

**RAE**

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2. **TITULO:** LESSON PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR PRE SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS
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6. **PALABRAS CLAVE:** planeación de clases, metodología, proceso enseñanza – aprendizaje.
7. **DESCRIPCION DEL TRABAJO:** El objetivo principal de este artículo es dar una guía a los profesores novatos que necesitan alguna ayuda cuando están haciendo sus planeaciones de clases. El documento ha sido estructurado en tres capítulos para discutir la información en una forma organizada: que es una planeación de clases, los principales elementos alrededor de la planeación y las etapas a seguir durante el proceso. Al final, las conclusiones hacen reflexionar al profesor sobre el hecho de que la planeación de clase demanda tiempo y esfuerzo pero al final siempre es una recompensa para los estudiantes y su propio aprendizaje.
8. **LINEAS DE INVESTIGACION:** Formación y Practica Pedagógica.
9. **CONCLUSIONES:** Los profesores novatos deben tener en cuenta que una clase en un proceso complejo que requiere tomar en cuenta elementos cruciales como el contexto del estudiante, motivación, materiales, objetivos y una estructura metodológica que puede variar dependiendo lo que el profesor quiera lograr con cada clase. Estos elementos darán al profesor una guía para completar cada clase.

Cuando se enseña una clase, es importante tomar notas acerca de las dinámicas observadas en el salón de clase las cuales serán de ayuda para las siguientes sesiones. Adicionalmente, es recomendable prestar atención a la metodología del profesor del colegio, pero más importante, a la actitud de los estudiantes hacia la actividad propuesta en la planeación. En este sentido, los profesores pueden empezar a seleccionar que clase de actividades serán buenas para los estudiantes.

En conclusión, la palabra clave en la planeación de clases es “adaptar” ya que no se puede establecer una “receta intransferible” para dirigir las actividades o las dinámicas de la clase ya que todo depende de las condiciones del lugar y las características de los estudiantes y su estado de humor. A pesar del hecho de que los profesores son quienes guían las clases y deciden que hacer y como guiar a los estudiantes, ellos deben ser conscientes acerca del hecho de que dejar lugar para las contribuciones de los estudiantes mantiene un buen ambiente en el salón, mejora el proceso enseñanza – aprendizaje y le da poder a los aprendices de ser agentes activos de la educación.

LESSON PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR PRE SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS

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Lesson Planning Guidelines for Pre Service English Teachers

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### **Abstract**

Throughout decades, teachers have been doing research about lesson planning in order to do an effective class and get a satisfactory result in the teaching-learning process. Their findings have provided educators with countless strategies to reach the common goal of maximizing learners' language learning. Moreover, theoretical foundations have given novice teachers the opportunity to feel excited about this topic, work hard to accomplish their own expectations, leave their marks on institutions and students and, of course, to feel proud of themselves. The primary focus of this article is to give a guide to novice teachers who need some help when doing their lesson plans. The document has been structured in three chapters to discuss the information in an organized way: what lesson planning is, the main elements surrounding the planning and the stages to follow during the process. At the end, the conclusions make teachers reflect upon the fact that lesson planning demands time and effort but at the end it is always a reward for students and their own learning.

Keywords: lesson planning, methodology, teaching-learning process

### **Resumen**

A lo largo de décadas, los profesores han estado investigando sobre la planificación de clases con el fin de hacer una clase efectiva y obtener un resultado satisfactorio en el proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje. Sus hallazgos han proporcionado a los educadores con un sinnúmero de estrategias para alcanzar el objetivo común de maximizar el aprendizaje del lenguaje de los estudiantes. Por otra parte, los fundamentos teóricos han dado a los profesores novatos la oportunidad de sentirse emocionados por este tema, trabajar duro para lograr sus propias expectativas, dejar su marca en las instituciones y los estudiantes y, por supuesto, sentirse orgullosos de sí mismos. El objetivo principal de este artículo es dar una guía a los profesores novatos que necesitan alguna ayuda cuando están haciendo sus planeaciones de clases. El documento ha sido estructurado en tres capítulos para discutir la información en una forma organizada: que es una planeación de clases, los principales elementos alrededor de la planeación y las etapas a seguir durante el proceso. Al final, las conclusiones hacen reflexionar al profesor sobre el hecho de que la planeación de clase demanda tiempo y esfuerzo pero al final siempre es una recompensa para los estudiantes y su propio aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: planeación de clase, metodología, proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje

