

HOW CAN I PREPARE AN IDEAL LESSON-PLAN?

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Abstract:

Preparing a lesson plan is one of the most challenging issues that novice teachers and students at their college levels face when they are asked to write a lesson plan (Bin-Hady, 2018). As a response to many of the students and teachers, the researchers try to set some solutions and guidance which can be even at limited level help such novice teachers and activate or sharpen skillful teachers. This paper provides novice teachers and students with theoretical and practical information about lesson-planning. It briefly defines lesson plan, explains its importance and sets the essential elements for a lesson plan. The second part of the paper focuses on the practical solution for writing lesson-plans. The researchers prepared different plans which focus on the four language skills and language areas. Such skill and areas are important to be concentrated on for enhancing learners in their language ability or using language communicatively. The researchers used Crescent English Course for Yemen (CECFY) as the content of this study because CECFY is the coursebook used to teach English at the Yemeni context.

Key Words: *lesson plan, teaching objectives, warming up, techniques and procedures, assessments.*

Introduction

Many queries have been continuously asking regarding lesson-plans, i.e. how and why to prepare lesson-plans? What are the essential elements of a good lesson plan? What language skills and areas should a teacher focus on his plan? And can you suggest us resources which can help us to understand ideal lesson-planning?

Before talking about the questions set preciously, for preparing lesson plans, the teacher should read the teaching materials for the lesson: pupils' book, (PB) workbook (WB) teachers' book (TB) and listen to the cassette if it is connected with that lesson. Next, it is the time now for the teacher to determine what the pupils will learn from that specific lesson, (teaching objectives). Such objectives are written at the top of TB however, they are little bit general. The

teacher needs to specify them clearly. After reading the teaching materials and determining the teaching objectives, it is the time for asking ourselves which teaching techniques and procedures are applicable to achieve our teaching objectives. Then the teacher may think about hooking pupils' previous knowledge to the new lesson (warming up activity). Finally, to check up the achievement of the teaching objectives, the teacher assesses his performance after each activity or task given to the pupils. Every step should be timed and set on the lesson plan.

Review the literature

However any novice teachers' training program must support trainees with enough practices about how to prepare lesson plans, when novice teachers start writing their own plans, they become confused (John, 2006). Planning is an important step which reminds the teacher what to do in the class and gives students confidence about their teacher (Harmer, 2001). Studies focused on the problems that novice teachers encounter at their planning or applying the plan steps during their classroom teaching (Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant, & Kennetz, 2014). Nevertheless, it has been viewed that changing from novice teacher to an experienced one depends on many criteria and needs long time adaptation (Berliner, 2001). In the Arabic context, a study which has been conducted in the Emirates context found that novice teachers not only encounter difficulties in the classroom management but also in the implication of lesson planning (Dickson et al., 2014). Another study conducted on the Yemeni graduated students on their fourth Year at their B.A program found that novice teachers face many linguistic difficulties as well as encounter many problems in the planning and applying the lesson steps according to the allowed time (Bin-Hady, 2018). Thus, the current study aims at helping the novice teachers with the basic elements of plan and how to apply them according to the given time.

What is a lesson plan?

A lesson plan is a schedule that tells the teachers what to do in a specific time to specific group of learners about specific lesson. It is also defined as "the road map or framework used to plan and conduct every class from first meeting to final exam. In addition, lesson plans ensure you have created a logical, systematic learning process essential to making sure your students achieve the most learning in the least time." (Faculty Training and Development, 2006: 3). It is also viewed as "an extremely useful tool, that serves as a combination guide, resource, and historical document reflecting our teaching philosophy, student population, textbooks, and most importantly, our goals for our students." (Jensen, 2002: 403). Thus, a lesson plan helps a teacher to shift from one step to another smoothly and keeps the pupils focused and encouraged to concentrate on the steps of a lesson.

Why preparing lesson-plans?

