

# THE EFFECTIVE AND BALANCED ENGLISH LESSON PLANNING

PhD N.V.Malovana

*Foreign Languages department*

Essentially, planning is only effective if it actually works for the individual teacher within his or her classroom. The most vital component of a good plan is that it leads to a high-quality lesson, in which effective learning takes place. It could be that the children do not actually learn what was originally intended by the teacher in his or her plan, but that the learning outcomes are nevertheless very good. The following tips will give every teacher some guidance about creating good plans:

1. *Find a balance:* Aim to achieve a sense of balance in your planning. This balance is perhaps one of the hardest things for new teachers to find, and it can take a good couple of years before you feel you have got it right. Balance comes in two forms: there should be a balance in your working life between the time spent on planning and on other important parts of the job; there should also be a balance of activities within the lessons themselves.

2. *Don't spend too much time on it:* If only it were as easy to follow this piece of advice as it is to say it! First, you need to work out what constitutes 'too much time' from your perspective. Planning is a key part of this, and you will need to devote a fair amount of time to getting lesson plans right. The secret is not to go overboard or plan in excessive or superfluous detail.

3. *Make it work for you:* A plan is only useful if you can actually use it during the lesson. This is why too much detail can actually be a bad thing — if you find it impossible to refer to the plan quickly and easily, it will tend to stultify rather than aid your teaching. At the same time, your plan must give sufficient detail to make you feel confident about teaching the lesson.

4. *Make it reusable:* At the opposite end of the scale from those teachers who plan in excessive detail are those who write down a few vague ideas moments before entering the classroom. With more experience, you may find that you can get away with this approach. At this stage in your career, though, it's best to ensure that your plans have enough detail to be reused at a later date.

5. *Make it engaging:* To my mind, one of the most vital qualities of a good teacher is that he or she is able to engage the children in what they are learning. A large part of this engagement is to do with planning appropriate, interesting, imaginative and creative tasks for your students. Although we are constrained somewhat by the demands of the curriculum,

we should still strive to make our lessons as exciting and engaging as possible.

*6. Make it work for your induction tutor:* Spend some time early on in the year talking through planning with your mentor. He or she will be able to advise you about how to plan, and also what is required during your observed and formally assessed lessons. It's likely that you will have to plan in some detail for observed lessons, including information about special needs, differentiation, and so on.

*7. Fit your plans to statutory requirements:* You will have many wonderful and imaginative ideas for lessons.

Achieving a balance in your plans is vital for successful lessons, but it is tricky to achieve. With practice, you will find that you can instinctively sense what is balanced and what is not. However, experience will only come by making mistakes and by being willing to experiment with more unusual ideas and approaches. Balance essentially means that your lessons should include a variety of strategies to keep everyone interested. A range of tasks will also mean you appeal to the different ways that your students like to learn. Finding a good balance will also encourage you students to behave well. For achieving a good balance in teacher's lessons one can take the following steps:

*Put yourself in the children's shoes:* When planning, ask yourself how you would feel if you were presented with the activities you have in mind. There's a big difference between being asked to read a textbook in silence for an hour and being given 10 minutes' reading time before discussing what you have discovered.

*Make use of time limits:* Set a time limit for each task to ensure that the students stay focused and work to their maximum capacity. Time limits give a sense of forward momentum to a lesson and keep the children on task. Experiment with different time limits to see how your children respond; perhaps two or three minutes for a quick discussion activity or five to ten minutes for something more complicated.

*Limit teacher talk:* The temptation to lecture your class is strong, but it's something that should on the whole be avoided. Talk for much more than about ten minutes to students of any age, and it's likely that they will start to drift off.

*Maximize student activity:* Keeping your students active will ensure that they stay involved in the lesson, and will also discourage low-level misbehaviour. Look for hands-on, kinaesthetic-style activities. If you do

have to talk to the class for a longer period, give the students something to do while you talk (make notes, draw a mind map).

