

# Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language

FOURTH EDITION

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**Table 1. Systematic Way for Teachers to Identify Words Worthy of Explicit Attention**

Vocabulary Categories	Words Critical for Text Comprehension	Words Worthy Beyond the Text Being Read
Five plus (+ +)	+	+
Five minus (- -)	+	-
Three plus (- +)	-	+
Three minus (+ -)	-	-

interesting magazine articles, information from the web, book covers from new library acquisitions, and popular song lyrics on the walls and bulletin boards of their classrooms and school corridors. Another option is to place key words and phrases from core readings on the classroom wall (or on a poster board or bulletin board). Of course, the simple display of words (selected by the teacher and/or students) does not guarantee vocabulary learning. The key is to return to the word wall and engage students in tasks that involve the meaningful use of the words on the wall. To assist students in learning the words, teachers can ask students to move words around on the wall to create meaningful word clusters (e.g., words that belong to a particular content area, antonyms, words from the same part of speech, words with positive or negative connotations, and collocations). They can also have students engage in activities (e.g.,

speed writes, reading activities, spontaneous speaking tasks, and role plays) that promote the meaningful use of vocabulary items (Pearson, Cole, Koring, & Slesler, 2008; Green, 2005). (See the Glossary on this volume.)

## Create opportunities for comprehension skills practice

The ability to understand a text underlies all reading tasks, yet it is not a simple ability. Comprehension requires a reasonable knowledge of basic grammar, an ability to identify main ideas in the text, an awareness of discourse structure, and strategic processing. Reading comprehension instruction should direct some attention to grammar, particularly at the beginning and low-intermediate levels. In certain cases, teaching a key grammar point will support students' reading comprehension. However, most EAP reading instruction occurs beyond the beginning levels, and it is not necessary for a reading course to review grammar extensively. Certainly, a reading course is not the place in which to teach a grammatical syllabus. At the same time, it is important not to ignore grammatical knowledge as a resource for more advanced reading comprehension abilities (J. S. P. Nation, 2008).

Main-idea comprehension should be a focus of reading instruction. Typically, however, teachers assess comprehension through post-reading comprehension questions (rather than task 4 [5]). Anderson, 2001). Main-idea comprehension is effectively developed through class conversations during which students identify and explain main ideas in the texts that they are reading. During these discussions, students can be guided to make connections across parts of the text, between texts or across texts, or between the text and their own background knowledge. Class conversations centered on main-idea



Figure 1. General concept-of-definition map.



Figure 2. Concept-of-definition map for the word tabloid.

comparisons (Note that some of this information changes over time, so the information may vary.)

- a. help with pronunciation
- b. other

Be prepared to discuss your findings.

## FURTHER READING

Leary, C. (2007). *Dictionary activities*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

The aim of this book is to equip teachers to help students know how to select dictionaries and how to make the most of them. It covers relevant topics such as dictionary skills-building, confidence-building, and language-building activities (including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and reading).

Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

This is a practical guide to vocabulary instruction that is presented in a comprehensive and clearly

explained collection of research. It is driven by the idea that vocabulary research should be systematically integrated into language instruction.

Zimmerman, C. B. (2000). *Word knowledge: A vocabulary teacher's handbook*. New York: Oxford University Press.

*Word Knowledge* is written as a handbook for teachers, breaking down the aspects of word knowledge (meaning, collocation, grammatical features, etc.) and showing teachers how to guide students to their mastery of each aspect. It includes examples and activities designed to clarify word teaching and learning.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the online dictionary, see Brown (2000).

<sup>2</sup> Available online. Retrieved on 16 November 2010 at <http://www.oxford.com/online>.

<sup>3</sup> See Collins' *The Concise Oxford Learner's Dictionaries* (<http://www.collins.co.uk/>) for access to the CD, and the DVD. This site provides useful guidance to teachers in presenting their own materials.

<sup>4</sup> See Zimmerman (2000, p. 117) for more about collection and for more examples of relevant questions.

<sup>5</sup> This writing is adapted from Lewis (2007, pp. 15–17).

UNIT 11

# Language Skills

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## *Assessing the Language Skills*

ETTY B. FERGASON

## KEY QUESTIONS

- ▶ What goes into lesson planning?
- ▶ Why should teachers plan lessons?
- ▶ How can planning in a shared context with on-the-spot classroom management and decision making?
- ▶ What are possible formats for lesson plans?

## EXPERIENCE

Julie teaches a multistyle class in an intensive English program for international students in Los Angeles. In addition to teaching 15 hours a week, she is in a graduate program in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and working part-time as a graphic designer to make ends meet. She has done some volunteer teaching in Guatemala and Thailand, but this is her first job as a teacher rather than as a conversation partner. Most of the class, her lesson planning consists of 30 minutes a day copying letters class glancing over the in-lesson textbook she was given. She feels bad that she is not doing more, but she remembers what happened during her first term teaching here. She spent hours planning every lesson and searching the Internet for fun activities, yet her efforts did not seem to pay off. Half the class, something would go wrong, like the copier being broken or the students getting confused during a game. The students also complained that they were not using the book they had bought. And Julie knew she was speaking way too much time on planning if she wanted to avoid burnout. This term's approach to lesson planning does not seem like a solution, however. She took herself searching over things in the textbook she had not looked at carefully enough, and necessary seems to be writing in over the class. She is eager to find a balanced and effective approach to lesson planning.

