



Developing Learner-centred Lessons and Materials in English Language Teaching

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Abstract:

A learner-centred lesson should be designed comprising tasks and activities that enhances and develops learners' language and language skills with varied interaction patterns and less teacher talking time. A well thought out lesson considers learners' level, interest in the topic and the use of vocabulary. A learner-centred material comprising tasks and activities could be developed and practiced in relation to the text. Keeping the class profile in general and keeping their learning styles and preferences in particular, a text should be selected with an objective to keep it learner-centred and to enhance the learners' skill (listening, speaking, reading and writing) or to introduce a language part to develop their concepts related to grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Such a text should not only provide information but it should also take the learner closer to real life.

These texts can be a conversational lesson- a role play, a story or such a lead-in with a scope of language formulation or skill development that such a text creates or develops a high level of interest among all the learners. This will help the facilitator to engage the learners because they like interaction between them. This will also surely improve the learners' ability to receive and understand and achieve at least some degree of acquisition. "At the very least, some of the language will stick in their minds as the part of the process of language acquisition, and if the text is especially interesting and engaging, acquisition is likely to be even more successful." (Pg. 68, Harmer J.).

A learner-centred lesson also widens the scope of language formation and developing productive skills because the readers will put themselves in the characters. This will definitely develop the oral fluency. Further such text builds up curiosity (what happens next?) every moment as they move on with the text.

The rationale, lesson plan highlighting interaction patterns and a sample material along with the text to be adapted is presented in detail in the full paper. And, the sequence adapted and developed for Material Development in the form of tasks, I think fits the selected text into an "ESA" (Engage Study Activate)" sequence. (Pg. 71, Harmer J).

The material designed here adopts "ESA" and makes the learners to develop their skill for gist, specific information, complete understanding. Further, it can take the learners to explore the other language skills and blend it with grammar or language use to enhance and strike a balance between accuracy and fluency.

Key words: Material Development, Learner-Centered lesson, Tasks for gist; specific information, ESA (Engage Study Activate)

Introduction

This paper focuses on two aspects of a Learner-Centered lesson that is planning the lesson and managing the learner behaviour during a lesson with an objective of developing English Language Teaching materials for more effective learning and teaching. The planning, the teacher makes decisions about goals, activities, resource, timing, grouping, interaction patterns and other aspects of the lesson.

Lesson Planning involves decisions about the pedagogical dimensions of the lesson. But another important aspect of a lesson concerns the management of learners during the lesson. This includes eliciting learner's attention, maintaining their engagement in the lesson and organising them into pairs or groups so that the class gets more learner-centred and less teacher-centred. The varied interaction patterns between students like pairs, groups and at times solo will definitely increase learners' confidence and will motivate them to be more self-dependent in learning a language component and polishing the receptive skills and productive skills.

Planning of a Lesson

Lesson Plans are systematic records of a teacher's thoughts about what will be covered during a lesson. Richards (1998) suggests that lesson plans help the teacher think about the lesson in advance to “resolve problems and difficulties, to provide a structure for lesson, to provide a ‘map’ for the teacher to follow, and to provide a record what has been taught” (p.103). Daily Planning of lessons also benefits students because it considers the different backgrounds, interests, learning styles, and abilities of the students in one class.

Lesson Plan and its Essentials

An effective lesson plan starts with appropriate and clearly written objectives. An objective is a description of learning outcome. Objectives describe the destination (not the journey) we want our students to reach.

After writing the lesson objectives, teachers must decide the activities and procedures they will use to ensure the successful attainment of these objectives. Planning at this stage means thinking through the purposes and structures of the activities. This step involves planning the shape of the lesson with proper sequence of activities and tasks according to a language-based lesson or skill-based lesson.

Assessing the Plan

The final part of daily lesson planning happens after the lesson has ended, when the teacher must evaluate the success (or failure) of the lesson. Ur (1996) says it is important to think after teaching a lesson and ask, “whether it was a good one or not, and why”. This form of reflection, she says, is for self-development.

The following questions may also be useful for teachers to reflect on after conducting a lesson:

- What do you think the students learned?
- What went well and what didn't?
- Did the lesson get finished on time?
- What changes will you make in your teaching and Why?

Sample Lesson Plan with Materials

The level of students is at Pre – intermediate level and the length of the lesson is 60mins. The main aim here is to develop learners' ability to listen/read for specific information and develop writing skills in the context of story-writing.

