

# Lesson Planning in the Second Language Teaching by Kitty B. Purgason: Article Review

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**ABSTRACT**— *Being a teacher can indeed be a demanding and challenging job. To be a successful teacher, one needs to know how to deal with various setbacks and occupational hazards like stress, brimming schedule, and the fact that we do relatively low paid, excruciating job which does not finish at the office or at our working place. The teacher's job comes with him after the working hours, to his home. Therefore, to be a successful teacher you need to love this occupation and be ready for the constant change, innovation and improvement. Otherwise, teaching does not make any sense, and classroom becomes difficult place for the teacher and the students. In the article, "Lesson Planning in the Second Language Teaching"; written by Kitty B. Purgason, we can find some important pointers regarding how to do lesson planning. These pointers may improve lesson content on the one hand and on the other hand may be helpful for a teacher in dealing with full schedule and short time preparation for the lesson.*

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## 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

It is well known fact (among the teachers) that sometimes while we are walking down the corridor, on our way to the lesson we think about the lesson, about the students and we think what to do in this lesson? The reason for our unpreparedness may be lack of time or simply overcrowded schedule, or some sudden, unexpected change, replacement, which got us into such situation. However, in a normal state of the affairs teachers should come prepared for the lesson, with the clear and well-defined aim and teaching plan. There are two types of teachers, one type usually relies on and follows the lesson plan which was made in advance. The other type of teachers usually relies on the experience and follows the current of the events in the classroom. It is out of question that even experienced teachers should have (at least long-term) lesson plan. Planning of the lesson is crucially important, since it enables the teacher to plan and teach in a limited period, with the best results possible. On the other hand, students can actually feel if the teacher is ready and is following some plan, therefore they gain in the self-confidence. If teacher is confident about teaching so are his students about learning.

Usually teachers are too occupied to write down detailed plans about the lessons to come, but it is very important and depending on the detailed and well defined plan, student's learning success may account.

The simplest and yet at the same time, the most precise and meaningful definition of lesson planning would be: *"Lesson planning is the process of taking everything we know about teaching and learning, along with the everything we know about our students in front of us, and putting it together to create road map for what class period will look like"*. (Purgason, 1991).

According to Purgason, planning lesson should contain following seven elements which are connected and interwoven into complex structure of what would be lesson road, and down which teacher is expected to navigate and drive: a) Second language acquisition theory, b) methodology, c) skill, d) audience, e) focus, f) context, g) philosophy of learning and teaching. Purgason goes on by explaining each of these elements in details and furthermore offers scheme in which teacher is a cook which makes a meal, with these elements as ingredients to make the meal. In order to prepare the meal, cook needs to take several facts in consideration, ingredients, taste, guests, environment, and to make interesting and yet tasteful meal.

There are numerous definitions of the lesson and the lesson plan through which teacher needs to navigate during the lesson period, some of them focus on lesson elements while others offer their own understanding what the plan or lesson should have. According to Harmer, the best model has a form of the PPP model, that is; lesson should have Presentation-Practice-Production model (Harmer, 2001). Further on Harmer somewhat changed his model and agreed on ESA model,

or simply Engage-Study-Activate model which in his opinion is more effective than PPP model. Some other researchers like Echevarria, Vogt & Short would advise SIOP model (Sheltered Immersion Observation Protocol) in which learners are literary immersed in language learning through the combination of the content and language learning. In Kurzweil and Scholl's opinion ECRIF model (Encounter, Clarify, Remember, Internalize, Fluently use) would be the right one to follow. Whatever model chosen, teacher needs to be aware that lesson needs to have different elements and that sometimes combination of these models might be necessary for our teaching.

## **2. A LESSON PLAN – DECISION MAKING (3-5 STEPS)**

### **2.1 Decisions before the lesson**

Planning is a means of making decisions. As teachers anticipate their class, they think about content, materials, sequencing, and timing in light of who their students are and what their objectives are. (Purgason, 2013)

Therefore, when teachers plan their lessons they need to follow three steps: in the first step of decision making: teacher needs to pay attention to the curriculum and objectives or learning outcomes of a learning period. In the second step teacher needs to decide whether objectives can be achieved with provided materials? Usually in this part teachers either add or remove necessary/unnecessary materials. In the third step teacher needs to check and take in consideration previous work and knowledge of the students. So teacher needs to decide if material is appropriate and whether students can follow and continue to learn. In addition to all this, teacher needs to fit all these elements into a limited period of time, and anticipate unplanned problems and develop contingency plan.

