



TLATEMOANI
Revista Académica de Investigación
Editada por Eumed.net
No. 13 – Agosto 2013
España
ISSN: 19899300
revista.tlatemoani@uaslp.mx

Fecha de recepción: 27 de mayo de 2013
Fecha de aceptación: 10 de julio de 2013

PREPARING AN ENGLISH CLASS

“...for those educators who really delight in preparing their classes...”

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ABSTRACT

Professionals in the world should learn English to be updated about all those new aspects in every single discipline of knowledge. That is why this language has been included in many scholar programs. One of the tasks of an English teacher is to develop an effective class, thus to accomplish the main aims centered on student's learning of a foreign language. It is necessary the English teacher turns into a skillful one when planning a lesson. Through this article, we want to highlight some essential points to facilitate the teacher's daily work on planning a successful class.

RESUMEN

Todos los profesionales en el mundo deberían aprender inglés, para estar actualizados en cada disciplina de conocimiento. Por esto, el Idioma Inglés ha sido incluido en muchos programas escolares. Una de las tareas del maestro de inglés es desarrollar una clase eficiente, y así, lograr alcanzar los objetivos, centrados en el aprendizaje del estudiante de una lengua extranjera. Es necesario que el maestro de inglés se vuelva habilidoso cuando planea la clase.

Mediante este artículo queremos enfatizar algunos puntos esenciales para facilitar la tarea diaria del maestro en la planeación de una clase exitosa.

KEY WORDS: Lesson plan- plan de una clase, class profile-antecedentes del grupo, meaningful context-contexto significativo, students' background-antecedentes de los alumnos, feedback- retro-alimentación, productive skills-habilidades de producción, educator (facilitator, teacher)-maestro, English as a foreign language (EFL)-inglés como lengua extranjera.

Generally talking, one of the activities that every educator has (perhaps the most important one) is to plan and prepare classes, and it initiates with a reflecting process. J. Harmer says in his book *"The practice of English Language teaching" (1991)* that *"the best teachers are those who think carefully about what they are going to do in their classes and how they are going to organize the teaching and learning"*. Planning guarantees the class will get a balanced combination of distinct resources, subjects and interaction patterns. It also cultivates an individual teaching personality (Woodward 202:25).

This task involves several aspects to be considered, before than educator's individual ideas. As it is mentioned before, everything starts with a thinking process; we would call it the pre-planning stage. In this point, it is arranged what elements will be run into the lesson and what the students will achieve by the end of it. That is to say, the necessary means to accomplish such aim, the starting of the whole progression (Harmer, Jeremy; "How to teach English"; Longman 2001)....

Given that, there are diverse manners to plan classes, they might progress from a very formal format "chart 1" to an informal "post it" note one. The nature of the format chosen would correspond to each educator's individualism and preferences. It is essential to mention there is neither a strict recipe to observe in each class, nor even on each course or subject to be taught, hence each class is unique (Robertson, C.; Acklam, R.; "Action plan for teachers"; BBC world service, 2000) and all decisions related to the subject will fully depend on the students' needs, teacher's personality and ability.

A trait, which is also part of the pre-planning stage, is a class profile to match with the learning process. As choices are not based merely on the educator's goals and plans, but on the students' needs and preferences, it is necessary to have a well-defined description about who the students are. It should be as meticulous as possible, including a needs analysis, which will provide information about learners' necessities, lacks and a learner's profiles. Centered on this information, the general objectives should be detailed enough to anticipate what the learners

will have accomplished by the end of the class, and which competences they would have gotten (Harmer, Jeremy; "The practice of English Language teaching" (1991); CUP. Scrivener, Jim; "Classroom Management Techniques" (2012);CUP).

The syllabus, established by the official program, would match the context to be developed in convenience with the grammar focus, and the skills; through all these the students will acquire enough knowledge to get those specific objectives previously planned, which will be shaped in each activity throughout classes. As an activity is seen as part of a process, its objective will have facilitated the general aim gotten by the end of the class (Harmer, J; "*How to teach English*"; Longman 2001) at the time they accomplish the competences expected beforehand.

In order to plan a lesson, it is mandatory the educator takes into consideration the frequency, time, text, class size, students' level, ages, gender, likes, dislikes, needs analysis, learning style, previous knowledge, background, and techniques to motivate which becomes part of a class profile. Likewise, it will be included a general objective for the whole plan, as well as a specific one for each activity (Harmer, Jeremy;" *The practice of English Language teaching*" (1991); CUP, 2001).

