**Lesson Planning and Grammar** – 60 mins

Aim:

1. to reflect on why well-constructed lessons plans are essential in the teaching process
2. to review the processes involved in presenting grammar to students

Preamble

Time is very restricted but because there will be group/pair work involved, it would be a good idea to do a favourite warmer / grouping activity with the teachers to mix them up. This would also help to model the one of the usual components of a lesson plan.

I have not made PowerPoint slides as my experience is that using the computer means that the training is centred very much to the front of the room and has a tendency to become too teacher-centred. Also, in the past, more often than not, computers and power supply have been an issue as have the training rooms themselves. Often in the afternoons especially, the rooms become too light and there is difficulty seeing the slides. Instead, I put the main information, which tends to be repeated or I want to highlight, either on the board – thus drawing attention to the importance of clear board writing skills – or on flipcharts, which are placed in different parts of the room. The flipcharts can be re-used and also, because they are not located in the front of the class, it means that I can re-direct the teachers’ attention. This also serves to model the fact that not everything has to be located / done from the front of the classroom.

I am also a big fan of using stories, especially of personal experiences in training sessions. I have found that this helps to lower the barrier between trainer and the trainee, gives the trainer more credibility and helps to explain/illustrate/clarify the teaching points that you want to make.

Everything that we do in the classroom should be a model of good practice and/ or alternative ways of organising students /materials or presenting teaching materials.

Lesson Plans

Probably we all are required to plan i.e. write down our lessons as in many situations this is demanded by our educational authorities – daily, weekly, by term, by year. Teachers often see this as being incredibly time-consuming and also a waste of time.

***A waste of time, because:***

***Elicit answers:***

* timetables change,
* students might not keep to the pace determined by the lesson plan
* absences by both teachers and students affect the pace
* too restrictive / doesn’t allow you to take advantage of ‘teaching ‘moments’, which often arise spontaneously
* other?

**Ques. ( 5 mins)**

You are all now using modern coursebooks, either Macmillan or from one of the other leading publishers. They all come with **very detailed and comprehensive teachers’ books,** so, teachers don’t really need to make additional lessons plans now? True?

***What would you say were the advantages/disadvantages of using a course book? Elicit comments – pair or whole class work.***

Possible pluses

* for students = security and provides a way to measure their progress and what they have achieved
* good resource for teachers, saves times, provides structure / ideas/teaching materials
* good coursebook is balanced in all the skills and the language it presents, has a logical progression, built-in revision/recycling activities
* most coursebooks written by experienced teachers of English – adds to credibility/sense of security especially for inexperienced teachers.

Possible disadvantages

* the coursebook might not be suitable for your particular class i.e. does not suit culture,, or contains unsuitable topics, too difficult/childish etc
* Most coursebooks are very predictable i.e. they follow the same pattern and have the same type of exercises. This can become boring for both the students and the teachers if they are followed too slavishly – ***solution – try to vary what you do i.e. the order of the exercises, you do not have to do all the exercises and*** ***your own ideas help you to make the material your own i.e. you are more confident teaching it!***
* coursebooks don’t really encourage teacher creativity – everything has been set out for the teacher – word for word what they could do in the lessons, plus there is access to resource files, supplementary material, online resources

( Action Plan for Teachers –a guide to teaching English- Callum Robertson/ Richard Acklam – BBC World Service )

***Ques: (5 mins ) – whole class or pair work***

So, there are times when we have to write lesson plans ourselves e.g. lessons on a special topic, some supplementary lessons for concepts, which the students are finding difficult to grasp.

***a) What are the main components of a lesson plan? – Make a list. – board work***

***b)What other factors do you have to take into consideration***?

a)

* aim
* subsidiary aim i.e. to foster classroom dynamics / group work
* date
* level / or class profile
* age of students
* length of lesson
* warmer/lead-in
* procedure + interaction patterns
* timing
* language analysis
* materials/handouts / board work
* resources
* anticipated problems e.g. if planning group/pair work what will affect the grouping if not all students are in class or there are one or two stronger/weaker /disruptive/dominant students?
* possible solutions?
* Homework
* Evaluation – formal/informal? Necessary/ unnecessary? Personal evaluation of lesson i.e. achieved aims? Stds – Liked? Engaged? More/ less time? Difficult/easy, possible changes?
* Classroom set up
* other?

There is ***no strict template*** for writing a lesson plan – some institutions/ exams (TKT ) do have a preferred model. Obviously an inexperienced teacher will have a more detailed plan, while experienced teachers might just have a few notes.

b)

* what do the students know already?
* what was covered in the previous class?
* new language or concept will require more time
* revising/expanding known material will take less time
* what do the students ***need to know***  i.e. is it just an English class or is it preparing for an exam – perhaps then the skills and language focus will be different
* what type of learners they are – e.g.VAK
* student interests
* homogeneous class or mixed-ability
* attendance i.e. do they all attend class?
* other?
1. ***and b) both give an indication as to why lesson planning is such a time- consuming and responsible process.***

\*\* Show topic webs from Teaching Children English as just one alternative how lessons can be organised.

***\*\* Snakes and Ladders Lesson Plan Game -15 mins – small groups/ whole class.***

The teachers will not finish the activity and perhaps it should be stopped after 10 mins or so, so that the trainer or participant can pick out some situation cards and ask for comments/ solutions from the whole class. These could be picked randomly or chosen specifically.