### **Introduction**

Planning a class is a process that involves the teacher, the student and the environment surrounding the class dynamics. It is important to create a good environment in the classroom that promotes learning and motivation for students to participate in the different activities proposed by the teacher who should analyze the necessities he or she sees in the classroom. It is the teacher's task to take into account different factors such as the students' school context, familiar issues and motivations that could affect the development of the class and the learning process.

That is why it is important to consider that the class is not just a physical facility to learn but a space where they can have fun, work cooperatively and collaboratively. The classroom is a place where learners know new people and construct knowledge since they acquire information and share what is learned and experienced with others. All the elements that teachers have to take into account when developing a class should be described in their lesson planning because teachers can foresee the activities and reflect upon what they see, perceive and realize in their classes. In this regard, the lesson plan sheds lights on strengths and weaknesses and encourages teachers to evaluate what is to be reinforced.

Accordingly, different authors have given their perspectives about what a lesson plan involves and what teachers should take into account when planning. The purpose of this article is to discuss what a teacher should keep in mind when planning English classes from the beginning of the academic year. This document is expected to be a guide for pre service teachers who could feel self-doubting when planning their classes for the first time and experience difficulty with the

selection of suitable tasks, the sequence that should be followed and what to do when things do not happen as planned.

In order to give some guidelines to beginner teachers the structure of this article will be divided into two main chapters. The first one is focused on some definitions of lesson planning to have a general scope of lesson planning. The second chapter discusses the issues that teachers should keep in mind when planning a class, that is, what novice teachers have to take into account before, during and after the class development. The first stage, before, is related to what a teacher should think of and reflect upon to foresee activities and attitudes. The second one, during the class, embraces the development of the plan through which it is discussed how to adjust the activities that are already in the plan to the classroom environment and students' behavior and what to take into account to maintain an effective learning environment. The final stage, after the lesson, is about the evaluation of the plan and some elements to take into account for the next lesson planning, that is, how teachers make changes and apply what he or she has learned from the class to the following plans. All these stages are described to show the importance of planning a class not only to establish a step by step process in the class but also to learn from the mistakes to do better lesson planning.

At the end of the article the reader will find the conclusions of this theoretical debate showing the most important elements to take into account when doing a lesson plan, such as time, structure, methodologies, etc., that guide a lesson and that are important to keep in mind in the stages of a lesson.

### **What is a lesson plan?**



Throughout years, different authors have given and shared their opinions about what a lesson plan is and what to take into account when planning in order to guide teachers and people who at any moment need a brief explanation of what it is and what it involves. However, those opinions will be helpful to some extent, due to the fact that nowadays the teacher has to face different types of difficulties when guiding his or her class, as students change over the years and their behavior needs a different treatment compared to students from five or ten years ago.

Although there are differences in time between teachers and students, it is important to take into account the researcher's points of view about a lesson plan, since they are the main foundations of the topic. Theoretical principles will always be crucial because, even with the time differences, a definition of a lesson plan no matter if it is ten or twenty years ago, will be helpful for novice teachers' lesson planning and future research about the topic or related topics. In this regard, taking into account Spratt, Pulverness, & Williams (2005) a lesson plan is:

A set of notes that helps us to think through what we are going to teach and how we are going to teach it. It also guides us during and after the lesson, we can identify the most important components of a lesson plan by thinking carefully about *what* we want our learners to do and *how* we want them to do it. (p. 91)

This definition gives us a brief explanation of what a lesson is supposed to be as their definition states which items are important to take into account when planning; the *what* and the *how*. They are the basic questions when doing a lesson plan since the answer to these questions gives us the starting point from which a novice teacher can begin his or her lesson for the assigned course.

