

USING SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM AS POST-LESSON REFLECTION: A PROPOSED TOOL FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Pham Thi Mai, M.A

Foreign Trade University

phammai_tacn@ftu.eu.vn

Abstract

In a profession as demanding as teaching, teachers constantly attempt to accomplish multi-tasks. In a fast-changing world today, teachers of English continuously strive to fulfill complex duties. In these hectic and seemingly unceasing lives, they need to spend time considering their successes and shortcomings for further improvements. Accordingly, there should be appropriate instruments for their reflection on teaching. At our university, teachers of English are supposed to complete a self-assessment form in four areas: instruction, research, course management and teacher learning at the end of a school year. However, it is necessary to focus more on teachers' daily self-assessment and it's best for them to draw conclusions from their everyday lesson. This requires a quick but practical reflection tool. Therefore, this article reports a completed action research on the use of newly-created self-assessment form for teachers' reflection after a lesson. To identify the problem (cycle 1), observation, photographic record and questionnaires were employed as data collection tools. Participating teachers were then interviewed to determine whether this form would be the best choice as a reflective instrument (cycle 2). The form was implemented and tested before rating scales, questionnaires and diary were utilized (cycle 3). The results from cycle 1 led to cycle 2 and those in 2 led to 3. All of them proved that this tool was useful and had a practical value for teachers. The research concluded that using the self-assessment form after each lesson would be a good practice for teachers.

Key Words: reflection, reflective tool, self-assessment, action research.

INTRODUCTION

Post-lesson reflection is considered as a meta-cognitive activity or process in which teachers recall, consider and evaluate experiences which occurred in the classroom and use the information or knowledge they get from these for broader aims in the future. This process usually starts with gathering the information about what happened, then teachers analyze and self-assess this information and finally make conclusions for changes and improvements in the next lessons or next time they teach the same lesson. Since post-lesson reflection is so highly individual and on a regular basis, teachers are in need of employing effective **reflection tools** to perform the process.

Fanselow (1988) said that **peer observation** is used as a tool for reflection on the classroom events truthfully. The invited colleague observes and records the activities during the lesson. After that he will discuss the teacher's performance and provide biased as well as unbiased opinions. The teacher then will look back at herself and formulate of an action plan for future improvements. Obviously, peer observation provides a subjective view on the lesson because the teacher might not see her weaknesses and strengths during the time she is so involved in teaching. Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2005) also noted that the practice of peer observation enhances self-awareness and meet individual developmental needs. However, this tool takes time and energy; thus, it seems not to be a good choice among teachers when they wish to reflect on the daily lesson.

Teacher diary is an easy way for teachers to reflect on their teaching after a lesson. They write in a notebook about what happened in the classroom. They can also describe their own feelings and reactions to an event such as a lesson disaster or an unexpected success. Muhammed (2014) emphasized that diary writing is increasingly acknowledged as a valuable tool for developing reflection. According to Richards and Lockhart (1996) keeping a teaching diary supports the teacher's memory and inspires new ideas for use in the future lessons. Nevertheless, reflective process relies on teachers' willingness to write the diary regularly. If teachers only keep the diary infrequently, it is hard to collect and analyze all the collected experiences.

Video recording is also a useful instrument for capturing every moment event in the classroom which can be used later for reflection. Murphy (2001) considered recordings as an estrangement device to gain an outsider's perspective on what teachers may be doing. In one study, Natalia (2009) found that video recording is a stimulus for critical reflection,

especially for teacher trainees because their observation, analysis and discussion on classroom performance are enhanced. However, there are some difficulties that make teachers hesitate to exploit this tool daily. While video facilities are still not available in every classroom, that teachers manage to equip themselves with cameras and sophisticated mobile phones remains a problem. Moreover, many of them feel that the video tool puts constraints on their process of teaching.

Student feedback has been long proved as an effective tool for teachers to have a critical reflection. Teachers may get students feedback through five-minute papers or student focus group (Murphy, 2001). **Other instruments** suggested by researchers are **self-reports, autobiographies, collaborative diary keeping, note-taking** and so on...Apart from their advantages to teachers' reflection, there are two common drawbacks of all these tools: they time and energy consuming and can't integrate separate past experiences whereas teachers are busy with schedules and exhausted with multi-tasks but still desire to take the fragments of their work, pull them together and make changes in every lesson. This has left room for further research. One of **the questions** is what would be the most appropriate but simple and concise reflective tool for teachers to assess their overall lesson performance.

