance for two or three hours, when you are not actively involved and you would rather be back at school collaborating with colleagues on a project. You surely deserve the chance to *learn by doing* that takes advantage of authentic artifacts, interactive activities, and other strategies to provide deeply embedded and highly contextualized professional learning, and have direct connection to your classrooms and students.
4. High-quality professional development fosters collaboration. Working with a small group of teachers with the same grade level, school or interests to exchange ideas on specific issues—rather than generic ones (e.g., a presentation on material development for teachers in different subject areas—is quite supportive in reflecting on and processing new information. Teaming up with colleagues to create collaborative workplaces or *communities of learners* provides changes for you to be exposed to instructional supervision in your own context and prompts a desire for further collaboration for professional sharing and growth.
5. Immediate use of information or practice of skills attained during a professional development activity or event contributes to your overall progress in the long run. Even though you should not let yourself filled with unrealistic expectations such as instant success and complete transformation, try to apply the ideas and inspirations you get from professional development efforts in your classes right away by creating related activities and lesson plans to test. This will give you an idea about what works and what not, and the chance to revise and retry.
6. Ongoing support in the form of feedback, tutoring, coaching, mentoring or troubleshooting may scaffold your implementation of an idea, technique or a strategy during a professional development activity or event. Your implementation of new instructional practices will not always be smooth and will often require more than a few tries to promote change—even when you grasp and understand them and are willing to put them into practice. In this case, people with expertise, instructional coaches or master teachers can offer feedback; visiting model classrooms to watch the new strategies in action might prove valuable; you can share your experiences about implementation of the new skills in your groups, or those of you who pick up the strategy more quickly can be assigned to serve as mentors for the others. Such strategies will help bridge the implementation gap in your professional development and will correspond to direct impact on student learning.
7. Revisiting and tracking the professional development goals you set at the beginning on a regular basis works as a good reminder to refine your vision. You should monitor your progress towards these goals and use feedback from students and observe their achievement to make judgments about how you are doing and whether the changes are contributing to your learner outcomes. You can discuss these findings with other teachers to brainstorm ideas as to what can be done next.
8. Successful professional development efforts demand persistence and patience. Holding realistic expectations including how much time it will take schools and teachers to adopt and implement goals will save you headaches. You should understand that most traditional professional development training events are inappropriate in size, scope, or structure to support learning of new ideas or skills, and will not give you the built-in time needed to think about and reflect on the material, ask questions and receive input, or go through activities to enhance your comprehension and to facilitate your implementation. Thus, you need to commit for an extended period of time—sometimes even a full school year or more—before you can

gradually spot change. It is crucial that you do not give up your efforts at half distance; and you periodically track your progress, follow up with complementary steps, and continue receiving support on the way until the very end.

9. Finally, professional development should be planned and managed well. There are many factors to consider in warranting the involvement, active participation and motivation of teachers to maximize the benefits for them. Firstly, the timing of the activity or event is an important aspect (e.g., during school time, after school, during the school holidays?). Next, the place and nature of the professional development will follow (e.g., at the school? outside of the school? online?face-to-face?). Other issues such as duration (e.g., how long? an hour? a day? a week?) and expense (e.g., any costs involved? free?) could be of interest as well. Planning and managing the event can be complex, but when executed well, the results will be positive. Here accessibility and convenience of the event or activity and your suitability will matter the most.

In conclusion, drawing on the cooking metaphor that ELT-KIT emerged from, high quality food requires, before anything else, top-level chefs. Leading successful and efficient kitchens is not an easy task and far from unconscious. Great chefs carefully consider every aspect of their operations—anything from heat control to portion sizing to presentation—to maximize the quality of their foods and services. They have to be on top of things, making sure the very best ingredients they use are ready and organized, and they have a perfect mastery of their surroundings (i.e., kitchen and its layout) and equipment (i.e., essential kitchen appliances, accessories and utensils) and they blend this all with their skills, dedication and love for food and cooking. Everything is intentional and nothing is left to chance. All this requires so much work, knowledge and practice; simply spending years in the kitchen without experimenting, reflecting, updating yourself, does not magically turn you into a master chef. In other words, your cooking wisdom and skills do not evolve overnight; nor are they guaranteed to magically appear in a specific timeframe. Similarly, good food takes time, patience, and preparation— even supposedly skilled chefs might end up hysterically searching for the required ingredients and utensils rather than focusing on their cooking, only to figure out that they ran out of salt, the olive oil is not extra virgin, the pan is not the desired size. Thus, if you are not equipped and organized with on-purpose, advanced planning, passing of time in the kitchen will not bring about additional taste. Finally, high-quality food involves contribution and involvement by different groups of people—from food producers to suppliers, from chefs to servers, and from business owners to customers. Healthy communication between all these parties will contribute to the quality of the end product and satisfaction of all those involved. This kitchen analogy, of course, applies to a professional kitchen—like the one at a restaurant—or else you can always make an omelet without salt, or a salad without extra virgin olive oil—I bet you can even make tea in a sauce pan, if you are just about basic needs and survival. What about if you are chasing that special taste, though, just like we seek excellence in teaching to make a difference?

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It is time we started using alternative assessment tools in our language classes

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Introduction

The new English language curricula for primary and secondary levels emphasize the importance of developing communicative skills. Instead of pushing the learners for mastery of discrete language items, as teachers, we are in a position to keep their focus on the authentic use of English. Within this framework, using alternative assessment tools seems to be a viable option for understanding their language development process. In this article, I will be presenting some nice recipes for designing alternative assessment tools. I will give practical guidelines and examples of how we can implement them in the classroom.

