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ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF FIRST-TIME LESSON PLANS OF STUDENTS OF ENGLISH

Abstract

This paper delves into the treacherous waters of novice lesson plans, exploring the frequent pitfalls that ensnare pre-service teachers during their initial attempts at crafting effective learning experiences. Drawing upon a rigorous analysis of 24 lesson plans meticulously designed by 4th-year English language and literature students, we illuminate key missteps that hinder successful knowledge acquisition and offer practical solutions for future educators. Our analysis reveals that overlooking student-centered objectives, neglecting differentiated instruction, and omitting formative assessment are the primary culprits behind ineffective first lesson plans. By prioritizing these crucial elements and implementing the proposed solutions, pre-service teachers can create engaging and impactful learning journeys for their students. Common missteps include ignoring student agency, noting that many plans prioritize teacher-directed activities, neglecting to explicitly define what students will actually do and learn. This lack of student-centered objectives disconnects learning from action, hindering engagement and achievement. The second is One-Size-Fits-All Approach which tries to explain that failing to cater to diverse learning styles and abilities leaves some students adrift. Effective plans must incorporate differentiated instruction, offering multiple pathways and scaffolds to ensure all learners can access the material. The expected outcomes, formulated using Bloom's Taxonomy verbs, prioritize student-centered objectives and ensure that learning is tangible and measurable. This shift in focus empowers students to take ownership of their learning journey. Implementing differentiated instruction, such as tiered activities, choice boards, and group work, allows students to engage with the material in ways that suit their individual learning styles and needs. This fosters a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. By equipping future educators with the tools to avoid these common missteps and embrace the proposed solutions, we can ensure their first lessons are not journeys into the unknown, but rather, voyages towards engaging and effective learning experiences for all students.

Keywords: *ELT, lesson plan, students, learning, teaching*

INTRODUCTION

Lesson planning is an important aspect in the education of future teachers. Lesson planning is at the heart of being an effective teacher. It is a creative process that allows us to synthesize our understanding of second language acquisition and language teaching pedagogy with our knowledge of our learners, the curriculum, and the teaching context. It is a time when we envision the learning we want to occur and analyze how all the pieces of the learning experience should fit together to make that vision a classroom reality (Aschcraft, 2014).

However, it is a process that is rather complex and may produce different results. On the one hand, it makes no sense to go into any situation without having thought about what we are going to do. Yet at the same time, if we pre-determine what is going to happen even before it has taken place, we may be in danger not only of missing what is right in front of us but, more importantly, we may also be closing off avenues of possible evolution and development. (Harmer, 2007)

Therefore, it is important to explain what are the elements and situations in which these two get intertwined, the final result being the novice teacher. Novice teacher as such is defined as "a teacher who has less than two years' experience of teaching'" (Karataş, 2013). However, the current focus of this paper are the students who are in the fourth year of their study for becoming B.A. in English language and literature and in due time will become aforementioned novice teachers. During their education, students have had classes in subjects such as pedagogy, didactics, ELT methodology and have arrived at the stage in which they are bound to go to school and conduct practical work. This practical work is their initial attempt to demonstrate in the school classroom all the skills they have acquired during their study.

The subjects they must pass in their fourth year are called Teaching practice I and II and they include visits to both primary (grades 1 to 9) and high school (grades 1 to 4). During their visit they are supposed to attend classes held by the experienced teacher who is their mentor and afterwards they hold one lesson in the same class. The appointed mentor is present and provides written evaluation of their work during their visit to the school and this evaluation is an integral part of their grade from the aforementioned subjects. Apart from attending lessons students are obliged to also get acquainted with all administrative and extra-curricular activities of teachers in school. This will help them to more easily adapt to their workplace once they graduate and are awarded their BA diploma.

