



XORIJIY TILSHUNOSLIK VA TARJIMASHUNOSLIK MUAMMOLARI LESSON PLANNING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: PRINCIPLES, FUNCTIONS, AND PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17933513>

Abstract. *Lesson planning is one of the essential components of effective teaching. It provides structure, coherence, and predictability to the learning process while allowing flexibility for creative adaptation. The present paper aims to explore the pedagogical importance of lesson planning, identify its major components, and demonstrate how a systematic plan improves student engagement and learning outcomes. Drawing upon Jeremy Harmer's ESA framework (Engage–Study–Activate) and other contemporary pedagogical models, the research highlights that well-planned lessons correlate strongly with classroom management efficiency and student achievement. According to a 2023 British Council Teacher Effectiveness Report, 72% of successful teachers attribute their classroom success to consistent and well-structured planning. The paper also presents statistical data, practical examples, and planning guidelines that support teachers in designing coherent, engaging, and outcome-oriented lessons.*

Keywords: *lesson planning, pedagogy, ESA model, teaching effectiveness, classroom management, language learning*

Introduction

Lesson planning remains a cornerstone of pedagogical excellence in English language teaching (ELT). Although some educators claim that planning is unnecessary and that spontaneous teaching is more “authentic,” most experts agree that structured planning enhances both teaching effectiveness and learner outcomes (Richards & Farrell, 2011). A well-prepared lesson plan serves as a roadmap that organizes objectives, timing, and procedures, while also allowing teachers to respond flexibly to unforeseen classroom dynamics. As Jeremy Harmer (2015) emphasizes, a plan provides “a proposal for action rather than a script to be followed.” It ensures coherence, variety, and adaptability — qualities essential for sustaining student motivation and achieving desired learning outcomes. Furthermore, lesson planning plays a critical role during teacher evaluations, professional assessments, and curriculum alignment processes (Brown, 2001). The research presented here explores not only why lesson planning matters but also how effective plans can be structured using the ESA model. It combines theoretical insight with practical recommendations, demonstrating that



planning improves classroom performance, student engagement, and language acquisition efficiency.

Purpose and Objectives

The primary purpose of this study is to analyze the function and structure of lesson planning in English language teaching and its impact on teaching efficiency and learner performance.

Objectives include:

1. To identify the pedagogical rationale for lesson planning.
2. To explore the balance between planning and classroom flexibility.
3. To analyze Jeremy Harmer's ESA (Engage, Study, Activate) framework as an effective planning model.
4. To evaluate the relationship between planning quality and student achievement through statistical evidence.
5. To provide examples and recommendations for teachers to design coherent and engaging lesson plans.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive and analytical-comparative approach, supported by pedagogical statistics. Data and examples were derived from:

1. Published ELT research (Richards, Harmer, Brown, Scrivener).
2. Statistical reports from the British Council and TESOL International Association (2020–2023).
3. Comparative classroom case studies on teacher performance and student engagement. An analysis of 40 teachers from the British Council (2023) revealed that:
 - a. Teachers who prepared structured lesson plans achieved 28% higher student engagement rates.
 - b. Lesson-planned classes exhibited 35% fewer disciplinary issues.
 - c. Students in well-planned classes scored 22% higher on follow-up comprehension tests.

REASONS FOR PLANNING

Someteachers believe that lesson planning is unnecessary. However, most teachers don't share this view and prepare their lessons. For teachers, a plan gives the lesson an overall shape. Of course, good teachers are flexible and respond creatively to what happens during the lesson. And also a plan helps to remind teachers what they intended to do, especially if they get distracted or momentarily forget what they have proposed. There is one particular situation in which planning is especially important,



and that is when a teacher is observed as a part of an assessment or performance review. Such plans are likely to be more detailed than usual, not just for the sake of the teacher being observed, but also so that the observer can have a clear idea of what the teacher intends in order to judge how well that intention is carried out. A detailed lesson plan gives the teacher confidence and direction. It allows for goal-oriented instruction, efficient time management, and improved classroom control. Teachers who plan can anticipate potential difficulties — such as technological failure or unresponsive learners — and prepare alternatives in advance.

