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The Process of Lesson Planning

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THE PROCESS OF LESSON PLANNING

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ABSTRACT

This paper shows how to prepare a lesson plan for an ESL classroom. It is based on the author's personal experience as a beginning teacher. The paper presents an overview and the author's view of the process of lesson planning and discusses the factors which affect teaching. At the end of the paper, sample lesson plans are provided to further illustrate the author's idea.

Eric Descriptors: Teacher Training - Lesson Plans

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INTRODUCTION

I have two purposes for choosing to write on this topic: first, to articulate some of my own assumptions about teaching, second, to provide some ideas to improve the teaching of my fellow teachers.

I am a young teacher just starting my teaching career. In my teaching program in China, most of the teachers are like me, just having graduated from college and involved in teaching for only one or two years. What I have experienced might be helpful for other young teachers. I hope my paper will be helpful to them.

While studying at the School for International Training for one year, I have been exposed to various approaches, methods and techniques. The practical teaching during the internship provided me with an opportunity to apply the knowledge I have gained and to develop further competence in teaching English as a Second Language.

What I have learned and heard during this year keeps me thinking about how I might link all of this with my own teaching. I look back at my past teaching experience, perceiving that I lacked a conscious awareness of my teaching. By being asked constantly about the assumptions behind doing each action, I have come to understand that as a teacher I should always be clear about the purposes of my teaching, the procedures I want to implement and the goals I hope to reach.

In actual teaching one single technique or method is far from enough. Teachers usually use several different techniques and methods within any teaching situation. What the MAT program has taught me as a student teacher is not what to teach, but to build up the ability of thinking about how I teach. This has trained me to find methods appropriate to my assumptions about what is important. I find that I have gained the ability to articulate my assumptions about teaching and

that I benefit a lot from asking myself about my assumptions. I realize that by knowing how to ask myself questions and being able to find answers, I am able to teach better. This is the reason I have chosen to write about the process of lesson planning as my final thesis for the program and also as the summary of this year of study. It will include many of my thoughts about teaching.

In my mind, teaching has two stages. First, we go through a mental process, planning the framework of the lesson. Then, we go through the process of actual teaching. Therefore, lesson planning plays an extremely important role in teaching. Without the first step the second process would be a failure. If we look at the process of preparing a lesson rather than only at the language or the content of the class itself, we make our teaching more effective.

The paper contains four main parts. First I would like to give my rationale for lesson planning. Second, I am going to present my view of the process of lesson planning. Third, I am going to discuss the factors which I think should be considered by teachers while planning a lesson. Finally, I want to provide two sample lesson plans to further illustrate my ideas.

LESSON PLANNING OVERVIEW

Almost every new teacher starts out by making very detailed lesson plans. All teachers go through the same kind of planning whether by writing or by thinking and formulating ideas in the mind. No matter what the form, teachers usually plan.

Planning a lesson is essential for a new teacher because she needs to learn the process of lesson planning to be able to order her thoughts. Planning helps the teacher sort out ideas and information and come up with an organized class. As teachers gain experience, their lesson plans often become less and less detailed. However, they still plan their lesson before class.

The purpose of this part is to discuss, first, the importance of planning a lesson and, secondly, the importance of assessing teacher and students strengths before making a lesson plan.

The Importance of Lesson Planning

Many people like making plans for things. An artist frames his ideas in his mind first, gets material ready for his idea and then starts to work. An architect plans each detail of a house before starting to build it. Teaching is the same as designing a piece of art work or building a house. It demands that we prepare before really setting to work. Just as when we begin a project, we need to gather together all the necessary information. This includes finding out about the language proficiency of the students, the material and the teaching facilities. We study these things and keep these things in mind when we plan a lesson; otherwise, we find ourselves in situations where we feel we have a lot to

do but do not know where to start, or we know we want to achieve something but have no clear idea of why or how to approach it, or what steps to take. So planning enables us to organize our thoughts, clarify our objectives and goals and be sure they are appropriate.

A good lesson plan has distinct objectives and goals and effective classroom activities in accordance with those goals. It is not composed simply of several presentation steps showing what is to be done first and second, nor does it consist of activities to fill up class time. When I first started teaching and was not sure of what I was doing, I wrote such detailed lesson plans that I wrote down almost every sentence I wanted to say in class. One of my friends planned every single step of her teaching. Yet, she often faced the situation that she either ran out of time or ran out of activities and had nothing to fill up the time. This clearly shows that planning a lesson is not making a shopping list, writing down everything we want to do. We should plan things for flexibility and in order to reach certain goals.

In my own teaching I have found that planning a lesson has several other advantages:

1. Planning a lesson helps me clarify the objectives and focus of my teaching.

When I start a lesson I always feel that there are many things I should teach and there are many things that the students need to learn. Planning enables me to sort out the immediate goals of my particular lesson and makes me clear about what I intend as an overall goal. Obviously, I can not deal with

every factor at the same time.

2. A neat and well-thought out lesson plan gives me confidence.

If I plan my lesson well and know what I am going to do in class, I feel very confident when I enter the classroom and my mind is clear and alert. Even though the students can not see it, I have an uneasy time when I do not prepare adequately. As a non-native speaker, I feel that confidence is crucial to my teaching of English. My confidence enables me to stand in front of the class facing a group of demanding students and talk as if I were a native speaker. I gain this self confidence by carefully considering the situation I will have and assessing how much I have already handled and how much I will try to get hold of during the lesson.

3. A lesson plan is a good way of recording what I have done and what more I need to do.

A lesson plan can tell me the direction in which to move. It is also a good way to record my students' progress and to give me a clear picture of their proficiency.

4. In the process of planning a lesson I can better understand myself and my students.

I know as a teacher what I expect of myself and the lesson and what my students are expecting of me, and can make sure that teacher and students are going in the same direction.

5. On-going lesson planning improves my overall competence. It forces me to develop my capacity to think carefully, logically, and purposefully. Whenever I design an activity or use a

technique I have to have a purpose for doing so. Thus, I become very conscious of what I do.

6. Careful planning makes my class efficient.

The time of a single class is limited. How students benefit from a short amount of time depends on how efficient I design the class to be. I can spend quite a few minutes on few things which turn out to be not very important; I can also come up with several things in ten minutes which both the students and teacher feel are productive.