## WHAT IS LESSON PLANNING?

Lesson planning is the process of taking everything we know about teaching and learning, along with everything we know about the students in front of us, and putting it together to create a road map for what a class period will look like.<sup>1</sup> One reason why teacher-teacher talks ask for help with lesson planning is because it involves all seven of the following interconnected elements.

1. **Second language acquisition theory.** A lesson informed by theories of scaffolding or teachability will sequence certain pieces in a certain order that are probably not the same as a lesson informed by behaviorism or a comprehension-based theory.<sup>2</sup>
2. **Methodology.** An oral skills lesson may consist of the three stages presentation, practice, and production. A task-based lesson may have completely different stages: pre-task, task, report, and language analysis. (See Nassar, this volume.)
3. **Skill.** The stages of a lesson will vary depending on what skill is being taught. A reading lesson may consist of pre-reading, main idea, reading for details, and post-reading activities. A pronunciation lesson may include phoneme analysis, listening discrimination, controlled or guided practice, and communicative practice.
4. **Audience.** The number of objectives or activities in a lesson will be different in a lesson for

children than it is one for adults or for a lesson for beginners than it is one for advanced learners.

5. *Focus.* A different focus will result in a lesson with a different purpose. For example, a lesson in an intensive academic preparation program, a lesson in a vacation foreign language camp program, and a lesson in a test-preparation class may all have different purposes.
6. *Control.* Some programs allow for goals to emerge from a needs assessment, or to be suggested by the learners themselves. In other programs, the goals are specified by standards, external exams, or institutional criteria.
7. *Philosophy of learning and teaching.* Should class be fun? Does a good teacher demand that students do lots of homework? Is the role of a teacher to allow students to control their own learning? Should the teacher do easy things first and build up to what is difficult or start out with the tough challenges while students are fresh? Lesson planning emerges from the teacher's view of what good teaching and learning consist of.

Knowing one's teaching context, students, and personal philosophy is a good foundation for lesson planning. However, teachers can also grow in their awareness of all these elements during the process of lesson planning.

Obviously this is a lot for teachers to consider the evening before they walk into class. This chapter assumes that either the teacher has thought about each of these elements and issues in the curriculum provided or the teacher accounts for them. The remaining question, and the focus of this chapter, is how to put the pieces together for a given day or week of classes.

## CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS

Lessons have been described using many different metaphors. A lesson is like a film, with a plot, theme, rhythm, flow, and ending (Thompson, 1999b). It is like jazz, with an initial chord sequence that players improvise on (Harmer, 2007a). It is like climbing a mountain, with hard work and a sense of satisfaction on reaching the goal (Li, 2012). It is like a collection of playing cards that may be played one at a time, in pairs, or other patterns (Woodward, 2001). It is like a road map or the signs on the highway that show us how to

get to where we are going (Spies, Pedersen, & Williams, 2000).

A metaphor that I have found especially helpful is that of a meal. Teachers can satisfy their students with a pre-made meal heated up minutes before serving, can throw together something from various ingredients they happen to have in the kitchen, or can plan an elaborate multi-course meal. They may have to work with only a few items, or they may have access to students full of a variety of foods. They can focus on nutrition, good taste, beautiful presentation, or a combination of these.

An elite's experience reminds us, sometimes teachers plan a lesson while walking down the hall from the teacher's room to the classroom; in other cases, they agonize for hours over what to do in class the next day. Other teachers do not plan at all, using the rationale that planning in advance is counterproductive given the unpredictability of class. Harmer (2007a) calls this notion the "planning paradox" (p. 265). On the one hand, we need to think in advance about what we want to accomplish and how we will do it. On the one other hand, we want to be aware of the interaction among teachers, learners, and language and of what emerges minute-by-minute from class.

The way a cook plans a meal for a large group of people suggests a good way through this paradox. It is very available to prepare to deliver a meal that will suit those coming to dinner, keeping in mind those who are vegetarian or eat halal (Muslim dietary restrictions) or cannot eat spicy food, and so on. However, there may be someone who forgets to tell the cook in advance that she is allergic to wheat or on a special diet. A good chef does not mind bringing out a fruit plate instead of the chocolate cake in such a situation.

Lesson plans as a term actually refers to three things. The first is what appears on paper, what I call the *form* for the plan (discussed later in the chapter). The second is a process occurring in the teacher's head (also discussed later). The third is a model of what is supposed to happen in a class. There are various models, from various experts, with various views of the learning/teaching process in general or of English language teaching in particular.