In order to be able to complete all of the above requirements and tasks, students must be acquainted with and well aware of the importance of lesson planning. However, even before starting with lesson planning it is necessary to gather some information which will prove invaluable for the success of the lesson. Some of the elements include

- the knowledge of learners and how they learn and develop within social contexts, including knowledge of language development;
- the understanding of curriculum content and goals, including the subject matter and skills to be taught in light of disciplinary demands, student needs, and the social purposes of education;
- the understanding of and skills for teaching, including content pedagogical knowledge and knowledge for teaching diverse learners, as these are informed by an understanding of assessment and of how to construct and manage a productive classroom (Hammond, 2006)

Besides Hammond, other authors, as well, stress the importance of other factors such as course design and course planning (Henderson, 2007), or classroom dynamics and student needs (Holm, 2003). However, Harmer goes even beyond this and states that lesson planning is important because teachers need to have a destination which they want their students to reach, and some idea of how they are going to get there. One particular situation in which lesson planning is of special importance is when a teacher is to be observed as part of an assessment or performance review. Such plans are likely to be more elaborate than usual, not just for the sake of the teacher being observed, but also so that the observer can have a clear idea of what the teacher intends in order to judge how well that intention is carried through. (Harmer, , 2010). This statement very closely defines the situation the subjects were in during the research. They were preparing very elaborate lesson plans and their classes were observed and evaluated by experienced teachers.

Lesson planning as such must have some constituent elements. It is evident from the above mentioned reasons for planning that even the act of planning must follow certain rules and contain some obligatory elements. Some of the elements that cannot be avoided when planning lessons are coherence and variety (ibid.). Every lesson regardless of its duration and number of activities must contain a single driving and connecting idea. All of the activities must not be of the same type as well, but must be varied accordingly, especially if we bear in mind the fact that the current trends in teaching put emphasis on students and their needs.

Having a class of individuals with different personalities definitely requires various types of exercises to cater for at least some of their individual needs. When preparing lesson

plans, especially when it comes to students and novice teachers, they may get confused or misguided by a plethora of possibilities. Therefore, in this process it is of substantial importance to have some kind of guidance. In this process a series of questions may be of great help (ibid.):

- Who exactly are the students for this activity?
- What do we want to do and why?
- How long will it take?
- How does it work?
- What will be needed?
- What might go wrong?
- How will it fit in with what comes before and after it?

The answers to the above questions will guide trainee teachers into the right direction and provide them with enough confidence to have a good and productive lesson. Another aspect which is going to be of great importance for future teachers is a list of items that may be required in a formal sense when it comes to lesson planning. It is impossible to cover all possibilities because they may be different among not only different countries but also different schools in one country. However, one common list may include (Harmer,2012):

- a) Learning outcomes
- b) Timetable fit (previous and following activities)
- c) Class description
- d) Language skills
- e) Teaching aids and activities
- f) Procedures and interactions
- g) Timing
- h) Anticipated problems and solutions

Another element which may prove to be worthy of short elaboration and which is going to be of great importance for the research part of this paper includes goals/aims in lesson planning. Namely, one of the aspects that students preparing to become teachers have is how to properly formulate goals and objectives of their lesson plans. Primarily it is necessary to define and differentiate between the two if we have in mind that in broad terms, they are somewhat similar in meaning. Goals represent an overall purpose of the class the teacher will attempt to accomplish by the end of the lesson and it serves as a unifying theme (Brown, 2000). An aim is anything you want your students to achieve in a lesson (David, 2019).

Objectives on the other hand are more explicit and should precisely state what students may expect to gain from the lesson. Explicit objectives help student to (Brown, 2000)

- a) be sure that you indeed know what it is you want to accomplish,
- b) preserve the unity of your lesson,
- c) predetermine whether or not you are trying to accomplish too much, and
- d) evaluate students' success at the end of, or after, the lesson.

A language lesson may have only one, two or several objectives, depending on the length of the lesson. However, teachers need to be realistic about the number of objectives that students can achieve in one lesson period. Objectives should be written from the perspective of what students will do during the lesson. In addition, they should be observable and measurable (Reed & Michaud, 2010). However, in stating objectives, it is often necessary to distinguish between terminal and enabling objectives. Terminal objectives are final learning outcomes that you will need to measure and evaluate. Enabling objectives are interim steps that build upon each other and lead to a terminal objective (Brown, 2000).

