



## Essentials of English Lesson Plan for the ESL Classroom

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### ABSTRACT

Considerable attention has been paid to how an English lesson should be most effectively planned, but the efforts have come essentially from non-ESL users and this leaves a gap in depth and emphasis. This paper describes the essential features of an English lesson plan with a view to (a) providing useful guidelines for would-be teachers and their trainers and (b) promoting effective teaching of the subject in Nigeria's secondary schools. It distinguishes between core and peripheral features and shows why and how each feature should reflect the peculiarities of the Nigerian ESL classroom, intricacies of the subject matter, planners' adequate knowledge of description and pedagogy, and planners' familiarity with the English curriculum. The paper identifies pervasive vagueness as a major shortcoming of English lesson plans. It extensively illustrates objectives and presentation, the core features in which the shortcoming is most pronounced, and concludes that the English lesson can be planned to achieve maximum success if planners exploit the connection between knowledge of facts and planning effectiveness. It recommends that English teacher trainers should upgrade their knowledge of English description since no one can effectively teach another how to teach a language they do not know.

### KEYWORDS:

Lesson planning    English lesson plan    Essential features    Lesson Objectives    Lesson Presentation

### WORD COUNT:

195

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### HOW TO CITE

Adejare R.A. (2025). Essentials of English Lesson Plan for the ESL Classroom. *Educational Perspectives*, 13(2B), 592-.606.

## Introduction

A lesson plan is a detailed description of how a given topic on a given subject is to be executed at a specified time and place (the classroom) by a given teacher. Prepared and used by the teacher as part of the curriculum implementation process, lesson plan differs markedly from lesson note in the sense that the latter refers to a document containing all the individual lessons written and delivered over a period of time by the teacher. Everyone engaged in the teaching-learning endeavour, including trainers of would-be English teachers, agrees that a lesson plan should have certain essential features. For instance, it should indicate the topic to be taught and state the objectives for its teaching. Moreover, it should contain features such as teaching aids and procedure for actualising the stated lesson objectives. The lesson plan serves as a guide to the teacher in the conduct of the lesson, which explains why every lesson must be carefully and effectively planned in order for it to achieve the overall goal of teaching and learning. The English lesson deserves nothing less in this regard. The need for effective lesson planning assumes greater significance when the subject in question is English. This is one language that is particularly unique in the sense that it is at once a compulsory subject of study and the prescribed medium of instruction at the secondary school level. These are educational roles imposed upon it by virtue of its political function as Nigeria's official language.

Considerable attention has been paid to how a good lesson plan for English language should be written. However, these concerns have come mainly from scholars and teacher-trainers whose experience of ESL is only academic or professional and therefore limited because they are non-users of the ESL variety themselves. Examples are Richard and Lockhard (1994) and Scrivener (2011). Besides, the learners they deal with are largely outside the geopolitical zones where English performs the function of a second language at both the individual and national levels. No known user of the ESL

variety appears to have devoted attention to how an English lesson should be planned, such that it will reflect the peculiarities of the ESL situation and, consequently, lead to the realisation of the goals of its teaching as defined in the Secondary School English Language Curriculum. Yet it is necessary to do so if description and pedagogy are not to run at cross-purposes, defeating the essence of teaching the language. It thus becomes imperative to identify and describe the features of an English lesson plan, with particular reference to the English curriculum implemented in the Nigerian secondary school classroom.

Against the foregoing background, this paper identifies and describes the essential features of an English lesson plan with a view to (a) providing useful guidelines for would-be teachers and their trainers and (b) promoting effective teaching of the subject in the Nigerian ESL classroom. Following this introduction is a brief examination of some perspectives on lesson plan, which serves to properly situate and further justify the current endeavour. The next two sections deal with the different features of a lesson plan while the final section is conclusion.

## Some perspectives on lesson plan

This section examines some perspectives on lesson plan with particular reference to its conceptualisation, relevance, and features. It ends with a model of lesson planning. It proceeds as follows.

## Lesson plan and lesson planning

It is useful to begin by drawing a clear distinction between *lesson plan* and *lesson planning*. The same noun lexemes recur in them, except that the headword is a base-form common noun (**plan**) in the one and a nominalisation (**planning**) of the *-ing* verb form in the other. The OED defines a plan as “an idea or method that has been thought about in detail in advance; an intention” and planning as “the action or process of making plans for

something” (p.881). It also defines the modifying nominal *lesson* as “a period of time given to learning or teaching; a class (...): a history/English/physics lesson” (p.675). These definitions underlie the usage of the words as technical, pedagogic terms. So, what does the literature on pedagogy say about lesson, lesson plan, and lesson planning?