Finally teacher needs to appraise and overview the plan, in order to evaluate the plan in terms of:” high professional standards, sound principles of language teaching, meaningful learning outcomes, opportunities for extended meaningful language practice and use, effective class management, a coherent sequence of activities, student motivation to learn given the opportunity to succeed, and the teacher's personal philosophy of teaching.” (Purgason, 2013)

Hundreds of the questions related to the objectives, to methods, to class management, to students, to be considered in planning one single lesson plan. Whatever model (PPP, ESA, SIOP, ECRIF.....) or combination of the models teacher may opt out for; each lesson needs to have introduction, middle part and finish since they are inevitable parts and should be incorporated carefully. In cooking terms: introduction will be appetizer of the meal, middle part of the lesson will be the main course (main meal) and finish of the lesson will be the dessert. So, to spicy up the meal here are some of the recommendations and advices for the introduction, middle part and finish of the lesson:

In the beginning of the lesson it is important to motivate your students and to create suitable working atmosphere. What teacher can do in this part is to simply introduce the students with what they will be doing in the lesson and to start with appropriate warm up activity or game which will engage and attract the students to join learning.

After successfully introducing the topic and after having students engaged to work, teacher should carefully commence the middle part (and the most important part) of the lesson. In the middle part, teacher like a waiter serves different courses of meals, employing different teaching methods: making groups, integrating different skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking), including different learning styles (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic) navigating through teacher-oriented to student-oriented approaches and having different roles (organizer, observer, facilitator,... ) which may be assumed by the teacher.

In the end phase, teacher needs to serve the dessert which students will see as reward for hard work and it could be encouragement for further hard work and learning. So in this part teacher could point out what the students learned and improved, also teacher can draw the attention to what they will learn in the next lesson. (Sometime teachers opt out for relaxing games or relaxing music in the end of the lesson).

### **2.2 Decisions during the lesson**

It may happen that our plan does not work, in such situations teacher needs to either improvise or fall back to some back up activity which should be included in the contingency plan. The reasons for our plan not to work can be different, and successful (experienced) teacher should anticipate them and be ready for such situations. It may happen that our students did not do their homework or assignment which is essential for our lesson, or maybe we could face technical problem or simply it may occur that our students are not interested in the topic or class discussion. Another problem is the timing; sometimes it happens that we simply could not fit content into the limited time as we planned. In similar situations teacher should be ready and anticipate such problems, therefore teacher could have back-up activity or game, or teacher could simply skip less important activities and give them as a homework. It happens that our students take

over discussion and lead the way, if teacher sees such opportunity which Harmer calls “magical moment” (Harmer, 2007) he should let students to lead and expand discussion which will be beneficial for the whole class.

### 2.3 Decisions after the lesson

After the lesson, it would be desirable if teacher could reflect and overview his plan, this could provide the teacher with better insight of what was achieved during the lesson. Purgason advises to ask the following questions which could improve and planning and teaching:

- How long did each activity take?
- What might have led to something going slower or faster than anticipated?
- How did the students respond?
- Were there any students who seemed left behind or left out?
- What did the students leave class with that they did not have before? (Purgason, 2013).

After we answer these questions teacher can improve our plan so that he is able to avoid similar flaws the next time he plans for the lesson.

## 3. WRITING UP A PLAN

While thinking about the plan, on what to do in the next lesson, there are some unavoidable elements which need to be included in the lesson plan. A lesson plan must have following elements:

- ❖ **Comments of the procedures:** procedures and methodology how to explain/do are crucial part of a lesson plan.
- ❖ **Activity vs. timing:** this part of the plan shows how each activity will take time.
- ❖ **Objectives:** every plan needs to have clearly defined aims and goals which are to be achieved during a lesson.
- ❖ **Materials/equipment:** everything that teacher will use should be precisely noted.
- ❖ **Step by step details:** once the overall plan is ready, teacher (especially novice) should write in details whole procedure, technique and methods on how to explain/teach/reach/achieve with his students.
- ❖ **Interaction/setting:** what does the classroom look like? How students will sit? Will they work in groups, pairs, individually? Where should teacher stand?
- ❖ **Contingency plan:** Teacher needs to think in advance and anticipate potential problems and how to deal with them?

## 4. CONCLUSION

Starting point for the writing of a lesson plan can be anywhere, as long as the above listed elements are interwoven and integrated in the plan. Teacher is a waiter standing next to the refrigerator and deciding which meal to offer to his students, depending on a resources and time: teacher may choose between frozen ready meal from the refrigerator and a fresh new meal with fresh new ingredients just bought on market. (Purgason, 2013) Teacher is a cook, chef and waiter; since he needs to decide what is digestible and useful for his students, and how it should be served for the best results. Teacher needs to think about several factors which may influence and affect the course of teaching and learning. So to be successful teacher, you need to make plans like a road with many road signs which tell you how to drive and what to expect during the ride.

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