All of the above elements have been provided to students either by the school they visited (all the information about administrative background and regulations), by their instructor/mentor (information about students and their background information required for lesson planning or by their subject professor at the University (all the necessary input about lesson planning and ELT methodology).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of this research was to assess the quality of the prepared lesson plans and determine whether they are aligned with the criteria for optimal lesson planning outlined above, and to ascertain the factors that contribute to or hinder successful lesson planning. In respect to data analysis dual quantitative-qualitative approach was taken into consideration.

The initial hypothesis for this research is that one of the greatest problems that pre-service teachers have in designing lesson plans is to clearly define lesson goals and objectives. The reason for defining it as such comes from the brief overview of the available lesson plans and the experience of teaching students in subjects Teaching practice I and II. Apart from the main point, the research will also address issues such as time management, anticipated problems and solutions, lack of activities for advanced/struggling students etc.

The quantitative data was obtained using multiple checklists outlining the elements that a functional lesson plan needs to contain, while the qualitative insight was gained by conducting an oral interview with the pre-service teachers in the final year of their BA studies in English language and literature. The data sources and the methods used to carry out this research will be described below, and the checklists used are presented in the Results section.

The quantitative data

As a part of the 4th year courses Teaching practice I and Teaching practice II at the English language and literature department, Faculty of Philosophy, students are required to teach a 45-minute lesson which is a part of the regular curriculum of their assigned class in a primary and a secondary school respectively. Prior to engaging in this task, which also represents the culmination of not only their work in these two courses, but of their study track in ELT in general, it serves to provide the assessment of the skills they have been developing.

Students first designed and wrote a detailed lesson plan that showcased their lesson preparation skills and was utilized in the execution of the lesson. The lesson plan was used during and after the lesson by the class instructor, who is the regular teacher in that particular class, and the course instructor as a benchmark of their performance. The lesson plan was also a basis for the comparison between the stated lesson aims and objectives and concrete steps taken, on the one hand, and the quality of the carried out activities and achieved objectives on the other.

The corpus for analysis comprised of 24 such lesson plans prepared between 2021 and 2024 by students in their senior years. The lesson plans were analyzed in group sessions involving the course professor and current senior year students in the form of in-class tasks. Each lesson plan was thoroughly read and evaluated using three checklists, which in turn were designed having in mind the essential and crucial lesson plan elements discussed in the introductory section of this paper. The first checklist concerned the lesson plan outline and the parts of the lesson plan, including the basic information about students, goals, objectives, summary of procedures, introduction, main part, conclusion and blackboard layout. The second checklist covered the lesson plan content with 25 separate elements that are found in lesson plans, some of which include methods, time allocation, use of audio and visual aids, resources used, real world application and special tasks for struggling or advanced students. The third checklist focused on lesson objectives and their proper formulation and design.

Each of the elements in the checklists was assigned numerical values that reflected whether the criteria had been met. Numerical value of 1 indicates that the required element was present in the checklist and was properly designed and explained. Numerical value of 0.5 indicates that the element was partially treated and may be lacking in some respect, and numerical value of 0 indicates that the said element did not appear in the lesson plan, or, if it did, it had not been adequately defined or there were serious flaws with its implementation. In addition, brief textual comments were provided for each lesson plan to complement the numerical grades and elaborate the reasons for assigning those values, especially in the case of low grading, stating the shortcomings noticed in a particular lesson plan.

Having thus graded each of the 24 lesson plans, the average score for each student was determined and the average score for each of the criteria in the checklist across all the analyzed lesson plans. This allowed the comparison between the quality of work done on specific sections or parts of the lesson plans and was intended to yield insights into the most challenging aspect of lesson planning that presented serious obstacles even to pre-service teachers in the final stage of their training. The values thus obtained ranged from 0-1 and were rounded to two decimal points when making points of comparison. In addition, the written observations and comments were grouped in terms of the aspects they referred to in order to reflect the most common issues perceived in the lesson plan design. The results will be further discussed in the following section.

Prior to conducting any form of research and analysis, having in mind the need for preserving the integrity and anonymity of the authors of the lesson plans being analyzed, all lesson plans were numbered and names blanked out so there could be no personal interference in that respect. There is also a list created with all the codes stated next to the name of the author of the lesson plan which is kept as confidential and with limited access.