Once, the general and the specific objectives have been established, the selection of a proper context should be made to formulate the presentation of the new focus. Sometimes the textbooks suggest a particular context to be followed, however very often they are not good enough for our students' level, needs, and backgrounds. Therefore, the facilitator should complement, separate and/or omit the diverse settings, following a different context line, which moves each class into a meaningful experience, leading students throughout new areas of knowledge needed to develop the target language to a common goal. This is the momentum, when the mastery of an English educator, as a foreign language (EFL) one acts his/her role by organizing, monitoring, predicting, solving, facilitating, helping the process of teaching, and assisting to change the learner's academic paradigm.

Additionally, as planning is a crucial function of a plan, one of the significant purposes of shaping a class is to predict aims, possible problems and how to solve them, to reinforce the students' abilities and skills in concordance with the entire group across a variety of activities, dynamics and techniques. These elements are carefully chosen and handled in a class, though; all of them are taken for granted, once we have known the students and established a good rapport (Harmer, Jeremy; "*How to teach English*"; Longman 2001).

Among other things, the textbooks, the topics and supporting material become tools which teachers would manage to make up what to do or not in a class. For those educators who have been teaching for a time their experience would lead them to decide what we have mentioned previously. For those new educators, it is advisable to note down the outcomes, they have

gotten, and if the activities planned worked or not, and a manner those actions could be improved. These notes will confirm and help the educators to gain experience. Furthermore, being part of an educators' party would be always helpful because over this kind of gatherings, there is a useful interchange of experiences.

All together and due to the fact that each student retains and process differently with a different rhythm, the activities will be selected or designed to give the chance to every learner to have an input, process and produce the information given.

Each activity would include a feedback, in order to students can review and analyze their production; also, the teacher can notice if the aim was gotten or not and how to facilitate the aim. A feedback can be done on different ways, in individuals, pairs, or group feedback when students share and compare their answers, or as soon as the educator provides the right replies to students.

The focus presentation is rather decisive in a class, the way it is done will determine the student's interest in the entire lesson, the vocabulary presentation, the method of mingling the activities set by the textbook and/or those designed by the educator to give extra practice or stimulate the productive skills (speaking and writing), all these must be sensibly organized to guarantee the success of the class.

- According to our own experience, and supported by J. Scrivener a class can be divided on four steps:

- 1) Warm up
- 2) Presentation
- 3) Practice
- 4) Feedback/Wrap-up

- 1) Warm up: Gareth Rees states that a warmer is a short activity that demands an active involvement from the students. We use warmers at the beginning of lessons for a variety of reasons. Firstly and perhaps most importantly to get the students going at the beginning of the day or the beginning of the lesson. To warm them up just like an athlete would warm up before their big race. Also, it gives the students a chance to switch on to using English. To get their brains ready to use a different language.

It is designed with information that was given to students previously, or with new information that they receive in an unconsciously, this means that the students acquire the new information in a natural way, without direct teachers' participation. It can be a game, a handout, a set of questions, a competence motion, or any activity designed to recycle the knowledge the learner already have about grammar, and vocabulary.

- 2) **PRESENTATION:** In this phase the use of language can be presented in an inductive way, giving grammar rules, specifying functions of the language, in other words teacher explains every single aspect of the topic and the students are lead through this practiced to develop the objective previously planned. On the other hand, the presentation can follow a deductive teaching method from general concept to specific use, this can be done by making a question to the group without any explanation, giving the students opportunity to find out the grammar rules, and make their own examples, following the teacher's ones. As for new vocabulary, it can be integrated with examples given by the teacher or can be analyzed in separated way. There are many diverse manners of presenting vocabulary, by using drawings or pictures, definitions, body language, and logical examples from daily life. The educator should be trained to make his/her mind up to use the textbook, whether it is clear enough for the language presentation, needs to follow the same order or create a different one. Essentially, this is the instant when there is a big amount of decisions to be taken.
- 3) **PRACTICE:** At this time of the class, the student receives all possible opportunities to practice some of the four skills making use of language, vocabulary, grammar. The activities involved in this phase have to be balanced out so that the student can practice to achieve the competence aimed: by developing a conversation, by reading or listening comprehension activity, by writing a meaningful paragraph using the new knowledge, or by answering the textbook's exercises.
- 4) **FEEDBACK/WRAP UP:** Some English teachers have called this part a "wrap up". Once students are requested: "Did you understand?" the answer is not realistic because it is influenced to give a confirmation; it will never show us any acquisition of new knowledge, as most of the students will reply -"Yes, I did" -in order to avoid feeling guilty. Instead, it is suggested to conclude with direct questions done randomly to students, with a quiz, through a role play or with an activity that might prove the student has gotten the competence intended.