Everything mentioned above affects how we plan a lesson and how much effort we put into it. The importance of preparation for each class period can never be overstressed.

The Assessment of the Teacher and the Student

To determine what kind of lesson we are going to prepare, we need to know essential background information about the teacher and the students. First of all, let us look at the teacher.

ESL teachers should have a good command of the target language and be able to provide explanations, whether or not they are native speakers. For instance, some Americans teach English in China. They often lack the ability to explain English grammar, an area which is usually a strong one for Chinese students. In presenting a lesson, teachers are often asked by students to distinguish between two similar language points or usages. Sometimes our foreign teachers are unable to explain. This is not because they do not know what to say or how to use their own mother tongue, but they were born into the language and never notice or think about the

differences. In these cases the teachers should evaluate their knowledge and pay special attention to their weak areas. Through planning and preparation they can make up for their weaknesses. For non-native speakers this is even more important. Planning can make our language more concise and clear and during the process of planning we can improve our language by thinking about it and thus, offer a high standard of language to our students.

Besides the teacher's language knowledge, the teaching facilities should also be taken into consideration. A teacher's strategies and ways of teaching can be influenced by facilities such as the classroom, environment and teaching aids. These aspects affect the selection of materials and methods the teacher uses in presenting any teaching plan. Once the teacher is fully aware of her teaching situation she can make wise judgements and make full use of what she has with her in the class.

Second, we should ask as many questions as we can about our students to see how much we know about them. First we should ask who the students are. Are they adults or teenagers? Age differences affect teaching. Then, we should know or try to find out the students' level of language proficiency and decide which areas to work on to give the students the things they need. After that, we should ask how motivated the students are. Motivation plays an very crucial role in both teaching and learning. Facing highly motivated students, the teacher can take advantage of this motivation in teaching. Facing non-motivated students, the teacher needs to think hard and try every possible means to increase motivation in the students. A class lacking in motivation is hard to teach. A teacher's task is not to complain about the situation but to change the

situation through classroom activities.

To conclude, I believe that awareness of the importance of making a good lesson plan is the initial stage of being a good teacher. It is so important that we can not do without it. "Successful teaching activities do not suddenly burst into flame by a process of spontaneous combustion sparked by the inextinguishable enthusiasm of the teacher and her 'charges'. They result from much hard work and premeditation. During this premeditation period the teacher hypothesizes 'what will work' in order to accomplish the objectives."* Planning is just for this. If we ignore or pay less attention to lesson planning we will not be able to make our lesson effective and the students will not be able to learn in the best way. The importance of careful preparation for each class period cannot be overemphasized.

*Chastain, Kenneth. 1976, p435.

PERSONAL VIEW OF LESSON PLANNING AS A WHOLE

In lesson planning, we consider our objectives for teaching and learning, as well as our situation, our students, classroom, and material. In starting, the immediate question we should ask is , how are we going to conduct the class in such a way that the students learn what they want to learn as well as what the teacher feels is important for them to learn. The teacher thinks about methods and techniques and about her own assumptions about teaching and learning. The lesson plan should reflect all these factors.

The purpose of this chapter is to look at what is important to me in planning a lesson and how I implement it in my own teaching. Basically I look at five aspects: presentation, practice, application, review and preview. These five parts are not necessarily sequential. Sometimes, for instance, I do the review at the beginning, and sometimes I do it at the end. No matter what comes first, it has to be appropriate for the lesson as a whole; that is, to show a logical movement so that the students' learning progresses always from the known to the unknown.

Now I will look at each step in turn.

Presentation

Presenting new knowledge to the students is usually the most important aspect of a lesson, because the purpose of teaching is always to help students learn new things. Other parts of the lesson either help clarify the presentation or reinforce the knowledge covered in the presentation. The presentation of new knowledge is the focus of the

lesson. While planning, the teacher needs to ask the following questions and be able to answer them:

1. Why do the students need to learn the subject matter?
2. What language points or elements do we want to present to the students as a focus?
3. How much do the students already know and how much do they not know?
4. How could we introduce the material and explain it?

When I was in China I once used the textbook Developing Communicative Competence: Interaction Activities in English as a Second Language.*

We called the book "Verbal Strategies" because it teaches how to communicate appropriately in different situations. One of the texts focuses on hiding feelings.

If we use my questions in order we might first ask: why might students need to learn to hide their feelings? I remember when I brought this topic up in class a student said that hiding feelings showed we were not honest with people. So I felt it necessary to show the students what kind of feelings they might want to hide and in what situations. To answer the rest of the questions listed above I decided to encourage the students to master the expressions of hiding feelings first and be able to use them in conversations afterwards.

What I did was that on the day I was teaching this class, I wore a new pair of sandals to the class. As soon as I entered the

* Kettering, Judith Carl, 1975.

classroom I also noticed that one of the students had just had her hair done. I began the class by talking about my new sandals first. My sandals were a new style and looked a little bit unusual. I chose this deliberately hoping to elicit differing opinions about my sandals. In China usually students compliment the teacher a lot. To be polite, they seldom say anything negative. In order to introduce the content of my lesson, I had to create a situation that let the students express their opinions freely and allow me to hear what they knew and did not know, and then discuss the verbal strategy. So I pointed at a student's shoes and tried to prove that mine were better than hers. In this process my intention was on three things:

1. to create a situation where the students would express their feelings freely
2. to assess at what level the students could express themselves
3. to use some new expressions in preparation for introduction of the new material.

For examples: Your new sandals are very unusual.

They are nice but I prefer ...

Based on the free talk, the material was naturally introduced. I asked the students to talk about when they might want to hide their feelings. Together we generated the following circumstances which are presented in the textbook:* - to avoid hurting people's feeling, to avoid sounding like a complainer, and to avoid an argument or to politely introduce an argument. By this time I assumed that the students might want to know more expressions having to do with hiding feelings.

* Ibid, page 10.

I grasped this chance to introduce more. In this way, the students learned quickly.