The qualitative data

While the procedure of analyzing lesson plans in the manner described above was designed to gather precise data points that can serve in establishing multiple lines of comparison, and as such could support rather objective and critical assessment of the major flaws in content and structure of lesson plans under review, it was felt that it would be best to complement it with a survey that would explore these issues in depth. There are several solid reasons why this may be necessary. First, as the lesson plans were the final outcome of the students' work for which

they were graded, they provide immediate understanding of only the end product of their efforts, neglecting the longitudinal nature of this task, which students completed in a series of steps and which included many revisions and modifications requiring extensive decision-making on behalf of each individual student. The decisions taken were guided and inspired not only by the specific context of the lesson they were to teach, but also by their previous experiences and the totality of the knowledge and skill-building acquired during the ELT track within their study program.

Second, the finished lesson plans were assessed and used in grading students, and even the analysis conducted in the framework of our research has been teacher-oriented, seeing that it was done from a vantage point of a course instructor reviewing the work submitted by students. Therefore, we thought it important to approach the lesson planning process from a student point of view and investigate its stages from that angle as well.

The method settled upon to conduct this aspect of the investigation was an oral interview, in part inspired by a procedure devised by Alanazi (2019). The interview was undertaken with 8 informants, all of whom were senior students at the English language and literature department and have gone through the same educational steps in the preceding semesters in regard to their ELT training. The interview consisted of a series of questions and the students were encouraged to share their learning and training experiences. The interview was recorded and later transcribed for analysis, and all informants' identities were kept secret and known only to the interviewer. The interview lasted 30 minutes. This proved to be a fruitful exercise since the students could share their opinions on the usefulness and quality of the teaching methods that were applied in their university classes, especially those that had the immediate impact on the practice of lesson planning. The results of the interview will be correlated with the quantitative data obtained in the primary research segment in the following section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In respect to the part of the research related to the lesson outline which includes information about general information (grade, course, number of students etc.), goals, objectives, lesson parts (introduction, main part and conclusion) and blackboard layout the results may be represented as follows:

Table 1 Lesson outline scores

	No of Students scored = 1	No of students scored < 1	Average score
Basic information about Ss ((grade, topic, length, etc.)	24	0	1,00
Goals	16	8	0,81
objectives	14	10	0,79
Summary of the procedures	18	6	0,81
Introduction	17	7	0,85
Main part	17	7	0,83
Conclusion	18	6	0,85
Blackboard layout	18	6	0,75

The group average score was 0,84, indicating that while there were deficiencies in the structuring of the lesson plans, the overall end result was at a satisfactory level. The segments of the lesson plans that scored the highest were the basic information (1,00), which is the most straightforward segment to complete, while the most common segment lacking information was the blackboard layout. While the scope of this research did not cover such factors as mode of teaching in great detail, it would be interesting to examine whether this low score could be linked to the changes to the teaching environment (live vs. distance learning) that were thrust upon the educational institutions across the world during the outbreak of Covid-19, which necessitated an abrupt switch to online teaching platforms that do not utilize the traditional blackboard layout, thus perhaps contributing to the shortcomings in the coverage of this part of the lesson plan. The next lowest score was observed in the objectives section, at 0,79. This would corroborate the primary hypothesis that stating clear and precise, yet specific and detailed objectives poses a significant challenge to pre-service teachers.

The most common comments regarding the quality of the lesson plan outlines were that goals and objectives need to be formulated better, adhering to the SWBAT “”Students will be able to”) format that emphasizes the student-centered approach to learning. Other written comments appearing with some lesson plans suggested that they should include a better blackboard layout, and that activity duration was not adequately specified, thus pointing to an issue with time allocation.

