

**ELT Methodology and Learners Meet in Techniques: A Lesson Planning Perspective  
for Teacher Trainees**

İskender Hakkı Sarıgöz

iskender@gazi.edu.tr

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**Abstract**

*Problem:* Teacher trainees attending English language teaching departments learn and practice major foreign language teaching methods and techniques. The abundance of methods and techniques requires a serious selection in order to compile the best lesson. The pre-service teachers are equipped with the required methodological knowledge and ready to implement teaching. Nevertheless, the learners are not aware of the huge teaching technology behind this rule governed and complicated discipline. They are only exposed to the program offered and the techniques that systematize instruction. The lesson plan which is a collection of instructional techniques offers ELT methodology and learners a meeting zone. The arrangement of such a meeting is always a demanding task.

*Purpose:* This discussion attempts to examine basic aspects of the meeting mentioned above and how it can be organized through a skills-based approach.

*Method:* A discussion about skills-based lesson planning has been presented along with a survey of literature. The suggested components of the teaching fashion discussed have been listed and explained briefly.

*Conclusion:* It is argued here that English language learners and ELT methodology meet in the techniques. Teacher trainees should consider all the variables and collect the most suitable set of techniques when they design their microteachings.

*Keywords:* English Language teaching, methodology, teaching techniques, lesson planning, teacher training.

## **Introduction**

English language teaching (ELT) has a very long and complicated history of methodological development. Such a professional acculturation has offered instructors a wide range of teaching methods and techniques. Such a rich variety has led methodology courses to pick up significant methods and bring them into ELT teacher trainee's attention. The twentieth century has witnessed creation of various methods with emphasis on different principles. Such a range of different methods and techniques supported ELT but it also caused some confusion in terms of choosing the best methods and techniques to apply. Furthermore, the complicated big picture has brought discussions of post-methods-era. The cautious approach to blind adherence to employing a single method in instruction, concern in learner needs, and educational developments such as the inevitable rise of constructivism created the need for the eclectic approach. Although eclectic approach is always a

controversial issue due to the professionalism it requires, it is a reality which is widely discussed in ELT methodology courses.

The teacher trainees who attend ELT departments encounter the major foreign language teaching methods in their early methodology courses. These are Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio Visual Method, Communicative Language Teaching, Suggestopedia, Total Physical Response, Community language Learning and others. They study in details ten major methods or more and criticize them systematically. Finally they prepare and present demos for each method in peer groups. In further methodology classes, they perform microteachings in order to teach language skills, games, songs, and crafts. They also perform microteachings geared to young learners and mixed intelligence classes. In four years at college, a trainee experiences a wide range of foreign language teaching modes.

The lesson planning process requires construction of the collection of techniques suitable for the needs and aims of the target learner group. These classical criteria cannot be sufficient for the full impact. The other concerns are considering the age characteristics of the group, using time efficiently, using materials flexibly, creating motivation and lowering anxiety, constructing the learning environment, considering learner differences, adjusting comprehensible exposure geared to the class interlanguage, and devising the implementation of the lesson with a well balanced plan. Such a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic features of foreign language instruction in the class requires a symbiotic existence, synchronization, and orchestration. Automatic administration of this complicated process may become perfect after methodological maturation of the practitioner and quality professional experience. Cook (1991, p. 94) argues that language teaching is different from the instruction of other subjects since the target language is not only the content but the teaching medium. Widdowson (1978, p. 144) suggests that teaching of language as

communication necessitates a teaching approach that integrates linguistic skills and communicative abilities.

Nunan and Lamb (1996, p. 44) states that when one starts actual teaching it becomes clear that efficient language teaching is much more than merely applying a pre-designed plan. Planning, teaching, and learning are complicated and multidimensional tasks with organic relationships between them rather than linear. Although studies of instructors' planning routes are not principally common, those that exist emphasize the organic nature of planning, implementing, and monitoring learning.