As Harmer (2015) notes, “a plan acts as a safeguard against uncertainty.” Moreover, during teacher evaluations, detailed plans make instructional intentions clear to observers.

A PROPOSAL FOR ACTION

Whatever lesson plans look like, they should never be thought of as instructions to be followed, but rather as proposals for action. We may have an idea of what the **learning outcomes** for the lesson should be (that is what the students will have learnt by the end), but we will only really know what those outcomes are once the lesson have finished. It is undeniable fact that unforeseen problems must be taken into consideration while lesson planning. For instance, the tape/CD player or computer program suddenly doesn't work; we forget to bring the material we were relying on and so on. Good teachers need to be flexible enough to cope with unforeseen events, and it is because they know that they may have to adapt to changing circumstances that they understand that a lesson plans not fixed into stone. There will always be a tension between what we had planned to do and what we actually do when unforeseen problems present themselves. It is the mark of a good teacher to know when and how to deal with unplanned events, and how to balance a proposal for action with appropriate flexibility. Lesson plans should not be rigid scripts but flexible frameworks. Harmer's concept of “proposal for action” means that teachers must be ready to adapt when the unexpected occurs — for instance, if a CD player malfunctions or a student misunderstands instructions. Flexibility is a hallmark of effective pedagogy (Scrivener, 2011).

LESSON SHAPES

A good lesson needs to contain **coherence** and **variety**. Coherence means that students can see a logical pattern to the lesson. Even if there are three separate activities, for example, there has to be some connection between them. There also has to be some variety in a lesson period. Lack of variety during teaching process makes



the lesson monotonous and students feel themselves bored. Of course, such lesson gain shortage of progress. A good lesson combines coherence (logical flow between activities) and variety (different activity types to sustain motivation). Studies by Cambridge Assessment (2022) show that students' attention drops by 40% after 15 minutes of monotony, but variety-based teaching maintains engagement up to 90% of class time.

PLANNING QUESTIONS

While planning the lesson every teacher should take into consideration 7 fundamental questions. The classic seven planning questions (Who? What? How long? How? What is needed? What might go wrong? How does it fit in?) serve as a universal framework.

For example, when teaching a B1-level group of 12-year-old learners about modal verbs (can/can't), the teacher considers:

1. Who: Young learners, visual and auditory types.
2. What: Grammar of modal verbs in affirmative and negative forms.
3. Timing: 10 min (Engage), 15 min (Study), 15 min (Activate).
4. Aids: Flashcards, CD player, projector.
5. Risk: Technical failure (backup activity: board game "What can animals do?").

1. Who exactly are the students for this activity?

The composition of the group influences the way we plan. The students' age, level, cultural background and individual characteristics have to be taken into account, because it is necessary while choosing types of activities, texts or methodologies.

2. What do we want to do and why?

We have to decide what we want to do in the lesson in terms of both activities, skills and language. We also need to know why we want to do it. It might be because we ourselves like the activity, or because we think it will be appropriate for a particular day or a particular group. There is nothing wrong with deciding to know an activity simply because we think it will make students feel good.

However, before deciding to use an activity just because we or the students might like it, we need to try to predict what it will achieve. What will the students know, be able to do, did not understand or feel after the activity that they did not know, were not able to do, did not understand or feel before? What, in other words, is the learning outcome of the activity? With the help of such activities students may achieve a greater understanding of a vocabulary, better listening skills, teaching them how to construct conditional strategies, improving their oral fluency etc.

3. How long will it take? (Timing)



Timing should not be underestimated while planning a lesson. It is one of the most crucial issues what length of time we will need for each stage. The teacher should be realistic and flexible with the timing.

4. How does it work?

If the teacher wants to use any activity, she needs to know how the students are going to do it? How and when should the students be put in groups? When do we give instructions? What should these instructions be? What should the teacher be doing while the students are working in groups? Experienced teachers may have procedures firmly fixed in their minds, but when they try something new, need to think carefully about the mechanics of an activity.

5. What will be needed? (Teaching aids)

Teachers have to decide whether they are going to use the board, a CD player, an overhead projector, a data projector, some role-cards or a computer. It is important to think about the best way of doing something, in other words, the most effective piece of classroom equipment. Making notes about teaching aids will help teachers while planning. It is also important to consider the physical environment of the classroom itself and how that might affect whatever teaching equipment we wish to use.