Preparing an English class, due to the specific characteristics, the subject itself involves educators to use many types of resources like: videos, music, books, magazines, newspapers, other textbooks, flashcards, posters, web pages, handouts designed by teachers, CD's, computer, internet, graphics, and games, among others. This vast advantage allows educators to organize something fun not only for students but also for themselves.

However, the circumstance of being able to use all these kinds of materials offers the educator, the freedom to select whatever he/she reflects is the best, in concordance to the students predilections and necessities. This is the reason why it is very important to take into account the

students' learning styles, current affairs, their needs, and the precise phase to develop the four skills in each student.

Matching the teacher's skill with the planning of an English class increases the possibility to achieve a successful instruction-learning process. When the teacher comes to the classroom with a lesson plan, the student will perceive the harmony, organization, responsibility, interest, educator's attitude in favor to the student's learning, therefore, the learners will feel motivated and confident about the knowledge they are acquiring to process and learn a foreign language.

Being an English teacher is not a trouble-free task. It means, having an integral culture, dealing with a large variety of social, emotional, cognitive and learning styles, and cultural backgrounds differences. Hence, an English educator should be aware of an extensive domain of erudition. Conversely, we do believe it is a pretty challenging and rewarding vocation which makes an educator a better complete person.

LESSON PLAN

<p>LEVEL: Intermediate II</p> <p>TIME: 11:00 hrs</p> <p>TEXTBOOK: Channel direct 4</p> <p>UNIT: <u>6</u></p> <p>PAGES: <u>38, 39</u></p> <p>TOPIC: <u>Inventions, movies and music.</u></p>	<p>STUDENTS' BACKGROUND: Students have studied around 240 hours of English. They are between 19 and 22 years old, they are studying at the University but they are studying different majors: Engineering, Nursing, and Marketing. Most of them have the same kind of free activities: watching TV, surfing the internet, listening to music, practicing soccer and watching movies among others. Some of them are taking the course for second time and they have problems to develop their speaking skills and their listening skills.</p>			<p>MAIN AIM OF THE CLASS: Discuss facts. Present passive voice and some useful phrasal verbs and other expressions.</p>
ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	MATERIAL	TIME	PROBLEMS/SOLUTIONS
<p>PRESENTATION: In pairs Ss will discuss the next questions.</p>	<p>To raise students interest on the topic.</p>	<p>Power point presentation(Ppp) with images of different kinds of</p>	<p>7'</p>	<p>Ss might not know the names of the cars. Teacher could write some examples on the board.</p>

<p>Do you like cars?</p> <p>What kind of car would you like to have? Why?</p>		cars	S-S	
<p>CONVERSATION: Sb page 38. Ss read and listen check new vocabulary by discovering meanings throughout context. Then students will practice the conversation in pairs.</p>	To present vocabulary in the context	Student book, CD CD player.	10' S S-S	Ss aren't able to find out meanings of the new expressions by context Teacher will give extra examples and definitions.
<p>GRAMMAR PRESENTATION: Ppp. Teacher will set the differences between active and passive voice in present simple using several examples. Group work will answer an exercise in the Ppp. Teacher will elicit the answers.</p>	Ss have to distinguish the differences between active and passive voice and practice.	Ppp	10' T-Ss	Ss might not remember the past participle of some of the verbs used in the exercise. Teacher will ask them to use the chart of verbs that they have on their Sb.
<p>ORAL PRACTICE: Sb page 39. In pairs Ss will develop a conversation trying to find out how much they know</p>	To encourage speaking using passive voice.	Cards with countries and incomplete sentences to match.	10' S-S	SS might have troubles with the general information; however T. will motivate them to give an answer in order to learn more about general

about some general facts.		Student book		culture.
GRAMMAR PRACTICE: Sb page 39. Ss will make a grammar exercise.	To reinforce understanding about the grammar rules.	Student book Board to check answers. Markers	10' S	The possible mistakes/errors will be solved on the board in group.
WRAP-UP: Ss will see some pictures in Ppp and will make sentences using passive voice to the whole group.	To evaluate students' achievements.	Ppp	10' S	Teacher will correct the sentences on the board.

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