Which recipes are better? Traditional or Alternative?

How do we know that our students are learning what they are supposed to learn? The answer to this question will probably be a very straightforward one. You could respond "We assess them!". Needless to say, the ability to assess student performance is one of the fundamental skills we are required to have. When we consider that assessment of students takes thirty to fifty percent of a teacher's classroom time (Stiggins, 1999), one can easily grasp the importance of its place in teachers' daily classroom routines and the need for competence in assessment skills.

Assessment, a matter of paramount importance, is defined as "a process of inquiry that integrates multiple sources of evidence, whether test-based or not, to support an interpretation, decision, or action" (Moss, Girard, & Haniford, 2006, p. 152). We are all aware of the importance of what we test, how we test, and what impact tests make on students. We also know about the consequences when insufficient care is given to selection of assessment techniques and how wrongly made decisions can do harm rather than good for our students. Particularly, what happens when we use traditional paper and pen tests especially with young learners is obvious to all of us. Wrong decisions regarding how we assess children do not only cause anxiety and affect their self-image but they also consume valuable learning time that could otherwise be used for more beneficial purposes (Smith, 1996).



Figure 1. The inevitability of tests in education system

In terms of assessment methods, we talk about two different types of assessment. We can broadly distinguish conventional paper-and-pencil language tests from performance tests.

Traditional assessment means assessing student performance by using conventional testing techniques. These include selected response test items such as multiple choice, true-false tests, matching activities, or constructed response test items like fill-in the gaps and short answer questions. Such items elicit students' ability to choose from a given set of options, or lead to demonstration of limited performance (Brown & Hudson, 1998).

Alternative assessment, on the other hand, is a general term which involves using methods that reveal students' language performance. This kind of assessment directly focuses on performance without using standardized tests (Kane, Crooks, & Cohen, 1999). Such assessment "emphasizes the communicative meaningfulness of evaluation and the commitment to measure that which we value in education" (Kohonen , 1997, p.13). There are also other terms commonly used to refer to the alternative options to traditional methods of assessment (Worthen, 1993) such as direct assessment, authentic assessment, and performance assessment. Are they different? In fact, they encapsulate the same meaning with the all-embracing term "alternative assessment".

In the most recent documentation of the new English language curricula in Turkey, theories of contemporary thinking are promoted regarding assessment. We see that continuous assessment, portfolios, self/peer assessment are recommended at almost every step. Assessment of authentic use of language with an emphasis on tools such as portfolios, projects, and/or communicative activities are suggested to have more place than traditional assessment tools such as multiple choice, true/false, and/or fill-in-the blanks (MoNE, 2018, p.10). Yet, unfortunately formal grammar-based exams continue to form the basis of the teaching and learning process of English from primary school onwards (British Council & TEPAV, 2013).

Brown's (2000, p.23) reference to Albert Marckwardt and his likening the paradigm shift in the approaches and methodologies in teaching English to "changing winds and shifting sands" reflects the transformation from structural and teacher centered approaches to communicative and learner centered approaches. If we prioritize process-oriented instruction and holistic learning in language education, we should then be following the same route when it comes to assessing our learners' understanding and use of English. Viewed from this perspective, language testing should also enjoy such a transition. After all, a testing procedure not complying with the nature of the curriculum that emphasizes language use in an authentic communicative environment would put at risk the accomplishment of the linguistic and pedagogic objectives. It is not difficult to foresee that the skills that allow our learners to show their abilities on a discrete item test will lead to failure when they encounter the task of communication in complex real-world situations. Only a task that resembles real language use will be effective in preparing the learners to perform outside the test or classroom situation (Fulcher, 2000). Right here comes alternative assessment very convenient.

Characteristics of alternative assessment recipes

Alternative assessment, as it aims to understand what students can do with language, is done continuously on an individual basis using contextualized communication tasks that are prepared in a free-response format. It is formative in nature and provides individualized feedback and washback. While traditional testing is concerned with the question "Do you know it?" performance assessment asks "How well can you use what you know?" (Hibbard et al., 1996).

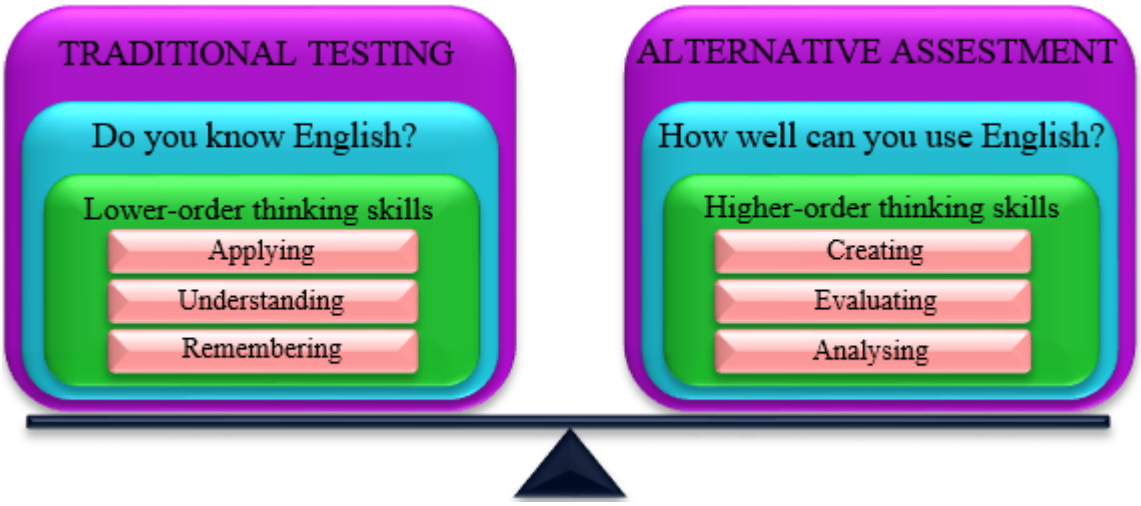


Figure 2. The complementary nature of traditional testing and alternative assessment

As the figure shows, through conventional assessment we are able to discern our learners' ability to remember, understand, and apply. We ask our students to match, choose, fill in the blanks or list most of the time. These are the kinds of activities that promote lower-order thinking skills. On the other hand, alternative assessment methods enable learners to be involved in the processes of reasoning, analyzing, and evaluating which capture higher order thinking and problem solving skills.