In this discussion the term lesson plan should normally be understood as unit plan in order to argue the complete outline which includes all language-skills-activities and other tasks. The terms lesson plan and unit plan are used interchangeably. Assembly of the collection of techniques selected for the teaching units requires inclusion of certain routines. These routines may include methodological traditions and innovative new techniques that support them. Some of these are warm-up, creating the context through a film, a reading text, a song, or similar discourse, follow-up questions, vocabulary activities, grammar elicitation, listening tasks, speaking, games, concept checking, role play, drama, and writing. The order and the components are not fixed. Furthermore, there must be methodological freedom to regulate and develop the lesson according to the needs and level of the learner group. All the activities employed in lesson plans are implemented through ELT techniques that are listed in acclaimed methods and additional techniques offered by the teacher or other sources such as the teaching materials. In other words, each activity is based on a teaching technique. Some inexperienced practitioners may attempt to take the teaching plan in the textbooks as the ultimate teaching guide nevertheless they may later feel the need to modify the suggested lesson plan according to the requirements of the class. Brown (1995, p166) argues that the

conventional wisdom that that does not accept the existence of a perfect book is likely to be true even if the materials are commercial ones or the products of a program.

The program designers, the book designers, and the teachers know the ELT methodology very well. However there is one partner of instruction who is not aware of this technology; it is the student. No approach, no method, no technique is known by the learner in details. The learner is not aware of the complete language system, methodological acculturation, and professional discussions except his/her role, some suggested strategies, and some general instructional reminders about what to do in order to learn the target language. Littlewood (1984, p. 95) discusses that the studies on how learners use their second language as a means of communication show that a lot can be achieved with an inadequate knowledge of the target language system. Moreover, it is generally not possible for the learner to know all these. In this vein, learner's connection with the methodology is a matter difficult to explore. As stated above, it is assumed in this discussion that the technology called ELT methodology and the learners meet during the application of techniques. Techniques are the most significant meeting points since they construct the skeleton of the lesson and determine what learners will do. The construction of the collection of techniques is a vital task for putting learning and target language use into operation. Widdowson (1990, p. 157) states that language learning as a human effort includes mastering the language and doing something using that language. The following section reviews essential components of a foreign language lesson and lists a few techniques for each of them. These components provide the meeting zone for the learners and the methodology as discussed elsewhere. In the preparation of complete lesson plans the methodological discussions and literature provide reference for ELT teacher trainees.

### **Physical environment**

There are discussions which attempt to describe the physical properties that can be created for FLT settings. Suggestopedia developed by Lazanow focuses on the design and furnishing of the environment, peripheral teaching aids, visuals, and musical aid. Brain friendly approaches also focus on peripheral teaching aids to foster learning. Jones (1980, p. 111) discusses the importance of an English room which accommodates class library, reference books, pictorial material, space on the walls for displaying work, moving furniture for group work, and audio visual material. Techniques: thematic learning centers, displaying charts, posters, and student prepared materials, specially arranged seating, using background music.

### **Warm-up**

Cognitive activity cannot be activated and brought to the desired stage automatically. Learners need a warm-up stage in the beginning of the lesson. This is for psychological and cognitive preparation of the learner for the coming theme and its linguistic and non-linguistic features. Techniques: general talk about daily events or daily life related to the topic, giving clues to the theme, using pictures, realia or other relevant audio visual materials as starters, presenting anecdotes accompanied by questions or a brief discussion, employing humor, personalization by asking questions.

### **Contextualization**

Warm up could be followed by a contextualization activity in which previously learned language material is mixed with new input. This is the section where learners are exposed to the new language material and the theme. The amount of comprehensible input is a controversial matter nevertheless it must be always at a supportable level by the learners. This part of the lesson is important since it contains and displays the discourse which

contains the material to be elicited, learned and practiced. The medium used in this part should be appealing. Techniques: using a photo story, using a song, using a four minute film or a cartoon, performing a puppet show, using a reading text, miming, role play, or a brief drama performance.