Preparing lesson-plans organizes the time of the classroom and helps teachers to achieve their lessons efficiently with the given time. O'Neill *et al.*, (2011) suggest that "Good lesson

planning results in efficient use of classroom time. Students respond to a well-organized lesson where no time is wasted, and the teacher's job is thus made less difficult." (p.12).The importance of planning lessons can be summarized as:

1. Helps teachers to think through what learners will achieve in the lesson.
2. Provides a framework for organizing ideas, methodology, materials etc.
3. Helps teachers to know where they are going and how they are going to get there.
4. Helps make the lesson coherent.
5. Avoids over-domination of coursebooks.
6. Demonstrates to learners that teacher knows what s/he is doing.
7. Being prepared boosts teacher confidence.
8. Helps to identify any problems or difficulties which may arise during the lesson.
9. Helps teachers to adapt to different classes.
10. Developmental – a learning document for teachers to reflect on after the lesson.
11. Helps to identify the kinds of activities and materials to include to achieve aims.
12. A plan can link the lesson explicitly to syllabus objectives. (British Council, 2008 :4).

Before planning any daily lesson the teacher should:

1. Read the lesson notes and the lesson materials and listen to the Cassette Section where relevant.
2. Think about the stated learning objectives and consider whether the recommended procedure will achieve this aim. If necessary, amend the procedure to suit the particular needs of your pupils.
3. Think about any difficulties your pupils may have and decide how you can best present the materials so as to deal with these.If the procedure advises asking questions and provides one or two examples, prepare other suitable questions and write them in your plan
4. Estimate the time needed for each stage of your lesson. If you want to set homework, prepare it now.
5. Make sure that your plan allows adequate time for pupil to pupil interaction.
6. Make sure also that there is a variety of activities in the lesson. The general pattern of a lesson should be:

A short teacher-led introduction

B pupil activities

C short teacher-led conclusion. (O'Neill et al., 2011: 12-13).

The essential elements of good lesson-plans

An ideal lesson plan should contain at least four essential parts: teaching objectives, warming up activity, techniques and procedures that can be used to achieve the teaching objectives, and assessment to check whether the followed techniques and procedures have achieved the teaching objectives or not.

Teaching objectives

A good teacher should know what s/he is going to teach their students. Thus, setting the teaching objectives for the lesson implicitly is essential for good teaching and ideal lesson-plan writing. To set the teaching objectives, teachers should read the teaching materials properly before planning. Including reading pupils' book, workbook and teacher's guide for the specific step that s/he is going to teach to students. It is advised that the teacher to utter or write the objectives to his students before starting the lesson, therefore, students' focus will be directed on the objectives not on something inessential. For example a teacher may say: "today we are going to learn new words used to describe animals' covering" (Crescent 6 unit1 step 1) so, by the end of this class, you should be able to:

- ✓ Memorize the new words used to describe animal covering;
- ✓ Utter the new learnt words correctly and figure them up when the teacher say them;
- ✓ Using the newly learnt words to describe the animals' coverings in complete sentences both spoken and written.

Obviously teaching objectives differ from one lesson to another and from teaching one language skills to another or even the same language skill has different teaching objectives. For example a reading lesson may focus on reading for gist, another for details, a third for reading comprehension, and forth for enjoyment, etc. Some lessons may focus on two or three from the above types of readings but not all.

Similarly, a lesson may focus on more than one language skills. It may focus on listening and reading; reading and speaking, or reading and writing etc. Hence, teachers should be aware of that by setting their objectives to include more than one language skills.

Finally, the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) LSRW cannot be taught in isolation. They need to be introduced with language areas. Language areas are the linguistic underlying system that the language is built up from, like vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. Thus, such language areas should be considered when writing the teaching objectives in the lesson-plans. The teaching objectives in the template plans have not been modified and mentioned as they have been in the teacher's book. The task of modifying them is given to the teachers to reform them as they like.

Warming up activity

Warming up activity is the kind of activities which aim to prepare the learners and insert them into the lesson. Any good lesson-plan should give time to call students' attention to the lesson being taught. According to Dixon (2016) warming up activity is "a little activity ...[which] activates background knowledge, intrigues students, and gives students access to all that they know." (n.p). It is not wise for the teachers to insert directly in the new lesson without preparing the students to take part in the lesson. Good teachers usually make use of their students' background information to introduce the new lesson and make such knowledge as a corner-stone that the new lesson depends on. However warming up activities are of good importance, the teachers should not lose his time on them. It is suggested for a 45 minutes lesson, the warming up should not be given more than 5 minutes.

