

Lesson Planning: A Guide to Teacher Trainees and Teacher Trainers

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Abstract:

Lesson planning is an essential activity for language teachers in most situations. Trainee teachers and their trainers must be aware of many elements/components that go into the preparation and execution of an effective language lesson plan. The current paper seeks to provide a compact guide for lesson planning, taking into consideration aspects such as lesson plan templates, lesson types, sequencing of activities, use of instruction checking questions (ICQs) and concept checking questions (CCQs), coverage of skills and subskills, provision of feedback, assessment of learning, and follow-up activities. It is hoped that the theoretical and practical inputs provided in this article will help the trainee teachers and the teacher trainers to become productive and efficient professionals at their work. It is also implied that language teachers would benefit immensely from the easy to use toolkit this paper offers. The insights into lesson planning presented in the paper, if employed methodically, could lead to career growth of teachers and enable them to stay up-to-date on key matters related to lesson planning. The trainee teachers will be able to design well-structured lesson plans with varied types of lessons which could be employed in teaching of languages at different levels and contexts.

Keywords: lesson planning, lesson types, stages and activities, skills and subskills, assessment of learning, career growth

Background

A lesson plan is an effective tool through which educators steer their professional journey. An effective lesson plan serves many purposes for teachers. They can enable teachers to be focussed and productive in their classroom teaching. Teachers can channelize their expertise to realize the curriculum goals and student needs. In my several years of experience as a language teacher and teacher trainer, I discovered that teacher trainees find several components relating to lesson planning problematic and frustrating. They find that the entire process of lesson planning, right from writing a lesson aim to designing a follow-up activity, is a herculean task. Lack of exposure to right lesson planning templates, and lack of practice in structuring stages and activities cohesively, keeping in view student level, teaching/learning context, relevant methods and materials, are some of the issues concerning lesson planning they struggle to deal

with. This paper makes an attempt to address the concerns of the teachers and provides them with a compact toolkit for lesson planning, which they could readily use to becoming confident and well-informed teachers in their professional journey.

Gülten (2013) in a study on the first lesson planning experience of the teacher trainees identified the main challenges of the trainees. These challenges include teacher trainees' hesitations about the process, timing difficulties, problems in sequencing and selecting activities, providing effective transitions and finding sources.

Lesson Planning Guide

Teacher's Name:		Date:	No. of Students:	Level:	Lesson No:
Lesson Aim:					
Lesson Objectives:					
Assumptions:					Teaching Aids:
Anticipated Problems:					
Solutions to Anticipated Problems:					
Time	Stage & Aim	Interaction Pattern	Teacher Activity	Learner Activity	Materials

The existence of too many lesson planning templates can also be potentially frustrating for many trainee teachers. They find it difficult to decide which should be used with their lessons and why? Some even complain that they don't have a clear template for planning their lesson effectively. The teacher trainers could solve this problem by providing the trainees with a clear and easy to use template such as the one suggested below. Once they become comfortable with various aspects of lesson planning such as effective sequencing of activities of the lesson, interaction patterns, and effective summing up of a lesson, they can they be allowed to experiment with various other templates of their choice. Providing a user friendly lesson plan template enables the teachers to focus on the vital components of a good language lesson.

A Compact Lesson Plan Template

The following lesson plan template is designed to make beginner teachers' journey a smooth experience. They would gain clarity and avoid confusion with regard to which template they should bank on in their initial days of teaching practice, be it in peer teaching or real teaching environments.

A Well-structured Lesson Observation Form

The lesson observation form presented below highlights the key areas that the educators should consider in the planning and evaluation of their lessons. Both the teacher trainees and the teacher trainers could employ lesson observation forms such as the one suggested below for incorporating major areas of lesson planning into their lessons. Familiarity with these key areas gives the teachers confidence to function effectively in varied teaching contexts and situations.