Despite the fact that the definition is useful, it is very general for pre service teachers when the authors state that a lesson plan is a set of notes that guides the teacher only during and after the lesson. Although it is a valuable opinion, novice teachers should keep in mind that a lesson plan should be more than a note, it has to have every detail about the activities we are going to do in such a way that the lesson plan becomes a real guide not only for the current lesson but for the next one. This idea is supported by Jensen (2001) because the author states that: “a lesson plan is 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 goal for our students” (p. 403).

According to this, a lesson plan is not just a guide of what activities a teacher will do in the class; the lesson plan should reflect the context in which the lesson is carried out and also the teacher’s perspective of a good lesson plan. Since the planning includes activities guided by a communicative goal, it is important for the teacher to show in which ways the goal can be accomplished and which challenges is the teacher expected to face in the next classes.

Jensen (2001) mentions something important in lesson planning that is the teaching philosophy: what teachers consider important when designing a lesson plan, it is the way each teacher plans which most of the time depends on the experience of the teacher and the suitability to the classroom. An example of this is the case between experienced ESL teachers against novice teachers; experienced teachers tend to make mental plans of what they are going to teach; on the other hand, novice teachers tend to create very detailed lesson plans where they demonstrate what they have learned in their theory classes and show it in their lesson plans.

Another way to see a lesson plan is mentioned by Jensen (2001) who talks about the use of textbooks as lesson plan; novice teachers have to learn how and when to use a textbook, that is according with what they want to accomplish with their students.

Using a textbook requires more work than it seems, as the teacher can take it as a kind of “bible” used during the whole class because parents expect their children to use the book as much as possible and to take advantage of it, after all, that is the reason why they buy it. However, these reasons should not limit or lead the lesson of the teacher, as the book can sometimes be fun but it can become boring and predictable in the students’ learning process. A good use of a textbook is one in which it is used just to practice some activities from the four skills or to go deeper into a topic.

In short words, the general purpose of doing a lesson plan is not just to guide the class and give an organization to the activities but to have an overview of the class. Lesson planning should tell you how you are directing your classes and show you to what extend your lesson plans are suitable to use in the future helping other teachers who will have the same course and will need ideas for successful activities.

### **What does a lesson plan involve?**

A lesson plan usually has a lot of information about the classroom and the activities, it is crucial that in the lesson plan the teacher includes all information about the activities, the school and the students. When planning a lesson it is important that the teacher takes into account every detail of the setting, that is the student context, the classroom environment and the kind of activities; that is why in this section I am going to look at the elements teachers should include in the lesson plan and what a lesson plan requires to be complete and used more than once.

There are plenty of elements to take into account when planning a lesson, and even more when we look at the characteristics of the context, for example, it is not the same planning for a bilingual school than planning for a public school in which a bilingual program is just being implemented. For this reason, I am going to talk about the most important features in a lesson that will be helpful for novice teachers in their first period of practicum, what they should take into account in their first classes when they do not know the group nor the students' interests and level.

### **Context**

Enerson, Plank, & Johnson (2000) state that “one of the most useful things you can do before you begin thinking about specific activities for a particular class is to reflect on who your students are and what they can reasonably be expected to know and do” (p. 3). The first day at the practicum, pre service teachers need to look for ways in which they can take advantage of the school teacher or the information he or she gives in order that they can identify quickly students' personalities.

Usually, the first time a novice teacher gets to the school in which she or he is going to start their practicum, he or she expects to get enough information to guide their activities in order to show a good first impression; from this point of view it is important to take into account every detail or hint the school teacher can give you. In some cases, the teacher just gives you the course and the schedule and you will have to work with that information but, in some other cases, the main teacher will give you hints about the classroom, for example, the likes and dislikes of the students, the methodology he or she uses, what kind of activities are preferred by the students and what kind of methodology is not good with them.

In this regard, it is important not only for novice teachers but for teachers in general to get a general view of their students' context from the first day in order to have an idea of what kind of activities will be appropriate for students. Throughout time, teacher may acquire the ability to modify activities, make decisions and improvise activities during the class according to the students' attitude and classroom environment.

During the process of knowing your students there are plenty of “getting to know you” activities in which you can get general information from your students such as, names, likes, dislikes, expectations of the class, strengths and weaknesses. This type of activities may be a good way to identify certain characteristics of students' context which in a certain way are more effective than talking to each student in isolation.