The following Table 2 contains the scores for the criteria on lesson plan content:

Table 2 Lesson content scores

	No of Students scored = 1	No of students scored < 1	Average score
Engaging introduction activity	19	5	0,85
Methods and approaches	21	4	0,85
Sequenced activities	19	5	0,83
Recap of key points	22	2	0,92
Step-by-step description	22	2	0,94
Clarity in instructions and explanations	20	4	0,90
Clearly outlined transitions	19	5	0,90
Allocated time for each activity	16	8	0,75
Aims for each activity	17	7	0,77
Reminders to learners when appropriate (e.g. for homework)	16	8	0,67
The use of supportive or illustrative audio or visual aids?	17	7	0,75
Resources beyond the school/curriculum texts, coursebook, etc.	19	5	0,83
Higher order thinking questions/activities	16	8	0,79
Activities for reading, listening, speaking and writing skills	15	9	0,77
Vocabulary list	14	10	0,58
Different learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic)	13	11	0,71
Grouping strategy (individual, pairs, small groups, or whole class)	20	4	0,88
When and how you'll provide feedback to students on their progress (e.g. good job, excellent, etc.)	13	11	0,56
Integration with other subjects (history, biology, etc.)	14	10	0,60
Real-world application of concepts	18	6	0,77

Clear instructions for homework assignment	15	9	0,71
Handouts & other materials	19	5	0,83
Additional practice for struggling students (e.g. repeat the song etc.)	9	15	0,48
Special tasks (for students that are struggling) or extra tasks (for advanced students)	4	20	0,21

The scores for lesson plan content were on average the lowest of all three questionnaires, with an average score of only 0,74. Most of the items in the checklist showed at least several lesson plans which did not meet the criteria, and some proved to be extremely problematic. The lowest score was 0,21 on the criterion of special tasks that are meant to cater to students whose abilities may deviate from the average, i.e. who might find the lesson content too challenging or not challenging enough. These scores indicate that preparing for a potentially mixed ability class is something that pre-service teachers could require more assistance with, and this is supported in part by results obtained in the qualitative part of our research to be discussed below.

Other segments of lesson plans that were assessed to be of low quality were providing feedback and the accompanying verbal encouragement (0,56), including vocabulary lists for independent studying and revision (0,58), integration with other subjects, i.e. making cross-curricular connections to enhance the retention of knowledge (0,60) and clear instructions for completing homework assignments (0,71).

The written commentary also focused on poor or missing time allocation, the lack of activities fostering higher order thinking, methods not being sufficiently explicated and not including proper transitions between tasks. A lack of diverse activities was also noted since a smaller number of lesson plans was deemed too rigid because they did not include activities that are designed to stimulate students with different learning styles, and those that cover all receptive and productive language skills. While a certain allowance can be made in this respect due to the nature of the lesson content, the pre-service teachers are instructed during their training to incorporate at least some activities that cater to all these in each lesson.

Table 3 Learning objectives scores

Learning objectives ...	No of Students scored = 1	No of students scored < 1	Average score
clearly state what you expect students will be able to do by the end of the lesson?	17	7	0.87
contain specific verbs to make them more actionable, such as "analyze," "evaluate," "create," or "explain"?	8	16	0.66
express what the learners will do (rather than what you, as the teacher, will do)?	24	0	1.00
set achievable, realistic goals?	18	6	0.89
align with the overall goals of the whole unit	18	6	0.86
address various cognitive levels, such as knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis.	11	13	0.78
clearly differentiate between terminal and enabling objectives	20	4	0.93

The third checklist represented in Table 3 above had a very good average score of 0,87, which at first seems to contradict the results from the related items in Table 1. However, at closer inspection, one can notice that while this relatively high score defies the critical comments stated above, there are two items in the checklist that drive the average score down and which, if improved, would in fact significantly boost the overall score for the objectives.

These numbers suggest that the critical aspects of outlining objectives and the major design flaws have been successfully isolated. Those are the use of specific verbs that make the objectives more actionable, such as “analyze”, “explain” or “evaluate”. We are not dealing here with mere cosmetic improvements or lexical embellishments. If properly integrated, these should serve as more precise guidelines to future teachers on how to carry out each of the tasks designed to reach a specific objective, and, in the light of their training and assessment, can also facilitate more constructive feedback from their instructors who are using their lesson

plans to grade their effectiveness in the real classroom. It seems that being able to articulate the objective with a greater degree of precision may be a relatively low-cost step towards future teachers providing a higher quality instruction for themselves.

