

My teaching experience

Thoughts and observations about 2025/2026

The past year has been significant in my teaching career, as it marked my first year working as a teacher. Since I entered the profession without any previous experience, I began with no practical knowledge of the role. Planning lessons, designing and grading assignments, working on classroom discipline – all of these responsibilities I had to learn and develop while carrying them out in the classroom. While this has been a valuable learning experience, it has also been the most demanding challenge I have had so far. Trying to grasp new information on the go requires mental effort, which often results in feeling exhausted by the end of the day. The best term to encapsulate this year is 'cognitive overload'. Despite the challenges of this year, I have been able to reflect on this year and analyse my strengths, weaknesses, accomplishments and development as a teacher.

One of my greatest strengths this year was lesson planning. Early on, I realised pretty the importance of incorporating different activities and organisational forms into each lesson. I made an effort to include tasks that developed all four language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking), as well as provide students with opportunities to work independently and in groups. My main goal was to make my lessons engaging for students to sustain their motivation for learning a foreign language. Based on the feedback received at the end of the school year, I was pleased to learn that my lessons managed to engage students who had previously had little interest in learning English. I began investing more thought into explaining new topics in a clear way. Looking back, I realise that I still have room for improvement in this area. For months, I approached lesson planning in an instinctive way, without giving enough consideration to learning outcomes. I focused more on choosing the most fun classroom activities than on defining what students are expected to achieve through them. In the future, I will definitely think more carefully about the objectives of the learning activities I use with my students and make sure they are aligned with the CEFR and the national curriculum.

In terms of areas for improvement, classroom management is the most significant. Until last year, I had never been responsible for leading others or establishing clear boundaries in a group setting. Also, I had never worked with children before. As a result, it felt unfamiliar to stand in front of a classroom, realizing that I am the person responsible for maintaining order, setting expectations and establishing my authority. At the beginning of the school year, my goal

was to be an approachable and understanding teacher. However, this decision caused challenges in maintaining clear boundaries later. I found it difficult to maintain students' attention during lessons, which meant I was not fully in control of the classroom. This led to further challenges: I couldn't explain new topics efficiently, set clear objectives or give useful feedback on students' work as the lesson was often disrupted. The chaos in the classroom made it difficult for me to think clearly and respond in the moment. Unfortunately, many activities were not as effective as I had hoped because I didn't have enough mental capacity to consider their intended outcomes. Next year, my main goal is to improve my classroom management skills. I understand that without clear discipline and structure, activities will be ineffective even if you have planned them carefully.

The key takeaway from this year of teaching is that I should think more about why specific activities are being used during the lesson, rather than what activities are being used. This year, I often lost my focus and found myself planning lesson activities without considering the positive washback it has for students. Now I realise that quality is more important than quantity: each activity and its contents needs to be carefully planned to suit students' needs and interests. It is also important to focus on how new information is presented and whether the instructions of the activity are clear. Even a fun, engaging activity can become ineffective if it is not carried out correctly. An 80-minute lesson does not need 6-7 activities to keep students engaged if there are 2-3 well-planned, purposeful activities.