

Understanding my context

Theme-based workbook

Your reflective journal
and additional resources



Foreword

Welcome to the workbook for the professional development theme of Understanding my context. Thank you for joining us to develop your skills and continue your professional development with TeachingEnglish.

We know that it's not always easy to find time for professional development, so we've designed this workbook to help you find key insights, recommended materials, reflection spaces, and practical guidance.

This workbook is the second of three teacher pathways for educators looking to develop their knowledge and understanding of their context:

1. Getting started with understanding my context – a ready-made pathway of carefully chosen learning resources and tools to get you started.
2. Going further with understanding my context – this workbook provides guided reflection activities to help you personalise your learning pathway and take your skills to the next level.
3. Working on understanding my context with others – a group study guide that includes practical case studies and professional development activities to explore the theme with others.

Take the pathways that are the best fit for you – or make your own. We're looking forward to learning with you.

The TeachingEnglish team

Contents

What is 'Understanding my context'?	3
Self-assessment test	3
What are your learning goals?	5
How can TeachingEnglish help you develop?	6
TeachingEnglish resources	8
Action plan: What are you going to change?	10
Reflection: What have you learned from making a change?	11
What can you do now?	12

What is ‘Understanding my context’?

What does Understanding my context involve?

Understanding my context involves recognising how teaching is shaped by the classroom, institution, community, education system, and global influences. It involves the evaluation of policies, practices, and resources, learners’ motivations and attitudes toward English, and the wider role of English in education. It also includes identifying opportunities and constraints in the teaching environment, collaborating with others, and using available resources creatively. Reflecting on how context affects teaching and learning is key to making practice relevant and effective.

What can a teacher who understands their context do?

A teacher who understands their context can:

- describe their context in terms of their classroom, school, community, country and the wider world.
- evaluate the appropriacy of policies, practices and resources and their impact on teaching.
- recognise learners’ needs and motivations.
- identify the possibilities and limitations for teaching and learning in their context.
- reflect on their approach to Understanding my context and its impact on teaching and learning.

Self-assessment test

How can you start developing your understanding of your context?

Reflecting on what you already know and do is an important starting point. The way that you explore, research and keep up to date might be different depending on whether you are teaching face-to-face or remotely, synchronously or asynchronously, and according to the type of technology you have available. Use the following self-assessment test to evaluate your strengths and areas of development.

Self-assessment test (cont)

Use the self-assessment test below to evaluate your strengths and areas of development. Give yourself between ★ (not confident) and ★★ ★★ ★★★★★ (very confident), depending on how you feel about doing each of the things.

I investigate my learners' motivations and the impact on my teaching.

I understand the educational policies that influence my institution.

I evaluate the appropriacy of teaching practices in my context.

I identify opportunities to make decisions independently, and with other teachers.

I work with others to find new ways of using our teaching resources.

I reflect on my understanding of my context and the impact that has on teaching and learning.

What should you do next?

How many stars did you get? Write the total here:



0–6 stars	The teacher pathways will help you to develop your understanding of Understanding my context. Try the self-assessment test again after you've followed it to see your progress.
7–18 stars	You have a good awareness of Understanding my context. Follow the teacher pathways with us and join our TeachingEnglish activities. Come back to the self-assessment test to see what you've learned.
19–24 stars	You already have a good understanding of your context. Which section would you like more help with from the teacher pathways?
25–30 stars	You are an Understanding my context champion! You are already integrating this knowledge in your teaching. Share your knowledge and skills with other teachers in our TeachingEnglish community.

What are your learning goals?

Considering the elements of Understanding my context that are most relevant for your teaching context will help you focus your study time more effectively. Check pages two and three for a reminder of what Understanding my context involves, your strengths and development areas. Complete the following prompts.

Which elements of Understanding my context are most important for you and your learners?

The most useful elements of Understanding my context are ...

Improving my understanding of my context will help me and my learners by ...

Consider Understanding my context. What are your strengths?

My strengths in Understanding my context are ...