Explanation by examples has been the most effective way for me to present material in my own teaching. I usually spend a very short time explaining rules and most of the time giving examples. I feel it is better if I provide examples first and sum up with rules afterwards. I show a picture or do an action showing "I am singing now" and then I generate the rule: S + Be + V. ing + Time Adv. . Examples give an illustration of a language phenomenon. Rules give a theoretical summary.

Practice

After the presentation, when the students are familiar with the new knowledge, the next step is to practice. Practice is a process of digestion. The students eat a lot, and need exercise to digest the food and turn it into each part of their bodies. As in eating, we cannot expect that the students will digest every single bit of the lesson. It takes time to go through the process. In planning the lesson, practice for the students should be designed to allow the students to get hold of the knowledge bit by bit and absorb as much as they can.

Besides the fact that practice is a process of digestion, it is also a process of establishing confidence. As it is natural for the students to feel timid or uncertain about things they have just heard in the presentation, it is important to design less challenging activities first to help students build up confidence.

As an example we can look again at the content of hiding feelings. First, we give the students an incomplete dialogue to finish, using the strategy just introduced. Then, we gradually reduce our input until

they have to work totally on their own.

Examples: -- A: Don't I look different?

B: No... Oh! You got your hair cut!

A: I thought you'd never notice. Do you like it?

B: _____

-- A: Pier, you haven't eaten your cake!

B: _____

A: Oh, but I made it especially for you.

B: _____

Thus, the students will be able to master the material presented to them in a controlled way. Immediate practice after the teacher's demonstration not only gives students the opportunity to master the language, but also gives the teacher ideas of the result of her presentation to see whether her presentation is clear and understood by the students. There is a saying "practice makes perfect". Appropriate practice makes learning more effective.

Application

Practice is the stage in which students start using the new knowledge but are not yet fully on their own. They try to assemble the parts of the language according to the new rules or structures; they might, for example, change the tenses in a sentence. Application is the stage which enables students to use language freely once they have had enough time to practice. At this stage the students not only need to use the knowledge they have just obtained, but also to fit the new knowledge into their old knowledge. They add and integrate the new knowledge with their previous

knowledge.

One crucial thing we should point out at this stage is that the purpose of applying the new language is to see whether the students can use it appropriately. For example, the students have learned many phrases of apology like "I'm sorry," "Please excuse my behavior yesterday," "I apologize for losing my temper," and so forth. Now they need to use these in a real or created situation. Dialogue-making in pairs is one way to help students to get involved in using the language. The teacher might suggest topics such as being late for or forgetting to write the assignment. This requires skills in both making an apology and making a dialogue as well.

In planning a lesson we should fully consider what kinds of activities or teaching formats can make students use both their past knowledge and their newly gained knowledge. In addition, it is an opportunity for students to relate the language to their own life experience and knowledge.

A topic that is interesting for students is more meaningful. For instance, in my English class in China we once taught the subjunctive mood. After we did some mechanical drills to let the students become fluent in changing the form of sentences we came to an activity in the text which let students imagine what they would do if they were the mayor of the city or the president of the country. Considering the Chinese situation and especially Chinese students, I changed the topics to "What could you do if you were the cook of the school" or "What would you do if you had a new large apartment?" The rationale for raising these kind of questions was making the discussion topic more

specific and more related to the students' own lives so that the students felt they had something to say. (Food is a big issue in school life. Everybody in China cares about the housing conditions and wishes for more space to live in)

Sometimes students say little, not because of the language obstacles, but because the topic is unfamiliar. Again, if the teacher knows the students' interests and provides the right topic or if she can let the students provide the topic, the classroom activity will be vital and active. Consider the two questions I gave to my students; I knew food at school and housing problems were the two things the students mentioned and complained about most. Giving these two topics in class was like laying a fire with very dry wood, the students were immediately involved.

Review

Reviewing the material and the content covered in a previous lesson is another essential part of lesson planning. The teacher reviews the lesson at the beginning of class and usually covers approximately one fourth of the class period.* Of course the length of time can vary according to the needs of the teacher and the students. If the teacher does not spend a fixed amount of time doing review she must do some other kinds of activities to achieve the purposes of review.

Basically the teacher gives a review of the lesson for three purposes. First, the teacher wants to give students time to recall the knowledge and be ready for the class. Students do not suddenly acquire skills.

* Chastain, Kenneth, 1976, p444.

They need to know why they are in the classroom and what they are going to do. They need help remembering what happened the time before. Review is especially important on Mondays when the students come back from the weekends. Some of them may have forgotten the rules of the language they learned the week before. Others may still be very excited thinking about the weekend fun they had.

Second, reviewing the lesson has the function of assessing students' mastery of the lesson taught. From this assessment the teacher decides whether there is any unclear point for which she needs to give some further explanation. Reviewing also reinforces the knowledge and insures that the students are ready to accept more and move to the next step.

Third, by reviewing, the teacher relates the old material to the new material and helps the students to see this relation. There are several ways of reviewing the learned material, for instance, asking questions either about the content of the material or about the language structure. Some teachers start their classes by checking some parts of the students' homework or talking about students' problems brought up in the last class or in the homework. Another way of reviewing is to do an exercise either orally or in writing.

One of my own ways of reviewing is to start with a ten-minute conversation. During this period of time students can talk about the things they care about. If we are working on simple present tense, we talk about the students' daily routines. (This can also apply to teaching frequency adverbs like always, usually, etc.) If we are working on the future tense like the modal verb "will" or the pattern "be going to", I set

a topic talking about plans for the coming weekend, and things like this. I can always find a topic. But I have to think hard before I start the free talk, about the purpose of my review, what I am aiming at, and about the language points I want to cover in the talk.

The review time should not be too long. The main focus of the lesson is to present new information. If we stay at the stage of review too long, we waste the time we could use for a lot of other meaningful and useful activities.

Some teachers put review at the end of class. This can be a quick summary of the class or a short follow up check to prepare for their next class. No matter when we have review, we plan it so that we can do it purposefully.

Preview

By preview I mean providing students with materials to prepare them for the next class or assigning work for the students to do before hand to give them an idea of what is going on next.