The *Model Model* (Harmer 2004), sometimes known as the *map, overview, or nine-step model* (depending on which of the steps are considered most deserving of emphasis), grew out of Michael Bruce's work with American

public school teachers. For advocates of this model, a good lesson starts with an anticipatory set, or hook, to attract students' attention. Next, the purpose of the lesson is stated. It is common wisdom that the instructional piece of the lesson include input, modeling, and checking for understanding. The next phase of the lesson is guided practice and monitoring. A closure statement reinforces the lesson before the final independent practice that helps students connect the lesson to the real world.

aimed at language teaching in particular, rather than education in general, the presentation-practice-production (PPP) model contains three lesson stages (Harmer, 2001). The teacher presents a teaching point with new language to the students, the students practice the language (teaching point usually being controlled activities), and finally the students produce the language on their own (being communicative activities). This model is one that fits a beginning-level class of adults learning spoken English, for example.

In more recent editions of his methodology texts, Harmer (2007a, 2007b) suggests that the engaged-learner (ELA) model is more suitable than PPP. During the engage phase, students' attention and interest are aroused. Next, during the study phase, students focus on language. Any number of different activities are appropriate here, from a teacher-voiced explanation of grammar, to student discovery of lexical collocations while reading, to students' unconscious acquisition of intonation patterns through listening. Finally, students review all their language knowledge and skill with communicative tasks during the activate phase. Although ELA resembles teachers of elements that need to be included in a lesson, the amount of time spent on each element and the sequence of elements can vary. A lesson for adults might consist of one ELA sequence during 90 minutes, while for children the duration may consist of multiple ELA sequences, such as ELA-ELA-ELA. A lesson for beginners would probably be a straightforward ELA similar to classic PPP. Other lessons, more differentiated, might have the elements ELA. That is, after the engage phase, students plunge into a task using whatever language they have, and then the first activate phase has exposed gaps in what students are able to do in English, the teacher will be more focused and the students will

be more motivated to pay attention during the following study phase. Harmer (2007a, 2007b) calls this a "boomerang" lesson. Lessons, especially at the intermediate and advanced levels, can be partnerships, or combinations of various aspects, such as ELA-ELA, reflecting the many ways that learning often occurs and providing variety in class.

The *Sakurai American Observation Protocol* (SOAP) model was developed by classes in a U.S. kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) context where children are learning language and content at the same time (Schwartz, Yagg, & Stone, 2012). Although it started as a rubric for observing teachers (hence the name), it has evolved into a lesson-planning model. A good lesson in this model starts with motivation (building background for students through links to their experience, links to prior learning, and key vocabulary). The presentation would include language and content objectives, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, and feedback. The lesson would then go on to practice and application. It would end with review and assessment, with an optional extension (contingency plan or homework assignment).

A model that was developed by teachers who wanted to focus more on the process of students' learning is *remember, don't, remember, interacting and fluently use* (RDIF) (Schorrell & Schell, 2007).<sup>2</sup> The encounter stage might include eliciting vocabulary from students, reading a text for the main idea, or having students in pairs talk about a topic. As students grasp the meaning and use of the new language during the clarify stage, the lesson could include finding out what students already know about a writing task, highlighting a grammatical feature, or explaining some vocabulary activities such as lists and tapes, drills, and quizzes are typical of those used during the remember phase as students move the new item from short-term to long-term memory. The purpose of the intermediate phase is to enable students to personalize the new knowledge or skill. Finally, the fluently use phase is a time for communicative tasks in which students use language to spontaneously and automatically communicate their own ideas in different contexts.

These different models reflect different goals (language only, content only, or language plus content), different professional backgrounds (beginning versus intermediate or advanced), and different theories of teaching and learning

Qualifications often stress communicative approaches. Teachers may be required by a supervisor or a school to use a particular model or to free to construct their lesson plans in any way they want. Regardless, it is hoped that this overview provides insight into which elements to include in a personal model of planning. To reinforce the teaching analogy, learning about these models is like learning about different chefs who prepare items such as “use local and seasonal ingredients” or “use local food” or “whatever you have in your pantry.”

## CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

### What happens when teachers plan?

Lesson planning accomplishes several aims:

- Planning is a means of making decisions. As teachers anticipate their class, they think about content, materials, sequencing, and timing in light of who their students are and their objectives. Planning is actually a way that teachers develop expertise.
- The plan can act as a road map during the class itself. It enables teachers to confidently face the students, concentrating on their responses rather than mindlessly groping for what to do or say next. Teachers who sense that their teacher has planned the lesson also gain confidence.
- A plan can be part of a log of what has been covered and used in conjunction with a list of standards (measures of what students should know or be able to do, often provided by a school or educational body) or a needs assessment (a study of what students need to go from point A (where they are now) to point B (a particular goal) to ensure that the necessary content has been included. It is also helpful for designing quizzes, tests, and exams.
- Finally, plans are useful when substitute teachers need to take over or when supervisors assess teachers or curricula.

In the section that follows, lesson planning is viewed as a thoughtful process before, during, and after class.

### Decision making before class

The first step in decision making involves looking at the curriculum and the materials and becoming familiar with them, especially with the objectives or student learning outcomes. What should students be able to do at the end of the lesson? Why are we doing what we are doing in class? Objectives might include:

- Students will be able to greet others and introduce themselves.
- Students will be able to describe their weekend using the past tense.
- Students will be able to fill out an accident report form.
- Students will be able to write a topic sentence for a paragraph.