### **Motivation**

A motivating classroom will demonstrate how much you, as the teacher, know your students and for how long the class will have a nice development until the moment students start feeling bored and the activities start appearing less attractive to learners. The fact that an activity does not produce the expected results or that our material does not work, does not mean that we are not good teachers, or that our methods are not effective. Conversely, it means that we are learning and that these stages will represent our first acquisition in our practicum, as we get to know what kind of activities work with certain students, we recognize the advantages and disadvantages of the setting and start identifying different characteristics of the students' context that will guide our teaching.

Dörnyei (2001) states that “among the factors that account for the qualities of exceptional language teachers is their enthusiasm for teaching, the high expectations they set for their

learners, and the relationships they have with them” (p. 82). As a matter of fact, it is important to show a good attitude towards the class in order to create a good relationship with your students and to motivate them since the beginning of the class. It is advisable to demonstrate that your classes worth the effort and that you are in front of them not just to talk but to listen and share.

## **Materials**

Another aspect that lesson plan should take into account is the materials that novice teachers use in their practicum given that it is important to establish what kind of materials will be suitable in the class. Consequently, teachers have to consider the characteristics of the classroom such as the age, the students’ context, the number of students and of course, the topic, because it will be easier to select ideal materials and aids that will be used as a bridge between students and learning. In relation to this matter, Brown (2001) points out that “it may seem a trivial matter to list materials needed, but good planning includes knowing what you need to take with you or to arrange to have in your classroom” (p. 166).

The purpose of the materials should not only be to help students practice certain topics but also to guide the class in a structured way because the materials may give the teacher an idea of how the lesson could be carried out and how long an activity will take. This guide will serve as a path for teachers to establish how many activities he or she will need.

Something to take into account for the selection of materials is, although it seems easy, the fact that evaluating teaching resources is a time consuming task because it is not only a matter of looking for a worksheet. Novice teachers have to keep in mind that education nowadays is a challenging process and that in a class, even if it is a basic level, you have to try to

work on the four skills as much as possible so as to give a variation to the environment and make students learn English in a meaningful way.

### **Objectives**

Another important aspect in lesson planning is the objective of the class since it tells any teacher the communicative purpose of the class and foresees the outcomes that students are expected to produce at the end of the session. Such objectives are the basis of the lesson planning because teachers establish what they want students to learn, how they take into account the context, what materials will be used and to what extent the class will be successful and motivating for learners.

It is important to take into consideration that when teachers plan they need to establish what the expected results of the class will be. Enerson et al. (2000) suggest that “when planning a particular class session, you need to think about what it is that you want the students to walk away with at the end of that session” (p. 3). According to this, novice teachers have to keep in mind the importance of establishing not only the first steps of the session but also the importance of that class in order to avoid doing monotonous classes without a purpose. It is important to remark that students always have expectations and attitudes towards their classes and that it is almost impossible to forget a bad teacher who teaches nothing and expect students to learn something.

### **Class structure**

Spratt et al. (2005) provide a summary about the lesson planning stages:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <i>Before the lesson</i> | Writing down the aims and the procedures for each stage of the lesson helps us both make sure that we have planned the best |
|--------------------------|---|

|                          |   |
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|                          | possible sequence and enable us to achieve those aims.  |
| <i>During the lesson</i> | The plan can also help teachers check timing – the amount of time we plan for each stage – and check that the lesson is following the sequence proposed.  |
| <i>After the lesson</i>  | We can keep the plan as a record of what happened, making any changes necessary to show how the lesson was different from the plan. We can then use the plan and notes to help plan the next lesson. At this stage, the plan may be more like a photograph, a story or a summary, giving us a record of the lesson. |

This summary gives us an overview of what each stage involves and what we have to keep in mind to do good lesson plans. Such stages will be depicted in detail in the next session which go from the draft of the lesson to the analysis of the activities accomplishment and thus highlight the lesson plan cycle: plan, implement and reflect.