Therefore, the **purpose** of this action research is to use a newly created teacher self-assessment form to improve teachers' reflection on their teaching after each lesson.

The research **was grounded** first and foremost in the theory **Reflection on action**, which highlights the importance of teacher's reflection on the lesson after it is over. Like looking into a mirror, reflection allows teachers to look at themselves and look at what they did in the classroom, why they did, what needed to change and improve (Arter, Spandel, Culham, & Pollard, 1994; McDonald & Boud, 2003). This ability above all makes a professional practitioner and good teacher to students because they become the direct beneficiaries of this underpinning value.

The research was then **based on** the Danielson's framework for teaching (Charlotte Danielson, 2007) and the five broad dimensions of teaching (Raoul A. Arreola, 2007) to design a reflective tool - a detailed self-assessment form for post-lesson reflection. Danielson considers teaching as an extremely complex activity which is divided into four domains of teaching responsibility: planning and preparation (1), the classroom environment (2), instruction (3) and professional responsibilities (4) with twenty-two components. She developed the Framework as guidelines for what teachers do when teaching. This Framework

provides a pathway to excellence by laying out the necessary components constituting professional practice. Raoul A. Arreola (2007) provides five broad dimensions required for teaching: Content Expertise, Instructional Design Skill, Instructional Delivery Skill, Instructional Assessment Skills and Course Management Skills. The pursuit towards an excellent teacher is based on these dimensions. The researcher also **adapted** ideas from several self-evaluation forms. She finally combined all these theories to **design** a newly created teacher self-assessment form (see Appendix D) to serve the aim of the study which is use this form as a post-lesson reflections for teachers.

Initially, the **research questions** of the study aimed to explore the present situation: Do teachers reflect their teaching after each lesson and in what ways (cycle 1)? Then the action research moved forward with further question to discover teachers' attitudes toward a newly created teacher self-assessment form (cycle 2): Would this form be the best choice among participants as a reflective tool after each lesson? As the main emphasis of the study was on implementing and testing this tool, the question in cycle 3 was: To what extent can a newly created teacher self-assessment form most effectively enable teachers to reflect their teaching after a lesson?

METHOD

Participants

The participation in the study was completely optional, but most teachers were keen to take part. The project consisted of three action cycles and involved 15 participating teachers (out of 22) from Division of General English, Faculty of English for Specific Purposes, Foreign Trade University.

Action research

Action research, a four-phase process consisting of cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection (Kemmis, 1997) framed the whole study. Figure 1 below shows a cyclical action research process with four inter-related stages:

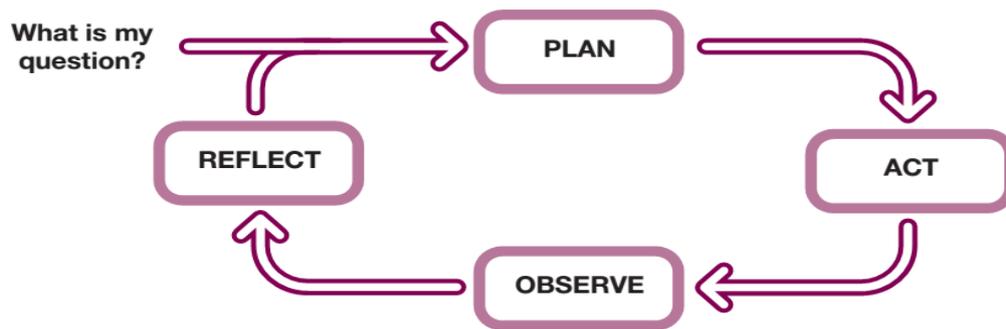


Figure 1: the action research process

The action research process starts with a question or an observation about an issue, a problem or difficulty. The cycle continues as some actions are taken to investigate the question. The collected evidence then will be reflected. Reflections and findings lead to another question and further action as represented in Figure 2:

