

Module 2 Lesson planning and use of resources for language teaching

Part 1 Planning and preparing a lesson or sequence of lessons

Unit 18 Identifying and selecting aims

■ How do we identify and select aims?

Aims are what we want learners to learn or be able to do at the end of a lesson, a **sequence** (i.e. a series) of lessons or a whole course. Aims may focus, for example, on a **function** or a **grammatical structure**, on the vocabulary of a particular topic or on developing a language **skill**. Aims, especially for younger learners, may not always focus on particular areas of language. The aim of a lesson may also be listening to a story for pleasure or encouraging a positive attitude towards the foreign language. To identify and select the most appropriate aims, we need to ask ourselves two questions:

What do my learners already know?

What do they need to know?

The answers to these questions will help us to make sure that the aims are the right ones for a particular group of learners at a particular time.

■ Key concepts

Look at the table. Can you work out what the difference is between main aims, subsidiary aims and personal aims?

<i>Main aim</i>	<i>Subsidiary aims</i>	<i>Personal aims</i>
To practise making polite requests in the context of making holiday arrangements. Example exponent : <i>Could you give me some information about hotels?</i>	Grammar: to revise modal auxiliary verbs. Functional exponents: <i>Could/Would you ...?</i> Vocabulary: to consolidate lexis for travel, accommodation. Phonology: to focus on intonation . Speaking: to give controlled oral practice.	To improve my organisation of the whiteboard; to give clearer examples.

A **main aim**, like the one above, describes the most important thing we want to achieve in a lesson or sequence of lessons. For example, we may want learners to understand and practise using new language; to **reinforce** or **consolidate** (i.e. to make stronger) the use of language they already know by giving them further practice; or to revise language they have recently

learnt. On a lesson plan the main aim should also include an example of the target language we are planning to teach.

As well as a main aim, a lesson may also have **subsidiary aims**. Subsidiary aims show the language or skills learners must be able to use well in order to achieve the main aim of the lesson. In the example on page 86, the main aim is to practise making polite requests; the subsidiary aims describe the language and skill that learners will need to make these requests. Stating both main and subsidiary aims is a good way of making sure that our lesson plan focuses on what we want our learners to learn, or to be able to do. It enables us to see how the lesson should develop, from one **stage** (or part) to the next, building up our learners' knowledge or skills in the best possible order.

In addition to learning aims for the learners, we may also want to think about our own personal aims as teachers. **Personal aims** show what we would like to improve or focus on in our own teaching. Like the ones in the table on page 86, these might be about improving the way that we handle aids and materials or particular teaching techniques, or they might be about our relationship with the learners. Here are some more examples:

- to try different correction techniques
- to remember to check instructions
- to write more clearly on the blackboard/whiteboard
- to make more use of the **phonemic chart** (a poster with **phonemic symbols**)
- to get learners to work with different partners
- to get quieter learners to answer questions.

Identifying and selecting aims are the first steps in planning a lesson. Once we have decided on the aims, we can design or select the most appropriate activities, put them in the best order and choose the most suitable **teaching aids** (things we can use to support our teaching in the classroom) and materials. After the lesson, we can look back at this part of the plan to see whether we have **achieved** our **aims**, i.e. whether we have succeeded in teaching what we planned to teach. This also helps us to select the most appropriate aims for future lessons.

■ Key concepts and the language teaching classroom

- The **syllabus** (i.e. the course programme) and/or the coursebook will give us a general direction for planning our teaching. To decide on specific aims for a particular lesson, however, we should think about our learners' needs and the stage they have reached in their learning.
- We can identify and select appropriate personal aims in a similar way, i.e. by looking back at earlier lessons we have taught and thinking about things that worked well and things we want to improve.
- We should not confuse aims and **procedures**. Aims describe what the learners will learn or what they will be able to do with the language, while procedures – for example, listening to a recording and answering questions about it – are what the teacher and learners will do at each stage of the lesson.
- Aims should not be too general. 'To teach the past simple' or 'to develop learners' reading skills' do not say enough about the purpose of the lesson. More specific aims might be 'to introduce and practise the past simple for talking about personal experiences' or 'to give learners practice in **predicting** content, **scanning** for specific information and guessing meaning from **context**'.

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- We shouldn't plan to do too much in a lesson. The amount we plan to cover will depend on the length of the lesson and the learners' level.
- Learners also need to know what the lesson is going to be about. It is often helpful to announce our aims (or to write them up on the board) at the beginning of the lesson, and/or to repeat them at the end.
- Learners of all ages find it helpful to know why they are doing things. For younger learners the aims of a lesson can be described in very simple language, focusing on the things they will do in the lesson and the language knowledge they will take away from it. (For example, 'Today we're going to read a story and learn how to describe people in English'.)