### **Before the lesson**

It is important to say first that when teachers are going to plan a class they have to keep in mind that it is a time consuming task, as there are a lot of things to cover in the lesson in terms of students and content, so, educators should devote time if you want to have a good class. This process is not just a matter of choosing activities and setting time but also it is a matter of anticipating problems, and in some cases preparing “plan B” activities.

One of the most known methods of planning a lesson is ESA (Engage – Study – Activate) proposed by Harmer (1998). This linear method for basic levels describes a methodological path



in which the teacher should “engage” the students with a topic by using different aids, then he or she gets students to “study” a language focus including grammar and rules and finally the student is expected to “activate” his or her knowledge by putting language elements into practice through a free practice activity. An example of Harmer’s (1998) method is described as follows:

1. **Engage:** students and teacher look at a picture or video of modern robots. They say what the robots are doing. They say why they like or don’t like robots.
2. **Study:** the teacher shows students (the picture of) a particular robot. Students are introduced to “can” and “can’t” (how they are pronounced and constructed) and say things like “It can do maths” and “It can’t play the piano”. The teacher tries to make sure the sentences are pronounced correctly and that the students use accurate grammar.
3. **Activate:** students work in groups and design their own robot. They make a presentation to the class saying what their robot can and can’t do. (p. 27)

The purpose of this method is to motivate students since the beginning of the class and to immerse them into the topic through the use of different aids covering student’s likes. As this strategy also gives teachers the opportunity to try different activities and to evaluate their effectiveness, I consider the E-S-A method a clear and effective way of planning for pre-service teachers.

Additionally to this, Richard - Amato (2009) suggests a five phased structure for a language lesson:

- *Opening:* links are made to previous learning, or the lesson is previewed.

- *Simulation*: a lead into the main activity is provided to create interest in the lesson.
- *Instruction*: the main activity of the lesson is taught.
- *Closure*: the lesson may be reviewed and future learning previewed.
- *Follow-up*: independent work or homework is assigned. (p. 39)

This is another example of how a class can be carried through which the author suggest dividing the class into 5 separate stages. However, Harmer proposes a more coherent and complete structure as the E-S-A components complement each other and method guides each stage and provides opportunities to present a topic, study language, produce communicative activities and reinforce some aspects of the class.

When planning a lesson, the first step is to organize your ideas about the topic keeping in mind that all the grammar elements cannot be presented at first because it would be boring and overwhelming for students. Once ideas are structured, the second step is to select the most important aspects about the topic and use different materials to teach it. In relation to the selection of the activities, Enerson et al. (2000) tells teacher to “be selective. Keep it simple. Resist the temptation to cram everything you know about a subject into a single class session” (p. 3).

As it is common that in the first lessons novice teachers put a lot of information, it is important to motivate rather than frustrate the students by giving a clear structure to the class and selecting activities related to the topic in order to cover the necessary tasks and move on to the next topic. During the stage “before the lesson” it is important to take into account that when teachers give a lot of information students may feel lost and the topic may take more time if it is not explained part by part.

Another consideration that novice teachers should take into account before the lesson is the “what if’s” questions which somehow prepare teachers for the class and help them identify the main difficulties they may face in the classroom especially if they teach for the first time. Some of these what if’s questions and possible answers to them are described by Harmer (1998) as follows:

- What if students are all at different levels: Use different materials, do different tasks with the same material, ignore the problem and use the students.
- What if the class is very big: Use worksheets, use pair work and group work, use chorus reaction, use group leaders, think about vision and acoustic and use the size of the group to your advantage.
- What if students keep using their own language: Talk to them about the issues, encourage them to use English appropriately, only respond to English use, create an English environment and keep reminding them.
- What if students are uncooperative: Talk to individuals, write to individuals, use activities, enlist help and make a language learning contract.
- What if students don’t want to talk: Use pair work, allow them to speak in a controlled way at first, use “acting out” and reading aloud, use role – plays and use the listening tracks.
- What if students don’t understand the listening task: Introduce interview questions, use “jigsaw listening”, one task only, play the first segment only, use the CD script and use vocabulary prediction.
- What if some students-in-groups finish before everybody else: Provide “spare activity” material and encourage fast learners help others.