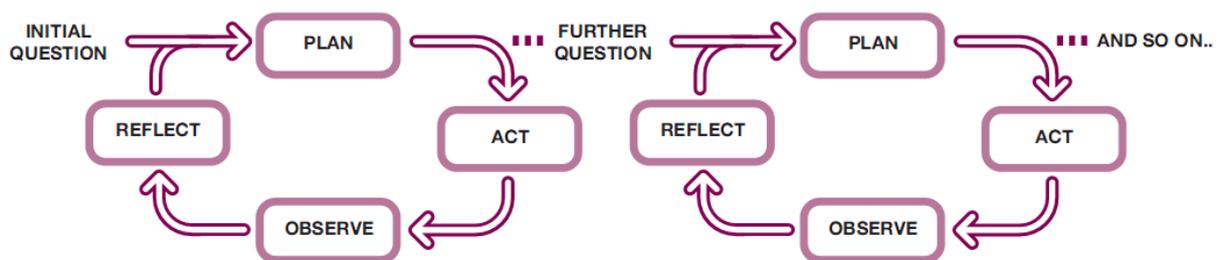


Figure 2: Action research moving forward

Action research has been recognized to be especially appropriate for improvements in education (Selener, 1997; Burns, 1999). Its ultimate goal is involve teachers in reflection on and within their practice so that they will be aware of the possible factors encountered in daily teaching lives. After understanding those factors, they make a plan and carry out strategies to resolve the problem. Burn (1999) noted that action research produces personal and professional growth and increases teachers' self-awareness and personal insight.

Procedure

Cycle 1 (2 weeks): Identifying whether participating teachers reflected on their teaching after each lesson or not. If they did, what tool(s) did they use?

A questionnaire (see Appendix A) comprises six questions: two first asked the participants about their working experience and workload and four last about their use of instruments in the post-lesson reflection. The aim was to discover their attitudes to reflection on a lesson and analyze their consciousness to it and methods as well as their self-assessment of the tool(s)

they were using. For simplicity, all the five were multiple choice questions, for example question 5 asked teachers if they used any kind of reflective tool, to avoid them from giving confusing answers, series of tools were provided (Teacher diary, The notebook, Video journal, Student survey / feedback, Peer observation and Recording lessons).

Cycle 2 (2 weeks): Determining whether the newly-created teacher self-assessment form would be the best choice among participants as a reflective tool after each lesson.

After reflecting on the participants' responses to the questionnaire in Cycle 1, an in-person interview (see Appendix B) was conducted. First, the newly created teacher self-assessment form (see Appendix C) was given directly to them. All the dimensions and components in the form were carefully explained. The objective was to test the coherence, unity and simplicity of the content of the form. Certainly, participants might not be excited if the form was lengthy and wordy. Second, they were asked about the necessity of adopting this form in place of their present tool(s) for the post-lesson reflection. Finally, participants were expected to start using the form.

Cycle 3 (3 weeks): Implementing and testing the newly created self-assessment form.

The results of Cycle 2 led to the main cycle of the study - Cycle 3. To what extent can a newly created teacher self-assessment form most effectively enable teachers to reflect their teaching after a lesson? Participants were asked to complete the form when the lesson had finished. During four weeks, all the accomplished forms were collected and the ratings were compared to find out the evidence of progress. Especially, participants' added comments were recorded and kept in a research journal since these served as a valuable source for the purpose of perfecting the form in future.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Reflections on Cycle 1

The outcomes of the questionnaire in Cycle 1 show that (1) 11 out of 15 participating teachers (accounting for 73%) did the post-lesson reflection (see Figure 3 below), the rest didn't use any kind of reflective tool. They added an extra note on the questionnaire form that they just memorized the experiences in the classroom. It was the honest response that partly helped them start thinking about the necessity of reflection. Thus, they would be more curious and enthusiastic with piloting the suggested tool from the study. (2) Teachers seemed to prefer the notebook to other tools. The Figure 4 reveals that 10 respondents were employing notebook to reflect on their performance after each lesson. Surprisingly, student

feedback was the second choice of employment by 4 people. Teacher diary used by only one person and Video journal, Peer observation and Recording lessons were in the same boat. No one was interested in recording lessons. In addition, there were cases when some respondents were adopting more than one tool at the same time. These results made a conclusion that teachers fancied making notes in the notebook. The most critical reason would be that “handwriting is more brain friendly, especially when it is less structured” (Margie Meacham, facilitator of ATD’s Essentials of Brain-Based Learning Program). Moreover, the notebook was portable, physical and suitable for documenting quick notes, highlighting and ideas for personal review.