See Unit 19 for identifying the different components of a lesson plan, Unit 20 for planning an individual lesson or a sequence of lessons and Units 23–25 for the selection and use of materials, activities and aids.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY (See page 173 for answers)

The procedures in the table below show a sequence of activities for a lesson with the main aim of developing intermediate students' confidence and skill in informal conversation. The subsidiary aims for the lesson (A–H) are in the wrong order. Put them in the right order so that they match the correct procedures.

Procedure	Subsidiary aims
1 Students move around the classroom to find students with matching halves of sentences.	A • to give students fluency practice • to practise using target language in a meaningful context
2 They talk in pairs about what they find difficult in listening to informal conversation.	B • to develop peer correction skills
3 They hear an informal conversation and identify speakers, place and situation.	C • to listen for detailed information • to focus students' attention on target language
4 They listen again and fill in missing phrases in the transcript.	D • to practise gist listening • to create a context
5 Repetition drill: students practise key phrases. Pairs practise simple two-line exchanges using key phrases.	E • to get students actively involved • to put students into pairs
6 Pairs write and practise their own conversation from role cards, using key phrases where possible. Several pairs perform and record conversations.	F • to give students confidence in speaking through controlled practice
7 Class comment and suggest improvements to grammar and vocabulary.	G • to review the whole lesson • to give the teacher feedback
8 Students discuss what they have learnt.	H • to raise awareness of what the lesson aim will be • to encourage personal involvement

Unit 19 Identifying the different components of a lesson plan

■ How do we identify the different components of a lesson plan?

Choose the comparison that you think best describes a lesson plan.

A lesson plan is like ... an instruction leaflet a photograph a story a road map
a computer programme a series of road signs a written summary something else?

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.

The main components of a lesson plan show us what the lesson is for (the **aims**) and what the teacher and the learners will do during the lesson and how they will do it (the **procedures**). Other components help us to think about possible problems and remind us of things we need to remember about the learners. So a lesson plan is most like a road map or a series of road signs, i.e. something that shows us where we are going and how we are going to get there – although we may sometimes find that during the journey we have to take a different route!

Here are some ways a lesson plan helps the teacher.

<i>Before the lesson</i>	Writing down the aims and the procedures for each stage of the lesson helps us to make sure that we have planned the best possible sequence to enable us to achieve those aims .
<i>During the lesson</i>	The plan can also help the teacher to check timing – the amount of time we plan for each stage – and to check that the lesson is following the sequence we decided on.
<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.)

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■ Key concepts

A lesson plan can include the following headings. Which ones do you think should always appear? Which ones may only appear sometimes?

<i>Lesson plan headings</i>	
Level and number of learners	who we are planning the lesson for
Timetable fit	how the lesson is connected to the last lesson and/or the next one
Main aim(s)	what we want learners to learn or to be able to do by the end of the lesson
Subsidiary aims	other things we want learners to be able to do during the lesson because they lead to the main aim
Personal aims	aspects of our own teaching we want to develop or improve
Assumptions	what we think learners already know or can already do related to the aims
Anticipated language problems	things that learners may find difficult
Possible solutions	action we will take to deal with the anticipated problems
Teaching aids, materials, equipment	useful reminders of things to take to the lesson
Procedures	tasks and activities for each stage
Timing	length of time needed for each stage
Interaction patterns	ways in which learners work at different stages, i.e. individually, in pairs, in groups, as a whole class
Homework	

It is usually a good idea to anticipate possible problems and solutions, but in a revision lesson we may not need these headings. Also, we may not have personal aims for every lesson, and we may not always give learners homework!

■ Key concepts and the language teaching classroom

Look carefully at this example of part of a lesson plan which aims to introduce and practise language for giving advice. Then read the points below.

<i>Timing</i>	<i>Procedure</i>	<i>Subsidiary aims</i>	<i>Aids and materials</i>	<i>Interaction pattern</i>
5 minutes	Ask students who they ask for advice if they have a problem.	Warmer/lead-in: to get students talking and introduce the topic	–	Pairwork
10 minutes	Discuss typical problems for young people; elicit language to ask for and give advice.	To create context To revise modal auxiliary verbs To elicit/introduce vocabulary	Magazine pictures Whiteboard	Teacher → whole class
5 minutes	Show headlines for students to guess the content of letters to the advice page in a teen magazine.	To get students ready for reading To predict content To use students' own knowledge	OHP	Teacher → whole class
15 minutes	Students read different mini-texts, then summarise the content of the letters.	To check predictions Intensive reading To introduce the structure 'If I were you, I'd...'	Photocopies of six problem page letters	1st group work ↓ 2nd group work (new groups)

- When we make a lesson plan, we need to ask ourselves how the procedures we have planned will help to achieve our aims and to make sure there are strong connections between the different stages.
- We also need to consider **variety**, i.e. how we can use different activity types, language **skills** and interaction patterns. Learners of all ages need different activities in a lesson, but this is especially important for younger learners.
- During the lesson we should teach the learners, not the lesson plan! We must be prepared, if necessary, to change our plan while we are teaching. If we have a clear plan, we will be more aware of what we are changing and why. We can include some different possibilities in a lesson plan, e.g. an extra activity to use if learners take less time than expected to complete a **task**, and this can help if we are not sure how well parts of the plan will work.