A lesson is “a unified set of activities that cover a period of classroom time...These classroom time units are administratively significant for teachers because they represent “steps” along a curriculum before which and after which you have a hiatus” (Brown, 2001, p.149, cited in Rhalmi, 2021). A lesson plan is “what the teacher intends to do during a lesson” (Richard & Lockhard, 1996, p.9); it is “the framework of the activities of the teacher and the pupils during the lesson” (Dondo et al., 2019, p.49). Two definitions of lesson planning worth restating are those of Harmer (2001, p.308) and (Yinger, 1980), cited in Rhalmi (2021). They respectively see it as “the art of combining a number of different elements into a coherent whole so that a lesson has an identity and “decision-making about the selection, the organization, and the sequencing of routines”. Rhalmi sums up lesson planning as the

process of selecting and organising a coherent set of activities that cover a period of time [...] the ability of the teacher to visualize and forecast how the lesson delivery will take place[...] the cognitive process of thinking about what will happen in the classroom when delivering the lesson, making decisions about what, why, and how the learning process will occur (Rhalmi, 2021)

It is clear from these definitions that lesson planning entails making decisions, thought and prediction. The notion of lesson planning as decision making was probably first expressed by Richard and Lockhard (1996), who devote a whole chapter to teacher decision making in their book

*Reflective teaching in second language classrooms*. They identify three types of decisions that teachers make as (a) planning decisions made before a lesson can be taught, (b) interactive decisions made on the spot during the lesson, and (c) evaluative decisions made about the effectiveness of the lesson. Planning decisions ultimately result in the lesson plan, which makes lesson plan the product and lesson planning the process (Richard & Lockhard, 1996, p.78). Another perspective on lesson planning is that that equates it with thought. One proponent of this view is Scrivener (2011), who sees lesson planning as “essentially a thinking skill” and the detailed formal lesson plan as “basically a training tool” (p.123). He adds that lesson planning is imagining the lesson before it happens and visualising how things “might look, feel and sound when they are done” (p.135).

### **Relevance of lesson plan**

The lesson plan is enormously significant in the teaching-learning endeavour. For instance, it is intended to help teachers-in-training organise the lessons efficiently and effectively (Richard and Lockhard, 1996, p.79). This assertion however restricts the scope of relevance of the lesson plan to would-be teachers only, and creates the preposterous view that, since they are no longer undergoing training, tenured teachers do not require lesson plans to function efficiently and effectively. Thus Scrivener (2011, p.135) observes that most teachers tend to jettison the ideals of writing a lesson plan literally after their training, which supports Dondo et al.’s (2019) recent report on the significance of Teaching Practice on lesson note preparation. Does this then imply that only teachers-in-training need to vigorously engage in lesson planning and writing lesson plans? Investigating this emerging phenomenon is however beyond the scope of this work. Perhaps the greatest value of lesson planning, as Scrivener’s (2011) warning leads us to understand, lies in the fact that, although no one can “completely predict

how learners will respond to anything”, the “better prepared” the teacher is the more likely it is that they will be able to cope with whatever comes up (p.123).

The lesson plan is so significant that there is this general belief among critical stakeholders in the teaching-learning enterprise that no meaningful teaching and learning can take place in the absence of a well-designed lesson plan. This statement becomes most critical when the subject concerned is English, given the fact that neither the teacher nor the pupil is a native speaker of the language. However, it is important to also point out that a good lesson plan does not necessarily translate to lesson effectiveness because of lesson dynamism and because of lesson unpredictability. This is where interactive planning comes in (Richard & Lockhard, 1996). Moreover, while the written plan serves very useful purposes---such as serving as guide to the teacher, ensuring that, barring any unforeseen circumstances, they remain focused throughout the lesson and do not deviate from the topic and the activities outlined for its execution, and being available for successful delivery by a surrogate teacher in the absence of its author--- it is neither “holy writ” nor “set in concrete”. Lesson plans are useful to the teacher and the learner in innumerable ways, but the warning must be sounded that they are not in any way like drama scripts that must be followed with rigidity.

Flexibility on the teacher’s part is advised and advocated, if effectiveness is to be achieved. Indeed, a teacher who follows the lesson plan dogmatically is unlikely to be responsive to the happenings in the classroom, as Scrivener (2011, p.123) observes. So, the teacher should be prepared to adjust their lesson plan according to the responses they receive from their pupils in the course of lesson delivery. They should not be a slave to the lesson plan they created.

The lesson plan can thus be regarded as previously thought-out ideas about a set of classroom activities, while lesson planning is the process of formulating ideas about such classroom activities. Both lesson plan and lesson planning are necessary for teaching-learning effectiveness and efficiency, and they are the concern of teachers-in-training and practising teachers alike. Whether the lesson plan is prepared daily or weekly is immaterial. What is of paramount importance is that it has clear objectives, can activate learners’ prior knowledge, raise their awareness about the target language using contextualised situations, and help them personalise the target language forms through activities (Rhalmi, 2017). The lesson plan can be written in the format of a ledger or spreadsheet, which has the advantage of reflecting more details and the disadvantage of being tedious and cumbersome. Alternatively, it can simply follow the conventional linear model where every major feature attracts a separate heading.

### **Features of a lesson plan**

A lesson plan has essential features that are distinctive, though the nomenclature and details may vary from one scholar to another. For instance, Richard and Lockhard (1996) state that a lesson plan usually includes

- (a) a description of the aims or objectives of the lesson, (b) the activities students will carry out, (c) the time needed for each activity, (d) teaching aids to be used, (e) strategies to be used, (f) grouping arrangements employed for each activity, (g) possible problems that might be encountered (p.79).