The class is more efficient and more focused if the students have a good preview. This is especially true when both the teaching and learning tasks are heavy. Very often the teacher has to finish many things in the class within a limited amount of time. The teaching items are all important for the students to learn and master. The teacher has to deal with all the language elements. She can not neglect any one item because they are all equally important. If the students can preview the lesson first, or if the teacher gives some questions to the students to think over before she really starts teaching, the students will have time to look at the subject and bring up key questions.

In the class the teacher can focus on those subjects which the students have the most problems with.

Because the process of preview is the process of prelearning, the students can learn and understand part of the material by themselves. Having previewed the material, students usually have a better and quicker understanding, and a deeper impression of what they have learned. I used to let the students look at selected exercises written in the textbook before class. Then, in class I checked two or three students as samples. I found it make a big difference if the students had previewed. Sometimes I asked students to do the exercise orally. Without having prepared for it, students worked extremely slowly. In contrast, if they knew which exercise they would do and looked at it ahead of time they would respond perfectly. In this way a lot of time would be saved for doing other or more things.

How much and the manner in which we ask the students to preview depends on the students. I can expect my Chinese students to preview lessons conscientiously. They are adults and have clear reasons for studying. Whenever they come to the class they are ready to obtain something - to learn from the teacher about the things they do not know or have difficulties with, and offer something - to tell the teacher what they already know and help make work easier.

However, things might change with a different group of students. I had the experience of teaching two groups of students, each with very different expectations. I used the same reading passage with both Chinese students and international students. Chinese students previewed the passage as they were expected to before class, while the international students from different countries did not. I had to spend time with them

on reading and it took a much longer time.

This raises the question of what kind of preview format is most appropriate for the students. To those who usually do not like to preview a lesson the teacher could give some interesting questions for the students to think about. I sometimes use the students' arguments or questions which come up in class and ask students to find out the answer and bring them to class. I believe that preview helps students learn better, more quickly. It makes the teacher's job easier.

All five parts of lesson planning: presentation, practice, application, review and preview make a whole lesson plan. If we carefully plan each part with the consideration of the teacher and the students, and bear in mind the importance and purpose of doing each part, we will be able to conduct our class successfully.

SOME IMPORTANT FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED WHILE PLANNING A LESSON

In the last two chapters I have talked about the importance of planning a lesson and about the stages of lesson planning. In addition to these two major aspects, a teacher needs to be able to do the following: 1) to make instructions clear and easy to understand, 2) to order the lesson in an appropriate sequence, 3) to pace classroom activities smoothly and naturally, 4) to vary teaching techniques in the classroom to enliven the class and keep students' interest, 5) to deal with supplementary materials to enrich the content of the class, 6) to use visual aids, particularly the blackboard, 7) to plan the time efficiently, and finally, 8) to effectively end a class and give assignments.

Everyday in class we come across these issues. We have to find answers to each one. It is far from enough to implement a number of teaching skills. It is the factors mentioned above that affect the class. In this part, therefore, I want to look at these factors and see how to handle each while planning a lesson.

Clarity of Instruction

A teacher should be able to make her instructions clear and concise. Whether the instructions are clear or not directly affects the results of the teaching and learning gains. Some teachers confuse students by giving vague instructions; students fail to do what is required, not because of their inability, but because of the fact that they do not understand what is expected of them by the teachers.

I feel it is important in my own teaching to be specific in giving instructions for an exercise. When I ask students to play a language game, I tell the students why I am giving them this exercise, what I want them to do or consider during the exercise and what results I expect.

I find that sometimes the students misunderstand the teacher's intention because the instructions are unclear. For instance, the teacher may want the students to read an article. She must state her objectives clearly. She may say, "Please read this article and try to find the main theme", or "Read the article and pick out the phrases or words you do not know." These two instructions are more detailed than the following, "Let's look at the text and finish reading it in five minutes." The first instruction tells the students to work on the content of the reading; the second to work on vocabulary; the third is vague. The students can not see the intention of doing this exercise because the instructions do not tell students what aspect they should work on.

In another example, a teacher may say to the students, "Please retell the story." In saying this, she should be clear of her intentions. She may want the students to pay attention to the tense of the whole story, to the transitions between sentences, or to the structure of the sentences. While giving instructions she should convey this intention to the students, to let them know what is expected. Otherwise, the students might be very tense trying to remember every word of each sentence or other things which are not expected by the teacher. So the purpose of doing any kind of activity should be stated in such a way as to offer students

the opportunity to focus on the same objective as the teacher.

In short, the instructions should be obvious and clear so that when the teacher wants to start a new activity, the students do their work appropriately.

Besides the clarity of the instructions themselves, a teacher should develop the ability to assess whether the students understand the instructions. We can see from students' faces; sometimes they look uncertain or puzzled. We can also check by asking one student to explain the instructions or to do one example. Usually examples help clarify unclear points.

In order to make our instructions clear and easy to understand, we should think about the language and skills as well. Some teachers make the instructions so complicated that the students can not get the point immediately. Sometimes oral instructions or instructions in written form demand good listening comprehension or reading comprehension by students though that is not the teacher's purpose. It is necessary that the teacher be clear in her own mind how she will give instructions when she plans a lesson. Clear comprehensible instructions need to be thought of in advance.

Sequence

Mastering a language is like building a house of bricks: one brick must be laid at a time, starting with the stones of the foundation and building upon them. Sequence in teaching allows for this solid foundation. In planning a lesson we should spend time thinking about, arranging, and presenting materials in such a sequential way that

students can build their knowledge step-by-step.

The primary purpose for sequencing in my teaching is to ensure that the learning always proceeds from the known to the unknown. The teacher always helps the students bridge the two. Once a teacher in a church school told me how she helped a child understand the Holy Spirit. She said one of her children did not understand the Holy Spirit. It seemed not to exist. The child was young. The teacher had to use simple language to explain clearly. The teacher used the wind as an example to explain the abstract concept. She said the Holy Spirit was like wind. We could not see it with our eyes but we could feel it by its result. It existed and affected us. Providing this example enabled the child to link what he had known and experienced to the new concept so that he could make a connection. In teaching it is our job to help students find the link or relation between the knowledge the students have and the new things they do not have. Once the students find the connection between their previous knowledge and the new knowledge, learning can be achieved.