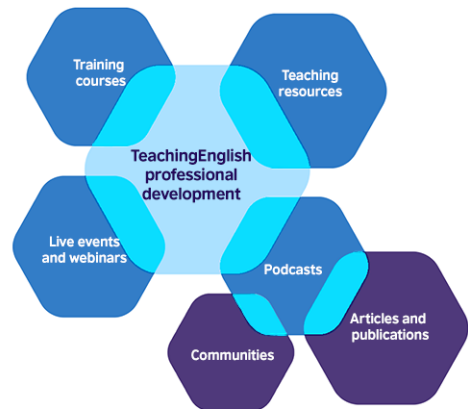
What skills and knowledge related to Understanding my context do you want to develop?

I need to develop ...

How can TeachingEnglish help you develop?

Whatever aspect of English teaching you want to improve, TeachingEnglish has the resources and support to help you make a difference, whether you have five minutes, an hour or more.

Find the best combination for your needs, available time and context by exploring the following options.



📍 Online communities (5 minutes+)

A dedicated, vibrant and inclusive online English language teaching community to empower teachers and teacher educators to collaborate and share knowledge. Join the conversation and access interactive live sessions and links to further professional development opportunities on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

Which TeachingEnglish online communities or social media channels will you use to connect with us?

The TeachingEnglish online communities I'd like to join are ... I might use them to ...

📚 TeachingEnglish resources (10 minutes+)

Access lesson plans, podcasts, articles and publications to help you develop your skills and knowledge of understanding your learners. Choose from the resources on page eight or search TeachingEnglish to develop your skills.

Which kinds of resources would you use to develop your understanding of your context?

I'd like to listen to, read, watch or use resources like ...

Live events and webinars (1 hour)

Our webinars are given by TeachingEnglish community members working in classrooms throughout the world. Our free webinars for teachers are held monthly, and you will receive a certificate for participating. Many webinars are followed by additional Q&A sessions that give teachers a chance to reflect and ask questions as they bring new ideas from the webinar into their teaching. Learn more about attending live on Zoom, Facebook and YouTube, or watching a recording.

Which TeachingEnglish live events and webinars would you like to join or watch?

The TeachingEnglish live events and webinars I'd like to join or watch are ...

Training courses (12 hours+)

Explore a range of courses related to understanding your learners. Each course takes approximately 12 hours to complete, and you can access and complete the self-study modules at your own pace. Join our Courses for teachers Facebook community to share your learning with other teachers and get feedback and guidance from our experienced tutors. Learn more about current courses you can enrol on or join immediately.

Which TeachingEnglish training courses would you like to join?

The TeachingEnglish training courses I'd like to join are ...

Resources

Below you will find a selection of resources to develop your understanding and application of Understanding my context. Use your answers on page three to guide your learning and the tick boxes to keep track of which resources you have used.

Time (mins)	Type	Resource description (tap/click to open)	Used?
1	Watch	Video: Working with what you have	
1	Watch	Video: What motivates your learners?	
5	Read	Article: Classroom action research	
25	Read	Publication: Supporting English teaching in Indonesia	
30	Listen	Podcast: How can we motivate our learners?	
30	Watch	Live event: How to teach in difficult circumstances?	
30	Listen	Podcast: Raising student learning outcomes	
30	Listen	Podcast: Successful education systems	
30	Listen	Podcast: Using different languages in my teaching	
40	Watch	Live event: Encouraging parental support	
40	Watch	Live event: Why won't they speak English in the classroom?	
45	Read	Publication: Teachers as agents of cultural relations	
60	Watch	Webinar: Using everyday language to support learning	
60	Watch	Webinar: Creating a space for everyone	
60	Watch	Webinar: Building rapport and managing stress with teens	
60	Watch	Webinar: Using AI to meet all learners' needs	
60	Watch	Webinar: Supporting social and emotional learning	
60	Watch	Webinar: Understanding how learners learn	
60	Use	Group study guide: Understanding policies and practices	
60	Read	Publication: Teaching English in state primary schools	
90	Read	Publication: Teaching English to young learners	
90	Read	Publication: Teaching in low-resource classrooms	
180	Use	Pathway: Understanding your context	
180	Read	Publication: English in higher education	
240	Watch	Webinar series: Breaking down barriers	
270	Read	Publication: Early childhood education in English	
270	Read	Publication: Language and social cohesion	
350	Watch	Playlist: Understanding my context	

Resources (cont)

At TeachingEnglish, we're constantly updating and adding to the selection of free articles, publications, lesson plans, live sessions and webinars available for teachers. Check our TeachingEnglish website and TeachingEnglish YouTube for the latest resources.