Rhalmi (2021) similarly lists the following as components of a lesson plan: (1) date, class, type of lesson, title, duration and materials, (2) objectives, (3) activities, (4) procedure, (5) mode of work, (6) timing, (7) extra class work, (8) potential problem, and (9) reflection. What is evident from these two samples is the apparent consensus on items such as objectives, problems, teaching aids, activities, and

time. There are also noticeable differences in nomenclature---exemplified by “group arrangements” and “mode of work”---and items appearing in the one and not in the other (e.g., extra classwork). This means that while some lesson plans may reflect all of these components, others may have more or even less.

What may be considered a third model of lesson plan to be examined here is credited to the Faculty of Education, Lagos State University. It was prepared for students’ use during the mandatory Teaching Practice exercise. It has the following features listed here in the order in which they appear in the official Teaching Practice Lesson Note: Name, Matriculation No., Date, Time, Period, Duration, Class, Average age, Subject, Topic, Behavioural Objectives, Previous Knowledge, Instructional Materials, Reference Materials, Content, Presentation, Summary, Evaluation/Exercise, Assignment, Supervisor’s Comment, Supervisor’s Name, and Supervisor’s Signature and Date. There are twenty-three features and each is accorded a separate heading, with gaps for students to fill in the required information. The booklet itself contains enough of these pro-forms to last a practice session. This is more comprehensive.

### A model of English lesson plan

The English lesson model proposed is eclectic because it integrates everything good in the existing ones into a single mould for comprehensiveness and flexibility. It classifies features into two but uneven broad categories called **CORE** and **PERIPHERAL** for want of a better terminology. Objectives and presentation represent the core features because even the least efficient teacher makes some mental notes of what they hope to achieve and how they want to proceed with it. The rest belong to the peripheral subclass. It will be noticed that features such as extra work and potential problem do not feature here because they are not considered essential. Each category will be described separately, with the peripheral

features presented first. What each feature entails, how it is handled in practical terms in the course of writing, and how the plan for a lesson can be written to achieve maximum effectiveness and efficiency vary markedly according to discipline and according to subject matter. There is a general assumption that the compulsory methods courses (e.g., English Methods) would take adequate care of everything students need to know about lessons and their planning. How well each methods course handles these areas remains a matter of conjecture, which further justifies the current research effort. The handling of a subject as important as English in all its ramifications cannot be left to chance, and this will be demonstrated presently in the sections that follow.

### The peripheral features

The peripheral features of an English lesson plan are grouped into four subcategories based on semantic affinity, with clarity, ease of presentation, and descriptive efficiency as motivating factors. These are general information, temporal considerations, subject matter and allied components, and materials, methods and evaluation. The exposition begins with general information.

### General information

The name of the school and its location should be boldly written on the cover page of the lesson note, followed by the teacher’s **name**. It is important that the teacher’s **qualifications**---such as BA (Educ) English and B Ed English--- be clearly spelt out in view of the unprofessional practice of assigning non-English graduates to teach English. For student teachers, their course of study, matriculation number, and academic level should be indicated; and for the tenured teacher, the information can also be provided on a sheet of cardboard and mounted in the classroom as class indicator. Except in the case of student-teachers, these details need not be repeated for every lesson.



Part of the general information that the lesson planner is expected to provide includes **age** and **class**. The average age of the learners should be determined and stated (e.g., 10 years; 16 years). The class for which the lesson is meant should also be clearly indicated (e.g. JSS I); and, where a teacher handles all or only some of the arms of a given class, it is useful to specify them (e.g., JSS I A-E; JSS I A&C). Accurate information on age and class helps in making appropriate decisions on the choice of method /technique of presentation to adopt, the type of teaching aids to source and utilise, and the language activities to introduce and their duration. Age and class also influence the level of complexity or otherwise of the teacher's language, the depth of treatment of the topic, the sample of language items to be chosen for practice, and even the sequencing of the presentation. More importantly, age and class often serve as markers of learners' level of linguistic development and, with particular reference to English as a second language, they help to determine what type of transition errors are still manifest-able and how best to deal with them.

### Temporal considerations

There are four ways of considering **time** in respect of an English lesson plan. The first is in terms of temporal calibration and, in this regard, it is important to indicate precisely when the lesson starts and ends (e.g., 8:00 am-8:40 am). The second perspective is in terms of **duration** (e.g., single period of 40 minutes or double period of 80 minutes). The third pertains to the **period** allotted for it on the School Time Table (that is, as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or nth period). Finally, there is the dimension of **timing** that concerns the entire gamut of lesson activities. The teacher should ensure that, barring all unforeseen circumstances, the defined objectives are accomplished within the time allotted for the lesson. They should therefore make judicious use of time by dividing the lesson into segments or stages and allotting time to each segment in accordance with the nature and relative

significance of the activities involved. For instance, the lesson's opening may attract three or five minutes, while presentation of the linguistic form attracts ten minutes, and practice and production exercises are allotted fifteen minutes each.

