

EPOSTL

PERSONAL STATEMENT

Your name: Tessa Toomsalu

Institution: University of Tartu

Date of beginning to use EPOSTL: 1 March 2026

The aim of the personal statement is to help you to reflect on aspects related to teaching in general and to think about questions that may be important at the beginning of your teacher education. Below you will find some questions concerning the teaching of languages which you may like to reflect on. At the end of this section, you can read some comments on the role and value of reflection.

1. As learners of language in school, you already have had a lot of contact with teaching. What aspects— teacher’s qualities, practices etc. – of your own language teaching might influence how you wish or do not wish to teach?

Experiences of being taught
Positive: 1. supportive, empathic, understanding 2. growth mindset (mistakes are okay when students are practicing new structures) 3. fair and equal treatment of students; strict if needed 4. creative, innovative (trying out new techniques and practices) 5. structured (lessons follow a clear outline) 6. great communicator 7. master of their subject
Negative: 1. picking favorites: it makes sense that teachers pick students who are easier to work with, but it is important to remain objective and understand the reason why difficult students are struggling 2. underqualified: a teacher who demonstrates insufficient knowledge in their subject (poor pronunciation of English, limited understanding of grammar rules) may set a poor example for students. Effective teaching is not just about the content of teaching but also presenting the content in a way that ensures students fully understand it. 3. weak classroom management skills: a well-managed classroom is a prerequisite to learning. If chaos ensues in the classroom, meaningful learning cannot take place. A good teacher needs to learn and use classroom management techniques. 4. poor role model: a good teacher should model appropriate, professional behaviour to students, not only in class but also outside the class. For example, a teacher who comes to class smelling of alcohol or smokes in front of the school fails to model appropriate behaviour for students. A good teacher understands the responsibilities that come with this role. 5. overly familiar: an overly familiar approach can blur the boundaries between teacher and student. The power dynamic in this relationship should be respected and maintained. While a teacher can and should be supportive, they must remember that their role is not to be a friend, but a professional educator.

(Try to analyse why these points were unsuccessful and consider what steps could be taken to improve the points you have mentioned.)

2. a) What aspects of teaching are you most looking forward to?

- Sparking students' interest in learning more about English
- Celebrating achievements: seeing students' progress and growth
- Professional growth and creative lesson planning (trying out new techniques and teaching materials in class, creating a clear lesson outline)

b) What aspects of teaching are you least looking forward to?

- Classroom management problems
- Dealing with students' individual problems that affect their learning (problems within the family, learning difficulties)
- Administrative tasks (grading, regular progress reports)
- Low student motivation
- Working with difficult parents

3. Expectations of your teacher education course

a) What do you expect most from your teacher education?

As I have limited teaching experience, I am eager to develop my skills in classroom management. Right now, I feel that poor classroom management hinders my students' ability to learn effectively. I need to improve my ability to maintain discipline and create an environment that supports meaningful learning.

b) What do you want most from your teacher education?

I would like to feel more confident in knowing my subject, as I often realise I don't know how to explain some of the grammar topics. I would also like to learn how to create a positive learning environment in my classroom. Learning more about practical lesson-planning would also be nice so I could avoid burnout and stress.

c) What do you think that your teacher educators expect from you?

I assume they expect young students to have enough professional preparation and class management skills to teach well. I have also noticed that reflection and lifelong learning is also important among teachers. All teachers, regardless of their work experience, should strive to improve their skills regularly to become better.

4. How important do you consider the following for a language teacher? Add your own ideas. (Insert ✓ in the corresponding box.)

		How important?				
		not → very important				
1.	Cooperating with others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
2.	Good organisational skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
3.	Being able to explain grammar	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
4.	Good classroom management skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
5.	Being adaptable and trying out new techniques	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
6.	Outlining a clear lesson structure	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
7.	Good problem-solving skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
8.		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