Use this space to note teaching ideas – and where you found them – that may help you better understand your context. You can record ideas from training courses, articles, podcasts, webinars or other teachers in live sessions or online communities.

An idea that may help improve my teaching is ... I discovered it in ...

What are you going to change?

Now plan to change your teaching. Starting with a SMART goal will help you make the change and better understand the impact it makes.

A SMART goal is:

- **S**pecific (What exactly do you want to achieve?)
- **M**easurable (How will you know if it happened and the difference it made?)
- **A**chievable (Is it challenging but possible?)
- **R**elevant (Does it help you and your learners?)
- **T**imebound (When will you do it?)

Look back through this workbook and think about your learners. Choose one thing you'd like to be different about your teaching or classroom experience. Write it as a SMART goal.

Something I'd like to be different in my classroom or teaching is ...

A change I can make that will help achieve that is ...

I will need ...

Some challenges might be ...

To solve those challenges, I could ...

What have you learned from making a change?

Using this reflective cycle as you work through the theme and introduce new ideas into your teaching will help you learn from experience and develop further. It can deepen your learning by guiding you to apply new ideas, assess their impact and adjust your approach. Use it after lessons, when trying new strategies or when facing challenges. By making reflection a habit, you'll continue to grow as a practitioner and better support your learners.



Make the change you planned in the last section, then reflect upon it. Sharing your answers to the following questions will guide you through the reflective cycle.

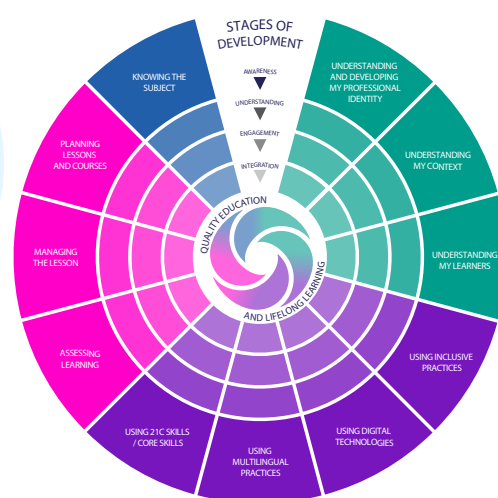
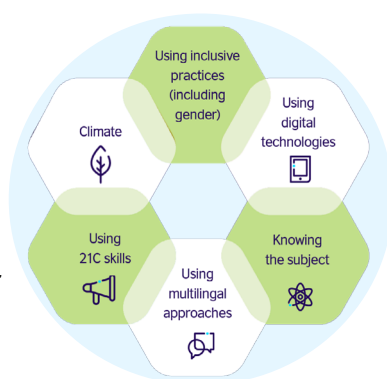
The change I made was ... When I made the change, my learners ...	Description
After making the change, I felt ... My learners felt ...	Feeling
Some good/bad things about the change were ... I know this because ...	Evaluation
I think things happened this way because ...	Analysis
The main things I learned from making this change to my teaching are ...	Conclusion
In future I will ... I will develop the skills and knowledge I need by ...	Action plan

What can you do now?









Well done — you've developed the professional practice of Understanding my context. We hope you've found this teacher pathway workbook useful.

On pages 10 and 11 you planned to introduce a change into your teaching and then reflect upon it. You can follow the same steps to experiment with other ideas you've discovered while exploring Understanding my context. We'd love to hear how this goes – you can connect and share your experience, questions and insights with us, and our global network of English teachers in any of our online communities. Follow #UnderstandingMyContext.

The British Council professional practices are deeply interconnected and not meant to stand alone. Therefore, we encourage you to take a look at and consider how you might use our CPD Framework for teachers.



Continue your learning with us by:

-  Joining the conversation and following our English teacher communities on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.
-  Subscribing to our newsletter
-  Enrolling on a free TeachingEnglish training course.
-  Accessing TeachingEnglish webinars for teachers and teacher educators.
-  Listening to TeachingEnglish podcasts for teachers.
-  Exploring our framework for teacher knowledge and skills and other professional practices for inspiration, support and materials.
-  Explore our playlists and recorded events.
-  Finding out what else is happening on TeachingEnglish.