See Unit 18 for identifying and selecting aims and Unit 20 for planning an individual lesson or a sequence of lessons.

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FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY (See page 173 for answers)

Some of the teacher's notes for this lesson plan are missing. Put the notes A–E in the correct places in the plan.

<i>Lesson plan headings</i>	<i>Teacher's notes</i>
Timetable fit	1
Main aim(s)	2
Subsidiary aim(s)	3 To listen for detail to a model story
Personal aim(s)	4
Assumptions	5 Students can already form tenses accurately
Anticipated language problems	6 Students may use present tenses
Possible solution	7
Procedures	8

- A To enable students to use past tenses accurately and put events in order in simple narratives
- B Students listen to the model story, then in groups, plan and write their own stories
- C Use gestures to remind students to use past tenses
- D To follow on from work on past tenses and to prepare for the storytelling project
- E To make sure that board writing is clear and readable

REFLECTION

Think about these comments from teachers. Which do you agree with and why?

- 1 Written lesson plans are helpful when you first start teaching, but experienced teachers don't need them. I plan all my lessons in my head.
- 2 Lesson plans don't help me teach because I always try to respond to learners' needs during the lesson.
- 3 Writing a lesson plan is the important thing. I always have a written plan, but often I don't look at it while I'm teaching.

Unit 20 Planning an individual lesson or a sequence of lessons

■ How do we plan an individual lesson or a sequence of lessons?

When we plan an individual lesson, we need to think about its aims, the 'shape' of the lesson and the kind of techniques that are most appropriate for a particular group of learners. For example, if we are introducing a new grammatical structure, we might choose a **Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP)** approach or a **Task-based Learning (TBL)** approach. **Skills** lessons, too, have regular shapes that we can use to organise lesson plans: for example, for receptive skills, we usually plan tasks or activities for learners to do before, while and after reading or listening; for productive skills, there is usually an introductory stage to **set the scene** (i.e. to explain the context) and a **feedback** stage after the speaking or writing activity.

We also need to think about the connections between the aims of the lesson and the procedures we will use to achieve those aims. The available materials, the length of the lesson and the information we have about our learners will all help us to identify possible procedures. But the most important thing is to make sure that the materials, tasks and activities we select are the ones that will help a particular group of learners to achieve the aim we have identified.

A **sequence** of lessons is a number of related lessons that develop language knowledge and/or language skills over a period of time. Sequences may develop a single topic or language area, or may involve topics or language areas that are very closely connected. Here are three examples:

Structural sequence

- 1 revision: past simple
- 2 revision: present perfect
- 3 contrast: past simple vs. present perfect

Integrated skills sequence

- 1 vocabulary development: describing places (**function:** describing)
- 2 reading: choosing a holiday
- 3 writing: letter to a friend narrating holiday experiences (function: narrating)

Project work

- 1 reading and listening about free time activities
- 2 class **survey** and research: sport and entertainment
- 3 preparation of a poster display to show results of survey

Key concepts

Planning an individual lesson

When we plan an individual lesson, we have to ask ourselves a number of questions:

- Will the topic be interesting and motivating for my learners?
- Are the activities and teaching materials at the right level for all the learners?
- Have I planned enough for the time available? Do I need any extra material?
- Have I planned too much for the time available? Are there any stages I can cut if necessary?
- Have I thought about exactly how to start and end the lesson?
- Does each step in the lesson help to achieve the aim?

Planning a sequence of lessons

Look at these three teachers' **schemes of work** (i.e. outline plans) for a sequence of four lessons. What do you think might be the advantages and disadvantages of each scheme?

	Scheme A	Scheme B	Scheme C
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar • Vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar revision (past tenses) • Vocabulary (free time activities) • Practice exercise (from coursebook) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion of advantages and disadvantages of living in the city • Revise and extend vocabulary • Focus on comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs; practice exercise
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening • Speaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check vocabulary • Reading (emails) • Speaking – fluency activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: personal stories: students order sections of text • Focus on text organisation • Writing: students' own stories • Peer correction (where students correct one another)
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick revision: work from Weeks 3 and 4 • Listening (e.g. holiday story) • Grammar focus (reported speech) • Writing (report of story) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening: song – group transcription • Grammar game (snakes and ladders) to revise work on comparatives and superlatives • Pronunciation practice: focus on /ə/
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking (role-play) • Feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of grammar and topic • Group work: producing sections of tourist brochure for students' town