Deliberate efforts should be made to stick to the time schedule for each activity in actual lesson delivery. It needs to be acknowledged at this point that this could sometimes be unrealistic, since no one can predict precisely the course in which a planned lesson will take. Any effective teacher should be able to react to the pupils' responses by adjusting their strategy accordingly, and this may entail spending more or less time on a given activity than envisaged, modifying an activity or jettisoning it altogether, or even devising a fresh one (let's say, a language game or practice exercise). This is where Richard and Lockhard's (1996) interactive decision making becomes relevant.

### Subject matter and allied components

The subclass of features titled subject matter and allied components comprises topic, content, and previous knowledge.

#### Topic

The scheme of work drawn up at the beginning of each school term is the source of the topics for which lessons are planned. It is usually arranged on a weekly basis and each broad topic can be further broken down into teachable units. The topic could be on any key aspect of the English Language Curriculum: grammar, phonology, and lexis. Alternatively, it could be based on any of the four basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. At the Junior Secondary School level where Literature is an integral part of the English Curriculum, the topic could be on any of the genres of literature, precisely on any of the recommended texts on prose, drama or poetry. Sample topics on some of these aspects of English are "Adjectives of

Comparison”, “The Simple Present Tense”, “Collective Nouns”, “The Consonants /θ/ and /ð/”, Contrastive Stress”, “Formal letters”, “Making a Request”, and “Vocabulary of Road Transportation”.

Whatever the subject matter of the lesson is, it is imperative that the teacher has a sound knowledge of it. In fact, there are two types of knowledge that any good English teacher should possess: knowledge of the subject matter and knowledge of pedagogy. Both complement each other to make the planning of an English lesson and, in effect, its teaching, effective and successful. Indeed, Dunne and Wragg (2005, p.5) emphasise the need for the effective teacher to possess a wide range of subject knowledge and a large repertoire of professional skills. As part of the planning process, teachers should read the topic thoroughly, take down necessary notes, and reflect deeply on a number of factors, including the lesson objectives, the learners and how they learn a second language, suitable materials to use, and appropriate techniques to adopt. On mode of learning a second language, the knowledge that Yoruba learners of English substitute the voiceless labiodental fricative (/f/) for the voiced one (/v/) would, for instance, cause the discerning teacher to sample suitable words and sentences for rigorous sound discrimination and differentiation exercises while planning a lesson on the labiodental fricative sounds.

### **Content**

A summary of the topic---which will necessarily include brief descriptive statements about the linguistic item under focus, rules governing its use and exceptions, examples, samples of usage, and practice exercises--- can be provided under the heading content. Unlike other school subjects English does not require elaborate notes. It is therefore sufficient to provide a brief description of the item as appropriate for the level as well as the rules. Contextualised examples are obligatory, as they provide the learners insights into how the aspect of the system of language they are exposed

to in a given lesson works in natural language use situations.

### **Previous knowledge**

Any knowledge previously acquired that is directly or indirectly related to the topic at hand and that can facilitate its understanding is known as previous knowledge or entry behaviour. Previous knowledge does not necessarily mean the knowledge gained from the last topic taught, except where that topic is tangentially related to the new one. Indeed, it could be anything within the experience of the learner that would help them in learning the new linguistic fact or skill. For instance, the previous knowledge for the topic “Adjectives of Comparison” would include the fact that pupils compare things in their everyday linguistic activities using comparative adjectives, in addition to the pedagogic fact that they can recognise adjectives and identify their uses, having been taught that topic earlier. Previous knowledge is the foundation upon which the teacher builds the new knowledge, and it should be exploited to arouse the pupils’ interest, motivate them to learn, and enhance quick and meaningful grasp of the new linguistic form. It must be stated as an integral part of a good English lesson plan.

### **Materials, methods, and evaluation**

Grouped together under this heading are teaching aids, reference materials, methods, and evaluation. Each one is described in turns.

### **Teaching aids**

Teaching aids or instructional materials are useful materials that facilitate the teaching -learning process and enhance its quality. They are so indispensable that a teaching-learning situation lacking in appropriate instructional materials have been described as “arid” and a “mockery” of the entire process (Akinpelu & Alabi 2010, p.193). Teaching aids are classifiable into visual (e.g., realia, i.e. concrete objects, diagrams, pictures,

maps, newspapers, charts, word cards, sentence cards, slides etc.), audio (e.g., radio tape recorder, radio) and audio-visual (e.g., video tapes, TV, computers, and films).

So, they range from the simple stick of chalk or whiteboard marker to the radio tape recorder or computer, and can be prepared by the teacher, purchased by the school, or borrowed from the Resource Centre. If white/black boards or cardboards are used, they should be properly mounted, have titles, and their contents must be legible. As a rule, teaching aids must not be harmful to the pupils in any way or create fear in them. They should be tucked away immediately after use to prevent distraction, and the teacher must ensure that the classroom does not become rowdy when an instructional material is being used. Teaching aids are veritable tools in the hands of the resourceful ESL teacher, and are most useful when they are relevant to the topic, when they are relate-able to pupils' linguistic and non-linguistic experience, and when they are properly utilised.