Techniques and procedures

Different teachers use various teaching techniques to teach the same point in a certain lesson. As mentioned previously a good teacher should specify his teaching objectives and warm up his pupils to participate effectively in the lesson steps. Thus, techniques and procedures are the teaching ways that teachers use to perform a certain activity. For reading a teacher may use guiding questions as signs to help pupils while reading a text. Similarity in listening, a teacher may prepare the pre-listening task by setting some questions that direct the pupils to what they are going to listen to. In speaking, a teacher may set an information gap activity or role play between learners and acting pupils to take role in them.

On the language area, a teacher may write on the board some vocabulary and introduce them to the class. Therefore, pupils are going to practice their pronunciation and using them in full sentences. Finally, grammar can be set whether deductively or inductively and later on the teacher should instruct pupils to actualize the learnt rule in real use of language. Different activities for the four language skills and language areas will be clarified in the next steps.

Assessment

A good teacher should check the efficiency of their teaching by asking questions about what they have taught to their pupils. Nunan (2015) defines assessment as "[t]ools, techniques, and procedures for determining what learners know and can do in relation to a particular knowledge domain." (p. 183). A teacher can do the assessment by transferring the teaching objectives into questions and check whether the pupils can answer them or not. Teachers should not expect that the teaching objectives to be achieved a hundred percent. However, the higher the percentage, the more efficient are the teaching techniques. Teachers can amend their teaching techniques day by day till they get the high percentage in assessment and they can write down any problem that encounters and hampers them from achieving their objectives.

Methodology

The study uses context analysis for a coursebook named: Crescent Course for Yemen 6. A course book which is taught for the third year of Yemeni secondary school students. The analysis focuses on the four language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing. It also applies on lessons which focuses on vocabulary, and pronunciation. Each lesson plan has essential elements which are: lesson objectives, warming up activities, techniques and procedures to be followed by the teachers and finally the assessment.

Language skills and areas to be focused on in lesson-plans

Listening

Listening skill is presented in Crescent English course for Yemen to develop learners' skills in pronunciation, accumulating general meaning of the text and picking up specific information (O'Neill et al., 2011: 14) . Thus, focusing on the different kinds of listening can develop learners' overall competence in listening. Listening skill is best taught by brining authentic materials that belong of learners' high interest. Teaching listening can be planned as:

Table :1

Lesson plan for listening

Lesson title:	Crescent 6: Unit: 1, Step: 7 PB 6/7 CS4	Language skill: listening	Language area: Pronunciation/grammar
1	Objectives Listen for gist and detail		Time 45m
2	Warming up I warm up my pupils by telling them that they are going to hear a conversation between two men who have a problem. I don't give them any further information, since they have to answer questions about the general situation after they listen to the tape.		5

3	<p>Techniques and Procedures</p> <p>Review I play the cassette section step four once straight through. Then I have my pupils answer the questions in Work Book (WB), step 1.7A. Again, I play the cassette again and let them check their answers. I also request my pupils to read the questions in WB1.7B before listening to the cassette again. They will then know exactly what information they are looking for. I also play the cassette once or twice and then have my pupils answer the questions. Furthermore, I draw a rough map on the board and have pupils come to the front of the class and mark their answers on the map. Whenever there are disagreements, I have pupils tell me which phrase or sentence gave them the answer.</p>	10
	<p>Presentation of New Material I have my pupils try WB1.7C with a partner first. I monitor their work and help where necessary. I have some of the pupils with the best descriptions come to the front and tell the rest of the class. I make sure that pupils understand exactly what they have to do here. Then I have them perform the role play in pairs. If space permits, I tell them sit back so that they are not looking at each other. Pupil B in each pair should have the map and try to discover where his / her partner is. I usually give pupils a chance to play both parts in the role play and monitor their work, helping if necessary. I avoid correcting too much, as the focus in this activity is on fluency. I also make a note of common mistakes and deal with them once the role play has finished.</p>	15
	<p>Pronunciation At this step I focus on the pronunciation of new vocabulary by listing them on the board and let my pupils listen to them while I play the cassette and then let them use the coral repetition to train them on the pronunciation.</p>	5
	<p>Grammar I explain to my pupils the new structures and vocabulary used in description and give them some examples. Later on, I request them to use the new structure in describing real things.</p>	5
	<p>Closing (activity such as game, music, flashcards, or video) Still in their pairs, I have pupils play the guessing game in WB1.7E. If necessary, I model the game first by describing a scene that is familiar to the pupils and having them guess the place I am describing.</p>	5
	4	<p>Assessment Assessment is usually done after each activity or task.</p>

(O'Neill, Snow, & Peacock, 1999: 35-36).