The second step involves answering this question: Can these objectives be accomplished with the materials provided? Teachers might need to bring in something extra to supplement the materials (e.g., real objects, authentic print materials, pictures, or video clips). The materials might need to be adapted to make them more relevant and personal for their students (e.g., teachers can change the map of London on a map of Barcelona). There may be something that should be cut out because it does not match the objectives. There is often a need to add to the materials to give students more review, more practice, or more opportunities to communicate. This is where the teachers' knowledge of how students best learn will affect the plan. Richards and Rohlf (2011, pp. 42–43) have a useful section on adapting textbooks when planning. (See also Byrd & Schumann, this volume.)

Third, it is good for teachers to look at more than the lesson in front of them. They should look back, considering how the lesson relates to previous work and how material can be reviewed and recycled. They should look ahead and see how related material might be coming up in the curriculum. They should also look outward to the lives of their students. How does this lesson relate to their concerns? How can it be connected to the real world as they are encouraged to use English outside class?

These three steps will result in a variety of components, or *clashes* (to use the usual metaphor). The next stage involves matching these components to the class period. How much time

should each component take? Is one of the activities a bonus if there is extra time, or is it something that can be cut or shortened if time is running short? Is it necessary to add an opener, or is one of the main activities suitable for starting the class? Which piece would make a good closing? How should the activities be sequenced for pedagogical effectiveness, variety, pacing, and management? What are the details for each activity? For example, should students listen to the dialogue with their books open or closed? Should they respond chorally or individually? Should they do a pair activity with someone sitting next to them or with teacher-assigned partners? What will the teacher do, and what will the students do? This is a good time to think about how to give instructions so students will be clear on what they should be doing.

The final step in pre-class decision making involves appraisal, that is, looking over the plan one final time. Richards and Bialostok (2011, pp. 3-17) suggest that teachers evaluate their plans for the following: high professional standards, sound principles of language teaching, meaningful learning outcomes, opportunities for extended meaningful language practice and use, effective class management, a coherent sequence of activities, student motivation to learn given the opportunity to succeed, and the teacher's personal philosophy of teaching. Depending on the class, there may be other important questions, such as whether the plan incorporates the required standards.

There are several elements to a lesson that deserve a closer look. Starting the lesson well can be like serving a good appetizer in a meal. In a 45-minute lesson, the opener might take just 5 minutes, while in a 90-minute class, it could last 30 minutes. Specific ideas can be found in Figure 1.

Wrapping up the class well does just what a party finish something or with an activity feeling well gives students a sense of accomplishment and teachers a sense of satisfaction. It might be like serving an elaborate cake or a simple after-dinner mint. See Figure 2 for ideas.

A good lesson planner is concerned with balance and variety the way a cook is interested in serving a meal that is nutritious and has a nice blend of taste and texture. Variety helps keep the pace of the class lively. However, this does not mean selecting activities haphazardly just for variety's sake. Ways of varying activities and keeping

1. Establish the appropriate atmosphere for the day (e.g., "We're going to have fun today" or "It's time to work hard").
2. Warm students up as they get ready for class and focused on English (e.g., "Is in your partner about these things and the and these things are about the class and please").
3. Prepare students and items or materials they will use in upcoming activities (e.g., "Check these two words in your dictionary" or "What comes to mind when you hear other languages?").
4. Review material from the previous lesson (e.g., "Remember we learned about the difference between called and calling. Answer, do you get an example with calling?").
5. Review any homework students with something unrelated but while you wait for others to arrive (e.g., give students a chance to go over a composition with the teacher or play a game that reviews vocabulary).
6. Give students a preview of what the "meal" will consist of (e.g., by going over the list of the day's activities that has been written on the board). When we know how things are set up we can go on and tell what type of food it is, we enjoy the experience.

Figure 1. Ways to begin a lesson.

1. Give an assignment. (Hint: If the assignment will take a long time to complete and students are already thinking about catching the bus or riding back, it is better to get the instructions over to the class and just a reminder at the end of class.)
2. Make a positive comment about what has been learned to encourage the students (e.g., "You've learned the first step in writing a summary today" or "Your pronunciation of *il* has improved").
3. Review the next class. Tell students what will happen in the next class and make them look forward to it.
4. Give a hint. It happens occasionally that you have come to a good stopping point—the goals have been met and the materials have been used—but there are still 5-10 minutes left in the class. There is a solution: 2-3-minute activities (e.g., see Liu, 1992) really that you can bring out so that the use of time is maximized by doing one or two.

Figure 2. Ways to end a lesson.

lessons from becoming monotonous are found in Figure 3. At the same time, too much variety might confuse beginning students, who are confused by predictable routines. Finally, variety may also be implemented throughout the week, rather than in just one lesson.

1. **Align** the grouping of students (whole class, small groups, pairs, individual work) as appropriate for the goal activity.
2. **Engage** several skills, moving from one skill to another (reading, listening, reading, and writing).
3. **Plan** an easy and challenging activity so that students can learn something beyond what they are learning something new.
4. **Appeal** to different learning styles (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic).
5. **Balance** activities that are content-oriented versus theory-oriented, student-centered versus teacher-centered, or low versus high level and low-tech versus high-tech, familiar versus new, and so on.

Figure 3. Ways of providing variety.