The other outlier is the need to address various cognitive levels, such as knowledge, comprehension, application and analysis. The ability to integrate the newly acquired knowledge into the existing scheme of information, not only about language, but about the world at large, is one of the key objectives of modern education. Developing critical thinking skills in students at every level is a goal to be kept in mind when designing any lesson unit. This may signal the need to shift the pre-service teachers' focus to student needs, and to consider designing the specific tasks that will challenge them beyond knowledge acquisition and retention.

The written comments did not deviate much from the numerical scores. The most common critique of the goals and objectives was that they are not specific enough, which is directly connected to the inferior use of terminology to specify the concrete actionable tasks to be done, as well as that the goals were too unrealistic. i.e. too ambitious and unattainable in a real classroom setting. Lack of specific vocabulary was particularly emphasized, and incomplete analysis or explanation of objectives was also highlighted, both justifying the low score on the second item in the checklist.

The oral interview consisted of a list of questions that covered different additional aspects of pre-service teacher education that factored in the quality of the lesson plans. The interview was conducted in such a way that the particular order of the questions prepared was not strictly adhered to and the informants interviewed were given significant leeway to direct the conversation based on their individual learning and training experiences. Therefore, the present analysis will focus on some key responses and the prompt questions which need not be in the chronological order in which the interview took place, with the discussion summarized and occasionally responses given by multiple informants merged into one when they reflected similar experiences.

- *Has any of the lesson plan parts been particularly challenging to draft (LP Information, Expectations, Content, Assessment, Learning Contexts, Learning/Teaching Strategies)?*

The lesson plan had to be based on the course unit assigned to the pre-service teacher, and it was felt that not knowing the students they would be working with hindered their lesson preparation. The level of assistance received from the teaching staff was satisfactory, and it

mostly came in the form of consultations with the TAs (teaching assistants) during practical classes.

Courses taught prior to the current one and dealing with different aspects of teaching methodology proved useful for the task of writing a lesson plan, since they provided the basis of writing a lesson plan outline and its main components, and they prepared them for the activities the students knew were ahead of them in the senior year, teaching them what parts of the LP should be more detailed or more concise, and emphasizing the need to include additional teaching materials and equipment that may become necessary.

It was pointed out that seeing the lesson plans used by the teacher in the school and with the class that they had practice classes with would have been beneficial. Having access to lesson plans created and used by that teacher and having insight into the design of lesson plans used on a daily basis was felt to be important to improving the quality of their own lesson plans, and they were not accessible to them. While available lesson plan examples were deemed sufficient to aid them through the process, the students thought that it was fair to have access to the lesson plans of their instructor.

- *Did you face any challenges while preparing the lesson plan?*

The primary concern or issue named was time management. This again can be related to the lack of sufficient knowledge about the learners to be taught in practice classes, namely their learner type and level, which resulted in challenges when ascertaining how much time should be devoted to each activity in class. More helpful tips on in-class time management or preparation in terms of in-class practice were suggested as an improvement.

Not being familiar with the proficiency level of the students, apart from the stated average level, yielded uncertainty about the best way to cater to the needs of more advanced or less advanced students and the additional tasks that could be needed to complement the textbook lesson. Students were also not confident about the language level they should use with the students, since they cannot be sure about their active vocabulary and general proficiency level, which is crucial in scaling down or up the complexity of the teacher language. It was also pointed out that they feared a discrepancy between the language level of the textbook and the actual proficiency of students.

Having met the students in the classes they were teaching, they got acquainted with the students and noticed that some of them were more introverted and at least one was a special needs student, so that allowed them to prepare suitable activities to engage all students to an extent.

One avenue for the improvement of lesson plan preparation, it seems, might be to provide more time and opportunity for the pre-service teachers to meet and interact with the students they are to teach as a part of their training module in order to tailor the activities they propose to the level and needs of the students, without relying strictly on the report given by the instructor.

- *Did you think about the students' needs while preparing the lesson plan?*

There were no perceived issues with creating lesson plan objectives, and when provided feedback from the teachers, they were able to easily implement the corrections suggested. It appears that once they received appropriate feedback from the course instructor, they were able to rectify the failings noted above, which proves to be a source of optimism in that timely and purposeful interventions on behalf of the instructor can make a big difference.