There are many possibilities for different approaches to teaching and learning. Although some of the activities below are traditionally associated with particular subject areas, it can often be great fun to make more unusual cross-connections (a graph in English, a poem in science). Be experimental — students often respond really well to the unexpected. The model balanced lesson plan below shows how you might put some of these approaches together.

### **Types of learning activities**

*Reading activities:* individual reading, shared reading ,e.g the whole class, reading for information, memorizing facts or vocabulary, reading in pairs or groups, speed or skim reading , reading from textbooks, reading on a computer screen, reading each other's work ,wordsearches and crosswords.

*Writing activities :* answering questions, summarizing the main points of a text, note taking, writing reports/ essays, factual/analytical writing)

*Speaking and listening activities :* discussions, explanations, role play and improvisations, question and answer sessions, quizzes, oral presentations, debates, listening to the CD disks (dialogues, monologues, ets)

*Physical and practical activities:* games and warm-ups, individual skills work, group exercise, drawing, modelling and painting, practical experiments, designing, building and testing.

A balanced lesson plan of one hour might contain the strategies and activities given below. I have assumed an actual teaching time of 50 minutes, giving five minutes at the start of the lesson for the students to arrive/settle and five minutes at the end for clearing away. This example is for a very straightforward lesson — once you've got the hang of balanced lessons you can play around with more experimental and practical approaches.

5 minutes — Quick starter activity on the desks for when the students arrive

*Student based, this helps to settle them ready for the lesson* 5 minutes —

Teacher introduces the aim and topic of the lesson.*Teacher talks, students listen*

10 minutes — Students brainstorm ideas on the topic in their coursebooks. *Students find out for themselves what they already know*

10 minutes — Ideas are correlated on the board and copied down. *This brings everyone's ideas together*

15 minutes — Students do individual writing on

the topic. *Focus on individual written work for a limited time 5 minutes* — A couple of students read out their work. *Brief oral presentation to the class.*

As well as balancing the different strategies and activities used, you should also be aware of what you are asking the students to do during a lesson. While taking your students' needs into account, do not forget yourself. Ensure that there is a balance within the lesson for you — that you are not doing all the work or all the talking. Your natural enthusiasm may encourage you to put huge amounts of energy into every lesson that you teach. It is only as the academic year drags on, and your energy starts to run out, that you realize why it is so important to find balance for yourself within lessons. Some tips for doing this are:

- *Don't be too controlling:* It can be tempting to overcontrol your lessons, by using lots of teacher input (the 'chalk and talk' style). The temptation is to lead from the front because this makes you feel more secure in managing behaviour. This can be a mistake, though, as teacher-led lessons will often lead to behaviour problems because the students are not *doing* all that much. Don't be afraid to hand over the reins to your children. Often, the best learning will take place when the students are working in small groups or individually, with you standing back and helping out when it is needed.

- *Give yourself some time out:* Aim for at least one period of quiet, calm individual work in most lessons, preferably with the children working in silence. This will give you a rest from the noise created by a class of students. It will also free you up to go around and help any individuals who need extra attention.

- *Take a lesson off:* From time to time, you may need a lesson off (a restful lesson): don't feel bad about this. Although the students may feel that they work really hard the whole semester, it is the teacher who makes the majority of the effort in most classroom situations. Give yourself a break when you need it.

All-in-all, your teaching practices will have given you a good idea of what life as a teacher is really like, part of the whole process of becoming a qualified teacher in future. The key to success is to concentrate on what really matters, i.e. how well the students are doing and how you are developing your skills in the classroom to help them learn. If you do the job to the best of your ability, the probability is that you will succeed.

Соціально-гуманітарні аспекти розвитку сучасного суспільства : матеріали Всеукраїнської наукової конференції викладачів, аспірантів, співробітників та студентів, м. Суми, 21-22 квітня 2014 р. / Відп. за вип. О.М. Сушкова. — Суми : СумДУ, 2014. — С. 175-179.