Apart from generally enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and facilitating the whole process, teaching aids have the following advantages.

- a) They aid remembering, recall and retention of specific language facts.
- b) They concretise language learning by removing it from the realm of abstraction to the realm of reality. In fact, they demystify language learning.
- c) Teaching aids situationalise learning by establishing a more direct link between what pupils experience in their day-to-day language use activities and what they are taught in the classroom. They make language learning more meaningful and relevant.
- d) They afford pupils the opportunity to closely observe language in some natural

situations, and create room for practical language activities.

- e) The teacher *can rest* while the pupils are observing the teaching aid.

### ***Reference materials***

Many English teachers rely essentially on the recommended course book for lesson planning and lesson delivery, which is good, especially as most course books are written in consonance with the contents of the English Language Curriculum. However, because the recommended course book are sometimes inadequate, the resourceful teacher seeks additional (or more accurate) information from other sources. Such other sources may be reference grammar books such as *A University Grammar of English* or supplementary reading materials including magazines and newspapers. Whatever the type and number of reference materials consulted, it is important that they be acknowledged appropriately by citing them in the appropriate section of the lesson plan. This way, anyone interested in cross-checking the correctness of the facts stated, or in ascertaining the accuracy or otherwise of the descriptive statements made in the lesson plan, can do so with greater ease, especially if all relevant information including page numbers are provided.

### ***Methods/Techniques***

A suitable language teaching method or technique should be selected, with an appropriate note made at the relevant section of the lesson plan. Since the same technique may not be suitable for all segments of the lesson, consideration should be given to the nature of activities to be undertaken in each segment. Techniques of presentation should be varied to suit the topic, age of learners, lesson objectives, and specific tasks of a given segment of the lesson. In this regard eclecticism is advocated for maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

### ***Evaluation***

Every English lesson ought to be evaluated to determine the extent to which the defined



objectives have been achieved. For example, can the pupils recognise, recall, name, spell, write, differentiate, or pronounce? This can be done using exercises, which may be oral or written or both. Pupils can also ask questions as a form of feedback mechanism. It should however be noted that evaluation is continuous, and does not necessarily have to be delayed till the end of the lesson. In essence, it can come at any point in time during the lesson. For instance, in Step IV under **Sample Presentation** below, pupils could be asked to listen to the initial tape once more and write down the words they think they heard and the symbols for the sounds in them.

There is a second dimension to evaluation which entails the teacher evaluating the whole lesson plan after delivery and which cannot be a component of the English lesson plan because it is undertaken as a post mortem exercise. The teacher themselves reflects on how the lesson had been and rates their performance. This is called “lesson report”. It “describes what actually happened from the teacher’s point of view”, whereas the lesson plan describes “what a teacher intends to do during a lesson” (Richards & Lockhard, 1996, p. 9). For the English teacher on teaching practice, this can be done by a fellow student-teacher, the cooperative teacher, or the supervisor. Here are some of the questions that may be asked, according to Rhalmi (2021): “Were the objectives achieved? Did I sequence the practical activities from the easy to the more challenging? Did I talk too much? Did the students demonstrate an understanding of the target language? Did the presentation take too much time? Did I vary mode of work/type of activities?”. To this lot may be added the following: Was my language of delivery suitable? Was I articulate enough? Did I commit some of the grammatical, lexical or phonological errors for which I punish my students?

### Core features of the English lesson plan

This section extensively describes the core lesson plan features of objectives and presentation.

#### Objectives

According to Rhalmi (2021), a lesson objective “is a statement that describes the behaviour that the teacher wants the students to show as a result of instruction and that can be used to assess the session’s success”; it “refers to what students should know or be able to know by the end of the lesson that they were not able to know previously”. This aligns with Scrivener’s (2011) statement that “aims are the result of the lesson from the learner’s perspective” (p.136). A school of thought argues that lesson plans should include a description of intended outcomes at the end of the lesson and that it is sometimes expressed in behavioural terms (Richards & Lockhard, 1996, p.79).

In essence, objectives are what the teacher hopes to achieve at the end of the lesson through the pupils. One requirement of lesson objectives is that they should be clearly defined and be indicated at the beginning of the lesson plan. Moreover, they must be SMART, which means objectives must be “specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound” (Rhalmi, 2021). Clearly stated objectives have numerous advantages. They guide the direction of the lesson’s activities, give the teacher a sense of purpose and direction, provide the learner with something to look forward to, and serve as the basis for the evaluation of teaching effectiveness. In addition, objectives give learners more realistic ideas of what can be achieved, cause them to develop greater sensitivity to their role as language learners, make evaluation more feasible, and help relate classroom activities to learners’ real-life needs (Rhalmi, 2021; Richards & Lockhard, 1996, p.79, citing Nunan, 1988, p.61),

#### Guiding principles

A basic principle guiding the statement of lesson objectives is that the teacher should have a clear

understanding of what the subject matter is and how it can best be approached. Since learning is generally defined as observable change in the behaviour of the learner, lesson objectives must be stated in measurable terms. One major defect seen in lesson plans generally and in English lesson plans particularly is pervasive vagueness, which results from the teacher-in-training not properly acquainting themselves with the contents of the curriculum and the different demands each aspect makes on the lesson planner. This can be illustrated with an excerpt from a student-teacher's lesson plan on reading comprehension, which resembles a directive in one of the numerous SSCE preparatory textbooks. It goes thus: "At the end of the lesson pupils should be able *to read the passage and answer all the questions that follow*" (Emphasis added). It is obvious that the lesson planner did not study the passage prior to stating the so-called objective, which could have afforded them the opportunity to know its content and identify the specific cognitive skills of reading comprehension each set question is meant to assist the learners in developing.