Based on the principle of moving from the known to the unknown, the sequences in my language teaching might be described as follows: practical - theoretical - practical, and oral - written - oral. The first stage of practice is exposure to a new language point, the second, an explanation from a theoretical point of view. Then, we practice again to reinforce and discuss other difficulties students might have. There is the same progression from oral to written. Because of the nature of language learning, speaking usually comes before reading, this is also reflected in lesson planning and teaching.

Although we know the basic principles and the sequential pattern of teaching, we have to realize that there is no fixed rule of order for particular language elements. Many textbooks provide a fixed sequence and proceed from point A to point B and C. The teacher may follow the provided sequence if the students feel comfortable about it. The teacher is able to change the order and adjust it according to the students' needs as long as the class keeps its continuity and applies the principle of moving from the known to the unknown.

Sequencing reflects the logic of the teacher and serves as a ladder leading the students from a lower level to a higher level. A lesson plan weak in sequencing will give the students the feeling that they did not learn very much or that they have missed something. A well-sequenced lesson helps students learn.

Transition

Transitions in a lesson are like chains in a pearl necklace. They link the parts of the lesson together. Without the chains the necklace falls apart. Without transitions, the lesson will not be whole. A nice chain adds great beauty to the necklace; a good transition makes for a good lesson.

A successful class usually runs smoothly and automatically. This automatic smoothness results from the teacher's careful planning and organizing of transitions between activities. In a well-organized classroom, transitions last only a short time and students seem to be able to shift from one activity to another without losing focus. In contrast, transition periods in less well-organized classrooms tend to be chaotic, leaving students confused, needing to ask the teacher

what to do, etc.

We need to think hard about how we can make the transition as natural as possible. The more natural it is, the more comfortable the students feel.

During the internship I had one class in which we were doing grammar explanation and needed to move on to talk about a picture as practice. I put the picture face down on the table. By the time I came to the end of the presentation of the class I wanted to use the picture. I turned over the picture. The students saw the picture. When I finished talking, my students asked what the picture was. Catching the students' question immediately, I moved on to the next step. I noticed that both I and the students felt comfortable and natural in changing to a new activity. This incident told me that we could use certain skills to help students get ready to change so that they would not feel surprised and the teacher could continue the lesson smoothly.

To conclude, transition puts the parts of the lesson together. If we do not pay attention to its importance, the class will not be tightly organized. Effective transitions avoid abrupt changes in classroom activities. We should try to make transitions as natural as possible.

Variety

Using a variety of techniques and activities in teaching is a challenge for the teacher because of the added time in preparation, but it is worth doing so to make the class lively and to keep the students' spirit high.

In the classroom, if we observe, we can see that students demand variety in teaching. Thinking back about my time as a student, I had a strong desire for variety in class. After I became a teacher I immediately noticed that my students like the same variety. Even though the students do not usually articulate this need, I can tell by the students' boredom with monotonous classroom techniques. Therefore, in preparing for the lesson, I spend time considering different ways of organizing my teaching.

As far as classroom activities are concerned, I always try to do a variety of things within one teaching hour; explaining some grammar, letting students have oral practice, giving listening exercises, providing a little bit of reading for comprehension or whatever, or organizing a discussion. The student - teacher dynamic can also vary; teacher to the whole class; teacher to individual student; students to teacher; students to students (small group work, pairs, etc.). In this way, each of the students is asked to participate in a variety of activities, always aimed at the same material or skills. Students are occupied and interested at all stages of a lesson and actively at work all of the time.

I enjoy teaching more if I do not do the same thing everyday. I try not to use the same activity twice within one week. I try not to repeat the same teaching technique within one class. I also try not to let the students know what I am going to do until I tell them. This requires them to listen to me attentively and follow my instructions. I try to avoid making my teaching fall into a daily routine which might make students passive. It is so easy for them to lose attention. I'd

rather have a challenge in preparation and a challenging class for the students to participate in.

So the variety of techniques and methods directly affects the students' mood of study and the atmosphere of the classroom. We should make an effort to keep the students involved.

Supplementary Materials

Supplementary material refers to any material other than the core material. It adds more information or is related in some way to the curriculum. It can be from other textbooks, or newspapers, magazines, journals or other forms of visual or aural material.

As teachers, we often find that there are many good books we can use for teaching. In fact, each textbook has its strong points and limits. It is ideal to use one book as the basic material and others as supplements. There are few textbooks so far which stress all four language skills and aspects. Even if books cover those aspects, we are still faced with the need to combine different kinds of materials according to the different needs of the students.

Providing students with supplementary material can broaden students' minds and expose them to more things so that their knowledge will not be limited by the textbook. It can also provide the teacher with good explanations and examples. Because of these, we should use as many supplementary materials as we can.

For new teachers, finding supplementary material may require a lot of extra work. They should pay attention to whatever they hear and see, accumulating material from daily life. Thus, they can have a

large variety of choices and have an easy time finding appropriate material to use in teaching. At the beginning, some teachers may feel that the time spent in preparation of the supplementary materials is more than on the plan of the lesson itself. However, in the long run, supplementary materials benefit both the teacher and the students.

Visual Aids for Teaching (Blackboard Use)

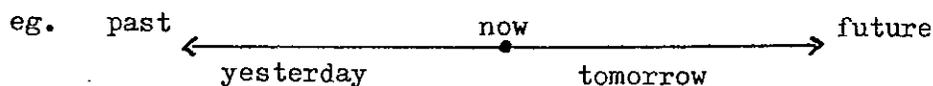
When I use the term visual aids, most people think of pictures, brown paper, overhead projectors, slide shows, films and so on . These are ideal teaching aids. But in this part of my paper I am not going to talk about those because not every teacher has such equipment in her teaching situation. What I am going to focus on is the use of a fundamental tool - the blackboard. It is widely used and most valuable. There are many ways to use the blackboard. At present, we need to know the art of planning how to arrange and design the use of the blackboard. Here are some suggested ways of using the blackboard:

1. Drawing stick pictures.

eg.



2. Chart



3. Arrow or box

eg. The boy is speaking. ↘

Is this a book? ↗

one

I'd like a book.

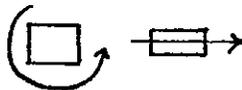
I'd like an egg.