Good pacing is a challenge. It is important to go fast enough that activities do not drag and that students feel they have accomplished something by the end of the class. However, going too fast may mean that students feel they have been left behind, did not grasp the material, or did not accomplish the objectives. Pacing is not just about speed; rather, this adds to pace. Ideal variety depends on the age of the students. Children may need to have a change in activity every five minutes, while adults may be able to focus longer on one activity.

It is helpful to make sure a clock is easily visible throughout the lesson. Teachers who have written in their plans estimated times (e.g., “When I start activity 5 it should be 10:50 a.m.”) and glance at the clock frequently to know whether they are on track with their pacing, whether they need to pick things up a bit, whether they can relax the pace, or whether they are going to have to completely revise the timing of the lesson.

**Classroom management through planning.** Issues such as students falling asleep in class or being disruptive are often thought of as management issues. However, to some extent, good planning can preemptively deal with some of them.

Activities can be thought of in terms of “waking” and “winding.”<sup>5</sup> A *waking* activity gets students moving around, thinking hard, or talking a bit. A *winding* activity has students sitting quietly, listening, or writing. If students come to class all keyed up, starting with a *winding* activity can focus their minds on English. If students start to drag in the middle of an afternoon class, it is good to have a *waking* activity at the halfway point. Teachers can

build these into their plan as they get to know the personality and pace of the class.

Activities can also be thought of in terms of rewards and consequences. If students need the discipline of incentives and penalties, this could be accomplished by means of planning and sequencing activities, for example, “If you quietly finish your vocabulary worksheets, we’ll have time for a game of Tangrams.”

**Objectives, standards, and outcomes.** Institutions often specify the objectives, aims, goals, or outcomes that they expect teachers to implement. Alternatively, teachers may be expected to develop their own course objectives or outcomes. Whether institutions or teacher-generated, those objectives or outcomes may entail levels from general to specific, or “terminal” like ultimate aim) to “enabling” (steps that support the learner in getting to the final goal). When objectives are specific, they are easier to measure, and it is easier to determine whether students have achieved them. A simple way of thinking about objectives is to imagine what students will be able to do at the end of the class that they could not do when they walked in. Instead of “improve in reading,” define a specific objective such as “students will defend their answers to comprehension questions by referring back to the text.” Instead of “practice pronunciation,” define a specific objective such as “students will use rising intonation for would you like questions in the context of offering hospitality to a guest.” Another useful way to think about objectives and activities is with this framework: “If the students engage in X activity, then they will be able to do Y with the target language.” (See Appendix A for more ideas on articulating objectives.)

Institutions may also have standards or learning outcomes specified for students at various levels, for example, seventh grade or post-intermediate. Learning plans help teachers fit class activities to these standards. Following are some examples from the China English as a Foreign Language project, adapted from China’s Ministry of Education standards by an international team (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2007):

- 1.1—Learners will be motivated to learn, use, and enjoy English and face the challenge in overcoming challenges in learning.

2.2—Learners will convey information, attitudes, and ideas effectively, both in speech and in writing, in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes.

3.1—Learners will show continuous expanding knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the cultural features and shared assumptions of both English-speaking and Chinese-speaking peoples.

The second- and third ESL program at Citrusdale Community College in California lists them among its student learning outcomes (Citrusdale Community College, 2011):

Level 1, 2.1—Using the Level 1 grammar structures, students will be able to write simple sentences about present and past situations and future plans.

Level 2, 2.4—Using the Level 2 grammar structures, students will be able to write guided paragraphs with simple and complex sentences about issues and results.

ESL 000, 1—Students will demonstrate comprehension of conversations by responding appropriately to speakers' questions.

Some adult ESL programs in the United States use the standards developed by the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS), a nonprofit organization that provides curricula and assessments.<sup>4</sup> Following are some example standards related to listening (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems, 2011):

L1.4—Distinguish basic stress and intonation patterns in English words and sentences (e.g., rising intonation for yes/no questions, emphasis)

L2.7—Recognize main phrases

L4.1—Comprehend simple learned social exchanges

L5.1—Comprehend short emergency warnings and commands (e.g., Stop! Heat!)

## Decision making during class

Given the dynamic nature of a group of students, plans can rarely be carried out in real life exactly as we had imagined them. Decision making and planning happens on the spot in class as well as at our

desks in advance.<sup>5</sup> Three common reasons why we may abandon or adjust our plans include something has gone wrong and we need to recover, our timing is off and we need to reevaluate, or something has come up and we want to make the most of it.

There are lots of unanticipated problems that can disrupt lesson plans. Students did not do the homework that was foundational for the day's activities, the projector or the computer broke down, the material was too hard, the students told the teacher they just did something similar in another class, the discussion topic felt flat, and so on. Experienced teachers learn to anticipate such problems and, for example, always have a back-up activity that does not use technology. It is also helpful to have some generic back-up activities ready. If the back-up plan is "unimpressive" and guaranteed to lead to a successful outcome and satisfied students, it can help teachers recover when something has gone wrong.