Objectives for reading comprehension should not be defined around the title of the passage (if there is one) either. So, it is inappropriate to state as objective the following: To teach "Discovering the Ocean Depth", the title of a passage in the good old *Practical English* series. Rather, the teacher should be guided by the cognitive skills because it is their development that underlines the teaching of reading comprehension itself. The passage only serves as resource. What the teacher needs to do is to study the passage carefully, identify those aspects of the story that can adequately serve to develop learners' ability to recall, remember, infer, make aesthetic judgement, and make evaluative judgement etc, and define the lesson objectives accordingly.

No two sets of objectives for reading comprehension can be same because the contents

of the reading passages are different. Lesson objectives on writing should similarly be based on a thoughtful analysis of the chosen topic in terms of content requirement, language, mechanics of writing, and organisation. In this connection, therefore, the lesson planner should familiarise themselves with the content of each topic and the general guidelines for teaching the aspect of English to which the topic belongs.

### *Language*

There are two issues that bother on language in the statement of lesson objectives generally, and these need to be addressed at this juncture. The first concerns the initiating prepositional phrase and the second relates to the choice of appropriate verb lexeme. Beginning with the first, two prepositions **by** and **at** are in common usage when it comes to stating lesson objectives and they appear as "by the end of the lesson" and "at the end of the lesson". The questions that arise are: Which prepositional phrase is more appropriate and why? The second phrase, *at the end of the lesson*, is semantically a more appropriate choice and this can be explained. Though both *by* and *at* express time as meanings (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 689-692), preposition *at* is temporally exact and this makes it contextually more appropriate than *by*, which lacks temporal exactness.

*At* refers to "point of time" while *by* "specifies an end point". Lessons are scheduled occurrences that have fixed duration (e.g., 45 minutes), beginning at a fixed time (e.g., 8:00 am) and ending at a fixed point in time (e.g., 8:45 am). So, it is not "by the time the lesson ends" but "at the time the lesson ends".

There is a connection between the general conceptualisation of learning and the statement of lesson objectives. This can be exploited here by asking and answering the following question: How does the teacher know that learning has taken place after a 45-minute interaction with pupils on a given subject matter? One sure way to determine this is

to compare the state of the learners' knowledge before and after the lesson. For instance, it might be the case that they could not contrastively distinguish between **record** (noun) and **record** (verb) before and that they can do so now. Since learning is generally seen as observable change in the behaviour of the learner, the requirement that lesson objectives be defined in measurable terms cannot be overstated. This is where the choice of an appropriate verb lexeme mentioned earlier comes in. Verbs such as *know*, *understand*, *remember*, *learn*, and *teach* are generally frowned upon because they are not measurable or are difficult to determine. In their stead, verbs such as *arrange*, *compare*, *contrast*, *define*, *differentiate*, *distinguish*, *discuss*, *explain*, *express*, *give*, *identify*, *list*, *name*, *produce*, *pronounce*, *provide*, *state*, *write*, and *read* are recommended because they are measurable.

Closely related to the issue of choice of appropriate lexical verbs is the choice of modality expressed by the modal auxiliary verb in the verb phrase it heads. Again, there are two variants of modal meaning normally seen in this regard. These are prediction, expressed by *will* and necessity, expressed by *should*. Whichever modal auxiliary verb is selected is necessarily followed by BE ABLE TO (a semi auxiliary verb with quasi modal functions expressing ability as meaning) to produce *will be able to* and *should be able to* respectively. The question of appropriateness of modality now arises. Between prediction and necessity the latter is deemed more contextually appropriate, given the whole essence of stating lesson objectives. There is an inherent desire for positive change in the behaviour of the learner and this has to be seen to have occurred. This is what the teacher looks forward to; it is also what everybody concerned with the curriculum process looks forward to. In fact, the pupils themselves actively work towards this transformation.

Returning to the prepositional phrase, it is seen that *by the end of the lesson...* usually goes with *will be able to* while *at the end of the lesson...* goes with *should be able to*. Let us add a potential lexical verb at this point and see what happens.

(a) By the end of the lesson pupils will be able to list twenty lexical items associated with health.

(b) At the end of the lesson pupils should be able to list twenty lexical items associated with health.

Objective (b) is no doubt semantically and contextually a better option than (a). Now, consider (c), taken from Scrivener (2011, p 136), and its variant (d).

(c) By the end of the lesson, the learners will be better able to find specific information on tourist information leaflet.

(d) By the end of the lesson the learners should be better able to find specific information on tourist information leaflet.

