

LECTURE 8. PLANNING LESSONS

8.1 The necessity for planning

8.2 Unit planning

8.3 Planning a class period

8.4 School Education Programme

You know that teaching and learning a foreign language is ensured: 1) through methods and techniques, i. e. acquisition of new information about a linguistic or language phenomenon to acquire some knowledge; drill and transformation to form habits on the material presented; making use of the habits acquired in various language skills. The choice of techniques for realizing each of the methods is determined by the principles which govern teaching and learning this subject in schools nowadays; 2) with the help of various teaching aids and teaching materials now in use; 3) by means of different arrangements of pupils' language learning: work in unison, mass work, work in small groups, in pairs, individual work with programmed materials and individual cards; 4) taking into consideration the stage of instruction, pupils' age, their progress in language learning, their intellectual development, the linguistic and language material, time the teacher has at his disposal. All these points answer the question how to teach and to learn this subject.

To utilize all these points effectively systematic and careful planning is necessary.

The foreign language teacher plans all the kinds of work he is to do: he plans the essential course, the optional course (if any), and the extra-curricular work.

The first step in planning is to determine where each of his classes is in respect to achievements. It is easy for the teacher to start planning when he receives beginners.

Though the teacher does not know his pupils yet, his success will fully depend on his preparation for the lessons since pupils are usually eager to learn a foreign language in the 4th form (or the 2nd form in a specialized school). Planning is also relatively easy for the teacher who worked in these classes the previous year (or years) because he knows the achievements of his pupils in each class. He is aware of what language skills they have acquired. Planning is more difficult when the teacher receives a class (classes) from another teacher and he does not know the pupils, their proficiency in hearing, speaking, reading, and writing.

The teacher begins his planning before school opens and during the first week. He should establish the achievement level of his classes. There is a variety of ways in which this may be done. The teacher asks the previous teacher to tell him about each of the pupils. He may also look through the pupils' test-books and the register to find out what mark each of his pupils had the previous year. The teacher may administer pre-tests, either formally or informally, to see how pupils do with them. He may also conduct an informal quizzing, asking pupils questions in the foreign language to know if they can understand them and respond properly, or he has a conversation within the topics of the previous year. After the teacher has determined the achievement level of his classes, he

sketches out an outline of the year's work. In making up his yearly outline the teacher consults the syllabus, Teacher's Book, Pupil's Book, and other teaching materials and sets seems to him to be realistic limits to the content to be covered during the course of the year. In sketching out an outline of the term's work the teacher makes a careful study of Teacher's Book, Pupil's Book, teaching aids and teaching materials available for this particular form. Taking into consideration the achievements of his class, he compiles a calendar plan in accordance with the time-table of a given form.

86.2 Unit planning

The teacher needs two kinds of plans to work successfully: the plan of a series of class-periods for a lesson or unit of the textbook or a unit plan, and the daily plan or the lesson plan for a particular class-period.

In compiling a unit plan, i. e., in planning the lesson of the textbook, the teacher determines the difficulties of the lesson, namely, phonetic difficulties (sounds, stress, intonation); grammar difficulties (grammar items, their character and amount), and vocabulary difficulties (the amount of new words, their character).

He then distributes these difficulties evenly over the number of class-periods allotted to the lesson in the calendar plan.

1. The teacher starts by stating the objective or objectives of each class-period, that is, what can be achieved in a classroom lesson. Of course the long-term aims of the course help the teacher to ensure that every particular lesson is pulling in the right direction and is another step towards gaining the ultimate goals of the course. "To help the class to speak English better", "To teach pupils to read" or "To develop pupils' proficiency in reading" cannot be the objectives of the lesson because they are too abstract to be clear to the learners. The lesson objectives should be stated as precisely as possible.

