

Appendix 1 **Observation Tasks**

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This appendix is a collection of lesson observation tasks. I include them because I strongly believe that observation of other teachers (or of other trainees on a course) is an excellent way of helping oneself to become more aware of options and possibilities.

Doing tasks like these can help an observer to focus more clearly on what is happening in a lesson. They may provide useful information or insights for personal reflection or for a post-lesson discussion. This does not imply that 'evaluation' or 'criticism' is required. Observation and discussion are learning tools for the observer and the teacher. In the right environment, where both people are respectful and supportive of each other, and where there is a clear agreement to be honest, then a post-lesson discussion can be invaluable as a way of moving forward.

Using the tasks

You could:

- observe a more experienced teacher's lesson;
- observe a colleague's lesson;
- agree to observe each other's lessons;
- observe a trainee teacher's lesson;
- ask someone to observe your own lesson;
- ask a colleague to teach your class and watch how your students work with a different teacher;
- think back to a lesson you have already seen;
- think back to a lesson you have already taught.

You could:

- discuss the lesson before it happens;
- discuss it afterwards;
- not discuss it at all;
- fill in the task during the lesson;
- not fill in the task, but use it to focus your thoughts;
- give the filled-in task to the teacher;
- keep the filled-in task for yourself;
- discuss the filled-in task.

You could, of course, also:

- invent your own task;
- agree a new task with the teacher.

OBSERVATION TASK 1 Classroom snapshot

Ask permission to go into a colleague's class for just five minutes. Your aim is to gain a 'snapshot' image of what is happening. Persuade the teacher not to prepare any special activity for this time.

For the first questions, aim to describe factually as far as you can (rather than interpreting or finding positive or negative aspects). Add your more subjective impression in answering the last question.

1 Describe how the learners are seated/standing in the room.

2 Describe generally what is happening (e.g. 'A tape is being played and learners are writing answers to printed questions').

3 Who is talking? Who is doing any other things?

4 Describe (a) the atmosphere; and (b) levels of engagement in the room.

OBSERVATION TASK 2 What helps people learn?

What is there about the classroom, the activities, the teacher and the learners that helps to create conditions for effective learning? What things do you observe that seem to play a part in preventing learning?

The classroom

Make notes on seating, sight lines, space, air, warmth, light, whiteboard, equipment, etc.

The activities

Make notes on the kind of activities used, the nature of student involvement, balance of students doing things and teacher doing things, etc.

The teacher

What personal qualities does the teacher have (i.e. not teaching techniques)? What kind of rapport does this teacher have? What is the personal psychological atmosphere generated by this teacher? What is it like to be a student in this classroom?

The learners

How motivated are the learners? Why? To what extent are they taking an active part in their own learning? To what extent are they expecting the teacher to do the work for them?

OBSERVATION TASK 3 Teachers and learners

For each line, decide if the statement on the left or right fits best as a description (or somewhere in the middle). You could use the chart to:

- think back to a language lesson you can recall from your past;
- use the chart as an observation task the next time you go into a class to watch someone else teaching;
- review your own teaching style, perhaps in a specific lesson.

| The teacher | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| The teacher smiles. | | | The teacher doesn't smile. |
| The teacher is unnaturally loud or quiet. | | | The teacher speaks at a natural, conversational volume. |
| The teacher behaves and interacts as he/she might outside the classroom. | | | The teacher behaves and interacts in a distinctively 'teacherly' way. |
| The teacher talks a lot. | | | The teacher talks very little. |
| Task instructions are clear. | | | Task instructions are not clear. |
| The teacher asks mainly open questions. | | | The teacher asks mainly questions with expected/fixed answers. |
| The teacher seems impatient. | | | The teacher is patient. |
| Information is conveyed clearly and is understandable by learners. | | | Information is conveyed unclearly or is not understood by learners. |
| Teacher doesn't seek or take note of learner feedback through the lesson. | | | Teacher seeks and takes note of learner feedback through the lesson. |
| Teacher adjusts the lesson content in response to learners. | | | Teacher doesn't adjust the lesson content in response to learners. |
| The teacher is working at his/her own pace. | | | The teacher is working at the pace of the learners. |
| Comments | | | |

| The learners | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| Learners are generally engaged. | | | Learners are generally not engaged. |
| Learners are largely passive. | | | Learners take an active role in lesson. |
| Learners are mainly obeying instructions. | | | Learners are largely autonomous. |
| Participation levels are roughly balanced | | | Some learners dominate. |
| Comments | | | |