Because timing is so difficult to predict, it is likely that there will always be days when students understand quickly, finish a task early, or run out of things to say—and there is extra time at the end. Thus, it is a good idea to have a supplement to the core activities or an additional activity on hand. It is also likely that things will go more slowly than anticipated. It is therefore advisable to make a notation on the lesson plan where activities might be shortened or which ones might be run or postponed if time is running short.

The third reason to adjust the lesson plan is because of something special happening in the class. Teachers who are sensitive to students notice when a timely topic comes up and decide to let the class have a go at it or are willing to let students who seem especially engaged to an activity keep going. Hansen (2007c) calls these "magic moments" or "golden opportunities for real communication" (p. 504). Other situations—for example, when a student asks a question and the teacher decides the whole class can benefit from spending time on it, or the students seem confused and the teacher decides to insert an impromptu activity to help them find their way—require knowledge and experience, not just sensitivity to the moment.

## Decision making after class

After the class, even though teachers have many urgent things to attend to, it is important to engage

is one more bit of reflection. Going back over the lesson plan to assess what happened is a way to build new lesson-planning skills for the future. Typical questions that teachers might ask themselves include:

- How long did each activity take? What might have led to something going slower or faster than anticipated?
- How did the students respond? Were there any students who seemed left behind or left out?
- What did the students leave class with that they did not have before?

A starting point is Li's (2012) checklist for evaluating lesson effectiveness. The measurements that teachers ask themselves whether learners are:

- actually learning the material well
- engaging with the target language
- attentive
- motivated and enjoying themselves
- active
- participating in real communication

However, since what is considered a “good” lesson will differ depending on the variables noted at the beginning of this chapter, teachers will have their own criteria for success for each class.

After several classes, say at the end of the week, it is good to reflect on the larger picture. What progress have students made? Are the lessons covering what is required? Are the lessons giving the students a sense of achievement and enjoyment?

## Writing up a plan

Writing up a plan before the lesson is a way to discipline one’s mind to think thoroughly about the class in advance. The template or format provided in Figure 4 is one option for writing up the plan. However, when teachers actually go into the class, they probably want to have a brief reminder handy, perhaps using sticky notes in the teacher’s guide, 2 × 3 cards, or a single piece of paper. Something concise helps teachers remember the plan without spilling them in a scrap that will prevent them from attending to the students. In addition, as teachers gain experience, they will probably be able to write less and rely on label notes, notice teachers, however, benefit greatly from a formal detailed lesson plan.

**Comments on the procedures section.** Because procedures are the heart of the lesson plan, additional details are warranted (see Figure 4).

**Activity/setting.** In this column the name of the activity serves as a quick reminder of what is happening. An estimate of how long it will take is also valuable. This can be written in terms of the class hour (e.g., 3:15–3:30 pm) or in terms of minutes (e.g., 15 minutes). If particular stages of a lesson are important to name (e.g., introductions to new language, practice, communicative activities), they can be noted in this column too.

**Objectives.** Objectives are the reasons why each activity in the lesson needs to be done. They may be related to the class itself (e.g., “help students relax” or “encourage students to do homework by checking it”). They may also be related to general standards (e.g., “meet Standard 5.7: Students will distinguish between fact and opinion”). As noted previously, most objectives should be framed in terms of what students will be able to do as a result of this activity (e.g., “students will improve their ability to articulate /h/ and /r/ in the context of a fluency-focused activity”). This is also a good column in which to refer to specific language objectives (e.g., “simple present affirmative statements,” “use to express ability,” “voluntaries with remember,” “learning to start conversations,” “understanding warning labels found on common household items”).

**Materials/equipment.** Writing down the exact materials and equipment will ensure that what is needed—from handouts to markers to poppers—has been gathered before going to class.

**Step-by-step details.** This will probably be the most detailed part of the lesson plan, unless the activity is a routine that is very familiar. It helps to imagine what will happen in class—what the teacher will do or say and what the students will do or say—and write it down in advance. Scripting something that may be tricky (e.g., instructions for a new activity, or an explanation of new language) will help prevent it from taking too much time or the language from being over the students’ heads.

**Attention/energy.** Are students interacting as a whole class with the teacher? Are students working on their own, in small groups, or in pairs? Putting

## Background<sup>1</sup>

Context: EL or EL writing

Intention: name of school, institute, or program

Coursework: e.g., intermediate reading or literacy & Literacy in EL 1

Students: number of students (EL), and relevant details such as race/ethnicity, first language, age, and education level

Classroom context: grade, e.g., prepare students for university level writing, or develop students' conversational fluency, or meet \_\_\_\_\_ students

Texts/materials: choice of textbooks, supplemental books, media, or websites used for this lesson

Lesson goal(s): e.g., students will learn an interpretational word, students will be able to report a two-column problem using the pattern "The \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_."

Prerequisite class materials: do this lesson after preparing them for the lesson, e.g., to be familiar with vocabulary related to math and fractions

## Procedure

Activity/ timing	Objective(s)	Materials/ equipment	Step by step details	Instructional strategy	Contingency plan/ other notes
Activate ELs	It will be able to ... write a, g or language	Handed 1	1 page book	In a pair, P = when this, etc.	It can be ...
EC					

Follow-up: Action items

What was not included in the lesson that will be covered next?