Can we expect our students to operate at higher levels of thinking? Yes, indeed we should. Therefore, to prepare our youth to compete with the demands of the 21st century, we are not only obliged to instill in these skills, but we also have the responsibility to carry out our assessment procedures accordingly. That is to say, in order to discover what is learned, we need to make additional effort and consider both the product and process of learning. Supporting alternative assessment with other assessment methods will be an excellent way for gauging our students' progress. Metaphorically speaking, adherence to one form of testing and ignoring the alternatives would be similar to judging and comparing the ability of an elephant and a squirrel to climb up a tree. I guess this is not fair play to our baby elephant.

Regarding alternative assessment, we need to bear in mind that we are the ones responsible for generating the necessary tools and there are certain features we need to pay attention to while doing so.

- The background and needs of our learners are important. Do not forget that each one is unique with their own learning styles, talents, and preferences.
- It is a long-term commitment; do not expect immediate progress. It will take time. Be patient!
- Be as much flexible as you can. View this process as a means and not an end in itself.
- Let your learners demonstrate the best of themselves without imposing unnecessarily strict boundaries.
- Be ready to deal with large samples of text. Keep in mind that the rewards are worth the time and the sacrifice!
- You are using these tools not to replace traditional assessments. Apparently, you are using them as a supplement to standardized assessment procedures.

For creating authentic assessment tools, Airasian (1991 as cited in Brualdi, 2000, p.2) suggests completing the following steps:

1. Identify the overall performance or task to be assessed, and perform it yourself or imagine yourself performing it.
2. List the important aspects of the performance or product.
3. Try to limit the number of performance criteria, so they can all be observed during a pupil's performance.
4. Express the performance criteria in terms of observable pupil behaviors or product characteristics.
5. Do not use ambiguous words that cloud the meaning of the performance criteria.
6. Arrange the performance criteria in the order in which they are likely to be observed.

Most commonly used alternative assessment procedures

The following are among the most commonly used alternative assessment procedures (Brown & Hudson, 1998; Ioannou-Georgiou, 2003; McNamara, 2000).

1. portfolios, ii. conferences, iii. role plays and group discussions , iv. demonstrations, v. self-assessment, vi.peer-assessment, vii. projects, , viii. journals, ix. reading logs, x. performance and creative drama tasks, , xi. videos of role plays, xii. audiotapes of discussions.

Since it is not possible to cover the features of each alternative assessment technique in such a short text, I aim to focus on the techniques, which in my opinion are easy to prepare, adapt, deliver and evaluate, but still offer stimulating potential for learning and assessment.

Now, I would like to present to you a few practical and not-so-practical assessment guidelines that I believe will help you support your students' endeavor into deeper learning and use of English. You can use the following techniques for measuring your students' abilities, progress, and achievement effectively in a wide variety of educational settings ranging from primary to tertiary level with different groups of students.

Portfolio Recipes

A portfolio "is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas.... [it] provides a complex and comprehensive view of student performance in context" (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991, pp.60, 63). Plenty of performance evidence can be included in a portfolio and the pieces can be related to different skill areas ranging from vocabulary to listening. Usually, writing samples form essential materials of portfolios (Gillespie et al, 1996).



The following items should be placed in a portfolio.

1. Cover Letter: This letter is written at the end but it appears as the first piece in the portfolio. In the cover letter, the learners present themselves, explain the extent of their learning and progress, and demonstrate how the portfolio achieves to document their development.
2. A table of contents page showing the headings and page numbers.
3. Entries – Pre-specified core pieces students have to include. There could be some optional

materials depending on learners' choices. The core elements are essential for each student and students are assessed over these. The optional items are individualized and they are mostly used to signal the impact the learners want to achieve through their personal choices.
4. Dates on all entries so that the development of the learners can be traced.
5. Drafts of written/aural products and revised versions. Students are asked to submit all the drafts up to the final one with dates on each. This will allow comparison between their first and last assignments and thus enable both you and the learners to become more cognizant of their growth.
6. Reflections- Students' self-assessment of their work or self-reflection on the items they choose to put into the portfolio. Learners can reflect upon their performance recursively at different phases throughout the learning process.

The students, who do not feel comfortable in expressing themselves in English, can write in their mother tongue. Students should be made feel at ease while expressing their feelings regarding their progress. Some guiding questions can be provided for students to help them organize their self-reflections. Sample questions are i. What have I learnt/gained/improved? ii. What was my major achievement? iii. Why did I include this item in my portfolio? iv. Is there anything I should change? v. Are there any areas I need to work on more? vi. What could I have done better? vii. What should I do next?

In order to facilitate the process of portfolio development, we need to provide students with the following information.