It is important to keep in mind the answers of these questions in order to have a good class and thus show the rest of the teachers that you are prepared and that you have the ability to handle different situations even if you have little or no experience.

When planning lessons, pre service teachers should take into account what kind of activities will be used with the students, even if they do not know them, teachers may encourage learners to work in groups. A good idea to open the class is to plan a task in which learners have to share with others or activities that can be used for next classes in such a way that prior knowledge may be activated. This this kind of routine creates a good environment in the class and makes students recycle specific topics and enhance long-term learning.

UK Centre for Legal Education (2011) is in favor of group work because students learn very effectively from each other. They recommend that teachers encourage peer learning, design team activities or, at least, provide informal opportunities for students to share knowledge and skills. This kind of activities will be helpful and meaningful for students as they are not only sharing with their peers but also learning and constructing social knowledge.

To sum up this section, it is important to say that no matter if it is the first time a pre service teacher faces a classroom or the teachers does not have a lot of experience, educators have the capabilities to do great things. If teachers get to know their students and prepare an activity they think is good for them, they will be breaking monotonous practices and contributing to making little changes that may have a larger impact on the student's learning process. This idea is supported by Woodward (2001) as the author talks to teachers and says:

I'll have to create what I can, given my situation. This is my setting and my design problem and this is how I'm going to set about solving it. I'm going to do the best I can and THAT is what I'm going to call "good"! (p. 2).

A good idea when lesson planning could be to take other teachers' activities as a point of departure since these activities were designed based on a necessity and probably had a successful result. However, we should modify them to our own context in order to tackle students' necessities; this will help you increase your autonomy and creativity and improve your material design abilities.

### **During the lesson**

After you have planned everything for the lesson, it is time to act out what you have planned. At this stage, teachers will show their capabilities in teaching and in fact they will notice not only good abilities but also weaknesses when they are in front of a class. But this stage should not scare pre service teachers but make them be prepared for what will happen.

During the lesson novice teachers should have an eye on their backs, pay attention to everything, record what happens in the classroom in regard to students' behavior and attitude towards an activity and try to learn the students' names as much as possible. These strategies will be helpful for teachers to be calm because they can show they are prepared for everything and that it will not be an easy task for students to mess up the classes. The class dynamics will make teachers reflect upon the kind of teacher they want to be and identify their students' behavior from a critical point of view.

How do you know if this is easy or not? As observation is crucial during the first classes, novice teachers should pay attention to what calls students' attention, the attitude students have towards the class and the activities proposed, the school teacher' methodology including instructions, the way he or she talks to the students, expressions he or she uses and how students reply. Therefore, pre service teachers will be able of identify if students are paying attention or if they feel motivated by analyzing expressions and attitudes,

If teachers notice that students are lost or not paying attention most of the time, they should motivate them and investigate the reason why students misbehave since this inquiry will give the teacher an idea of what to do next to solve this problem. It is also important to remind teachers that thy have to pay attention to students' likes to have a greater impact on their interest and show that they are not in a higher level than learners. Accordingly, Brown (2001) states that "it takes a good deal of cognitive empathy to put yourself in your students' shoes and anticipate their problem areas" (p. 169).

Additionally to this, teachers should give students the chance to contribute to the methodology of the class and thus motivate them to keep working, that is, students can be given the opportunity to give their own ideas and feel active agents of learning process by avoiding teacher-centered classes. However, it is important to establish to what extend we will permit learners to cooperate in the planning of your lessons and thus keep a balance between likes and needs. If this balance is broken, teachers may get into trouble as it can be observed in Woods (1996) example:

My teacher normally greeted me with, "what will we do today?" and I explained what I wanted to do or what I wanted to learn and he either did what I had decided, or he made

decisions to help me accomplish what I said I wanted to learn (...) The one time I kidded, “You’re the teacher, aren’t you supposed to decide?” he acted somewhat insulted and put me through an hour of rigorous, repetitive exercises in which I had no say at all. (p. 53)

Woods’ example shows the importance of identifying when teachers can let a student participate in the development of the lesson and when it is necessary that they propose own activities according to what they consider good for the class. In this regard, we may show that we have clear criteria to guide the class and that we are prepared to make decisions whenever possible.