(sentence pattern)

more than one

I'd like some books.

I'd like some eggs.



(preposition)

Many teachers do not realize the importance of arranging blackboard work. They use different colors of chalk, write wherever they want on the blackboard and erase all the time. I think the purpose of using the blackboard is to help our own teaching as well as the students' learning. In other words, a neat blackboard can give students a clear outline of the lesson so that they see at a quick glance what the most important point is and what points the class has already touched on. I believe that we should carefully plan the use of the blackboard so that at the end of the class if someone comes into the classroom and looks at the blackboard, he can see from the blackboard immediately what has been done. To provide an example we may arrange the blackboard like this:

Lesson Nine			
Past Tense			
Sentence Pattern:	Verb:	Time Adv.	Homework:
eg. I got a letter ...	get - got	just now	1.
He went to school...	go - went	3 days ago	2.
<p style="text-align: center;"> <u>past</u> <u>now</u> <u>future</u> </p>			

As soon as the teacher starts the lesson, she writes the number of the lesson on top of the blackboard to tell the students the focus of the day. As the class goes on, she writes down the pattern (one or two examples on the blackboard) and leaves one third of the blackboard for drawing pictures or writing new vocabulary if the students come across some. There she writes whatever she feels necessary and erases that part at any time. At the end of the class, she can use the space to write the assignment for the class. In this way, if a student gets lost at any point she or he can find where s/he is by looking at the blackboard. So it is crucial to keep our blackboard work neat, clear and orderly. The teacher should include the planning of the blackboard into her lesson plan and try to make it look pleasant.

Timing

Timing is another issue that every teacher should consider. In observing other teachers' teaching I have found there are mainly three factors which influence timing. First of all, nervousness. Because of this nervousness some teachers may speak very fast, they may forget some of the things they ought to say or they may find themselves unprepared or flustered by a student's question.

The second circumstance occurs when the teacher is carried away by topics other than the main topic. One situation might lead to this is that while the class is going on someone may bring up an issue, suddenly everybody seems interested in it including the teacher. It is very easy for the teacher at this moment to get involved and forget her original purpose in teaching. Another situation which results in the teacher's losing control of time might be the student's questions.

Students ask questions for many reasons. They might ask questions to "test" the teacher's knowledge of the target language. Some teachers are flattered when students ask questions which reflect an interest in the subject matter. Others are challenged by such questions and feel compelled to offer an explanation far beyond the student's competence in order to prove their own expertise in the language. Thus, they spend extra time on things apart from the real focus of the lesson.

A third danger is incorrectly estimating the amount of time necessary for each activity. Experienced teachers usually know how much time an exercise will last, though it will vary according to the students' mood and the performance. We should have the ability to handle some unexpected things.

If we have some time left at the end of the class, we can explain something about the homework or have some exercise at hand in case we need it so as not to waste time. It is better if the teacher plans something simple which she can finish in a busy period. In writing a lesson plan we have to be clear about which exercise we can eliminate and which one we can not.

To sum up, in order to minimize wasted time, we should learn to estimate and adjust the amount of time we are going to use on each item. We should also keep our mind clearly on the focus of our lesson and keep ourselves on the right track. Finally, we should always prepare something for flexibility.

Closure and Homework Assignment

Personally, I feel it is necessary to plan appropriate activities to end the lesson to let the students feel there is a beginning and

ending. However, the teacher could also give students a brief summary of the lesson so that they are clear by the end what they have accomplished, or end her daily classes with an assignment for the students. The purpose of assigning homework for the students is to ensure that the students have understood the content of the lesson and to allow the students themselves to evaluate how well they have mastered the new knowledge.

Therefore, when we plan the format of homework, we should go through the whole lesson plan and look at the exercises at the back of the textbooks or at the materials we are using. We should be sure of the level of difficulty of the exercise. If it is a new type of assignment we should think whether it needs some explanation or if an example needs to be given.

When we plan the amount of homework we should consider that the written homework should not be given in such amounts that it becomes busy work.

In assigning the homework in class, we should also decide how to give the assignment. Do we leave enough time for finishing the assignment? Do we write it on the blackboard? or print it on slips of paper? Has the content of the exercise been covered in the class? A good, clear assignment can be a good ending to the class.

In conclusion, we can not plan a lesson without looking at the factors discussed above. Many teachers constantly encounter problems because they have not fully considered all factors. Some factors appear to be less important and easy to handle. In reality, they are not. Usually we can not see the clarity of the instructions or perfect

timing on our lesson plans, but they are essential parts of planning and we can not leave them out.

EXAMPLES

Having talked about the procedure and factors involved in lesson planning, I would like in this part of the paper to provide sample lesson plans. I am going to show the detailed content of the plans and state the assumptions behind each step of them. Since the lesson plans are based on material chosen for an individual daily class, they are complete in themselves. I do not include the review and preview in the plans because they are not in a fixed curriculum though in actual teaching review and preview would be indispensable. The following are the examples.

Sample Lesson Plan One:

Lesson Plan

Teacher's name: _____

Intended date of presentation: _____

Estimated time of the lesson: 50 minutesEstimated students' language level: BeginningTeaching point: The usage of good (adj.) and well (adv.)

Teaching Objectives: Students will be able to recognize the differences between the adjective "good" and the adverb "well", and will use these words correctly in class speaking and writing.

Teaching Materials: 1) dialogue (written handout, transparency, and tape recorder)

2) functional explanation written on board or transparency

3) evaluation - written handout

Teaching Procedure:

Step 1: Warm-up activity (5 minutes)

Free talk format

eg. Whose handwriting is good?

Who can write on the blackboard very well?

(Ask the student to actually write on the blackboard)

Blackboard: Date: July 1, 1983.

Good & Well

Step 2: Presentation of pattern in context (15 minutes)

A: Introduce the main idea

Ian and Jeremy are two students. They are walking home from school. (Write the names on the board)

B: Vocabulary

professor (teacher) assignment (homework)

C: Listen to the dialogue over the recorder

Ian: How are you doing in math class, Jeremy?

Jem: I'm doing well. I like math. But I'm having problems with that American history course.