Pupils coming to the lesson should know what they are to do during the lesson, what performance level is required of them, and how it can be achieved. There are a few examples:

- Teach pupils to understand the following words ... when hearing and to use them in sentences orally.
- Teach pupils to form new words with the help of the following suffixes ... and to use them in the situations given.
- Teach pupils to consult a dictionary to look up the meaning of the following words ...
- Teach pupils to recognize the international words ... when hearing (or reading).
- Teach pupils to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context while reading text " ...".
- Teach pupils to understand the statements in the Present Perfect and to use them in the following situations

- Teach pupils to ask and answer questions in the Present Perfect and to make up dialogues following the models
- Teach pupils to find the logical predicate in the sentences ... while reading following the structural signals.
- Teach pupils to speak about the following objects on utterance level (in a few sentences).
- Teach pupils to use the words and grammar covered in speaking about the places of interest in our town.
- Teach pupils to find topical sentences while reading text "... " silently.
- Teach pupils to get the main information while reading text "... ".

The teacher can state no more than three concrete objectives for a particular class-period depending on the stage of instruction, the material of the lesson, and some other factors.

2. The teacher distributes the linguistic material (sounds, words, grammar, etc.) throughout the class-periods according to the objectives of each period, trying to teach new vocabulary on the grammatical material familiar to pupils, and to teach a new grammar item within the vocabulary assimilated by pupils; or he first teaches pupils hearing and speaking on the new material presented, and then pupils use this in reading and writing.
3. The teacher selects and distributes exercises for class and homework using various teaching aids and teaching materials depending on the objectives of each class-period. For example, for developing his pupils' skill in dialogic speech within the material covered the teacher needs a record with a pattern dialogue, word cards for changing the semantic meaning of the pattern dialogue to make the structure of the dialogue fit new situations.

In distributing exercises throughout the class-periods the teacher should involve his pupils in oral practice and speech, in oral and silent reading, and in writing. Exercises which are difficult for pupils should be done under the teacher's supervision, i. e., in class. Those exercises which pupils can easily perform independently are left for homework. In other words, new techniques, exercises, and skills should be practiced in class before the pupil attempts them at home. The homework done, the pupils return to class for perfecting, polishing, expanding, and varying what they have practiced at home, they learn to use the new words, the new structures in varied situations.

When the teacher determines the pupil's homework he should take into account that the subject he is teaching though important and difficult is not the only one the pupil learns at school. The realities of schools militate against more than 20-30 minutes of every day homework in a foreign language. This requires the teacher to teach in class rather than test. Practice proves that pupils do their homework provided they know exactly what to do, how it should be done, and that their work will be evaluated. Besides, pupils should know that six twenty-minutes' work at their English on consecutive days is more effective than two hours at a stretch.

The unit plan, therefore, involves everything the teacher needs for the detailed planning of a lesson (class-period), namely: the objective (objectives) of each lesson,

the material to work at, and the exercises which should be done both during the class-period and at home to develop pupils' habits and skills in the target language.

The unit plan includes nine columns:

1. The number of class-periods.
2. The objectives of each period.
3. Language material.
- 4 – 7. Language skills.
8. Accessories.
9. Homework.

The importance of unit plans cannot be overestimated since unit planning permits the teacher to direct the development of all language skills on the basis of the new linguistic material the lesson involves. He can lead his pupils from reception through pattern practice to creative exercises, and in this way perfect their proficiency in hearing, speaking, reading, and writing. He can vary teaching aids and teaching materials within the class-periods allotted to the lesson. Unit planning allows the teacher to concentrate pupils' attention on one or two language skills during the lesson; in this case the class hour is divided into two main parts: a period of 20—25 minutes, during which he takes his pupils through a series of structural drills or other exercises supplied by the textbook, and a period of 20—25 minutes during which the teacher engages the class in creative exercises when they use the target language as a means of communication.

The teacher should bear in mind that pupils lose all interest in a language that is presented to them by means of endless repetitions, pattern practices, substitutions, and so on, and which they cannot use in its main function of exchange of information through hearing or reading. That is why, whenever possible, the teacher should make his pupils values of his pupils aware of the immediate values of his lesson if he hopes to keep and stimulate their interest in language learning which is very important in itself. When a pupil is convinced that learning is vital, he is usually willing to work hard to acquire a good knowledge of the target language. It is well known that some pupils see little value in much of their school work in a foreign language and feel no enthusiasm for their work at the language. Careful unit planning helps the teacher to keep pupils' progress in language learning under constant control and use teaching aids and teaching materials more effectively and, in this way, make his classes worthwhile to all of his pupils.