Another situation that could happen in the classroom and that will probably not be in the lesson is when students feel lost with certain topics or do not want to do anything. As these situations are common in the classroom because teachers almost never teach in a personalized way and not all students have the same learning style, we have to be prepared to deal with this by being open-minded to changes and adjust the plan according to the context. According to Nolasco & Arthur (1988), a good way to better handle situations like the previous one is the seating arrangement. Here are some recommendations for teachers to keep in mind:

- Don’t take the present arrangement for granted. Study the space and the placing of the seats and display surfaces and see if you can improve on the layout of the room. If you can improve on it but you have colleagues who prefer it the way it is, work out the swiftest way of moving things where you want them, and then get students into a quiet routine of moving things at the start and finish of each lesson.

- If moving seats and boards is not possible, for example, in a raked lecture auditorium, look at the different possible configurations of students and get them used to turning round, passing things up, etc.

In order to make any seating arrangements teachers have to take into account the students' behavior and try to separate students who talk too much in order to focus their attention on the task. Novice teachers should also keep in mind all the recommendations given by the school teacher because he or she knows better than anyone how the group can be organized in order to improve students' performance.

To sum up, it is important to make pre service teachers reflect upon the fact that what is planned will not necessarily happen as it is written since they cannot predict students' responses to the activities, but just adapt the plan to what is actually happening. This is supported by Harmer (1998) when he states that “no plan is written on tablets of stone, however. On the contrary, the plan is just that – a plan, possibilities for the lesson which may or may not come about, in other words.” (p. 121).

### **After the lesson**

Even if the class finishes, teachers should keep working because the end of the class does not mean the end of the teaching-learning process; in fact the end of a lesson gives you the starting point for the next one. At this final stage, teachers have to take into account what happened in the class in order to avoid committing the same mistakes and keep on searching for alternatives to work on students' weaknesses and maximize strengths.



The idea is to take advantage of the “during the lesson” stage given that you put into practice what you have planned and notice if the methodology and the activities used with the students were meaningful for them. In the “after the lesson” stage, teachers have to pay attention to the different characteristics of the plan such as the effectiveness of the plan, the evaluation and results of it.

This final stage is as important as the other two because teachers have the opportunity to evaluate their own job by being as honest as possible, retrieve the notes they take about the implementation of the activities, remember the events that were relevant during the class and analyze students’ reactions and attitudes towards the class dynamics. Once teachers do this metacognitive evaluation, they can start developing the next plan and, if they want, use previous activities they consider good enough to apply more than once in order to take advantage of successful experiences and reduce the time required for planning a lesson.

But even if a class was effective the first time, it is not for sure that it will work again as good as it was. “Since every lesson you teach has a life of its own, you will often find that even if a lesson worked perfectly on one occasion, teaching it in the same way the next time may not have the same results” (Richards & Farrel, 2011, p. 63). This event could happen because students’ attitude is not the same in each class, that is, there could be days in which they will work a lot and on the other hand there could be days in which they do not want to do anything. Unfortunately, such changes of attitude are impossible to predict and avoid, so teachers have to be prepared to handle these situations in order to keep the order in the class.

When doing your next lesson plan, it is absolutely important that pre service teachers reflect upon their teaching practice and depart from their plans in order to improve the development of the class:

- *Serve the common good* (e.g., an issue raised by an individual student was thought to be worth pursuing because it would benefit the whole class).
- *Teach to the moment* (e.g., the teacher drops the lesson plan and pursues an issue likely to be of particular interest to students at that moment).
- *Accommodate students' learning styles* (e.g., the teacher decides to incorporate some explicit grammar instruction since the learners have a preference for this mode of grammar learning).
- *Promote students' involvement* (e.g., the teacher drops a planned activity to give students more time to work on an activity that they have shown a high degree of interest in).
- *Distribute the wealth* (e.g., the teacher keeps one student from dominating the class time to enable the whole class to benefit from a learning opportunity).