### **Reading**

Reading is among the most useful contextualization tools. It is always available and easy to produce. It contains discourse features which are easy to analyze and talk about. It can be supported by various teaching aids with no difficulty. There are many popular reading skills that can accommodate the text. Techniques: reading the text and answering comprehension questions, guessing the meanings of unknown words, summarizing, making comments, criticizing, rewriting the text in various forms

### **Follow up questions**

The questions about the discourse in contextualization part are the starting point for ‘doing and discovering’ and ‘hands on learning.’ It is not extremely demanding but it tests and fosters the comprehension of the old and new language material. As well as being an indirect elicitation activity, this part may serve as a smooth transition to the rest of the lesson after presenting the gist. Techniques: open ended questions, wh-questions, multiple choice questions, yes-no questions, put a tick grids

### **Elicitation**

Cognitivist and constructivist approaches to language teaching entailed learning by doing and discovering rather than learning by structural ways. In elicitation the meaning is discovered by the learner through the techniques employed. The main aim is to increase power of input and store intake in long term memory. Doff (1988, p. 164) argues that there is

no clear line dividing what students ‘know’ and ‘do not know.’ There is language material that they ‘half-know’, since language is rule governed they can easily guess things they have not been taught. Eliciting is a way of promoting learners to infer and to work out rules for themselves. Developing the ability of making guesses is an essential part of language instruction. Jones (1980, p. 82) argues that pictures can correlate a theme and be illustrative enough to elicit a response. Techniques: asking questions, miming, performing demonstrations, acting out, role play, using all types of audio visual effects and materials such as calendars, posters, contextual photo strips, displaying a timeline, a very short film, and using realia

### **Vocabulary in context**

Vocabulary activities should not be seen as tools only for learning the meaning. They have to be designed to develop acquisition and storage of words in order to retrieve and use. They are prerequisites for all language activities. Techniques: highlighting the new input by writing in bold, using a photo story with subtitles, matching the pictures and meanings, matching the pairs, crossword puzzles, using realia, and all types of suitable elicitation techniques

### **Listening**

Listening should not be a neglected skill. In real life it takes place as much as speaking. It can be a challenging skill to develop if rarely or not offered in the program. It is important to listen to the material suitable for the class interlanguage. It is also a skill to be developed in order to be able to understand native speakers’ speech. Techniques: Listening to the recording without reading, listening and reading at the same time, listening for meaning, repeated listening tasks, listening and filling the blanks, listening and acting out, listening to songs and other related language materials and doing the follow-up tasks



### **Grammar in context**

Grammar is the backbone of the interlanguage developing in the class. Grammatical input must be presented in context and perceived through elicitation. This is essential for effective learning, long term storage, and easy retrieval. Upon the perception of the meaning by the students conventional grammar activities may be presented. Techniques: employing conventional grammar exercise types in context, pictured animation of the grammatical discourse, all kinds of elicitation, explanation and study by using pictures, timelines, and comprehensive charts

### **Speaking**

Speaking is putting the language into operation, and it is the most important part of the lesson from the perspective of linguistic pragmatics. Lantolf and Thorne (2006, p. 79) emphasizes that speaking and writing are the mediational means human deploy for thinking and are the main features among language activities. Low profile teacher should facilitate all types of speaking activities using particularly pair-work and group-work along with general class talk. In order to generate real communication there must be a suitable topic, information gap, roles, and flow of messages. Power relationship in the class must be watched carefully and weak students must speak as well as the brighter ones. Anxiety may be very high in this part, for this reason teacher's assistance when necessary may release the tension. Speaking is the major language skill that should dominate the entire unit. Speaking techniques should be employed wherever and whenever possible, that is, quality speaking should appear many times during the lesson. Techniques: discussing the given topic, creating a dialogue, talking about a given subject or given audio visual materials, making explanations, criticizing a given situation, talking about personal experiences, making comments, answering questions, summarizing, making jokes, solving puzzles in groups, solving problems, making guesses,

story-telling, story-completion, performing role play and drama, pair work and group work, speaking about unexpected topics that occur during the lesson

### **Pronunciation**

This is an important language sub-skill essential for self expression. The aim is to reach a mutually understandable level of pronunciation. The teacher is the most important model for standard pronunciation. Like other language skills, pronunciation does not develop automatically. Every unit must include a pronunciation component. Techniques: listening to native speaker recordings, listening to short videos, pronunciation games such as same or different sounds, matching sounds and words, repetition when necessary, self study assignments.