**Conclusion**

So, why plan? Pair or whole class work ( 2- 3 mins )

* sign of professionalism – very easy to tell if teacher is prepared or not – it is a way to gain students’ respect
* no courseook will completely meet the needs of your students –planning will ensure that you have taken the abilities/needs/interests of your students into account and give you the opportunity to tailor your teaching to your particular situation.
* Provides variety from the coursebook
* Helps teachers to feel more confident e.g. have researched target language that they are teaching in more depth, and have anticipated possible difficult questions /problems that might arise
* Other?

\*\*\*\* Very important point to remember is that lesson plans are flexible – they are not set in stone and teachers must be able to seize upon ‘teaching moments’ that arise as well as to vary the pace if the learners are experiencing problems or conversely have finished the tasks promptly.

**Presenting Grammar ( 5 mins intro )**

**Aim**: To reflect upon and review the many different ways of presenting language structures.

1. Coursebooks have a scope and sequence, which not only outlines the topics, vocabulary and activities that a teacher could (must) teach, but also the order in which grammar structures are presented. Teachers do not have to think about what they have to do – they have a map or GPS to follow.

The following is an overview of some of the things that we need to keep in mind when presenting grammar.

\*\* Grammar items can be graded by; ( I would probably have these on a flip chart )

* Complexity of the **form** e.g.
1. **I live in Georgia**. – present simple of the verb + place
2. **I have been living in Georgia for ten years** – more complex still subject + present perfect of ‘to be’ + present participle+ place+ time phrase
3. **I would have lived in Georgia, but my family wanted to** **move to England**. = conditional - subject + perfect conditional + conjunction+ subject+ simple past + infinitive + place.
* Complexity of **meaning -**  if we look at the above sentences, then the complexity of meaning is clear
	+ 1. **I live there now.**
		2. **I started to live in Georgia 10 years ago and I am still living there now**
		3. **3rd sentence = obviously more complex in meaning and form.**

**\*\* The meaning, of course, is paramount. There is no point knowing the form and not understanding the meaning. The structure would then not be used.**

**( Exercises on context and meaning )**

* Complexity of **concept – e.g.** countable and uncountable items – do not occur in many languages and needs an understanding of what can be counted and what can’t and why it can’t.
* **Frequency -** how often the grammar item is used
* **Range –** how many situations it can be used in
* **Similarity to learners’ L1**
* **Similarity to structures the learners already know**

2 )

a) **Jumbled lesson plan** ( 7 mins) – Selection of 2 \_ feedback

Participants do one of the 2 activities in pairs/small groups

1. **Filling in table about 12 grammar presentation methods** (15 mins) pairs/small groups – feedback. Presuming that there are 30 teachers in a class, this would necessitate making some 15 sets of the 3 grammar presentation sheets, which would then be used through out the training.

This activity, firstly would make the teachers aware of the many different ways of presenting grammar structures that exist. Secondly, they would have to think about the suitability of the methods and possible drawbacks. Thirdly, it would raise their awareness of how many methods they employ in their everyday teaching and which ones they prefer and why ( if time )

Method:

a) Ask the whole group to quickly skim the texts and to note the 12 methods. ( I might have these on a flipchart at the back of the room )

1. Because of time limitations – allocate pairs/small groups 3- 4 methods to concentrate on.
2. Get feedback from each section – whole group
3. Elicit personal preferences / student preferences + reasons

\*\*\* If time permits, it would also be a good idea to go over what has been covered in the session i.e. an overview, to see if what has been done corresponds to the aims presented in the beginning.

**Conclusion**

We have not even considered ways of practising these new structures, but instead we have concentrated on looking at the many different ways that we can present new structures, so that our students stay motivated and interested and which help them to learn.

Grammar is like a coat hanger – it gives form – to the language, just as a coat hanger gives form to our clothing. A fancy and elaborate coat hanger will not improve the form of our clothes, neither will complicated grammar explanations improve our understanding and use of grammar.

For young learners, certainly before the age of 10 or so, it is a complete waste of time teaching learners the language of grammar. They are not able to process it. But, as our learners get older and they have more grasp of English, then some of this meta language i.e. noun, verb, determiner, phrase, clause etc will become necessary.

Perhaps the observations of Jim Scrivener - in Learning Teaching need to be reflected on:

‘ Many teachers spend most class time on presentation because they see this as the most important thing they can do to help their learners with grammar. They see a language teacher’s job as primarily supplying information. Are they right?

I’d say ‘no’. For me, a language teachers’ job is primarily to push, encourage and help learners to try using the language themselves. In fact, you don’t need very much information before you can try using language yourself, and once you start trying to use it, you can get feedback, correction and help on how to do it better. The primary learning experience is doing the thing yourself, not listening to someone else telling you about how to do it. So, I’d argue that students in many classes do not need long explanations or detailed information. What they tend to need more are challenging opportunities to try using the language items themselves.

Thinking about grammar teaching as primarily ‘ practice’ rather than ‘presentation’ can help to solve a number of problems that teachers feel they face in class, not the least the situation where students say ‘ We have studied this before’ or ‘We know this already’. ( 277 )

I would probably have this written out on flipchart paper as the text is too long for the teachers to fully take in, if it is just read to them.

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