Ian: Me, too. The professor doesn't explain things very well.

Jem: I know. But at least we have a good textbook.

Ian: Yes. The book is very easy to understand.

Jem: By the way, have you done the assignment for tomorrow?

Ian: I forgot all about it! I'd better get busy.

Jem: Me, too. I'll see you later.

D: Comprehension questions

- 1) Are Ian and Jeremy in a classroom?
- 2) Does Jeremy like math?
- 3) Ian is having problems with the American history course, isn't he?
- 4) Is the professor a good teacher? Why (not)?
- 5) Is the textbook a good one?
- 6) Is the textbook difficult to understand?
- 7) Did Ian do the assignment yet?

(Listen again)

E: Identification of pattern

Hand out the written dialogue and let the students look at the dialogue again.

Ask - What sentence has the word "good" in it?

Where do you find the word "well"?

(Write answers on transparency)

S: Good: At least we have a good textbook.

Well: I'm doing well.

T: Let's see how these two words are different.

Step 3: Practice (5 minutes)

Mechanical drills: T: Please listen.

We have a good textbook. dictionary

We have good dictionary. car

We have a good car. lesson

We have a good lesson.

OK, let's try it now.

T: We have a good textbook. dictionary

S: We have a good dictionary. etc.

T: OK. Now let's try the word "well".

Listen.

He doesn't explain it very well. understand

He doesn't understand it well. express

He doesn't express it very well. know

He doesn't know it very well.

Let's try it.

T: He doesn't explain it very well. understand

S: He doesn't understand it very well. etc.

Step 4: Grammar explanation (10 minutes)

Now let's see if we can find out how these words "good" and "well" are different.

T: What kind of work is "good"? (Is it a noun? adjective?)

It's an adjective. Which means what? Where does an adjective go? (Before the noun? After it?) We put it before the noun. Now, what kind of word is "well"? Yes, we are using it as an adverb. And what does that mean? An adverb adds information to a verb, right. And where does the adverb go? After the verb.

Functional explanation

T: How can we use these words? Where do we use each word?

(Put on overhead projector - blanks are filled in with students' answers)

It is a good book.

I don't understand it very well.

I am not feeling well.

That was a good dinner.

She's a good tennis player. She plays well. etc.

So we see that "good" is an adjective, and is placed before the noun it describes. "well" is an adverb, and goes after the verb it describes.

Step 5: Application (10 minutes)

A: Meaningful drills

T: Let's try to use these words in some questions.

Please listen.

teacher? Mr. Smith is a good teacher.

skier? Mr. Smith is a good skier.

dancer? Mr. Smith is a good dancer.

Let's try that now.

teacher?

S: Mr. Smith is a good teacher. etc.

T: Listen again.

teaches Mr. Smith teaches well.

skis Mr. Smith skis well.

dances Mr. Smith dances well.

Now you try it.

teaches

S: Mr. Smith teaches well. etc.

B: Communicative drills

Now let's use these words to talk with each other.

T: (S1) ask (S2) if she is a good cook.

S1: (S2) are you a good cook?

S2: Yes, I am.

T: (S3), what kind of a cook is (S2)?

S3: She's a good cook.

T: (S4) how does (S2) cook? Does she cook badly?

S4: No. She cooks well.

etc.

T: () ask () if she swims well.

if he is a good ping-pong player.

if she draws well.

C: Optional activity

Mini dialogues - let the students do a short dialogue
using good and well.

Step 6: Evaluation (5 minutes)

T: hands out evaluation, students complete it, turn it in.

Evaluation: Fill in the blanks, using the word "good" or
the word "well", as appropriate.

1. Mr. Chen speaks English ____.
2. Do you think the professor expresses himself ____?
3. Maria is a ____ mother.
4. It's not a very ____ book.
5. There are several ____ lawyers in this city.
6. Her brother is a ____ student.

7. Hiro dances _____, and he is a _____ singer, too.
8. What shall we listen to? There are many _____ records to choose from.

The End of the Class

In beginning her lesson plan, the teacher notes down teaching objectives and materials. Objectives reflect the teacher's chief goal in presenting the lesson. By the end of the lesson she must achieve her objective. Materials remind the teacher of the general things she will use in teaching and should prepare before teaching. Writing the materials at the beginning of the plan enables the teacher to have a quick look before going into class to be sure she has everything she needs with her. The actual classroom teaching is implemented according to the lesson plan.

Step One is designed as a warm-up activity which catches students' attention, and assesses students' competence in this particular language point.

Step Two The teacher introduces the subject matter by presenting it in context. Each substep within this stage is preparation for the next one. The comprehension questions check the students' understanding of the basic facts of the dialogue. Because of the students' beginning level, most of the questions are yes / no questions. Question No. 3 is a tag question. The teacher provides students with the opportunity to be exposed to different questions. When the students come across this form of question again later on, it will not be totally new to them.

Step Three is practice. As I said in the previous chapter, practice provides opportunities to try out the new information through controlled exercises. Through practice students have a close look at the use of the

structure.

Step Four is a grammatical and functional explanation. The teacher explains the language phenomena by raising questions and encouraging students to provide answers and generate rules. A functional explanation explains things by using them. We learn swimming by jumping into the water to swim; learning language is the same.

Step Five is applying the language. This part contains two kinds of drills, meaningful drills and then communicative drills. It also reflects the assumption that going from more controlled to less controlled exercises is the best way to proceed.

Step Six is an evaluation exercise to close the class and to evaluate the students' learning gains immediately.

As for variety within the lesson, the teacher includes listening, reading, and writing. There is time devoted to the teacher's control of the class and a time for student control. It balances whole group work and individual work. What's more, the question format throughout the lesson compels the students to think all the time. Therefore both teaching and learning progress rapidly.

Sample Lesson Plan Two

Lesson plan sample two is based on my internship teaching. The students came from numerous countries. The class was intended to help them survive and communicate in the United States and gain the knowledge of English to enter academic programs or stay in the United States.