1. Tell the learners what purpose the portfolio will serve.
2. Inform them about the time period it will span
3. Describe the types of work they will include
4. List the criteria that will be used to evaluate portfolio including the instructions for both core and optional entries. This requires developing criteria ahead of time.
5. Let them know about the degree of flexibility/inflexibility involved in the process.
6. Make sure they have access to resources necessary to create portfolios.
7. Make it clear whether they will be working alone or collaboratively in pairs/groups.
8. Describe the physical structure of portfolios, how do you want it to appear. If possible show a sample.
9. Announce how portfolios will affect their grades.

For the assessment of developmental portfolios, we can use analytic rating scales to assess student performance based on a set of criteria. However, for showcase portfolios we can prefer holistic ratings assessment and assign a single score to the whole compilation. We just need to bear in mind that it is never possible to create a perfect rating scale or a rubric. All we need to do is consider the expected conceptual knowledge, skills, or behaviors the entire time and work on improving our skills in creating rubrics. Only by practice can we gain the desired competence.

Self-assessment recipes

Self-assessment is a process in which individual students judge their performance by making decisions about their selves and their abilities (Blatchford, 1997). Self-evaluation and self-monitoring are also used to refer to self-assessment. Self-assessment is a vital element contributing to learner autonomy in that it provides the opportunity for learners to assess their own growth and guide them towards focusing on their own learning, (Dickinson 1987). Self-assessment can be done in the form of logs, diaries, essays, presentations or checklists that reflect the assessment criteria.

A four-stage model that can be used for teaching students their role in self-evaluation (Rolheiser &

Ross, 2001, pp.7-8).

STAGE 1- Involve students in defining the criteria that will be used to judge their performance.

STAGE 2- Teach students how to apply the criteria to their own work.

STAGE 3- Give students feedback on their self-evaluations.

STAGE 4- Help students develop productive goals and action plans

With the intention of providing a sample self-assessment model that can easily be constructed on the basis of learning objectives of a particular lesson, I developed the following self-assessment grid by using the vocabulary activities recommended in Puskas (2017, p.108). The following checklist can be used with both young learners and adolescents as long as the content is modified and the indicators of proficiency levels are changed into different forms. For instance, while young learners are expected to tick a "smiley", a "neutral" or a "sad" face, older students can rate their performance over a scale of one to five where one is the lowest level of proficiency and five is the highest.


Name: Date:

Self-Assessment Rubric for Vocabulary Knowledge

I can match pictures with words			
I can match opposite words			
I can match synonym words			
I can match a word with its definition			
I can label pictures			
I can complete missing letters in words			
I can complete word puzzles			
Total score			

Comments:

Figure 3. Self-assessment rubric for vocabulary knowledge

I must add that students' complete understanding of the criteria is a pre-requisite for effective self-assessment. In order to be able to evaluate the quality of their work and discriminate between a satisfactory or unsatisfactory piece of work, the assessment criteria must be transparent and comprehensible. Otherwise, the judgments they make as regards to their performance and their level of attainment of the objectives might be overcast. Where possible, engaging students in the construction of these criteria will positively impact and enhance student's understanding of academic standards they are expected to reach.

Reading Logs Recipes

Reading literature is a promising technique for students. It can help them to gain competency in four

basic language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking and language systems such as vocabulary and grammar. While reading literary pieces, in addition to learning the language in context, learners can enjoy fascinating plots, charming characters, and authentic dialogues. However, if we use texts that are above learners' level, if they are not fully aware of the expectations or if there are no guidelines for assignments, it might become a rather uninspiring activity for our learners (Lyutaya, 2011). To turn this experience into a beneficial one, we can use reading logs. Reading logs are simple tools that can be used as a form of alternative assessment in order to capture learners' individual responses to the reading materials (Carlisle, 2000). By keeping a log, students take notes of various aspects related to their reading. By completing entries in their reading logs at different stages, learners gain confidence in reading comprehension, activate new vocabulary, and improve their writing skills. A reading log can look like as follows.