### *Sample objectives*

Space constraint and other factors will not permit the exemplification of every major aspect of the English curriculum. So, only sample objectives can be provided here to illustrate the discussions in the foregoing paragraphs.

(a) At the end of the lesson pupils should be able to  
i) identify the base form and -s form of the verb as markers of present tense in English;

ii) distinguish the contexts in which each variant of the simple present tense form is used;

iii) express the simple present tense using the base form verb with appropriate personal pronouns and plural nouns in sentences;

iv) express the simple present tense using the -s form verb with the appropriate 3rd person

singular pronoun and singular noun form in sentences; and

v) select the appropriate simple present tense form in a fill-in-the-gap exercise and use the simple present tense forms to talk about their everyday activities.

(b) At the end of the lesson pupils should be able to

- i) identify /θ/ and /ð/ as meaningful sounds of English;
- ii) pronounce each sound distinctly;
- iii) distinguish between the pairs /θ/ & /ð/ and /t/ & /d/ normally used as substitutes;
- iv) contrast the sounds in word and sentence contexts; and
- v) provide examples of words bearing the sounds and use them in contrasting sentences of their own.

(c) At the end of the lesson pupils should be able to

- i) identify and list twenty lexical items associated with health;
- ii) group the identified words into classes and semantic categories such as personnel, equipment and diseases;
- iii) state the meaning of each lexical item and recognise the appropriate context of its use;
- iv) use each lexical item in sentences to show how it operates as a health register; and
- v) give a personal account of an encounter with the health sector employing some of the lexical items identified.

(d) At the end of the lesson pupils should be able to

- i) identify all the persons and places named in the passage;
- ii) explain why Mrs Nweke went to Mobi and what happened to her there;
- iii) describe how they would have reacted if they had been in Mrs Nweke's shoes;
- iv) state whether it was right or wrong for Mrs Nweke to have left her son unattended to, and give reasons why they think she should have obeyed her initial instinct to discontinue with the journey; and
- v) explain the expression *roared into life* as used in the passage and relate it to their experience as commuters.

**NOTE:** An untitled passage in *Goodbye to Failure in English for senior secondary schools: Students'*

*Book 3* (pp.148-149) is the base-text for these objectives, each of which pertains to a sub-skill of reading comprehension.

(e) At the end of the lesson pupils should be able to

- i) identify five broad causes of road accident and their subtypes;
- ii) generate a suitable outline based on the identified causes and sub-causes;
- iii) write a topic sentence for each paragraph and develop the paragraph fully;
- iv) discuss exhaustively the causes of road accident, paying as much attention to content and its organisation as to language and the mechanics of writing; and
- v) write a coherent, full-length essay on the causes of road accident with minimal grammatical, lexical and orthographical errors.

### Presentation

Presentation is the aspect of the lesson plan where the teacher describes in detail how the lesson will be delivered in practical terms. The topic, class, pupils' average age, and time allotted to the lesson determines how it is going to be presented, among other relevant factors. A suitable language teaching method and/ or technique should be selected, and an appropriate note of it should be made at the relevant section of the lesson plan. Since the same technique may not be suitable for every segment of the lesson as already hinted, consideration should be given to the nature of the activities to be undertaken in each segment. Techniques of presentation should therefore be varied to suit the topic, age of learners, and the specific tasks of a given segment of the lesson. The teacher might begin by defining or describing a grammatical item and follow this up with examples or practical illustrations. Alternatively, examples and practical illustrations may precede definition and descriptive statements.

They may even adopt Rhalmi's (2021) "present, practice and produce" maxim. What is important is for a lesson to be structured in some logical and

meaningful way. Lesson structuring, which refers to “how lessons are organised into sequences and how the momentum of a lesson is achieved”, has four dimensions, namely opening, sequencing, pacing, and closure (Richard & Lockhard, 1996, p.112). Whichever way the teacher chooses to present the topic, they should not lose cognisance of the guiding principles.

### *Principles guiding lesson presentation*

a) Arm yourself with a clear understanding of how people learn language, especially a second language, and plan activities to reflect this knowledge of language acquisition processes.

b) Involve the pupils because language is an activity and language activities are meaningful activities. So, the pupils should actively participate in the teaching-learning process.

c) Relate the topic to the pupils’ everyday experience for meaningfulness and relevance. This arouses their interest, motivates them to learn, and establishes a direct link between what is to be learned and what they encounter on a day-to-day basis as users of English.

d) Describe the linguistic item in isolation for recognition and mastery purposes.

e) Present the item under focus in linguistic context. In other words, use the sentence as the basic unit for teaching ( e.g., I want *some* bread. Give me *some* water. I want *some* work to be done. I want *some* paper.)

f) Ask questions such as this: How do we make the nouns in (d) a little definitive? The answer to this question---which is, through the use of partitives such as a piece/slice of, a glass/bucket of, a piece of, and a piece/sheet/ream of---invariably brings the lesson to the realm of situational context. So, teach linguistic items in situational contexts.

g) Since the actual presentation of the lesson is undertaken in segments, stages or steps popularly known as Step I, Step II, Step III, Step IV, Step V etc., state precisely what the teacher, the pupils, or both the teacher and the pupils will be doing at each segment of the lesson. Somebody must be doing

something at every point in time: either the teacher alone, the pupils alone, or the teacher together with the pupils. In other words, each step should indicate the activities to be undertaken by each set of participants in the teaching-learning endeavour, and this must be stated appropriately.