Speaking

Crescent English course for Yemen is also aimed to develop learners' ability to use the English in real situations. That can be done by growing up their confident and providing them with vocabulary and structures which can be used to develop their language functions, i.e., using the language appropriately according to the situation (O'Neill et al., 2011:15).

Table :2

Lesson plan for speaking

Lesson title:	Crescent 6: Unit:1, Step:6 PB5 WB5/6	Language skill Speaking	Language areas: Vocabulary /grammar
1	Objective Describe a scene		Time 45m
2	Warm up activity Teacher elicits from pupils as many words as possible to describe the weather. List them on the board. Then have pupils look out of the window and try to describe what they can see.		5
3	Review Have pupils match the descriptions of the weather on PB5 to the pictures and then write the appropriate numbers in the boxes in WB1.6A1		10
	Presentation of vocabulary -a scene Elicit from the class what they can see in the picture. Present new words without reference to the numbers. Say, for example, There is a desert, it is behind the mountain. Either individually or in pairs, have pupils work to match the eight pictures in the PB to the words. They should write their answers in WB1.6A2		15
	Vocabulary development Have pupils complete WB1.6B. Confirm the answers before moving on to the next activity.		5
	Grammar Get the pupils to describe what they can see in pairs using "There is / are". Encourage them to add details. For example, There is a river between two hills. When they have finished, elicit complete descriptions from individuals		5
	Closing Pupils fill in the blanks with words from the box. When they have finished, have them compare their answers with a partner. Encourage them to discuss any differences. Finally, go round the class asking pupils to read out one sentence each.		5

4	Assessment Assessment is usually done after each task or activity.	
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Reading

However reading is taught in all schools, it is usually done by using grammar translation method, i.e., reading a text and translate it into Arabic. A good teacher should train their pupils on all the different kind of readings: Reading for gist, reading for specific information, or reading for comprehension.

Table :3

Lesson plan for reading

Lesson title: Unusual animal	Crescent:6. PB3/ WB4	Language skill Reading	Language areas: Pronunciation/grammar
1	Objectives Read for gist, detail, and vocabulary.		Time 45m
2	Warm up Teacher uses the pictures and title to introduce the topic. Then, I have pupils read the instructions, elicit possible answers, I do not confirm any answers yet. Teacher encourages and motivates pupils for the new reading lesson entitled (Unusual animal). Teacher also urges them to see the pictures in their text books and ask them what they can see in the pictures. Why such animal is unusual? Where does it live? Etc.		5
3	Review I give my pupils five minutes to read the article. I encourage them to skip over words that they do not know for the time being - they will have an opportunity for detailed reading when doing the Workbook activities. Whenever the time is over, I ask the questions to the class as a whole and encourage discussion if there are any disagreements for five minutes.		10
	Presentation of New Material Teachers explains the new vocabulary that students could not understand by listing them on the board, (title, divided, part of, male, female, whereas, intense, unlike, back (= part of body), coat (of an animal), well-known, Arabia).		15
	Pronunciation		

	Teacher focuses on the pronunciation of the new words and the pronunciation of new structures (comparison and contrast) (like, as well as, however, etc.) week form and stress form.	5
	Grammar Teacher explains the usage of comparison and contrast conjunctions like, (as well as, however, etc.) and encourage the class to use the structures in communicative practice.	5
	Closing (activity such as game, music, flashcards, or video) I model the game by describing an animal to the class. They should guess which animal I am describing. Then have pupils do the same with their partner.	5
4	Assessment Assessment is usually done after each task or activity.	

Writing

However, Crescent English course for Yemen aims to develop learners in writing reports, writing skill is hardly taught to pupils. Writing skill depends largely on other skills like reading and listening (O’Neill et al., 1999: 21). It is also used to check pupils' knowledge in vocabulary and grammar.