All this should be done by the teacher if there are no teacher's books to the textbooks. If there are such books the teacher's planning should deal with

- (1) the study of the author's recommendations;
- (2) the development of these recommendations according to his pupils' abilities.

The teacher tries to adapt the plan to his pupils. He may either take it as it is and strictly follow the authors' recommendations, or he may change it a bit. For instance, if he has a group of bright pupils who can easily assimilate the material, the teacher utilizes all the exercises involved in Pupil's Book and include some additional material or stimuli pictures, objects for the pupils' speaking within the same class-periods. If the

teacher has a group of slow pupils, he needs at least one more period to cover the material, he also omits some exercises in Pupil's Book with asterisk designed for those pupils who want to have more practice in the target language. The teacher may also increase the number of oral exercises and give pupils special cards to work on individually and in pairs.

Given below are the examples of plans the teacher can find in Teacher's Book.

In *Fourth Form English Teacher's Book* by A. P. Starkov, R. R. Dixon, M. D. Rybakov the material is distributed throughout the terms, and within the term – the weeks and class-periods. The plan includes nine columns:

Week	Class-period	Oral language					Reading	Writing
		Phonetics	Auding		Speaking			
			Gram.	Vocab.	Gram.	Vocab.		

Looking through the plan the teacher can see that auding is the most important skill that should be developed in pupils in this form. They can aud more than they can speak. In the first term pupils learn to aud and to speak. As far as reading and writing are concerned, pupils learn the English alphabet and English penmanship.

The plan in *Ninth Form English Teacher's Book* is:

Week	Class-periods	Class work			Home work					Grammar at teacher's
		Auding	Speaking		Reading					
			Revision of topic	New topic	Exercises	Newspaper	Exercises	Text	Writing	

The plan manifests the importance of planning pupils' work in the classroom and at home. The teacher can see that in the classroom he should develop pupils speaking, and auding skills. As to reading, pupils develop this skill at home reading various texts and performing oral and written exercises connected with the texts. The teacher can also see what topics should be reviewed and what topics are new for his pupils. He can also find a new column in the plan "Newspaper reading". It means pupils should be taught to work with this type of texts. There is a column in the plan dealing with grammar. Pupils should review grammar in a certain system.

The teacher therefore thoroughly studies the plans in Teacher's Books and adapts them to his pupils.

8.4 Planning a class period

The unit plan completed the teacher may move into planning a class-period or a daily plan which, in addition to what has been determined by the unit plan, indicates the ways the teacher will follow to organize his class to work during the lesson. Therefore the daily plan includes

- (1) what should be achieved during this particular lesson;
- (2) what material is used for achieving the objectives;
- (3) how the objectives should be achieved.

Since almost every teacher has several classes of one level he usually makes preparations for each level although, ideally, a separate plan is needed for each class because classes proceed at different speeds, thus he must make adaptations in his plans to compensate for varying speeds of progress in the classes of the same level.

The teacher should write his daily plans if he strives for effective and reasonable use of time allotted to his pupils' learning a foreign language. However some teachers, including novice teachers, do not prepare written plans. They claim that they can teach "off the top of their heads", and they really can, but their teaching usually results in poor pupils' language skills because in this case we have, "teacher-dominated" classes when the teacher works hard during the lesson while his pupils remain mere "observers" of the procedure. Indeed, when the teacher is standing in front of pupils he does not have much time to think how to organize his pupils' activity. This should be done before the lesson for the teacher to be able to stimulate and direct pupils' learning the language.

We may state that the effectiveness of pupils' desired learning is fully dependent on the teacher's preparation for the lessons. If the teacher is talking, reading, and writing a great deal himself during the lesson, he is not ready for it. And vice versa, if the teacher gets his pupils to talk or read with communicative assignments while he listens, or to write while he moves about the class, giving a helping hand to everyone who needs it, he has thoroughly thought over the plan of the lesson beforehand. Therefore we may conclude: to provide necessary conditions for pupils' learning a foreign language, the teacher should thoroughly plan their work during the lesson which is possible if he writes his daily plan in advance.