These reasons for getting rid of the lesson plan dependence were given by EFL teachers during their classes after having defining “good teaching”. These suggestions are a good example of reflective activities teachers can do when they notice that the class is not going as planned and consider they have to change the activity quickly in order to maintain the students’ attention. In short words, the stage “after the lesson” is the opportunity to identify the pros and cons of the teaching lesson plan; it is the time when educators can correct their mistakes and answer the questions that emerge from the classroom in order to improve future lesson plans and get more confidence when teaching a class. This stage also gives any teacher the chance to assess their

teaching skills due to the fact that the practice is, for many teachers, the moment when they notice if they love what they are doing or they prefer to change their profession instead.

### **Conclusions**

Pre-service teachers have to keep in mind that a lesson is a complex process that requires taking into account crucial elements such as students' context, motivation, materials, objectives and a methodological structure that may vary depending on what the teacher wants to accomplish in each class. These elements will give the teacher a guide to complete each lesson.

When lesson planning, novice teachers should look for ways in which they can produce simple but effective lessons, for example the one given by Harmer (1998) whose ESA method contributes to organizing the lesson in an understandable way not only for teachers but also for students as this method does not demands great transitions but activities interconnection.

When teaching a class, it is important to take notes about what the dynamics observed in the classroom which will be helpful for next sessions. In addition, it is advisable to pay attention to the school teacher's methodology, but most importantly, to your students' attitude towards the activities proposed in the lesson plan. In this regard, teachers can start selecting what kind of activities will be good for the students.

Pre service teachers should take enough time to plan a lesson, include elements that are considered important to teach several activities and be open-minded to changes by adapting activities according the students' needs, wants and lacks. This ability to adaptation contributes to

the management of misbehavior in class and methodology improvement. In accordance with this statement, Jensen (2001) says that “a lesson plan is mutable, not written in stone; it is not meant to keep a teacher from changing the duration of an activity or forgoing an activity altogether if the situation warrants. A good lesson plan guides but does not dictate what and how we teach.” (p. 403).

In relation to the writing of the lesson planning, it is important to remark that a lesson plan is something personal, and that during its development teachers have to consider what is good and suitable for students depending on the characteristics of the setting where the class is taught. Educators should love what they do in order to transmit that feeling in the classes in order to show that they are not only good at grammar features but also passionate for their profession. Accordingly, it is important to be reflective and give students important reasons why you teach what you teach and why it is important for them to learn it.

This idea is supported by Milkova (n.d.) who states that “a productive lesson is not one in which everything goes exactly as planned, but one in which both students and instructor learn from each other” (Conclusion, para. 1). As the author emphasizes the fact that sharing knowledge in a class is a two-way process given by both the teacher and the student, it is important to highlight that teachers always learn something from students since they also give a lot of information that “educate” in different areas.

Taking into account that such education goes from one side to another (teacher and student) when knowledge transfer takes place in the classroom, educators should be aware of the fact that lesson planning does not only rely on the teachers’ job. When the teaching-learning process is not regarded as a complementary process, we can observe in the classroom that

teachers' expectations differ from the students'. Therefore, Jensen (2001) points out that, "as teachers expect their students to come to class prepared to learn, students come to class expecting their teacher to be prepared to teach" (p. 403).

Additionally to this, pre service teachers should keep in mind that class preparation is a bit demanding at the beginning of the teaching process. However, they need to realize that they will not be novice forever and that there will be one day in which they notice that their strategies for classroom management are effective and interesting for students. If this happens, novice teachers will know that planning a lesson has become an easier and even unnecessary task because "experience teachers generally make use of less detailed lesson plans than novice teachers and often teach from a mental plan rather than a detailed written lesson plan" (Richards, 1998, p. 35). Consequently, when pre service teachers get enough experience they also get the ability to plan changes during the class, that is, they are able to improvise activities and make modifications to the plan according to the moment and the students' attitudes.

In conclusion, the key word in lesson planning is adaptation since you cannot allow an "immutable recipe" to direct the activities nor the dynamics of the class since everything depends on the setting conditions and the students' characteristics and mood. Despite the fact that teachers are the ones who guide the classes and decide what to do and how to approach students, they should be conscious about the fact that leaving room for students' contributions maintains a good environment in the classroom, improves the teaching-learning process and empowers learners to be active agents of education.

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