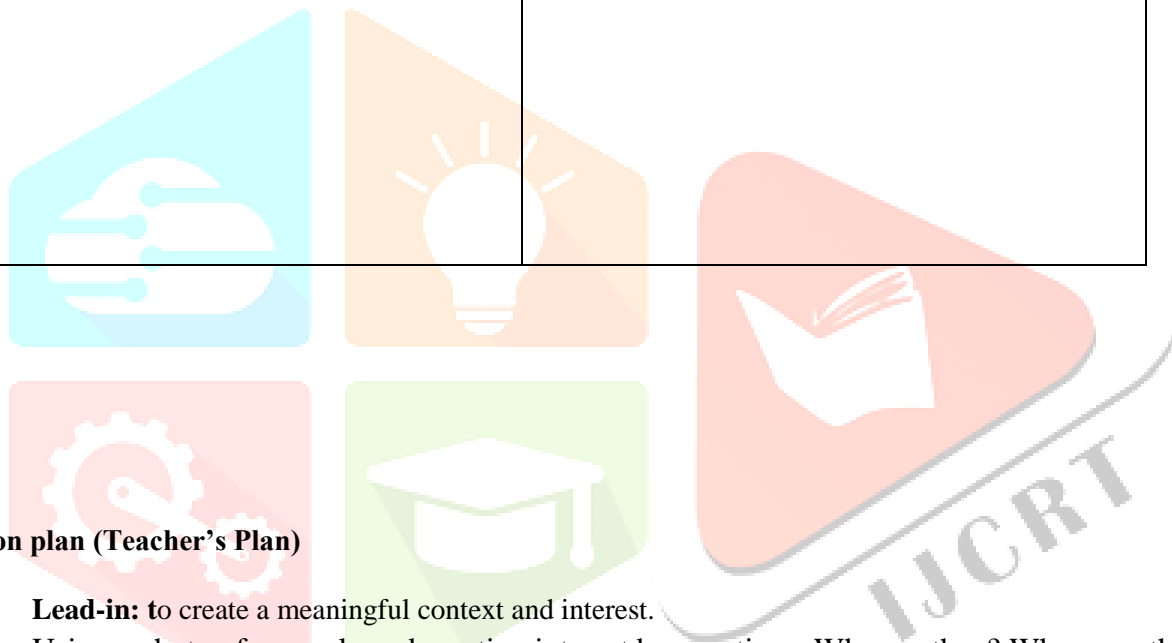
The Sub-aim is to develop learners' oral fluency by playing roles and to clarify falling and rising intonation (sure tune and unsure tune)

The Materials I use for designing skill-based lesson is **Visuals and Texts from “Get your Tenses Right” by Ronald Barnes.**

My assumptions about students’ knowledge/ abilities are: They know the use of simple present tense.

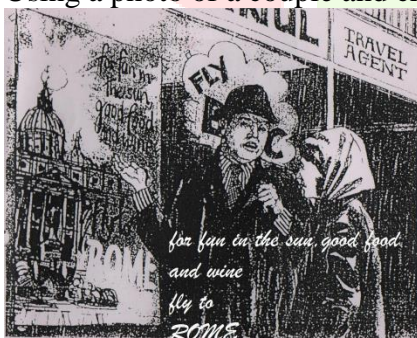
PROBLEMS STUDENTS WILL HAVE WITH:	MY SOLUTIONS:
<p>MEANING</p> <p>They may not understand intonation tunes with question tags. (unsure tune)</p>	<p>CCQs during the task.</p> <p>e.g.</p> <p>Does she know a lot about Anne’s holiday? N</p> <p>Is she gathering information? Y</p> <p>Is she confident enough in her statement? N</p>
<p>PRONUNCIATION</p> <p>They may not do the falling tune properly with question tag.</p> <p>(sure tune)</p>	<p>Drilling: choral and individual.</p>
<p>FORM</p> <p>Statements with question tags could be a problem.</p>	<p>Board work for tunes and tags both.</p> <p>Unsure tune: statement falling tone and tag rising tone.</p> <p>When the statement is positive the tag is negative and vice-versa.</p>
<p>SKILLS</p> <p>They might have problem in listening and understanding the text.</p>	<p>They’ll listen to the text again if required.</p>

<p>TASKS</p> <p>Some of them may not be able to write the role- play on their own.</p>	<p>Pair work will help them out to exchange and complete the task.</p>
<p>ACTIVITIES</p>	



Lesson plan (Teacher's Plan)

- **Lead-in:** to create a meaningful context and interest.
Using a photo of a couple and creating interest by questions. Who are they? Where are they?



- Elicit some more information from them.
 - **Meaning** – Concept Checking Question – to establish their understanding
 - **Pronunciation** – choral and individual drill.
 - **Forms** – word stress - write on board.
- Show them the picture and ask the students to fill-up the table.
- Sign-post the reading task and distribute the handout to them. Ask them to solve the questions written on the handout.
- Students will read the text and answer the questions.
- Students will discuss answers to reach at a common consensus and the teacher will monitor them.
- OHT – to check answers.

- Sign-post the handout and distribute the handouts to them to solve the questions written on it.
- Students will read the text in detail to find out the answers and write them.
- Students will check answers from each other.
- OHT – to check answers.