Teacher:	Observer:
Date:	Lesson No & Duration:
Key Areas	Pointers
1. Warming up/Lead-in	Did the teacher: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) use the right type of lead-in? b) use an interesting and effective warming up activity/lead-in?
2. Motivation and involvement of learners	Did the teacher: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) build on learners' prior knowledge? b) encourage learners to take a positive and responsible attitude to learning?
3. Preparation and topic knowledge	Did the teacher: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) have a sound knowledge of the topic? b) prepare well for the lesson? c) foster and maintain learners' interest in the subject?
4. Lesson structuring	Did the teacher: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) structure the lesson stages and activities systematically? b) develop understanding through effective use of lesson time?
5. Voice, ICQs and CCQs	Did the teacher: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) speak slowly, clearly, audibly, and confidently?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) give instructions and explain concepts clearly? c) use ICQs and CCQs? d) use eliciting, questioning, giving instructions, giving feedback, responding to learner's queries? e) modulate the voice to engage and motivate the learners?
6. Assessment and feedback	<p>Did the teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) assess varied activities and exercises? b) provide feedback, both orally and visually ? c) encourage learners to respond to the feedback?
7. Classroom management	<p>Did the teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) have clear rules and routines for behavior in classrooms? b) establish a framework for discipline with a range of strategies, using praise, sanctions, rewards consistently and fairly? c) manage classes effectively, using approaches which are appropriate to learners' needs in order to involve and motivate them? d) deal with technical glitches/interruptions effectively?
8. Interaction patterns	<p>Did the teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) interact with learners in varied ways? b) deploy interactions patterns such as teacher to the whole group (T-Ss), pair work (S-S), and group work (Ss-Ss) c) support the objectives through different interaction patterns?
9. Instructional material, handouts, and worksheets	<p>Did the teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) design and/or use instructional materials that served the aims and objectives? b) use appropriate, interesting and effective instructional material, handouts, and worksheets?
10. Summing up and following-up	<p>Did the teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) end the lesson appropriately?

	b) use an effective follow-up activity/home assignment?	
Strengths:	Areas for development:	Overall Comments:
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	

Major Components of Lesson Planning

According to Jeremy Harmer (2001), “Lesson planning is the art of combining a number of different elements into a coherent whole so that a lesson has an identity.” In other words, to produce an effective lesson plan a teacher should work on the entire process of lesson planning very carefully. Different elements that go into lesson planning should be understood in a clear manner. Some of the major elements include the following.

Lesson Types and Models

Lesson planning can be approached considering varied methods or models to teaching. The three popular models employed in language teaching include the Presentation Practice Production (PPP) model, Teach Test Teach (TTT) model and Task Based Learning (TBL) model. PPP is more traditional than the other ones. Shehadeh Ali (2005) contends that “PPP is a well-established pedagogical method, or approach.” It is a good idea for novice teachers to gain sufficient practice in the PPP model first and then they can go on to employ the other models too.

Lesson Aim

The lesson aim is a broad or main goal the lesson achieves. It should be stated using Bloom’s taxonomy so as to make assessing the lesson less cumbersome. Avoid being vague. For instance, it is better to state the aim as “To practice using the simple present tense in describing one’s daily routine” is better than “To teach the present simple tense”.

Lesson objectives

The lesson objectives are the steps the teacher follows in breaking down the main goal stated in the lesson aim. Mohammed Rhalmi (2021) lists out the main functions of lesson objectives: a) Learning objectives give learners a clear picture of what they can expect to learn and what is expected of them by the end of the lesson. b) They also provide the teacher with a

goal to achieve during the lesson delivery. c) They serve as the foundation for assessing the effectiveness of the teaching, the learning, and the lesson effectiveness.

Formulating assumptions, anticipated problems and solutions to anticipated problems

In my training of teacher trainees I noticed that most teachers struggle to deal with these aspects. This is mainly because they don't realize how important these are for their lesson planning. Hence, it is axiomatic that trainers should pay attention to these elements and insist that their trainees work on them consciously in each of their lesson plans.

Lead-ins

A lead-in is the first and most basic activity for an effective lesson. Depending on the topic and student background, a lead-in activity can be done using pictures/images, anecdotes, stories, hot topics, current affairs. A lead-in should be should not take much time- it should just be about three to five minutes. it should engage the learner attention and activate their prior knowledge about the topic.