A scheme of work helps us plan a sequence of lessons in the best way to cover the school **syllabus** or the units of a coursebook in the time available. It also helps us to think about what we want to achieve and what materials we might need. It also helps us to include enough variety across our lessons. Teacher and learners need clear **aims** beyond the single lesson and

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need to see how lessons are linked to each other. Here are some of the main advantages and disadvantages of the three schemes of work on page 97:

Scheme	Advantages	Disadvantages
A	Leaves teacher free to respond to learners' needs.	Gives no details of what will happen in these lessons and so does not remind the teacher of general aims or what materials to prepare.
B	Quite detailed. Some sense of direction.	Probably the most useful of the three schemes of work. Not too much detail or too little, but the teacher will probably need to return to it and add more detail week by week to turn it into a set of lesson plans.
C	Very detailed. Gives very clear sense of direction.	Difficult to predict several weeks ahead exactly what learners' needs may be, so the teacher will need to return frequently to the scheme of work and change it if necessary.

You can see that schemes of work are less detailed than lesson plans. Like any individual lesson, a sequence of lessons should have a logical and learning-friendly progression and a good balance of approaches and activities. Like a lesson plan, a scheme of work helps us to identify our aims and make sure we choose materials and **procedures** that match those aims.

■ Key concepts and the language teaching classroom

- It's a good idea to make lesson plans look as simple as possible, so notes are better than full sentences, and there's no need to describe every step in great detail. However, we may want to write down some important things in a **complete** form – for example, prompts for drilling, questions to check learners' understanding, instructions, etc.
- A lesson plan should be clear and easy to read during the lesson. Different colours, boxes, underlining, etc. are useful. It is often helpful to include drawings of the way the blackboard (or whiteboard) will look at different stages.
- **Variety** is very important both in a sequence of lessons and in a single lesson. We should avoid always doing the same kinds of things in the same order, e.g. always beginning the lesson with a conversation or always ending with a role-play. There are several different ways of introducing variety into lessons. Here is a list of things we can **vary**:

pace	→ quick and fast-moving or slow and reflective
interaction pattern	→ individual, pairs, groups, whole class
skill	→ productive or receptive
level of difficulty	→ non-demanding or requiring effort and concentration
content	→ changing from one language point to another; from one subject to another
mood	→ light or serious; happy or sad; tense or relaxed
exciting or calming activities	→ 'stirring' (lively and active) or 'settling' (quietening down)

(adapted from *A Course in Language Teaching* by Penny Ur, Cambridge University Press 1996)

Unit 20 Planning an individual lesson or a sequence of lessons

- Learners may well require more frequent revision than the coursebook provides. A scheme of work is a good way to make sure that we **recycle** language (i.e. use it again) and include regular revision activities during a sequence of lessons.
- Coursebook units are often arranged around a specific topic (such as sport or relationships), which may be a useful way of linking together a sequence of lessons. This kind of sequence gives us the chance to develop particular areas of vocabulary, but learners may feel that the lessons are repetitive, so we need plenty of variety of texts and **tasks**.

See Units 5–8 for skills-based lessons, Unit 18 for identifying and selecting aims and Unit 19 for identifying the different components of a lesson plan.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES (See page 174 for answers)

- 1 The lesson summaries 1–6 below are part of a scheme of work to introduce and practise language for describing people, clothes and places. Complete the scheme of work with the correct summaries (A, B or C) for lessons 1, 5 and 6.

A Project work: groups prepare poster displays (magazine photographs) Writing: descriptions of people and places (further practice of functional language)
B Listening: descriptions of people Present new vocabulary and check pronunciation: lexical sets for describing people (flashcards and board drawings) Writing: descriptions of students in class
C Video (TV police drama): focus on descriptions of people Role-play in pairs: police interviews (practice of new language) → whole-class correction

<i>Scheme of work</i>
1
2 Reading: descriptions of clothes (from teenage magazine) Vocabulary: dictionary work Writing: descriptions of people and clothes → peer correction (pairwork)
3 Vocabulary: descriptions of places and people (photographs) Practice exercises (coursebook) Speaking: describe-and-draw activity (pairwork) Writing: descriptions of places drawn in speaking activity
4 Vocabulary: pictures of people, clothes and places Grammar: comparative and superlative adjectives Practice exercises (coursebook) Speaking: general knowledge quiz (whole class)
5
6

2 In the scheme of work in Activity 1, which lesson or lessons:

- A has/have a variety of pace?
- B use(s) different interaction patterns?
- C practise(s) receptive skills?
- D practise(s) productive skills?
- E increase(s) the level of difficulty?
- F has/have a change of topic?
- G has/have a change of language focus?
- H is/are lively and active?
- I is/are calm and quiet?