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**AN ANALYSIS ON VARIOUS IMPROVEMENTS IN  
ESTABLISHING LESSON PLAN FOR ENGLISH  
TEACHERS AT SCHOOL LEVEL**

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# An Analysis on Various Improvements in Establishing Lesson Plan for English Teachers at School Level

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**Abstract – Lesson Planning" serves as a guide for novice teachers who need to create formalized lesson plans. The paper covers why, when, and how teachers plan lessons, as well as basic lesson plan principles and a lesson plan improvement. A sample lesson plan is provided in the context of a weekly overview, module overview, and course overview.**

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## INTRODUCTION

All good teachers have some type of plan when they walk into their classrooms. It can be as simple as a mental checklist or as complex as a detailed two-page typed lesson plan that follows a prescribed format. Usually, lesson plans are written just for the teacher's own eyes and tend to be rather informal. But there may be times when the plan has to be written as a class assignment or given to an observer or supervisor, and therefore will be a more formal and detailed document. This paper will serve as a guide for creating these more formalized lesson plans.

A lesson plan is an extremely useful tool that serves as a combination guide, resource, and historical document reflecting our teaching philosophy, student population, textbooks, and most importantly, our goals for our students. It can be described with many metaphors such as road map, blueprint, or game plan; but regardless of the analogy, a lesson plan is essential for novice teachers and convenient for experienced teachers.

A lesson plan is a teacher's plan for teaching a lesson. It can exist in the teacher's mind, on the back of an envelope, or on one or more beautifully formatted sheets of A4 paper. Its purpose is to outline the "programme" for a single lesson. That's why it's called a lesson plan. It helps the teacher in both planning and executing the lesson. And it helps the students, unbeknownst to them, by ensuring that they receive an actual lesson with a beginning, a middle and an end, that aims to help them learn some specific thing that they didn't know at the beginning of the lesson (or practise and make progress in that specific thing).

To summarize, and in very basic terms: a lesson plan is the teacher's guide for running a particular lesson, and it includes the goal (what the students are supposed to learn), how the goal will be reached (the method, procedure) and a way of measuring how well the goal was reached (test, worksheet, homework etc).

A good lesson plan is an important tool that focuses both the instructor and the learners on the purpose of the lesson and, if carefully constructed and followed, enables learners to efficiently meet their goals.

A lesson is a unified set of activities that focuses on one teaching objective at a time. A teaching objective states what the learners will be able to do at the end of the lesson. Teachers use the information learned through the needs assessment to develop the objectives. For example, if the learners identify "understand written communication from my children's teachers" as a goal, an objective might be "learners will be able to interpret a child's weekly homework form" or "learners will be able to read the notes that their children's teachers send from school."

Lesson planning helps ensure that classroom instruction aligns with curriculum goals and objectives and therefore enables students to demonstrate their successful learning on unit or curricular assessments. Lessons not only shape how and what students learn, they also impact student attitudes toward language learning. In the long run, it is the lesson—not the curriculum or the unit plan—that students actually experience. It is through the lessons they teach each day that teachers communicate what language learning is all about and what they believe matters in language learning. As they experience the lesson,

students may decide whether they will or will not invest their time and energy to learn the material.

Classrooms are busy places with many things happening all at once. Teachers are challenged to monitor multiple classroom events simultaneously while at the same time collecting and analyzing data on student performance. In the course of teaching lessons, teachers must make important instructional decisions almost continually: What question should I ask next? Should I call on a particular student or not? What does this student's answer reveal about their understanding or skill? Are my students showing that they are ready to move on, or do I need to clarify information for them? Clearly, just remembering how the lesson should unfold can be challenging when teachers are simultaneously trying to monitor student learning while also making significant instructional decisions.

Lesson planning—well in advance of the actual class meeting—allows for the luxury of time. Teachers need time to think through their lesson goals and objectives. They need to consider the logical progression of the lesson as it unfolds to lead students to improved knowledge and performance. The decision-making process of lesson planning requires teachers to pull together an array of knowledge and understanding: What do I know about learning in general? What do I know about language learning? What characteristics of my students will affect the choices I make about my lesson experiences? What are the many ways I know to help my students achieve the lesson goals, and, of all the ways I know, which ones should I choose and why? Lesson planning is also an opportunity to think about the kinds of teaching that result in student learning. Foreign language educators are generally in agreement regarding a repertoire of teacher behaviors that result in improved student learning. If these behaviors are key to successful language learning, then teachers must ensure that these behaviors are consciously planned for in each lesson.

This guide provides a framework for thinking about the elements essential to foreign language lesson plans and guidelines for developing plans that reflect theory and practice in language education today.

Effective teachers in all disciplines plan lessons. Much of their planning requires attention to features of lessons that have been shown to make a difference in student learning, whether the subject is mathematics, art, or foreign language. Other aspects of lesson planning are discipline-specific.

## ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF A LESSON PLAN

A lesson plan identifies the enabling objectives necessary to meet the lesson objective, the materials and equipment needed, and the activities appropriate to accomplish the objective.