- *How did you arrive at the teaching techniques that you opted for?*

The specific teaching techniques were settled on after having met the class. Even the first impressions and the overall glimpse into their work was influential in choosing the tasks to be included in the lesson plans, while at the same time leaving enough room to resort to some basic, mid-level complexity tasks to fall back on.

The templates of lesson plans created by students from previous generations made available to them also proved useful in gaining an idea of the structure of lesson plans and the teacher's expectations. Seeing what techniques were already in use in the classroom by the instructor, the pre-service teachers were able to intentionally and deliberately opt for different techniques for the purpose of adding some novelty and innovation in the execution of the tasks. In general, the informants agreed that more on-site observation prior to the writing of lesson plans would benefit them and enable them to design a lesson plan better suited to the particular group of students it is meant for.

- *Have you encountered any logistical issues while writing your LP?*

A suggestion was made to make the time available to different students to complete their lesson plans more balanced. Since the lesson plans had to be ready in different weeks, depending on when the classes were scheduled to take place, some had more time to prepare their lesson plans, based on the order of the classes they taught. Also, while timely, the feedback they received and the corrections they had to make to their lesson plans also factored in the time they had available before implementing their lesson plans in the classroom setting.

Some lesson plans were based on ready-made and available materials (including audio files) that came with the textbooks they used, but some had decided to prepare their own materials adjusted to the specific class. This required extra time, and it was suggested that time

allotment for the creating of lesson plans should reflect this aspect as well. A general conclusion is that the teachers should, to some extent, allow for differentiated preparation time based on the complexity of the unit to be taught and the availability of teaching materials.

A logistical issue that came up was the distance to the school where the classes were to be held, which poses a problem for students who are based in other cities and rely on public transportation. This, however, is not directly pertinent for the issue under consideration.

- *How would you describe the quality of the feedback received after the completion of the lesson plan?*

The feedback received from the university teaching staff was considered satisfactory. However, the feedback on the lesson plans from the instructor at the primary school was lacking. Although they had been told they would receive it at a later date, they did not. They were provided with general overview and pointers that reflected their performance as a group, but individual feedback could have been more detailed.

Some felt that the link between the feedback on their teaching performance and the proposed lesson plan was not there because the instructor was not fully aware of the activities and procedures included in the lesson plan and provided comments that were not aligned with the design of the LP. To pre-service teachers, this appeared to stem from the instructor's cursory knowledge of their lesson plans.

- *Has this knowledge transferred to any other related skill set you need for other courses you take?*

The skills developed by designing and writing lesson plans were not deemed transferable to other courses and tasks in their curriculum.

- *How much did you rely on your classmates to assist you with your LP in terms of ideas and task design?*

Some students completed the assignment by heavily relying on each other's feedback during the drafting process, consulting each other while writing the lesson plans and practicing (online, using Google Meet) to prepare for the actual classroom environment and make adjustments to their respective LPs. They also freely shared their completed work with their classmates, so they can have insight into what a good lesson plan should look like. One student stated that they were "completely lost" and needed the assistance of their classmates to make their LP more detailed and fuller in content. Relying on peer support proved to be a common trend in this group of students, who, being a smaller class, had previously also exhibited high levels of cooperation and reliance on their classmates.

- *How would you describe the usefulness of the process for your professional development?*

The process of making lesson plans was judged to be quite useful for the work one student does (teaching students in a language school) because they learned how to incorporate interesting tasks into their routine and make it more efficient.

The application of the skills learned in the process could be expanded to some other non-related fields of work which require organizational skills (planning), but it was also specified that these skills can be attained just as easily by doing that actual job.

Lesson planning, with some modifications, such as adapting the time management, can also be applied to non-traditional classroom settings, such as smaller groups of learners in online tutorials.

Additional comments

The comments on the aspects of the lesson planning not considered particularly useful centered on the detailed description of the interaction sequences which were thought to be monotonous and energy consuming, and often not applicable in real life. The skill that should, in their opinion, be emphasized is that of improvisation, being flexible and ready for a range of possible student responses. While they do understand the logic underlying such detailed conversational exchanges that are included in the LPs, these proved to be the most tedious, although not stressful, part of the procedure.