### *Language*

The most appropriate way of stating participants’ roles in each segment of the lesson, or expressing what is to be done, is to use imperative clauses. These are clauses lacking a subject and beginning with verb phrases marked for imperative mood. An imperative clause indicates order as an underlying semantic function, and could be initiated by a non-tensed x+o form lexical verb or the catenative verb *let*. Here are examples.

(a) *Let* the pupils *observe* the list of proper nouns on the board.

(b) *Give* a sample reading of the chosen passage.

(c) *Pronounce* each sound distinctly and *let* the pupils *do* so in turns

(d) *Ask* the following questions.

The alternatives (e. g., Teacher/ The teacher writes...) are both pragmatically and textually inappropriate because they are not directives to be carried out, as evident in the following sample from a student-teacher’s lesson plan on “Words commonly misspelt” presented on 6 May 2019.

Step I: The teacher shares the objectives with the students.

Step II: The teacher asks questions on the last topic.

Step III: The teacher identifies the key vocabulary words with the students

Step IV: The teacher introduces the named topic.

Step V: The students ask questions.

(Notice that these presentational statements are pervasively vague.)

### *Connection between presentation and other features of the English lesson plan*

Presentation is not written in isolation of, or without reference to, other critical features of the



lesson plan, notably objectives, teaching aids, and previous knowledge. Because it is in this section that the defined objectives is shown to be being achieved, it becomes important that the lesson planner establishes a visible link between objectives and presentation. First, each step must correspond to each defined objective. So, if there are four objectives, there should be a corresponding number of steps to articulate how each objective is to be realised. Additional steps may however be introduced before that relating to the first objective and after that corresponding to the last one. These are meant to take care of preliminary activities (e.g., arousing the pupils' interest by linking the new topic to their previous knowledge) and end activities (e.g., recapitulating or summarising) that may not strictly be associated with the specific objectives. The point in time at which the teaching aid will be introduced and the mode of its utilisation should be indicated in the section titled presentation. This could be in Step I, Step II, Step III, Step IV or even Step I and Step IV.

### **Sample Presentation**

Only one sample presentation can be afforded here due to space constraint, and this is on the topic "The consonant sounds /θ/ and /ð/".

Step I: Revise the previous lesson on the sounds /f/ and /v/, and pay particular attention to the pupils' ability to distinguish them. Announce the fact that they are going to meet a similar set of sounds in the new lesson and that they will hear a tape first.

Step II: Play the tape-recorded material with a preponderance of words bearing the sounds /θ/ and /ð/, and let the pupils listen attentively. Draw their attention to the sounds in question.

Step III: Pronounce each sound distinctly and guide the pupils to do the same. Highlight the difference between /θ/ and /ð/ using practical demonstrations and sound cards.

Step IV: Guide the pupils to distinguish the sets /θ/, /t/ and /d/ on the one hand, and /ð/,

/t/ and /d/ on the other hand. Let them pay attention to the differences in place and manner of articulation as appropriate.

Step V: Contrast the sounds in word context as follows:

a) /θ/ and /ð/: *think this; through*

b) /θ/ v /t/ and /d/: *thought taught dot; though dough tow; thrust trust dust*

c) /ð/ v /t/ and /d/: *thence dense tense; those dose toes; then ten den; think tank*

Then, contrast the sounds in sentence context thus:

a) *There are three trees behind the library.*

b) *Ten brave men came through the wooded area into the kidnappers' den.*

c) *The kidnappers then attacked them for daring to enter their den.*

Step VI: Let the pupils provide their own examples of words bearing the sounds /θ/ and /ð/, and practise contrasting them in word and sentence contexts.

Step VII: Dictate /θ/ and /ð/-bearing words from the passage they had listened to earlier,

and ask the pupils to write them down accordingly.

### **Conclusion**

From what has been exposed above, it is clear that there is a correlation between adequate descriptive knowledge and planning effectiveness, and the English lesson can be planned to achieve maximum success if planners realise this fact. When the lesson planner knows the subject matter in the true sense of the word, as this paper has shown, it reflects in the definition of lesson objectives, the choice and utilisation of appropriate language teaching aids, and the specification of the steps to take to actualise the objectives, to mention but a few advantages. A poorly planned English lesson betrays the weakness of the planner in the same way a properly designed one reveals the planner's high knowledge and skills levels. There is no short-cut to effective and efficient lesson planning and lesson plan for the ESL classroom. English lesson planners simply have to embrace what is

professionally the right path to tread. In this regard, English teacher-trainers at the universities and colleges of education should upgrade their knowledge of both the description and pedagogy of English and familiarise themselves with the contents of the Secondary School English Curriculum, since no one can effectively teach another how to teach a language they do not know. This is a statement of fact that can never be over-reiterated.

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