From observation and analysis of photos of respondents’ notebooks; however, the researcher held the view that these notebooks couldn’t be the optimal tool for effective post-lesson reflection because they couldn’t collect enough information such as what worked well, what needed to be adjusted, or the lesson disaster, classroom management, teaching skills and strategies...Therefore, they couldn’t analyze this information and evaluate their effectiveness. As a result, teachers couldn’t identify and explore their own practices and underlying beliefs. It was hard to make changes and improvements in their next lessons.



Figure 3: participants’ responses to research question 1

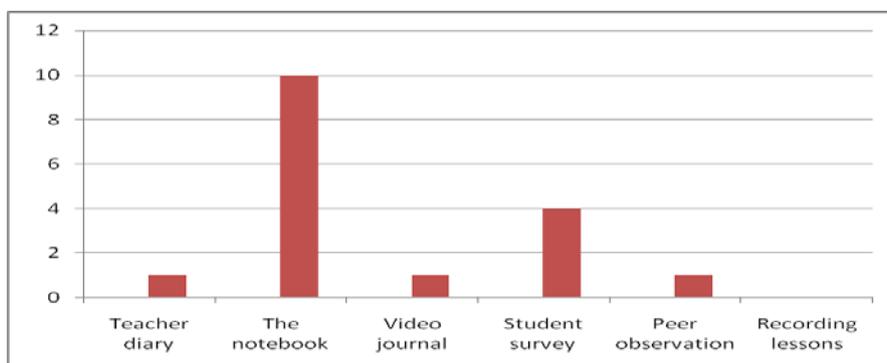


Figure 4: participants’ responses to research question 2

The researcher supposed that there should be a more reflective tool which combined the brain-friendliness of notebook, visualization of video recording, critical feedback of peer observation and generalization of lesson plan. Besides, this tool should be user-friendly and could be kept as a diary for the cases that teachers needed to look back not just after a lesson but after a period of time as well. The researcher thought that a kind of self-assessment form would serve the above purposes. As said in the Introduction, the researcher based on the theory **Reflection on action** and Action research ; adopted and adapted the Danielson's framework for teaching (Charlotte Danielson, 2007) and the five broad dimensions of teaching (Raoul A. Arreola, 2007) and many other self-assessment forms to create a new self-assessment form for teachers' post-lesson reflection (see Appendix D). This form includes 3 domains: Instructional design, Instructional delivery and classroom management with 28 components. After rating themselves in this form, teachers made some notes in the Action summary part which outlines their self-assessment and goals for self-improvement.

Reflections on Cycle 2

The outcomes in Cycle 1 involved participants' attitudes and methods to post-lesson reflection convinced the researcher of the benefits associated with using a newly created self-assessment form as lesson reflection for teachers.

As mentioned earlier, this form was designed with simplicity, coherence and unity. It included all possible dimensions and components needed to allow teachers to reflect on every aspect of the lesson (see Appendix C). Completing it was also simple and effortless; teachers just rate their level of performance on a lesson according to each dimension and component and quickly outline their self-assessments and goals for self-improvements in the action summary part. Scientifically, this form could serve teachers' expectations for a reflective tool that had to be time, energy saving and concise. More importantly, it was more like the notebook in that teachers could write notes in the action summary and it was more beneficial than the notebook because all experiences that might occur in the lesson were presented into sub-statements.

From the in-person interview (see Appendix B), the researcher learned that all participants confirmed that it was necessary to reflect their teaching right after each lesson. After the newly-created self-assessment form (see Appendix C) was shown, 80% of them expressed a positive attitude towards the use of this form while 20% acknowledged that they were still more likely to use their current tools such as the notebook, diary and so on (see Table 1).

Their enthusiasm about the new form and expectations for this new means of reflection enlightened the researcher to conduct Cycle 3.