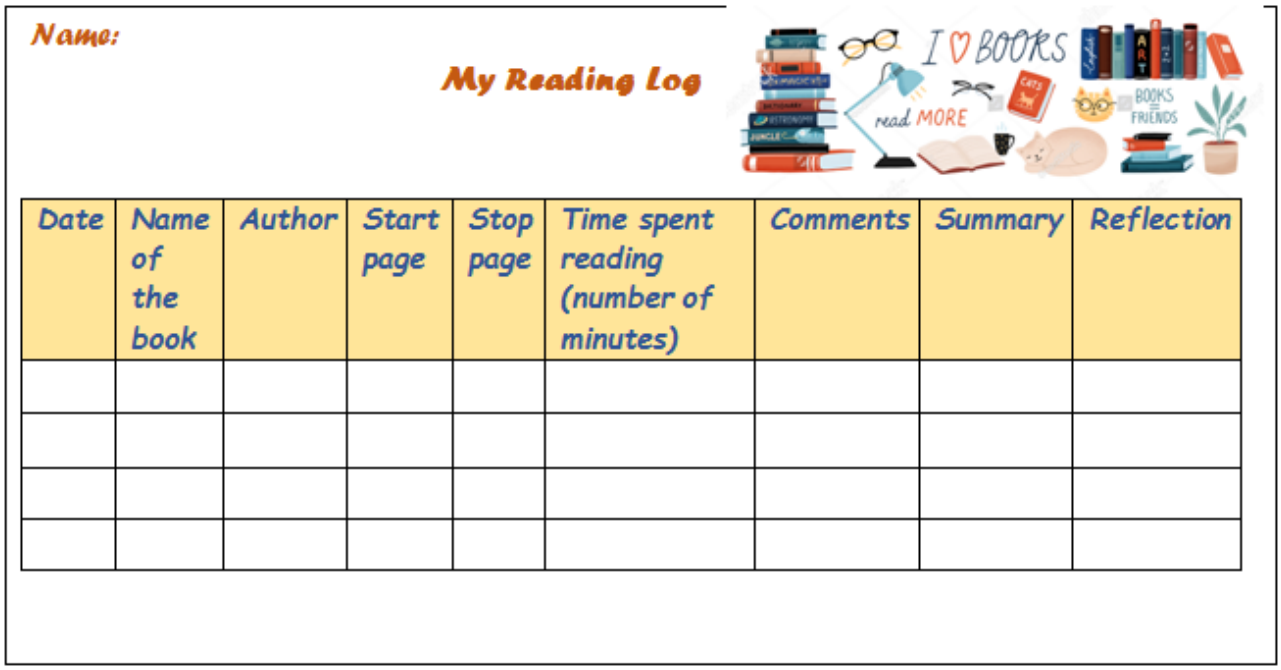


Figure 4. Reading log

We can modify reading logs depending on the level and age of students. If we are working with young learners, we can ask them to show their understanding or reflection by drawing pictures. They can draw pictures to illustrate the setting, characters, or the plot. They can also be asked to rate a book by giving stars. We can also add other reflection categories based on the expected outcomes.

All in all, regardless of the method you use as an alternative in your assessment, in order to increase the effectiveness of alternative assessment and ensure that there is an interaction between students' performance and the instruction that precedes it, it is important make sure you

1. select the assessment tasks that are clearly aligned or connected to what has been taught.
2. share the scoring criteria for the assessment task with students prior to working on the task.
3. provide students with clear statements of standards and/or several models of acceptable performances before they attempt a task.
4. encourage students to complete self-assessments of their performances.
5. interpret students' performances by comparing them to standards that are developmentally appropriate, as well as to other students' performances (Elliott, 1995, p.82).

Conclusion

As we all know, it is usually hard to understand whether a wrong answer is just a result of carelessness or it represents a more important gap in our students' competence and thus requires a more proactive approach for its treatment. Unfortunately, as is the case in a number of classes, a passionate attachment to traditional testing frequently leads to basing our teaching solely on testing, a lack of focus on deep learning and not to our surprise to demotivated students who do not hold even a little bit of enthusiasm for learning English. Traditional tests are undoubtedly important, but cannot totally replace authentic assessments. We usually have different arguments in support of traditional testing. Most of the times it is the system – exams being the gatekeepers, the entrenched routines of classrooms or students' interpretation of learning- that pushes us into adhering to conventional test habits. I suggest that once we start trying out alternative methodologies for evaluation of our students, we will be addressing their needs and improving their learning no matter what the limitations are. Earlier studies frequently reflect pessimism about English language education caused by problems such as crowded classrooms, lack of materials, or teachers' work overload. Yet, the report by the British Council and TEPAV (2013) indicates that Turkish schools are generally equipped with decent infrastructure, with students who are open to learning and with teachers who welcome professional development opportunities that will enable them to turn their classrooms into effective learning environments.

The recipes I have tried to outline briefly in this article can be used as part of daily classroom activities easily. Integration of such practices will yield a more thorough portrayal of our students' capabilities along with the areas that need further attention. As opposed to traditional tests that only depict quantitative characterization of students, alternative assessment methods will grant us "a story for every student…and the knowledge to be able to reflect upon, discuss, and assist a student's journey through the learning process" (Huerta-Macias 2002, p.342).

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Reflective teaching: A brief guide for foreign language teachers and teacher candidates

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What is reflection?

When we consider the real-life answer to this question, we may come up with the following definition: 'what we see when we look in a mirror'. Another question that follows then is: 'Why do you look in a mirror?' The answer is obvious: 'To check how we look!' Once we check our looks (i.e. hair, clothes, make-up), we take the necessary precautions to look better. If we are lucky and hundred percent sure that we look great, we begin the rest of the day with the motivation and self-confidence necessary for a successful and beautiful day.

Reflection is not always in front of the mirror, and not all actions are reflective. The famous education philosopher John Dewey distinguished between 'routine action' and 'reflective action'. According to Dewey (1933), routine action is directed by factors such as tradition, habit and authority, and institutional definitions and expectations. Within this understanding, routine action is relatively static and is, consequently, insensitive to altering urgencies and conditions. Reflective action, alternatively, encompasses an enthusiasm to take part in persistent self-judgement and development. In addition to other things, it entails flexibility, serious examination, and social consciousness.

Reflection for language teachers is not different from the real-life reflection illustrated above. Actually, the dictionary definition is quite similar to the definition we proposed above. The Oxford Dictionary also includes 'serious thought or consideration' in the definition of reflection. This suggests something which is more than what we see or think about on the surface, therefore, a deeper

and a more thoughtful reflection is the key to 'reflective practice'. The idea of reflective practice derived from the work of Donald Schön. According to Schön's (1983) philosophy, reflective practice is a mechanism for closing the gap between formal theory and actual practice by finding the actual theory that is inserted in what professionals do, rather than what they say they do. From this perspective, reflective practice is principally seen a means for improving practice.

Another distinction is between reflection, which I defined above with the mirror analogy, and 'critical reflection'. Critical reflection is the more purposeful and more structured description of the concept of reflection. In other words, critical reflection is more than just 'thinking about' our practice, but rather a way of 'critiquing' our practice in a logical and rigorous manner. This will certainly help us wisely think through what is good already and what can be made better. According to Crawley (2005, p. 166), the main reason for using critical reflection is that "we can question our routine, convenient, everyday practices and ask questions about what really does and doesn't work". In other words, taking part in critical reflection enables us to keep learning, develop and progress in and through practice.