Lesson Plan:

Date:

Class: 10 - 12 students

Level: Intermediate

Time: Two hours (8:30 - 10:30)

Material and Content: Modern English, Volume One, Unit 2*

1. Communicative Function - Asking Directions
2. Pronunciation and Intonation
3. WH Questions
4. Expressions
5. Reading and Writing
6. Activities

Objectives: Students will - know how to ask directions with right form and intonation

- be able to use sentence structures from the dialogue and produce their own sentences.
- understand and generate the sentences covered in the class both orally and in written form.

Teaching Aids: Tape recorder, tapes, sound pattern sheet (brown paper).

Teaching Procedure:

Step 1: Dialogue "Asking Directions" from the textbook. **

* Rutherford, William E, 1975.

** See the appendix I.

I. Teacher - Student (Free talk)

eg. Have you ever had the experience of losing your way?

If yes, what did you do? What kind of questions did you ask?

Purpose: Ask students to present something first to see how much they know about asking directions; to give students a sense of the content to be learned; to introduce or present the lesson.

II. Listening to the dialogue

A: First time - understand the meaning and content of the dialogue.

On the blackboard: NAME PLACE (to help students follow the dialogue)

B: Second time - answer some specific questions.

Purpose: Listening for general meaning and then for specific information.

III. Look at the dialogue and define the meaning of some sentences which students may find difficult to understand.

eg. Let's face it.

(Students may look at their textbooks now and read them.)

Purpose: to allow students to see what they are learning in the book.

IV. Pronunciation and Intonation

Students pronounce sentences on the sound pattern sheet

(Written on the brown paper), paying attention to the intonation contours.

The sound pattern sheet:


Who do you ask in a strange town?


Where do you find one?


How do we get to the post office?

T - Ss / Ss - individual / Human computer

V. Practice - role play

A. In a group of three - Sid, Mort, Officer

B. Dialogue variation - try to use some new sentences

eg. All we have to do is ask - We only have to ask

Excuse me - pardon me

I'm not sure - I don't know exactly.

Purpose: to check students' intonation, the ability to say the sentences, understanding of the dialogue, and producing new sentences.

Step 2: WH questions

I. Formation

Most wh-questions have the form of yes-no questions with a wh-word in front:

statement: You can find one (somewhere)

yes-no question: Can you find one some where?

wh-question: Where can you find one?

II. Picture talking - uncontrolled exercise, making sentences or questions with people doing different things in a picture.

Purpose: to teach the students the formation of wh-question and to check whether they understand it by using pictures to practice.

Step 3: Reading "You can't miss it" *

- I. Reading the passage individually
- II. Students ask questions using wh-words
- III. The teacher writes some questions on the board
- IV. According to question, students retell the story

Purpose: to read a passage related to the text to learn more expressions and to gain a better understanding of the use of the language; to reinforce the knowledge of wh-questions.

Step 4: Activities

- I. Use school map or map of town to ask directions or locations of some places.

- II. Finding places:

Description: (in pairs)

Students are not allowed to look at each other's sheet or map. S1 asks S2 how to get to the Bank from where he is and S2 tells S1 according to his sheet. Then, S2 asks S1 to do the same.

Place: ?	?	Main St.	?
bank	church	R.	?
shoe shop	bookstore		Mobil
cafe			

←  S1

bank	shoe shop	Main St.	?
?	café		
?	?		

←  S2

Place: ?
church
book store
Mobil station

* See appendix II

Step 6: Assignment

I. Writing - you ask somebody in a strange town.

(who) _____

(Exercise at the back of the text.)

II. Oral - make a dialogue telling someone how to get to your
apartment, dorm, office, etc.

Purpose: to check whether the students have learned.

The End of the Class.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I suggest that every teacher write a lesson plan for every class and consider the procedure and factors mentioned in the previous chapters. Planning is an inseparable part of teaching. We can not go to class without preparation. A complete and detailed plan allows for the improvement of professional competence and success in teaching.

In terms of planning a good lesson, I believe that we should include a warm up activity which is designed to build students' confidence and to establish a positive mindset toward learning. We also need a variety of techniques and activities within each class session. Clear transitions between activities should be provided so that the students are aware of changes in activity and able to follow from one to the next. Including visual aids in the lesson reinforces meaning and helps students follow the class.

I recommend that lessons be planned in detail, that they provide for work on all four language skills, that the students be encouraged to prepare their lessons, so they are ready to respond most of the time. I also recommend that students put knowledge into practice by applying the language material to their own lives.

Teaching is an art. This is why not everybody can be a teacher and not every teacher is a good one. Any teacher who is devoted to teaching and responsible for herself as well as for the students should be serious about lesson planning and do it well.

APPENDIX I

Modern English, Second Edition, Volume One, Unit 2

Dialogue: Asking Directions

Sid Let's face it. We're lost.

Mort Don't be silly, Sid. All we have to do is ask.

Sid Who do you ask in a strange town?

Mort You ask a policeman, or anybody for that matter.

Sid I don't see any policeman. Where can you find one?

Mort Standing right behind you. Excuse me, officer, can you tell us how we get to the post office?

Officer Go straight ahead three blocks, turn right, walk ...

Sid Not so fast, please, officer. We're strangers here.

Officer Sorry. Walk to the first traffic light, then turn left. You can't miss it.

** ** * * * * *

Mort I don't see a post office. How many blocks did he say?

Sid I'm not sure. What happens now, Mort? What do we do?

Mort We ask another policeman, of course. Pardon me, officer, how do we get to the post office from here?

APPENDIX II

Modern English, Second Edition, Volume One, Unit 2

Reading: You can't miss it

Last summer my brother and I stayed for a week with some family friends in Boston. That was our first trip away from home and we wanted to see something of Boston's historic places. One morning we started out to look for a famous church. We stopped a stranger and asked, "How do we get to the Old North Church?" "Go three blocks and turn to your left," he said. "You can't miss it." So we walked three blocks and turned to our left, but the church wasn't there. We then asked a second stranger. He said, "Go three blocks and turn to your left. You can't miss it." But again we couldn't find the church. Finally we asked a third stranger. "Go three blocks and turn to your left. You can't miss it." This time we found the church, but we wondered if everything in Boston was three blocks and a left turn away. Just then somebody walked over to us and said "Excuse me, where is the post office? Can you tell me?" "Go three blocks and turn to your left," my brother replied. "You can't miss it."

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