OBSERVATION TASK 5 Options and decisions

The term 'classroom management' refers to the moment-by-moment decisions made and actions taken by the teacher in class, e.g. writing on the board, giving instructions, organising the class into pairs, etc. For every decision made, there will have been other options that the teacher did not choose.

For each of the following headings:

- 1 note one example of a classroom situation in the lesson you are observing. What does the teacher do?
- 2 note one or two other options that the teacher had at that point in the lesson, but did not choose.

Example: Dealing with unexpected problems

- Situation: A student arrived twelve minutes late for the lesson.
- Action: Teacher said 'hello' politely. (The student then sat down quietly and found out what was going on from his neighbour.)
- Other options: Teacher could have asked why the student was late. Teacher could have pointed out the time to the student.

Student participation in lesson

Situation:
Action:
Other options:

Grouping of students; arrangement of seating

Situation:
Action:
Other options:

Setting up activities; instructions

Situation:
Action:
Other options:

Board; classroom equipment; visual aids

Situation:
Action:
Other options:

Dealing with unexpected problems

Situation:
Action:
Other options:

Teacher's role and participation

Situation:
Action:
Other options:

Other notes about the lesson:

OBSERVATION TASK 6 How can a teacher influence the learning environment?

The table lists some ways a teacher can influence the environment in which students learn. Choose a few of these headings (four or five is probably enough). Observe and make detailed notes about what the teacher does/doesn't do to help learning. Where possible, note specific concrete examples of techniques, e.g. what precisely does the teacher do to help create a warm classroom atmosphere?

| Aspects of the learning environment | The teacher's role |
|--|--|
| Classroom atmosphere | The teacher can help establish and maintain an appropriate, warm, focused working atmosphere. |
| Organisation | The teacher can take an active role in organising how time, space, materials, etc. are used. |
| Encouragement and support; promoting participation | The teacher can provide positive, realistic support and encouragement to take an active role. |
| Promoting guided discovery | The teacher can elicit answers, construct questions, offer partial examples, encourage hypotheses, etc. that lead the students to work out answers for themselves. |
| Presenting content information | The teacher can explain, lecture, answer questions, etc. on areas of the learning content. |
| Provision of samples of language | Instructions, comments, questions, stories, etc. in the target language provide language exposure for the learners. |
| Materials and tasks | The teacher can propose, suggest or select what work is done in class and the texts and other materials used. |
| Monitoring | The teacher can monitor what is happening in class. |
| Informative feedback | The teacher can offer objective information that may help the learning process; for example, information about errors made, information about how language is formed or used, information about how a task was performed, suggestions for future work, etc. The teacher can notice and help to draw attention to progress made, problems encountered, etc. |
| Habit of learning | As part of a regular timed lesson, the teacher can help provide a sense of form, regularity and concreteness to an otherwise more formless learning process. |
| Selecting, packaging and grading | The teacher can plan that new material is met and worked with in ways that students may find more manageable than if they had to deal with the entire language in one go. |
| Structuring and sequencing | The teacher can suggest or help select what to study and how to organise the programme of learning and the shape of individual lessons. |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Authority | The teacher can use her authority where appropriate, e.g. to make decisions, to close activities or discussions, to require certain actions from individuals, etc. |
| Raising awareness | The teacher can ask questions, give information or do other things that help learners to notice areas they may otherwise not have been aware of. These may be to do with the subject being studied or about other things, for example, about themselves and their way of learning, their relationships with other students or their behaviour. |
| Guidance and direction | The teacher can use her knowledge and experience where appropriate to counsel, guide and direct individuals. |
| Learner training | The teacher can raise learners' awareness about their own process of learning and can suggest ways they could become more efficient and effective learners. |
| Democracy and personal responsibility | The teacher can help ensure that all students are equally respected and their views and working styles equally valued and catered for. The teacher can make efforts to allow students to stay at the centre of their own learning and not resign ownership to the teacher or other members of the class. |
| Natural motivation | The teacher can work to allow natural motivation to flower – and especially take care not to get in its way or otherwise prevent it! |

| Areas chosen | The teacher's role – comments |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
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OBSERVATION TASK 7 The learners

This task may help you to see a lesson from a student's point of view.