There are teachers who strictly follow the textbook and accept plans that others have made for them without any changing. In doing this they overlook the unique capacities of their particular classes. They race through the textbook covering the ground regardless of whether pupils master each section.

Some experienced teachers assume that the content of foreign language teaching is constant and as they have worked for many years they do not need daily plans; they have them in their minds. In reality, however, the content changes continuously as well as the methods and techniques of teaching. Moreover, the old plans which are in their minds may not suit the needs of a particular class, since each group of pupils is unique, or they may no longer be applicable because better and more effective teaching aids and teaching materials have appeared. Consequently, proceeding from these

considerations the teacher needs a daily plan to provide a high level of language learning of his pupils.

To involve all pupils in the work done in the classroom the teacher should compile a kind of scenario in which every pupil has his role, while the teacher only stimulates and directs his pupils' role-playing. In any case, a workable form for a daily plan should state the objectives, specify the activities, include evaluation techniques, indicate the assignment, and determine teaching aids and teaching materials. The plan itself should

- (1) be brief, but with sufficient detail to be precise;
- (2) assign a definite number of minutes to each activity;
- (3) indicate exactly what words, phrases, facts, items are to be learnt and how;
- (4) make use of a variety of classroom activity for every pupil.

In the organization and conduct of a foreign language lesson there is always a wide range of possibilities. No two teachers will treat the same topic in the same way. There are, however, certain basic principles of teaching and learning which should be observed:

1. Every lesson should begin with a greeting in the foreign language and a brief talk between the teacher and the pupils. Through this conversation the lesson may be motivated. The conversation may take place between:

Teacher — Class

Teacher — Pupil on duty

Pupil on duty — Class

Two Pupils on duty

The foreign language should be used for all common classroom activities; the teacher manages the class activities by giving directions in the foreign language. He stimulates pupils' participation by asking questions, praises and encourages pupils from time to time, and he may also criticize the behavior of a pupil or a class if necessary.

2. There should be a variety of activities at every lesson, including pronunciation drill, oral activities, reading, and writing. The success of activity is measured by attention, enthusiasm, and involvement on the part of the pupils.
3. The lesson should be conducted at a high speed when oral drill exercises are performed. Pupils should not stand up to say a word, a phrase, or a sentence.
4. The lesson should provide a certain sequence in pupils' assimilating language material and developing habits and skills from perception, comprehension, and memorizing, through the usage in a similar situation following a model, to the usage of the material received in new situations that require thinking on the part of the learner.
5. The lesson should provide time, for the activity of every pupil in the class. They must be active participants of the procedure and not the teacher as is often the case when the teacher talks more than all the pupils.
6. The lesson should provide conditions for pupils to learn. "Language is a skill so it must be learnt, it cannot be taught" (M. West). A certain amount of time should be devoted to seatwork as opposed to activities involving the class as a whole.

During seatwork and other forms of solitary study pupils learn to learn for themselves. The use of language laboratories, teaching machines, and programmed instruction creates conditions for each pupil to learn for himself.

7. The work done during the lesson should prepare pupils for their independent work at home. It is generally accepted as good practice not to assign exercises that have not been covered in class; this especially refers to early stages of language learning.
8. The lesson should be well equipped with teaching aids and teaching materials which allow the teacher to create natural situations for developing pupils' hearing and speaking skills in a foreign language.

In *Teacher's Book* the teacher can find daily plans which differ greatly in form from conventional plans. For example, the author A. P. Starkov and his coauthors do not determine the objectives of each class-period and the points of the lesson (session) in a traditional way when the object of planning was rather teacher's work than pupils' activity. They plan pupils' work for each particular class-period. Pupils should pass through a number of "steps", each designed for forming a particular habit or involving them in a certain language activity. Since there are a lot of habits and skills to be formed and developed in pupils, a daily plan comprises a great number of "steps".