## Notes

What happened during the lesson? How long did things usually take? How did students respond? What could be improved next time? What worked well?

Figure 4. Lesson plan template or format.

this in a separate column allows teachers to prepare students to move around, check that the instructional pattern matches the activity (e.g., the students need to be in pairs to fill out a worksheet), and see at a glance whether there is writing.

**Contingency plan/other notes.** Teachers need to think in advance about potential problems that might arise (e.g., students are not interested in the discussion topic, students find the text too difficult or too easy, an internet access is down) and plan for alternatives. This is a place to make notes about which activities can be skipped if time is short or note down a relevant extra contingency activity to add if there is extra time. It is also a good place to make any other notes that will help the class be run effectively and humanely (e.g., "Don't forget to collect the homework," or "Ask Tasha about her father's health").

## Sample lesson plan

Figure 5 presents a sample lesson plan for adult migrant students.

## The planning process

Teachers initiate the planning process at different points. They may start with a page in the textbook, an activity that they like, some materials they think students will enjoy, a goal, or even a time frame they need to fill. Starting anywhere is fine. However, the end result must have strong connections between large instructional standards or goals, overall course aims, lesson objectives, and class activities. If the activity does not have an objective or if the materials are not used to the

## Background

Context: An eighth-grade science teacher is planning a unit on ecosystems. She has identified the following activities for the unit:

- 1. Read a story about a forest ecosystem.
- 2. Watch a video about a forest ecosystem.
- 3. Visit a local park and observe a forest ecosystem.
- 4. Write a story about a forest ecosystem.
- 5. Draw a picture of a forest ecosystem.

She is planning to use the following activities for the unit:

1. Read a story about a forest ecosystem.
2. Watch a video about a forest ecosystem.
3. Visit a local park and observe a forest ecosystem.
4. Write a story about a forest ecosystem.
5. Draw a picture of a forest ecosystem.

## Procedure

Activity description	Appropriate	Materials/resources	Empiricism details	Instructional practices	Constructivist practices/notes
1. Read a story about a forest ecosystem.	1. Read a story about a forest ecosystem.	1. Storybook	1. Read the story aloud to the class.	1. Read the story aloud to the class.	1. Read the story aloud to the class.
2. Watch a video about a forest ecosystem.	2. Watch a video about a forest ecosystem.	2. Video	2. Watch the video with the class.	2. Watch the video with the class.	2. Watch the video with the class.
3. Visit a local park and observe a forest ecosystem.	3. Visit a local park and observe a forest ecosystem.	3. Local park	3. Visit the park with the class.	3. Visit the park with the class.	3. Visit the park with the class.
4. Write a story about a forest ecosystem.	4. Write a story about a forest ecosystem.	4. Paper, pencils	4. Write a story about a forest ecosystem.	4. Write a story about a forest ecosystem.	4. Write a story about a forest ecosystem.
5. Draw a picture of a forest ecosystem.	5. Draw a picture of a forest ecosystem.	5. Paper, pencils, crayons	5. Draw a picture of a forest ecosystem.	5. Draw a picture of a forest ecosystem.	5. Draw a picture of a forest ecosystem.



several course goals, then the lesson will most likely be less effective. In other words, “I will cover Chapter 5 in the textbook” or “we will play bingo” is not really good lesson planning.

Novice teachers are often advised to plan in great detail. As mentioned previously, scripting such things as the instructions used to introduce an information-gap activity to the students, how to transition from the warming-up to the main activity, how to group students for a given activity, or the details of a grammar explanation will ensure that things are clear and comprehensible. However, in the area of readable teaching, it is rare to have time for such details in plans, and teachers should work on planning effectively but quickly.

One way to make planning more efficient is to think in terms of “chunks” (DeLorenzo, 2001) or “game plans.” An example is “division case.” A novice teacher’s plan might include:

For six texts up on the front board. Divide class into pairs (use matching color card method). Identify writers and readers. Tell writers, “Come up to the board and read your text. Remember as much as you can. Go back to your partner. Tell your partner what to write.” Tell writers, “Write what your partner tells you. You can ask questions about spelling and punctuation.” Points will be given to teams who are fast and accurate. (p. 7)

Later, as this process becomes familiar, it is enough to just jot down “Division case with x, y, and z text” in the plan. Smaller chunks combine to become larger units that teachers can carry out automatically. However, too much reliance on chunks or routines makes teaching boring for experienced teachers or prevents them from doing new things that their students may benefit from. To return to the cooking analogy, cooks often start by wanting a complete recipe with detailed instructions about how to perform a new technique such as braise or sauté; later, their familiarity with cooking techniques means that a few brief notes about ingredients and processes will suffice.

## FUTURE TRENDS

With publishers providing web-based supplements to textbooks, lesson planning for teachers using

such materials may involve less searching or searching and more choosing from the options provided by the publisher. Some schools use materials that avoid scripted lessons—if this is a future trend, lesson planning will avoid familiarization with or even memorization of the scripts. As teachers develop specialties, for example, in content-based language teaching, business ESL, or online teaching, they will need to develop ways of integrating new content and technology into their lessons. Finally, with websites offering online lesson plans (see the online links), teachers need to hone their skills in adapting those ideas so that they work for their particular learners.