As you arrive in the classroom, choose (privately!) one student to focus on in your observation. Watch this student throughout the lesson and make notes under the headings below.

- A** Choose a random two-minute period. Write a narrative description of what he/she is doing.

- B** Choose a random two-minute period. Write a narrative description of what you imagine he/she is thinking/feeling.

- C** Towards the end of the lesson, write the student's own description of what has happened in the lesson. Have you enjoyed it? Have you learned something? What helped you? What would you have preferred? What worried you, annoyed you, hindered you? How are you feeling?

OBSERVATION TASK 8 Errors and correction

Note down some student errors. Categorise each error (e.g. wrong tense, wrong phoneme, meaning unclear, etc.). Describe in detail what happened.

Error: *I am agree.*

Type of error: unnecessary word

Indication/correction: The teacher held up three fingers (to represent the three words of the sentence) and then 'picked out' and 'threw away' the middle finger. The student looked puzzled, then said the sentence again without the middle word. The teacher acknowledged this correct sentence with a smile and said 'Good'. The student seemed to not quite believe that this was now a correct sentence. He repeated 'I agree'.

Error: *Give me that pen.*

Type of error: rude

Indication/correction: not commented on or dealt with

Some considerations:

- Did anyone notice that there was an error? Who?
- Did the teacher do anything?
- Did the student do anything?
- Did the other students do anything? Who?
- Did anyone indicate that there was an error? Who?
- Did anyone correct the error? Who?
- How was it corrected?

Error:

Type of error:

Indication/correction:

Error:

Type of error:

Indication/correction:

Error:

Type of error:

Indication/correction:

OBSERVATION TASK 10 Stolen goods

Note several things that you would like to 'steal' from the teacher and the lesson in order to make them part of your own teaching, i.e. personal qualities, teaching skills and techniques, activities, classroom atmosphere. Finally, choose something you feel you would like to give this teacher in return for your many thefts.

Stolen item 1

Description of item:

I stole this because:

Stolen item 2

Description of item:

I stole this because:

Stolen item 3

Description of item:

I stole this because:

Stolen item 4

Description of item:

I stole this because:

Stolen item 5

Description of item:

I stole this because:

Gift

I'd like to give you:

I think you'd like this because:

Appendix 2 Resource Materials

See more
information in:

| No. | Photocopiable resource | Summary of instructions | Chapter | Section | Page |
|-----|--|--|---------|---------|-------|
| 1 | Pairwork information exchange: Beach picture | Resources 1–3 are all 'spot the difference' activities for pairs. One student has picture A; their partner has B. They don't show each other the pictures. By discussion, they try to discover fifteen differences. A full worked lesson example for Resources 1–3 is in Chapter 3, Section 3. | 3 | 3 | 52–53 |
| 2 | Pairwork information exchange: Office scene | | 3 | 3 | 55 |
| 3 | Pairwork information exchange: European holiday | | 3 | 3 | 55 |
| 4 | Pairwork grammar exercise: What happened? | Picture description and comparison task. In pairs, students describe the scene in their picture to their partner and listen to their description. Together, they try to work out what actually happened. | 3 | 3 | 55 |
| 5 | Pairwork information exchange: What shall we do tomorrow? | Planning and discussion task. Students have different information about some events in their area (some have Set A, some Set B). They discuss and decide what to do tomorrow. | 3 | 3 | 55 |
| 6 | Small-group discussion: Board game | Students play a board game. They discuss topics on cards as they go round the board. | 3 | 4 | 56 |
| 7 | Topic cards for board game | | 3 | 4 | 56 |
| 8 | Grammar game: What's happening? | Pairs write sentences to describe their picture, then swap descriptions with another pair. The new pair tries to reconstruct the picture from the description. | 3 | 5 | 58–60 |
| 9 | Questionnaire for learners: Individual learning preferences | A form for students to fill in, to get them thinking and to provide data for you. | 4 | 1 | 66 |
| 10 | Needs analysis cards: Set 1 | Cards that students can discuss, sort and select to raise issues about learning. | 4 | 3 | 71 |
| 11 | Needs analysis cards: Set 2 | | 4 | 3 | 71 |
| 12 | Needs analysis questionnaire | A form for students to fill in. | 4 | 3 | 71 |
| 13 | Blank lesson plan | You could use one of these formats when writing your own lesson plans. | 6 | 4,5 | 118 |
| 14 | Blank lesson plan (short version) | | 6 | 4,5 | 118 |