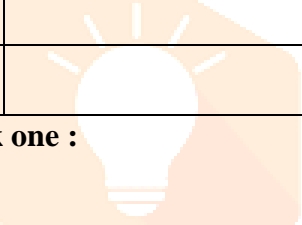
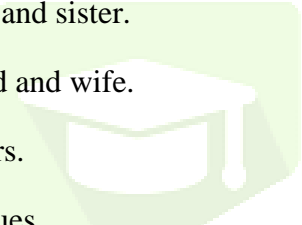
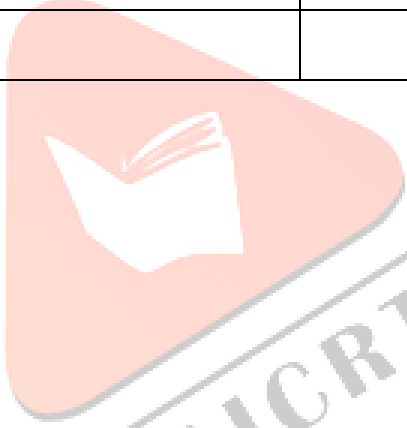
Ask students to play roles of the characters and then ask them to interchange their roles.

- Check intonation and monitor it.
- Correct the errors of intonation through board work. (MPF).
- Students will use the idea and the characters from the role-play to write a story and end it on their own.

Tasks (Materials Designed and Developed) for students

A. 1. Look at the picture and predict your answers:

1. Fill up the blocks:

	Who is in love?	Who is booking a ticket?	Who is very happy talking to Betty/George?
George			
Betty			

2. Who are they? Tick one :

1. They are friends.
2. They are brother and sister.
3. They are husband and wife.
4. They are strangers.
5. They are colleagues.

B. Listen to the text and quickly answer the following questions in “yes or no”:

1. Is George happy talking to Betty?
2. Is Betty in love with George?
3. Is George also in love with Betty?

C. Listen to text and answer the following questions:

1. Who's George talking to?
2. What's George doing at the travel agency?
3. When's he leaving for Paris?
4. Why's he going to Paris?
5. Who's meeting him at the airport?
6. Why is he going to act as interpreter?
7. How long is George going to stay in Paris?
8. When is his boss arriving?
9. What are they going to do after lunch?
10. Is George's firm doing well in France just now?
11. Who's George going to ring this evening?
12. When's Anne going on a holiday?

D. Listen and write 'S' for Sure and 'U' for Unsure for the following line.

1. She is on a holiday, isn't she?

Answers**A.**

1. No, he isn't.
2. Yes, she is.
3. No, he isn't.

B.

1. He's talking to Betty.
2. He's booking a plane ticket to Paris.
3. He's leaving for Paris tomorrow afternoon.
4. He's going to Paris on business.
5. His Paris representative is.
6. He's going to act as interpreter because George can't speak French very well.
7. He's going to stay in Paris for a couple of days.
8. He's arriving the day after tomorrow.
9. They're going to talk to their Paris branch.

10. No, it isn't.

11. He's going to ring up Anne.

12. She's going on Holiday next week.

C.

1. U

Reading Text (Material Adapted from the Book)

Betty: George! What on earth are you doing here?

George: I'm booking a plane ticket to Paris.

Betty: When are you leaving?

George: Tomorrow afternoon.

Betty: Are you going on business or for pleasure?

George: On business. Our Paris representative is meeting me at the airport and taking me to the hotel. He's going to act as interpreter because I can't speak French very well.

Betty: How long are you going to stay in Paris?

George: Only a couple of days. My boss is arriving the day after tomorrow. We're going to have lunch together, and then we're going to talk to our Paris branch. Our firm isn't doing so well in France just now.

Betty: I'm sorry to hear that. By the way, what are you doing this evening?

George: I'm going to ring up Anne and ask her out to the pictures.

Betty: Oh. She's on holiday, isn't she?

George: No, not yet. She's going on holiday next week.

Betty: She's lucky. Well, have a good time in Paris.

Rationale

How the Materials I devised and developed will help the class to be more learner-centred and to develop the learners' language skills

The tasks I devised here have varied interaction patterns making the class more learner-centred. The tasks in such lesson plans further comprises predicting exercise to personalize, gist task for an overview, reading for specific detail and post reading tasks for productive skills like speaking and writing. The tasks designed fit the reading text into an "ESA" (Engage Study Activate)" sequence. (Pg. 71, Harmer J). Thus, it involves the learners to learn and improve on their own and also through peers where the teacher becomes just a facilitator.

Conclusion

This paper focused on the day to day lesson planning decisions that teachers face. As we all have different styles of teaching and therefore planning, the suggestions here are not meant to be prescriptive. Teachers must allow themselves flexibility to plan in their own way, always keeping in mind the yearly, term and unit plans. As Bailey (1996) correctly points out, “In realizing lesson plans, part of a skilled teacher’s logic in use involves managing such departures from the original lesson plan to maximize teaching and learning opportunities” (p. 38, Harmer J). A clear plan will also maximise time and minimize confusion of what is expected of the students, thus making classroom management easier and learning better with the learner-centred approach.

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