Critical reflection is about "challenging and testing out what you do as a teacher and being prepared to act on the results" (Crawley, 2005, p 167). Critical reflection is important and necessary if we are responsible, as teachers, to build generations who are more caring as this type of reflection will help

us change. It is a vital action as it can allow us to have higher levels of self-awareness by:

- evaluating our present-day practices,
- keeping thinking about what is appropriate,
- studying what is possible and what is not possible,
- having new ideas that inform our actions.

In conclusion, critical reflection is honestly capable of helping us to develop, improve, and change our teaching. As Hole and McEntee (2003) entitled their work, 'reflection is at the heart of practice".

What is reflective teaching?

Reflective teaching, as you would also appreciate, goes hand in hand with critical reflection. A reflective approach to teaching, that is reflective teaching, is never a 'top-down' activity. That means it does not come from an authority; it is not applying what is already given to you as passive technicians; nor is it following a method or approach strictly without any flexibility. In the same vein, research about teaching does not come from external forces (i.e. scholars, administrators, etc.). It is actually a 'bottom-up' activity. For their own teaching, teachers initiate, direct, and evaluate their actions. Within such an approach, teachers are both practitioners and researchers. They observe themselves; they collect their own data for their own teaching, and finally they use these for their self-evaluation and for their own change. The final outcome is, of course, teachers' own professional development.

Within the procedure of reflective teaching, teachers and students are involved in the process of self-observation and self-evaluation. This means that, as a reflective teacher, you and your students must collect evidence on your activities and thinking processes. Then, you organize, analyze, and interpret the collected evidence in order to find out about the possible views, expectations, and principles, which are involved in your activities and thinking processes. Figure 1 below shows the reflective teaching in a cyclical manner.



Figure 1. The reflective teaching cycle (Adapted from Pollard & Tann, 1989)

As you can see in the figure, teachers go through a cycle in which they start from the unknown and move towards the known. In other words, reflection starts from reflecting and ends with reflecting.

In other words, you are able to recall your own experiences, make decisions, and take action in a critical way. This, finally, will bring you back to another reflection, a new process to begin with your own classroom practices or experiences.

Why reflective teaching?

The above scientific explanations might give us an idea about the reasons for dealing with reflection and becoming a reflective practitioner. However, Richards and Lockhart (1994, pp. 3-4) are able to explain the full picture with the help of some assumptions about the nature of teacher development:

- An informed teacher has an extensive knowledge base about teaching.
- Much can be learned about teaching through self-inquiry.
- Much of what happens in teaching is unknown to the teacher.
- Experience is insufficient as a basis for development.
- Critical reflection can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching.

In addition to these assumptions, no doubt, reflective teaching makes a teacher a real-life researcher. You should keep in mind that research is not limited to academics. Even the best researcher may not capture the real atmosphere of a classroom; however, a teacher-researcher is always holding first-hand information. Finally, you may find yourself sharing your research findings with your peers, which means that you are actively involved in the research process professionally as a real researcher.

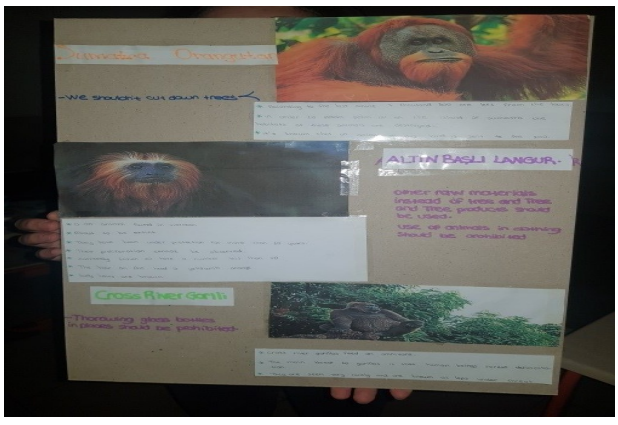
How to reflect?

Most of us, as teachers and individuals, are convinced about the usefulness and importance of reflection in language teaching. But, unfortunately, we may not be sure about how to start. Actually, there are some frameworks, models, or guidelines that are suggested in the literature, which can help us to reflect on our experiences related to our teaching practices. Below you will find some suggestions for reflection. This set of ideas aims to help you come to your own conclusions about which approaches you may want to use for your own purposes in the best way. The common characteristics of these tools are described as follows:

- Describing the experience/situation
- Acknowledging your feelings and opinions
- Evaluating the experience – the good/the bad
- Analyzing the experience – its meaning
- Finding new learning and actions

To become a critically reflective teacher is not difficult. Here are some suggestions that will help you use the tools of reflection keeping in mind the characteristics described above:

1. Keep a teaching journal:



You may record your ideas and/or classroom events you experience in order to reflect on them. In this way, you can discover more about yourself and your teaching. One important consideration about keeping a teaching journal is that you must write and review it regularly. An example diary and its afterthoughts are as follows (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 8):

Journal Entry

Today I gave my class a reading activity which focused on skimming. I gave them an article to read called "Study Paints Grim Picture" and asked them to skim through the article to identify the social problems mentioned. After a few minutes, I checked the answers and asked the students to number the paragraphs. They need to find the paragraphs which contain information on each of the social problems. Then I checked the answers and explained some difficult vocabulary. Then I gave one handout which contained five paragraphs and another handout which contained five headlines. Students had to match them

Afterthoughts

Timing again was a problem. I originally planned to check the answers of the matching exercise, but there was no time. Less time should have been spent on explaining expressions as it defeated the objective of my lesson-skimming. I should have allocated a specific amount of time to practice skimming. I should have opened the lesson with a discussion of social problems so that students could compare their answers with what they found in the article.