Table: 4

Lesson plan for writing

Lesson title: Armenia- 7, December 1988	Crescent 6: Unit:2, Step:11 PB16 WB26/27	Language skills: Writing	Language areas: grammar
1	Objective Prepare to write a news report.		Time 45m

2	<p>Warm up Teacher encourages pupils telling them to describe what the piece of information is about.</p> <p>Teacher can also ask them have they heard about hurricane and in what countries such natural disaster erupt. And what is the measurement used to tell the destroy-strength of such disaster.</p>	5
3	<p>Review Have pupils spend some time reviewing PB14, the article about a hurricane hitting Central America. They should also look at their answers to WB2.7A.</p>	10
	<p>Grammar Teacher asks pupils to check the tenses used in the news report. This activity will help them to use similar tense in the next step during their writing for report.</p>	5
	<p>Presentation of New Material Teacher motives pupils to answer the WB2.12B activities about the reports on the earthquake in the previous PB16.</p>	5
	<p>Write a new report Teacher encourages pupils work individually to write their report. While they are doing this, the teacher moves around and help where necessary.</p>	15
	<p>Closing If time permits, the teacher tells some of the better ones read out their reports to the class.</p>	5
4	<p>Assessment Assessment is usually done after each task or activity.</p>	

Language areas

So far, the four language skills are discussed and given template plans. Language areas are the system of language or what is called by Chomsky as linguistic competence. They are grammar, phonology and vocabulary. All the language areas are also mentioned in the lesson plans during our explanation for the four language skills. As it has been reported that pronunciation is neglected during the teaching at Yemeni secondary school (Bin-Hady, 2016), the researchers set a plan for teaching pronunciation to easify for novice teachers the difficulty they find in teaching pronunciation.

Table: 5

Lesson plan for pronunciation

Lesson title:	Crescent: 6. Unit:2, step:9 WB22-23	Language skill	Language areas: Pronunciation/grammar
1	Objective To practice questions with correct intonation. Speak freely.		Time 45m
2	Warm up I warm up my pupils by working through the notes about pronunciation. I have them practice the examples in the notes for Yes/No questions and make up some Wh- questions to see if they can get the correct intonation.		5
3	Review I ask individual pupils to try the six practice questions in WB2.9A. When a pupil has the correct intonation, I repeat it myself and have the whole class repeat it after me.		10
	Presentation of New Material I make sure that my pupils understand what they have to do in activity B. Then I, let them work on it individually before confirming their answers. B Again, I ask individual pupils to say the questions. When a pupil has the correct intonation, I repeat it myself and have the whole class repeat it after me.		15
	Pronunciation I play the audio material and let me class repeat after the tape recorder to enhance their pronunciation and get good training about English intonation, Where patterns associating intonation and grammar are predictable, I highlight these to my students. I see these as starting-points, rather than rules. Some examples are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wh-word questions: falling intonation 		5

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes/No questions: rising • Statements: falling • Question-Tags: 'chat' - falling; 'check' - rising • Lists: rising, rising, rising, falling 	
	<p>Closing - 5 minutes (activity such as game, music, flashcards, or video)</p> <p>A. I give pupils some time to prepare appropriate questions for the interview they have to conduct. Then I put them into pairs and have them interview their partners. They should write the answers in their WBs. I make sure that every pupil has a chance to ask and answer the questions.</p> <p>B. I ask pupils to provide some information about their partner and his / her family. Teacher explains the new grammar rules and encourages the class to use the new structure in communicative practice.</p>	5
4	<p>Assessment Assessment is usually done after each task or activity.</p>	

Conclusion

This paper tries to answer some of the various questions that novice teachers or students at fourth year level face at Yemen colleges of education. Such questions are: what is a lesson plan? Why should I prepare a lesson plan? How can I prepare a lesson plan? What are the essential elements of lesson plans? The researchers gave practical answer to the above mentioned questions. Moreover, the paper actualizes such answer by planning lessons from Crescent English Course for Yemen 6. Such planning can be used as a sign to help novice teachers and as a guide which can help teachers to teach Teaching School Text subject which is usually taught at Yemen College at third year in the B.A program.

Teachers are advised to use this guide and apply it to many lessons in CERY. The more that students applied planning the better they can internalize the skills of planning and the better they teach at their schools.

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Appendix:

1	Objectives	
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