CONCLUSION

Terms lesson plan(ing), pre-service teachers, ELT students all address the same group of students and their path to becoming competent ELT professionals. Having in mind that they undergo extensive and intensive training before being awarded the degree it was a necessity to perform research of this kind to attest the successfulness of the work done in this process.

Based on the results of the research it is evident that problems with defining goals and objectives in lesson planning do pose one of the issues but are not the only ones. Use of blackboard and its inclusion in lesson plan is also seen as deficient which may be attributed to the changes in educational norms and the use of technology in the classroom.

The lack of activities for gifted/struggling students and proper time management proved to be stepping stones for some students as well. The reason for this should be found also in the teaching paradigm which usually plans and prepares the teacher for the ideal student and not for one in any way different from the standard. However, having in mind that nowadays

inclusion of students with special needs in regular classrooms is increasingly frequent, it is necessary to pay more attention to this aspect in lesson planning as well.

Finally, the interview responses proved the invaluable resource for the insight coming from the students about all aspects of their experience. They revealed the difficulties encountered during hospitiation, lesson plan preparation and their university classes.

Having in mind all the observations made above, it can be clearly stated that this type of research provided invaluable information that should be used when introducing changes to the curriculum and the form of future teacher practical education in both primary and high schools.

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PREDNOSTI I NEDOSTACI PRVIH PRIPREMA ZA NASTAVU STUDENATA ENGLESKOG JEZIKA

Sažetak

Ovaj rad se bavi analizom prvih priprema za čas koje pišu studenti engleskog jezika tokom svojih prvih koraka na putu ka sticanju prvih obrazovnih iskustava. Uzimajući za osnovu detaljnu analizu 24 pripreme za čas, koje su pažljivo napisali student engleskog jezika i književnosti na 4. godini, ukazuje se na ključne propuste koji ometaju uspješno sticanje znanja te se nude praktična rješenja budućim nastavnicima. Naša analiza pokazuje da zanemarivanje ciljeva usmjerenih na učenika, zanemarivanje diferencirane nastave te izostavljanje formativnog vrednovanja predstavlja glavne krivce za neefikasne prve pripreme za čas. Posvećivanjem pažnje ovim ključnim elementima i sprovođenjem predloženih rješenja, budući nastavnici svojim učenicima mogu stvoriti privlačan i zanimljiv put ka učenju i usvajanja znanja. Česte pogreške u prvim priprema uključuju nestavljanje učenika u centar pažnje tako da mnoge pripreme za čas prioritet daju aktivnostima koje vodi nastavnik, zanemarujući šta će učenici zapravo raditi i naučiti. Ova razdvojenost između učenja i aktivnosti ometa angažovanost i usvajanje kod učenika. Drugi pristup koji studenti koriste a koji uzima u obzir princip jednog rješenja za sve ima veliki nedostatak u tome što se jedno rješenje ne može koristiti za različite stilove učenja te samim time neki učenici mogu biti zanemareni. Učinkovite pripreme za čas moraju uključivati diferencirane upute, nudeći višestruke načine dolaska do rješenja te podršku kako bi se osiguralo da svi učenici mogu pristupiti materijalu. Očekivani ishodi, formulisani korištenjem glagola Bloomove taksonomije, daju prioritet ciljevima usmjerenim na učenika i osiguravaju da poučavanje postane opipljivo i mjerljivo. Ova promjena fokusa ohrabruje učenike da preuzmu kontrolu nad svojim učenjem. Uvođenje diferencirane nastave koja uključuje aktivnosti različitog nivoa, ploče izbora i grupni rad nudi više puteva i potporu kako bi se osiguralo da svi učenici mogu pristupiti materijalu. Ovim se promoviše inkluzivnije i pravednije okruženje za učenje. Pripremanje budućih nastavnika za korištenje alata i načina za izbjegavanje ovih uobičajenih grešaka te prihvatanjem predloženih rješenja, možemo osigurati da njihovi prvi časovi ne budu putovanja u nepoznato, već putovanja ka zanimljivom i djelotvornom iskustvu učenja/poučavanja za sve učenike.

Ključne riječi: ELT, priprema za čas, studenti, učenje, poučavanje