Interaction patterns

A good lesson must contain a variety of interaction patterns. Novice teachers tend to rely heavily on teacher to the whole class interaction pattern, though they know how to use other patterns. This is mainly because they feel that learners might not respond correctly or they may waste a lot of class time trying to motivate the learners to discuss among themselves. Mohammed Rhalmi (2021) identifies varied types of interaction patterns in the classroom. These include:

- Closed-ended teacher questioning (T – Ss): The teacher asks a question that requires one correct answer.
- Open-ended teacher questioning (T – Ss): The teacher asks a question that requires many possible correct answers.
- Choral responses. (T – Ss): choral answers that require all students to respond verbally to the teacher's cue.
- Teacher talk (T – Ss): The teacher is giving a lecture.
- Individual work. (S): The learners work independently.
- Pair work (S – S): The learners working together in pairs.
- Group work (Ss – Ss): Students work in small groups.
- Collaboration (S – S or Ss – Ss): The learners collaborate with each other,

- The student initiates, the teacher answers (S – T): The teacher answers the student's questions.
- Full-class interaction (Ss – Ss): The students discuss a topic or do an exercise as a class.
- Self-access (Ss – Ss): Students decide on their own learning activities and work independently.

To make lessons communicative and learner centred, teachers should employ varied types of interactions, especially student to student interaction patterns.

Sequencing of Activities

Many trainee teachers find sequencing of activities a problematic matter in their lesson planning. This is mainly because they fail to match the sequencing of activities with the lesson type and the subskills focus of the lesson. Therefore, being clear about the lesson type and the range and the order of subskills they want to cover is important. For example, when teaching reading skills, it is better to start the activities around gist reading first and then take up reading for details. Amanda Momeni (2019) suggests the following sequence for the grammar and lexis lesson: Lead-in, Presentation, Controlled Practice and Freer Practice. For a writing skills lesson, the sequence suggested is: Lead-in, pre-writing, in-writing, and post-writing.

Teacher Activity

Teacher activity must be stated clearly and fully for each stage of the lesson. The description should contain, among other things, instruction checking questions (ICQs) and concept checking questions (CCQs) the teacher uses.

Learner Activity

In the same way as the teacher activity, learner activity should also be described clearly and fully for each stage of the lesson. For instance what do learners do when they listen to an audio clip, a YouTube video, or participating in a peer or group activity should be stated in very clear terms so that they can involve fully in the activities planned for them and to achieve the intended lesson goals and the learning outcomes.

Assessment of Learning

Most teacher trainees, in a rush to complete their lesson in time, tend to pay less attention to assess their learners' understanding of the concept/topic presented at each stage of the lesson. Teachers must bear in mind that assessment and feedback provision ensure reinforcement of target language to the learners. Error correction can be done in many ways. Hot correction and delayed corrections are used depending on the error types. Teachers should encourage peer assessment and correction as and when possible.

Teaching Aids

Appropriate teaching aids should be employed for the teaching of the target language. Teachers rely on a host of teaching aids such as textbooks, white/black boards, smart boards, projectors, cue cards, projectors, cassettes, pictures, images, maps, brochures, authentic emails, letters, and reports etc. to bring a wholesome language learning experience to their learners. Effective implementation of teaching aids is important for the successful realization of lesson aims and objectives.

Instructional Material, Handouts, and Worksheets

The teachers should design and/or use instructional materials that serve the aim and specific objectives of the lesson. They should also use appropriate, interesting and effective instructional material, handouts, and worksheets to engage their learners in practicing the target language. Efforts should also be made to use digital tools and resources such as Quizziz, Kahoot, Padlet, Google Suite etc to integrate technology to make the teaching learning environment more up to date and interesting to the learners. Game-based, fun-based and activity-based teaching should be a prominent feature of the lesson planning.

Summarizing and Follow-up

Giving an appropriate ending and planning a useful follow up activity should be considered important for both the learners and the teacher. Summarizing helps in recapitulating the main points and a follow up activity ensures the learners gain more practice and become more independent and autonomous in their learning.

Conclusion

Speaking of the importance of the lesson planning, Dion Varnado (2022) states: “An effective lesson plan ensures that as a teacher, you are creating not just an efficient teaching environment but a conducive learning environment as well.” An appropriately and systematically staged lesson is bound to produce requisite teaching and learning outcomes with varied language levels and language teaching and learning contexts. Teacher trainees and teacher trainers should make use of all the key components of lesson planning for ensuring a productive teaching.

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