Although there is no definite structure or framework for writing in a teaching journal, it is a good idea to do it in an organized way. Only in this way, the review process will be meaningful and useful. Here, we can propose a guide (Hole & McEntee, 2003) that will be easy to follow (Figure 2):

Guided Reflection Protocol (For Individual Reflection) *Collect stories. Some educators find that keeping a set of index cards or a steno book close at hand provides a way to jot down stories as they occur. Others prefer to wait until the end of the day and write in a journal.* *What happened? Choose a story that strikes you as particularly interesting. Write it succinctly.* *Why did it happen? Fill in enough of the context to give the story meaning. Answer the question in a way that makes sense to you.* *What might it mean? Recognizing that there is no one answer is an important step. Explore possible meanings rather than determine the meaning.* *What are the implications for practice? Consider how your practice might change given any new understandings that have emerged from the earlier steps.*

Figure 2. Guided Reflection Protocol for Individual Reflection

2. Get feedback from your students:



Whether formally or informally, learning about your teaching from your students gives you valuable information as reflective teachers. You may ask students about an activity you conducted or learn about their preferences. This will give you an insight about your future work as a foreign language teacher.

Surveys and questionnaires can be used to collect information about your students. As we all know, learning about the characteristics of the students helps you a lot in creating a better classroom environment and gives you a chance to conduct more attractive classroom activities. Those surveys and questionnaires mostly help you learn about the affective aspects of teaching and learning. In other words, you have the chance to discover our students' emotional characteristics. Take learners' beliefs, for instance. Students' beliefs about the language they are learning, their beliefs about teaching a foreign language, their beliefs about the speakers of that language, or their beliefs about the four language skills do affect their learning. Furthermore, their attitudes, motivation, possible anxiety, willingness to communicate in the classroom, or their language learning preferences can easily be identified through surveys and questionnaires. Exploring all of these will help you a lot to better know about our students and teach accordingly.

How can you find and use those surveys and questionnaires? Actually, you don't have to be experienced researchers. Considering the fact that you will be using the information you collect for yourself only, without any concerns for publication, you may devise your own instrument or adapt/take ready-made ones from the published works. You may even find the Turkish versions of those surveys and questionnaires for your students whose level of proficiency is not enough to understand and respond to the items in the questionnaire. For example, the following survey is a very famous one developed by Reid (1987) investigating the perceptual learning styles of learners (Figure 3). Here are the various learning styles determined via the instrument:

- Visual learning: Learns more effectively through the eyes (seeing)
- Auditory learning: Learns more effectively through the ear (hearing)
- Tactile learning: Learns more effectively through touch (hands-on)
- Kinesthetic learning: Learns more effectively through complete body experience
- Group learning: Learns more effectively through working with others
- Individual learning: Learns more effectively through working alone

Algı ile İlgili Öğrenme Stilleri Tercih Anketi
İnsanlar değişik yöntemlerle öğrenir. Bazı insanlar gözlerini kullanarak (görsel öğrenenler), bazıları kulaklarını kullanarak (işitsel öğrenenler) öğrenirler; bazıları ise deneme yanılma yolunu kullanarak (devinsel veya dokunsal) öğrenmelerine yardımcı olan aktivitelere katılarak öğrenirler. Bazıları tek başlarına çalışarak daha iyi öğrenirken, diğerleri bir grupla bir arada çalışarak daha iyi öğrenirler.
Bu anket en iyi öğrenme yollarınızın tercihleri hakkında bilgi toplamak amacı ile düzenlenmiştir. Bu anket öğrenme ile ilgili 30 ifadeden oluşmaktadır. Lütfen her cümleyi dikkatlice okuyunuz ve sizin İngilizce öğrenmenize en iyi uyan seçeneği cevaplayınız. İfadelere katılıp katılmadığınıza karar veriniz. İfadeleri lütfen fazla düşünmeden, hızlı bir şekilde cevaplandırın. Karar verdikten sonra kararınızı değiştirmemeye özen gösterin.

		Kesinlikle katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılmıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
1	Öğretmen bana ne yapmam gerektiğini anlatarak gösterdiği zaman daha iyi anlarım.					
2	Sınıfta bir bilgiyi yaparak öğrenmeyi tercih ederim.					
3	Başkalarıyla birlikte çalıştığım zaman daha fazla bilgiler üretebiliyorum.					
4	Bir grupla çalıştığım zaman daha fazla bilgi öğrenirim.					
5	Sınıfta en iyi başkalarıyla çalıştığım zaman öğrenirim.					
6	.....					

Figure 3. Sample for the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire

If you want to find out about the perceptual learning styles of your specific group of students so that you can tailor your classroom activities accordingly, you may easily use the English or Turkish versions of this instrument. Remember that using this sort of instruments requires official permission from the related institutions and the developers if available.

3. Practice observation:



Observation is the easiest way of exploring learning and teaching issues as you will certainly find out numerous matters in their own classrooms. In fact, classroom observation in a reflective program can provide you and your students with an opportunity to gather information about your own classroom practices (Farrell, 2008). This can help give you the opportunity to examine classroom issues more critically.

There are different forms of observation in a foreign language classroom. These may be listed as follows:

- A student/novice teacher observes a mentor.
- A mentor/trainer observes a student/novice teacher.
- A researcher observes a teacher.
- An administrator/inspector observes a teacher.
- A student teacher observes another student teacher.
- Students observe the teacher.
- A teacher observes another teacher.