	Interview question number 1	Interview question number 2	Interview question number 3
Number of respondents agreed	12	12	12
Number of respondents disagreed	3	3	3

Table 1: Results of in-person interview (cycle 2)

Reflections on Cycle 3

Significant results could be seen from recording participant average scores on the self-assessment form over 3 weeks. The most remarkable one was that the scores increased week by week. There were 15 participating teachers and the researcher collected a total of 225 samples (one person completed 5 forms a week on average). Look at Table 2, ‘Week 1’, ‘Week 2’ and ‘Week 3’ demonstrates the average scores of all the completed self assessment forms a week. For example, participant 2 gained 2.6, 3.6 and 4.7 in Week 1, 2 and 3 respectively and this is a very good improvement in his process of post-lesson reflection because he increased by 1.0 from Week 1 and 1.1 from Week 2. Remember that the set standard score is 5.0 (see Appendix C).

Participant	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
1	2.1	2.7	3.3
2	2.6	3.6	4.7
3	2.0	2.7	3.0
4	2.3	3.6	4.2
5	2.0	2.4	2.8
6	2.6	3.6	4.3
7	2.2	3.0	3.7
8	2.9	4.0	4.5
9	2.0	3.0	3.8
10	2.6	3.3	4.0

11	2.8	3.5	4.5
12	2.0	3.0	4.0
13	2.5	3.5	4.4
14	2.7	3.5	4.6
15	3.0	4.0	4.7

Table 2: Average scores of samples over three weeks

The standard score is 5.0

The next valuable result is that the ability to reflect on teaching after a lesson had been improved. Participants clearly benefited from the newly created teacher self-assessment form thanks to the practice of completing it over a period of three weeks. They began consciously reflecting on their performance when the lesson had ended. Inevitably, this starting point would construct them a good habit if they kept this best practice even when the study had finished. As said by Jean Koh Peters and Mark Weisberg (2011), teachers learn from experiences, so they must reflect on them. Julie Tice (2004) also concluded reflection is a means of professional development which begins in a classroom.

Another result would be noticed that teachers set goals for self-improvements based explicitly on the newly created teacher self-assessment form. The action summary part beside the form required participants to outline the areas of work that they believed had been carried out well in the classroom, those areas they had conducted on a less desirable level, specific areas they needed to improve and their goals for self-improvements for the coming lesson (what they intended to do, how they would go about it, what helped them would seek to do it...).

Limitations

There were some limitations of this research that should be mentioned here. Firstly, the data collected are able to show short-term changes over 7 weeks; thus longitudinal research study exploring the same topic would be valuable. In addition, the number of teachers participated (sampling) in the study was limited (15 participants). Reliability would be more convinced if research results could be applied to a wider group rather than those who took part in the study. Finally, although the newly created teacher self-assessment form was adopted and adapted from authentic sources, it also needed feedback from peers and consultancy from the faculty management.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The self-assessment form is useful for teachers to develop expertise and provide guidelines in what a teacher does after teaching a lesson. Three dimensions of teaching with 28 components of activities play as a personal device to help teachers analyze their performance of the lesson as a whole and set goals for self-improvement. For novice teachers, this form provides a pathway to excellence by laying out the important components that construct professional practice and development. Other teachers honestly face the facts to move forwards in their professional development. By way of a conclusion, it is recommended that this post-lesson reflection tool should be also applied to other subjects and division/faculty/department.

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APPENDIX A

Teacher Questionnaire

We would like you to fill out this questionnaire to help with our research project into the use of Self-Assessment Tools for Teachers of English after each unit. The aim of the project is to propose a teacher's effective form of self-assessment for unit reflection.

A. Your working experience

1. How long have you been working as a teacher of English at FTU (please circle)?
 - a. Less than 5 years...
 - b. 5 – 10 years
 - c. Over 10 years
2. How many lessons do you have a week on average (please circle)?
 - a. Less than 5
 - b. From 5 to 10
 - c. Over 10

B. The use of self-assessment instruments

3. Do you use any kind of reflective tool for your teaching after a lesson (please circle)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. Do you use any kind of post-lesson reflection tools as follows? Circle the one(s).
 - a. Teacher diary
 - b. The notebook
 - c. Video journal
 - d. Student survey / feedback
 - e. Peer observation
 - f. Recording lessons
5. How would you evaluate the tool(s) that you use in Question 4! (please circle)
 - a. Not effective, because it/they cannot help to reflect on aspects of my teaching.
 - b. Effective, because it/they can help me to look back over what I did in the classroom, how students responded and how successful were my teaching strategies and management techniques.
 - c. Very effective, because it/they can help me to look back over what I did in the classroom, how students responded and how successful were my teaching strategies and management techniques, and this leads to changes and improvements in my teaching.
6. How long does it take you to use the tool(s) of reflection (please circle)?
 - a. Less than 30 min
 - b. About 1 hour
 - c. More than 1 hour