- *Enabling objectives* are the basic skills (language skills such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation) and the life skills (including cultural information) that are necessary to accomplish the objective.
- *Materials and equipment* should be identified and secured well before class time to ensure that activities can be carried out as planned. These may include realia (real-life materials like bus schedules and children's report cards), visual aids, teacher-made handouts, textbooks, flip chart and markers, overhead projector, tape recorder, etc.
- *Activities* generally move from more controlled (e.g., repetition) to a less structured or free format (e.g., interviewing each other). They should be varied in type (e.g., whole group, paired, individual) and modality (e.g., speaking, listening, writing).

### a. What Are the Stages of a Lesson?

Good lesson design begins with a review of previously learned material. New material is then introduced, followed by opportunities for learners to practice and be evaluated on what they are learning. In general, a lesson is composed of the following stages:

- Warm-up/Review—encourages learners to use what they have been taught in previous lessons
- Introduction to a new lesson—focuses the learners' attention on the objective of the new lesson and relates the objective to their lives
- Presentation—introduces new information, checks learner comprehension of the new material, and models the tasks that the learners will do in the practice stage
- Practice—provides opportunities to practice and apply the new language or information
- Evaluation—enables the instructor and learners to assess how well they have grasped the lesson

## WHY WE PLAN

Deciding what to teach, in what order, and for how much time are the basic components of planning. The lesson plan serves as a map or checklist that guides us in knowing what we want to do next; these sequences of activities remind us of the goals and objectives of our lessons for our students. As previously mentioned, a lesson plan is also a record of what we did in class; this record serves as a valuable resource when planning assessment measures such as quizzes, midterms, and final exams. A record of previously taught lessons is also useful when we teach

the same course again, so that we have an account of what we did the term or year before to avoid reinventing the wheel. When we have to miss class, a lesson plan is a necessity for the substitute teacher, who is expected to step in and teach what had been planned for the day. In addition, just as teachers expect their students to come to class prepared to learn, students come to class expecting their teachers to be prepared to teach. A lesson plan is part of that preparation.

Yet in spite of the importance of planning, a lesson plan is mutable, not written in stone; it is not meant to keep a teacher from changing the duration of an activity or forgoing an activity altogether if the situation warrants. A good lesson plan guides but does not dictate what and how we teach. It benefits many stakeholders: teachers, administrators, observers, substitutes, and of course, students.

### **WHEN AND HOW WE PLAN**

To be perfectly honest, a certain amount of lesson planning takes place the night before a class is taught. This planning, taking place just hours before entering the classroom, should be the fine or micro tuning of the lesson, not the big picture or macro planning that is based on a programmatic philosophy or syllabus design. A good lesson plan is the result of both macro planning and micro planning. On the macro level, a lesson plan is a reflection of a philosophy of learning and teaching which is reflected in the methodology, the syllabus, the texts, and the other course materials and finally results in a specific lesson. In brief, an actual lesson plan is the end point of many other stages of planning that culminate in a daily lesson.

Before a teacher steps into the second language classroom, he or she should have developed his or her own understanding of second language learning and teaching. This background includes knowledge of theories of second language acquisition and learner characteristics as well as familiarity with both historical and current trends in second language pedagogy. This background knowledge will create a personal philosophy that is realized whenever the teacher is preparing lessons, teaching classes, or grading assignments or tests. A good teacher cannot help but bring his or her own sense of good learning and teaching into the classroom. Ideally, this philosophy will be consistent with the teaching methodology employed by the institution since the methodology will then help implement the syllabus and influence the choice of textbooks for most programs.

Once the syllabus and texts have been decided, planning for the year or term takes place. For many teachers, especially newly hired ones, these decisions have already been made and the macro planning has been taken care of by colleagues or supervisors. In

some cases, however, the new teacher may be responsible for the macro planning as well as the micro planning. Consulting or planning with fellow teachers about syllabus design and textbook selection can be very helpful in this type of situation. In rare cases, nothing may be in place so it may be entirely up to the instructor to design the course syllabus, choose the teaching materials, and plan the daily lessons. Generally the opposite is true for the novice teacher, however, who will have very little input at first in terms of macro and even micro planning. (See Appendices B, C, and D for examples of macro planning: a course overview, a module overview, and a weekly overview.)

### **PLANNING THE LESSON**

Lesson planning is a cognitively demanding task in which teachers bring to bear their expertise and experience to make good instructional decisions. When planning lessons teachers consider the following:

- Where are students now and where do they need to be? (What do my students need to know and be able to do that they do not know and are not able to do now?)
- What should I do and in what order should I do it? (What do I know about learning in general and second language learning in particular that will influence decisions I make as I plan my lesson? What options or choices do I have about learning experience and activities, and based on the factors above, which one is most likely to lead to the result I want?)
- What student characteristics (needs, abilities, and interests) should I keep in mind as I am planning? (What are the needs, abilities, and interests of my students?) Because language learning takes such a long period of time and there is so little time available for school-based language learning, there is no time to waste. Teachers must make every minute and every activity count as they lay out their ideas for a lesson.