## CONCLUSION

In the process of planning what to serve for lunch or dinner, we may stand at the freezer and decide what prepared meat to pull out and heat up, or we may make a trip to the farmer’s market to see what is in season and start with fresh ingredients. We may go to the grocery store and pick up some ready-made kebabs or work all day preparing dozens of special dishes. In the same way, lesson planning can vary depending on the resources and time teachers have. However, just as a meal is cooked from a few ingredients to the stage a body needs, a lesson plan enables teachers to give students what they need to acquire the target language in an enjoyable and digestible way. It is also a tool that enables teachers to make decisions, solve instructional problems, deal with classroom management issues, reveal student progress, and be accountable.

Lesson planning can be facilitated with the series of questions asked before, during, and after the lesson-planning process.

## Before

1. What curriculum and materials do I have? What are the objectives?
2. Can the objectives be accomplished with what I have? What might I need to adapt, cut, or add?
3. How does this lesson relate to what students have already done in class, will do in the next lesson, or need to do outside class?

- How can the various pieces of this lesson be put together in the time available?
  - Do I have good options?
  - Do I have a good closing activity?
  - Is my lesson balanced?
  - Will my plans result in a well-paced class?
  - How can I use the plan to deal with classroom management issues?
  - Have I articulated objectives for each activity?
- Does this lesson meet the criteria for quality?
- Have I written down the plan in such a way that I can use it in class, in the future, and for my administrative requirements?

## During

- Have I formulated my plan to allow for flexibility once I am in class, anticipating problems, timing issues, or special teaching/learning opportunities?

## After

- Am I making notes on my lesson plans at the end of class to improve my teaching in the future?

## SUMMARY

- Lesson planning is grounded in our overall understanding of language learning and teaching as well as the lesson context and the student population.
- Planning is a way to engage in advance decision making and develop teaching expertise. Plans give teachers the security to focus more intentionally on their students once they are in class. Plans also provide a mechanism for post-class assessment and reflection.
- Teachers can initiate the lesson-planning process at different starting points, write up their plans in different ways, or use different models of planning, as long as the end result is a coherent lesson with connections between objectives and activities, following good principles of teaching and learning.
- Teachers must also be mindful of objectives, standards, and learning outcomes to ensure

that their lesson plans support overall curricular goals.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Briefly describe a class you may have to plan in terms of several or all of the following: L2 theory, methodology, skill, outcome, focus, context, standards/student learning outcomes, and teaching philosophy. Now describe some key goals to you by the location or by your personal choice. Compare notes with a classmate, and discuss how these will affect your lesson planning.
- If you are a novice teacher, what is it about lesson planning that intimidates you the most? How do you plan to deal with these particular challenges?
- What details do you find most important to include in your lesson plans? What are the pros and cons of writing out plans in detail?
- Are you familiar with situations where teachers do not plan? The teachers may walk into class and just open the book to the next page, or they may just talk about whatever is on their mind. How do students react? What factors may contribute the lack of lesson planning, and what advice would you give such teachers about planning?
- What effect does your plan have on what happens in your actual class? Give examples of in-class decision making that have resulted either from something you prepared in advance or that led to your changing your plan.

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Examine the lesson plan in Appendix B.
  - What model (or models) of lesson planning might work best for it? Is it a good match for the context and students?
  - Critique the plan in light of the questions found in the Conclusion section of this chapter.
- Using a textbook you teach from or any textbook with and a group of students you teach or have observed, write a lesson plan according to the template in this chapter.
- Write a commentary on the decision making you engaged in while writing the plan (e.g.,



in class rather than on things they need to do in the real world:

4. produce sentences, paragraphs, essays, presentations
5. use (words, patterns)
6. identify (listen), analyse (listen), interpret (message)
7. comprehend (listen), recognise (written)
8. organise, outline (listen, essays)
9. apply (rules, strategies)

### Useful specifications

- texts at \_\_\_ level,
- TEXTS of \_\_, words,
- \_\_\_ kind of texts/tasks,
- topics related to \_\_, for \_\_\_ purposes, by means of \_\_,
- with \_\_\_% accuracy
- so that errors do not interfere with communication.
- using the words \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_,
- including \_\_ and \_\_ features.

### Typical weaknesses in writing objectives

- Students will be able to comprehend short text. How do we know the students have

comprehended? → Students will comprehend short text as demonstrated by means of multiple choice questions.

- Students will learn how to write an essay. How do we know they know they have learned? → Learn is not a strong verb for objectives.
- Students will write an essay. What kind of essay? According to what standards? → Students will write an essay following \_\_\_\_, format and including \_\_\_\_, ideas/supporting ideas and with four then \_\_ sentences per page.
- Student will produce the simple present tense. Why? What will they be able to do with it after they practice? → Practice is not a strong verb for objectives.

### APPENDIX B: SAMPLE LESSON PLAN (BUSINESS ESL)

This lesson is based on a public radio program, *On Being*, with Krista Tippett, American Public Media (<http://livingpublicradio.org/programs/good-business/index.html>). The entire lesson can be found at TESOL Resources from Kelly (<http://teacherswithastory.blogspot.com>).