Thank you very much for your time!
Researcher

APPENDIX B

In-person interview

The necessity of an effective self-assessment tool for your reflective teaching after each unit

- 1) Do you think that using a Teacher Self-assessment Form after a unit is a good way to reflect on the unit as a whole?
- 2) Do you think that the Teacher Self-assessment Form will facilitate teacher's process of unit reflection?
- 3) To what extent does this form help teachers reflect on their practice, collect evidence and generate ideas to improve their teaching?

APPENDIX C

TEACHER SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM (after each lesson)

Teacher's name:

Subject:

Date:

Lesson:

Three major domains in this form are divided into many components. Teacher gives yourself a range of ratings from 1-5 for each sub-statement using the following scale as a guide:

5 – Excellent

4 – Very effective in this part of my work

3 – Good; an acceptable level of performance.

2 – Fair; needs my attention; must update my performance in this part of my work.

1 – Poor; dissatisfied with this part of my work; must take immediate steps to improve in this regard.

Standard Score: 5.0

Then teacher adds up the total and average scores for each area. Finally, teacher fills out four items in the action summary on Page 4.

	5	4	3	2	1	
	Excell ent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	
Instructional Design/Planning						
1. I conduct the deep analysis of the lesson content						
2. I write the lesson plan, and this ensures that I am prepared for my class and the lesson will run smoothly.						

3. I align my instructional/learning goals and activities with the adopted curriculum, faculty's academic content standard and school's strategic goals.						
4. I design the learning activities to help students become independent learners and to develop their pair/group/team work skills as well.						
5. I select the proper types and strategies of assessments to check students' understanding and provide them with immediate and meaningful feedback in the classroom such as posing questions, quick paper-pencil tests, quizzes...						
6. I select the appropriate instructional support materials and handouts which promote students' engagement, learning, and problem-solving ability.						
7. I prepare the instructional equipment (projectors, computers, CD players...) and visual aids.						
8. I prepare the proper forms of instructional technology such as e-books and software.						
9. I set the timing for the whole lesson.						
10. I anticipate the problems that may be occur in the class.						
Total score (i)						
Average score (= total score/10)						
Instructional Delivery						
1. Organizing the lesson						
- (Introduction) I start with a short review of the previous lesson and an outline of the new lesson.						
- (Body) I develop the main points of the lesson according to the lesson plan.						
- (Conclusion) I make a quick summary of the main points covered and remind						

students what is to be done for the next lesson.						
2. I communicate learning goals clearly and check regularly for student understanding.						
3. I link leaning activities to those learning goals.						
4. I motivate my students to work productively, independently and collaboratively.						
5. I treat all of my students fairly and endeavor to involve every student in the learning activities.						
6. I speak clearly with my students and use a conversational tone.						
7. I encourage my students with praise, commendation and constructive criticism.						
8. I use the instructional equipment (projectors, computers, CD players...) and illustrative materials (visual aids, audio tracks, videos...) where available and appropriate.						
9. I utilize the instructional technology (e-books, e-learning, software...) in the delivery of instruction where available and appropriate.						
10. I provide my students with clear and well-chosen handouts and recommend them references where available and appropriate.						
11. I use some types of assessments (posing questions, quick paper-pencil tests, quizzes...) to check my students' understanding.						
Total score (ii)						
Average score = (ii) / 11						
Classroom Management						

1. I go to the classroom on time and ask my students to be punctual.						
2. I check my students' regular attendance to the class.						
3. I manage my students' behavior up to the standards in the classroom.						
4. I maintain a high standard of decent and courteous language.						
5. I foster a learning environment which is respectful, supportive and caring.						
6. I enhance and manage a safe and positive learning environment.						
7. I enforce classroom rules and procedures consistently and fairly to maximize learning time.						
Total score (iii)						
Average score = (iii) / 7						