### **LESSON PLAN CYCLE**

The complete cycle of lesson planning includes eight steps:

- (1) Determine the objective
- (2) Research the topic as defined by the objective
- (3) Select the appropriate instructional method

- (4) Identify a usable lesson planning format
- (5) Decide how to organize the lesson
- (6) Choose appropriate support material
- (7) Prepare the beginning and ending of the lesson
- (8) Prepare a final outline.

**Determining The Objective.** Often we will begin our lesson planning with an objective or objectives clearly in mind. At other times the objective may be shaped by the research and additional planning we do. In other words, although the first step of the lesson planning process is to determine the objective, our objective may not fully evolve until after we have completed other steps of the process.

**Researching The Topic.** After we have written or been provided with an instructional objective, we are ready to decide on the main points of the lesson and gather materials about the lesson topic. Normally we do not collect a mass of research materials and then develop an objective to match the findings. Not only is this latter approach inefficient, but it is also likely to be ineffective. It may well ignore the specific needs of the students and the Air Force. The objective should determine the research that needs to be done. On the other hand, research may justify a decision to modify an objective or rearrange main points for greater accuracy or clarity.

**Selecting Instructional Methods.** After deciding exactly what to teach, the instructor determines how best to teach it and what instructional method to use. When related to instruction, "method" refers to a combination of techniques or skills used by the instructor to engage students in meaningful learning experiences.

**Philosophy Underlying Selection.** We should choose a teaching method suited to the student's needs as a learner. In making the selection, we consider the ways that people learn: by doing, by discussing, by listening, by observing, by participating. We should select the instructional method that will most effectively guide students toward desired learning outcomes. Our role is to select the method and the techniques that will result in a meaningful learning experience.

**The Selection Process.** No one method is suitable for all teaching situations, because no single method is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of students in every learning situation. In general, as we have seen, the nature of a learning outcome suggests the type of activity that will be most helpful to the students in achieving that outcome.

**Lesson Planning Format.** Good lesson planning is essential for any systematic approach to instruction. Although many instructors become discouraged by the

time required for good lesson planning, a well written and properly used lesson plan can be a very worthwhile teaching aid.

**Organizing The Lesson.** After we have researched the topic, selected the appropriate instructional method, and identified the lesson planning format to use, we must decide how to organize the lesson.

## BASIC PRINCIPLES OF LESSON PLANNING

As with any skill, lesson planning becomes easier over time. As teachers gain experience in the classroom, they learn certain principles about planning. When seasoned teachers are asked to list some basic principles of lesson planning that novice teachers should be aware of, the ones that are frequently mentioned are actually basic principles of good teaching: coherence, variety, and flexibility. These principles have proven useful for all teachers, not just the second/foreign language teacher.

1. A good lesson has a sense of coherence and flow. This means that the lesson hangs together and is not just a sequence of discrete activities. On a macro level, links or threads should connect the various lessons over the days and weeks of a course. On a micro level, students need to understand the rationale for each activity; also, they learn best when there are transitions from one activity to the next.
2. A good lesson exhibits variety. This variety needs to be present at both the macro and micro levels. While for most students, a
3. certain degree of predictability in terms of the teacher, the texts, classmates, and certain administrative procedures is comforting; however, to avoid boredom and fatigue, lesson plans should not follow the same pattern day after day. On a macro level, there should be variety in terms of topics (content), language, and skills over the length of the course. On a micro level, each daily lesson should have a certain amount of variety in terms of the pace of the class, such as time spent on various activities, depending on the difficulty or ease of the material being covered. The percentages of teacher-fronted time and student-centered activities should vary from lesson to lesson; there are days when we want J: our students to participate and be active, but there are other days when we want them a bit calmer in order to be receptive to new material or practice a listening or reading strategy. Some teacher-trainers have referred to this as the ability to "stir" or "settle" our students depending on the need. Each lesson should also have some variety in terms of classroom organization such as whole-class, small-group, pair, and individual activities. The mood of different lessons will vary as well; mood shifts can



reflect the teacher's disposition on a certain day, the chemistry of the mix of students, the weather, current events, or something unexplainable.

4. A good lesson is flexible. Lesson plans are not meant to be tools that bind teachers to some preordained plan. Good teachers think on their feet and know when it is time to change an activity, regardless of what the lesson plan says. An interesting student question can take the class in an unanticipated direction that creates one of those wonderful "teaching moments," not to be missed. A brilliant idea can come as the teacher is writing on the board; sometimes pursuing these ideas is well worth a risk of failure. Even failure can be a valuable lesson for both the novice and experienced teacher.

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## CONCLUSION

Knowing how to go about planning a second/ foreign language lesson is the result of many other stages of preparation. The teacher must be familiar with the principles of second language learning and teaching, as well as the needs of the institution and the student population. He or she must first see the big picture of the course and be aware of the goals and objectives for the entire term before planning weekly and daily lessons. If the big picture is kept in mind, the individual lessons will connect to form a learning experience that benefits both the teacher and the students.

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