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| 15 | Group planning task: Lost in the forest | A discussion task. You tell a short, exciting 'We were travelling on a bus through the jungle ...' story and then explain that the bus broke down miles from nowhere. Students must decide how best to escape from the forest using the map and information. | 7 | 2 | 153 |
| 16 | Worksheet for recorded radio/ TV news headlines | A worksheet with a sequence of tasks for using when students listen to recordings of the news headlines. | 8 | 4 | 181 |
| 17 | Functional worksheet | See Chapter 10, Section 6 (Analysing communicative function) for a detailed description of this task. Choose a set of cards (Set 1 or Set 2) and give a copy to each student. Use the first row as a worked example. Students then meet up in pairs to discuss and fill in some possible answers for the blanks. When they have finished, they can join with another pair to listen to and discuss their answers. Hopefully there will be a few laughs at this stage! You can use the other set of cards to do the task again on another day. | 10 | 6 | 223 |
| 18 | Learner's word list | A photocopiable blank word list for students to use. | 11 | 6 | 241 |
| 19 | Board game: The block of flats (present simple) | Play the game in small groups like snakes and ladders, using die and counters. The aim is to go from the front door to the penthouse flat. Go up or down in the lifts when you land on a lift square (NB squares 4 and 22 don't go up!) When a player land on a sentence, he/she must decide if it is correct English or not before anyone else says what they think. When the player has decided, the others say if they agree or not. If they agree, the player remains there. If not, they go back to the square they came from. Don't help or judge during the game! Students should note any uncertainty or disagreement for the end of the game. Win by getting to the penthouse. | 12 | 2 | 265 |

| | | | | | |
|----|---|--|----|---|-----|
| 20 | Board game: The block of flats (blank for teacher's own use) | The sample game above practises the present simple. Easily adapt this for any grammar point of your choice by writing in sentences on the blank game board. | 12 | 2 | 265 |
| 21 | Script sheet for Total Physical Response/drama lesson | You read out the script slowly, line by line. Students don't speak but must do the actions. If there are comprehension problems, show them an action. Don't explain anything. If problems continue, repeat small sequences of lines a few times. Stage 1 is easy, for lower levels. Start with stage 1 and go on to stages 2 and 3 for a more exciting story! | 12 | 5 | 281 |
| 22 | Chant | The idea of using a chant is described in Chapter 16. You could model the chant and get students to repeat or follow a procedure such as that for an elicited dialogue. | 13 | 1 | 285 |
| 23 | Cards for 'Phoneme bingo' | Each student gets one card with four phonemes. Call out phonemes one by one. All students must write down each phoneme as it is called (so that you can check and find problems later). If a student has the phoneme on their card, they cross it off. When someone gets all four phonemes, they get a point and a new card. Variation: call out short words. Students can cross phonemes off if it is in the word. | 13 | 3 | 288 |
| 24 | True/False cards | Before students have to tell stories to each other, hand them a true/false card (which they do not show anyone else). When they have told their story, others must guess if it was true or false. NB This idea can be integrated with many other speaking activities. | 16 | 5 | 344 |