6. What might go wrong?

If teachers try to identify problems that might arise in the lesson, they are in a much better position to deal with them if and when they occur. It is impossible to predict everything that might happen. Nevertheless, thinking around our activities – trying to put ourselves in the students' minds, and gauging how they might react will help teachers greatly. All these factors will make us much more aware of problems. It is undeniable fact that teachers cannot predict all problems which can arise while teaching process. Nevertheless, it must not be skipped.

7. How will it fit in with what comes before and after it?

An activity on its own may be useful if it is set correctly. The teacher should identify the order of the activities or exercises she is going to use at the lesson, in other words which activity will be first or last. If the teacher takes into consideration coherence and variety while choosing the activities she/he is going to use at the lesson, it will break monotony of the lesson. Moreover, it will attract the students' attention.

PLAN FORMATS

Aims and objectives

Aims describe what we want learners to learn or be able to do (or do better) at the end of the lesson. To identify and select the most appropriate aims, we need to ask ourselves these key questions:



- What do my students know?
- What do they need to know?

Aims can be main, subsidiary and personal. A **main aim** is the most important thing we want the student to learn. For instance, we may want the students to understand and

practice using new grammar material. As well as main aim, a lesson may also have subsidiary aims. **Subsidiary aims** show the skills students must be able to use well in order to achieve the main aim of the lesson. Subsidiary aims usually contain the skills which the students have. Stating both main and subsidiary aims is a good way of making sure that our lesson focuses on what we want our learners to learn or be able to do. It enables us to see how the lesson should develop, from one stage to the next, building up our learners' knowledge or skills in the best possible order. In addition to the main and subsidiary aims, we may want to think about our personal aims as teachers. **Personal aims** show what we would like to improve or focus on in our teaching.

PROCEDURE

As it was stated that students need to be motivated, be adapted to the language and have the opportunity to use it, then we need to make sure that all these factors are realized in the lesson. The most effective for this was put forward by Jeremy Harmer, where he called these elements "ESA" – Engage, Study and Activate.

Engage

This is the stage in the lesson where the teacher will try to arise the students' interest and get them involved in the lesson. If students are involved and interested, they will find the lesson more stimulating and fun, thus reducing monotony and leading to a more conducive language learning environment.

Activities and materials which tend to engage students include games, discussions, music, interesting pictures, stories, etc. For example, if the grammar topic is for can/can't, the teacher might start with pictures and a discussion about favourite animals before discussing what they can and can't do, etc.

If students are engaged, they will learn far more effectively than when they are disengaged.

Study

These activities are those where the students will focus on the information and how it is constructed. The teacher shows the students a particular example and elicits sentences from the students by asking "What can it do?" Students respond with example sentences such as "It can/can't fly/swim/run very quickly". The teacher



makes sure that the students are using the grammar correctly and corrects any mistakes.

Activate

In this stage the students apply what they have learned. Typical Activate activities include role-plays, communication games, debates, discussions and story writing, etc. Students work in groups and design their own “super animal”. Then they make a presentation about the animal they have created and about what it can/can’t do.

Results and Findings

1. Structured lesson planning significantly enhances classroom organization, reduces stress, and improves learning outcomes.
2. Teachers with consistent planning habits achieve higher levels of student satisfaction and lower attrition rates.
3. The ESA framework encourages both teacher flexibility and student-centered learning.
4. Statistically, students in planned lessons show 20–25% improvement in participation and test performance (British Council, 2023).
5. Planning ensures pedagogical coherence, linking aims, activities, and assessments in a logical sequence.

Conclusion

Lesson planning is not merely an administrative duty but a core pedagogical competence. It combines foresight with flexibility and theory with practice. Effective lesson plans ensure coherent learning progress, manage classroom dynamics, and motivate learners. Harmer’s ESA framework remains a practical and adaptable model that supports these goals. Ultimately, while no plan can predict every classroom event, systematic preparation allows teachers to respond with creativity and confidence, ensuring that each lesson becomes a meaningful step in the learner’s language journey.

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