Most of the above versions of observation, unfortunately, are completed without the willingness of the observee. Sometimes it is a part of the teacher training program; at other times, the administration asks for this kind of an activity. However, observation is of greatest value performance when it is a voluntary activity. Otherwise, it may even have an unintended negative effect as the observee, in particular, might consider this activity as a way of displaying their weaknesses in teaching. Therefore, peer observation is the key concept when we care about being a reflective teacher.

The general principles for peer observation (Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 24) are as follows:

- Observation should have a focus.
- Observers should use specific procedures.
- The observer should remain an observer.

In order for peer observation to be successful, it is important that three key stages are followed

throughout the process:

1. Pre-observation meeting/discussion: This will help both parties (the observer and the observee) a mutual trust and any anxieties stemming from the feeling of being observed will be reduced. During the pre-observation sessions, the following issues should be considered:

- What are the objectives of the lesson?
- Which teaching approach will be followed?
- Are students ready for the observation? If not, how can you make them comfortable during the observation?
- How will the observation be done? (time and place of the classroom, where to sit, the focus of observation, tools to be used during observation, etc.)

2. Observation – teaching and learning: This is the actual observation time. During the observation, the classroom atmosphere must be as natural as possible. To ensure this, students should be informed about the observation and convinced that it has nothing to do with their performance. The observed teacher should act as if there is no observer present in the classroom. During the observation, the observer must never participate in the lesson as it would change the focus of the observation. The observer should remain silent and do whatever has been decided upon (filling-in forms, taking notes, etc.)
3. Post-observation feedback meeting: This should be done as soon as possible after the observation. During the meetings, the observer should act very sensitively as the purpose of peer-observation is to give feedback, not to criticize the observee for the possible mistakes or problems in the classroom. Therefore, the tone of the voice, facial expressions, and the selection of words during the post-observation sessions are as important as the content of the feedback provided.

4. Engage in 'group reflection' sessions:



Reflection does not have to be individual all the time. If you are working with colleagues who are eager for professional development and volunteers to engage in reflective practices, sharing ideas with each other is a wonderful idea. In fact, almost all teachers tell each other about their ideas or classroom events. However, doing this in a systematic way will make things easier and straightforward. In this sense, you may benefit from the following guide (Figure 4) for a shared reflection activity suggested by Hole and McEntee (2003). With the help of this guideline, you will have the chance to gain insights about their own teaching by listening to others' stories and by responding to possible problems of fellow teachers.

Critical Incidents Protocol (For Shared Reflection)
Write stories. Each group member writes briefly in response to the question: What happened? (10 minutes)
Choose a story. The group decides which story to use. (5 minutes)
What happened? The presenter reads the written account of what happened and sets it within the context of professional goals. (10 minutes)
Why did it happen? Colleagues ask clarifying questions. (5 minutes)
What might it mean? The group raises questions about the incident in the context of the presenter's work. They discuss it as professional, caring, colleagues while the presenter listens. (15 minutes)
What are the implications for practice? The presenter responds, then the group engages in conversation about the implications for the presenter's practice and for the participants' own practice. A useful question at this stage might be, What new insights occurred? (15 minutes)
Debrief the practice. The group talks about what just happened. How did the process work? (10 minutes)

Figure 4. Guided Reflection Protocol for Individual Reflection

This protocol was used in a Turkish context with pre-service teachers of English and yielded very positive consequences (Merç, 2011). The teacher candidates who took part in the procedure of shared reflection via the 'Critical Incidents Protocol' mentioned that the sessions helped them a lot. One student teacher had said (Merç, 2011, p. 285):

"We started these sessions three weeks ago and in our second session, we discussed time management. From that time on, I had five or six lessons and I was really able to arrange my time to complete my activities and never experienced time problem. I think these sessions should be conducted among language teachers regularly, especially the novice ones like us."

This simple and real example demonstrates the use and benefit of taking part in a group reflection session. It might be even more interesting to create and start your own 'reflective teaching groups' in collaboration with colleagues who are really willing and motivated to become reflective teachers.

Obstacles to reflective teaching and suggestions for overcoming them

Being a reflective teacher is not obstacle-free. During these reflective practices, you may face several challenges stemming from yourselves, students, administrators, peers teachers, or even the society. The following can be considered as the possible problems:

- It's a time-taking activity! If you believe that you don't have enough time, you may get frustrated. But giving a chance to this valuable activity is worth it.
- It requires a kind of intrinsic motivation. Don't start it if you don't want it. But try to find out the reasons for not wanting it at all.
- It requires some degree of knowledge related to conducting classroom research. But, don't forget that you can easily get information about what you need by reading or doing you own review of the related literature if you are really interested in it.
- You need to know about the source of the problem to take action: yourself, students, administrators, peers teachers, the society, etc. Once you identify the source, you can solve the problem more easily.
- Finally, don't forget that all of the obstacles are most of the time 'the excuses'. Remember this proverb: "Excuses are merely nails used to build a house of failure". Stop producing excuses and take action!

Conclusion

Being a reflective teacher is not a very big issue. In this article, I have tried to give you some background information about reflection and reflective teaching. I have also provided some practical guidelines for you to make it easy to engage in reflective activities as well as the potential challenges that such engagement can pose for your teaching. Whether you want to be a reflective teacher or not is naturally a matter of choice. However, it can be one of the greatest ways of becoming a better teacher and a chance for you to further your own professional development. I would like to conclude with the famous quotation by Margaret J. Wheatley, an American writer and consultant: "Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences, and failing to achieve

anything useful.”

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