### **Concept checking**

Concept checking is employed for confirming the perception of the new material and it is a kind of double-check. This stage may be compulsory in very detailed lessons which are full of different and challenging activities. Although lessons have pre-determined linguistic aims every student may not focus on the intended patterns and mentally go to different directions in the discourse. In this case concept checking activities may cause a quick come-back to the subject matter. Techniques: Asking questions, having learners rephrase what has been done, employing suitable conventional exercise types, asking them to use what they have learned in context, summarizing and other techniques that can be used for input confirmation.

### **Games**

Instruction is mediated through many activities with nonlinguistic features to offer enjoying environments for learning such as games, crafts, and songs. Games may create

some action or competition where language is used naturally for some purpose without the fear of making mistakes. In games there are mostly groups with certain goals. The communication in the group and between the groups may be genuine as desired. After all, language learning should lead to real use of the target language in social context. Games are among the suitable environments for language use within the class interlanguage especially in instruction for young learners. Techniques: word games, action games, board games, guessing games, comparison games, matching games

### **Drama**

Drama activities enable the class to approach temporarily to foreign language acquisition mode. Drama can be considered as one of the most real-like communicative performances that can take place in the classroom. It is suitable for classes where strong version of communicative approach is employed. Techniques: dramatizing a situation by playing the given role, free role play, simulation, performing plays, skits

### **Writing**

Writing is the combination of ‘reflection of what has been learned’ and ‘learners’ creativity.’ Although it always appears towards the end of the unit, it is a productive and creative activity which enables the students to produce a discourse using the interlanguage for some purpose. It is a relaxing activity which gives time to think, produce, and edit if necessary. Techniques: all types of composition writing techniques such as description, comparison and contrast, narration, argumentation

### **Conclusion**

Lesson planning in ELT requires selective and constructive flexibility in terms of technique preference and adaptation. In this manner, eclectic approach may conjure up

images of freedom however there is always methodological responsibility and limitations. The basic components of the teaching unit must always exist. The collection of techniques on which the unit is based must promote methodological priorities such as proper exposure to the target language, implementing communication, permission for fluency, self discovery of meaning, learner centeredness, and creativity.

In main stream schools the class hours for English may be very limited, in private schools it may be the opposite. Unit design may be very strict in the former group due to the restricted time. The selection of teaching techniques and their implementation in dense programs and crowded classes require specific large class handling techniques such as intensive use of pair work and group work. In this way class time is used economically.

As a result, , in skills based programs teaching a complete unit may include the followings; greeting, warm-up, recycling (optional), contextualization through a reading text with pictures, follow up questions, a listening activity, vocabulary activities, grammar elicitation part, grammar in context, speaking activities, a phonology game, a drama activity, and a writing task. The density and detailing of the tasks can be adjusted according to the time limitations. The suggested unit plan above is not the final one. All components can be replaced by similar or different units eclectically and the order may be different according to the linguistic needs and aims of the learner group. The additional use of innovative new techniques is always required for variety and novelty.

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**İskender H. Sarıgöz** is a teacher trainer. He is interested in interdisciplinary studies which integrate ELT with other instructional trends. He lectures in BA, MA, and Ph. D programs.

**İngilizce Öğretim Yöntemleri ve Öğrenciler Tekniklerde Buluşur: Öğretmen Adayları  
için Bir Ders Planlama Yaklaşımı**

**Özet**

İngilizce öğretmenliği bölümünde okuyan öğretmen adayları çok çeşitli yabancı dil öğretim yöntemleri ve teknikleri öğrenmekte ve bunların uygulamasını yapmaktadırlar. Yöntem ve tekniklerin çokluğu uygun ders planı hazırlanmasını güçleştirmektedir. Yabancı dil öğretim teknikleri yöntembilim ve öğrencilerin buluşma noktasıdır. Bu nedenle öğretmen adayları ders sunumlarında en uygun tekniklerin seçimine özen göstermek zorundadırlar. Bu çalışma dil becerileri odaklı ders hazırlama açısından önemli konuları tartışmakta ve öneriler sunmaktadır.

*Anahtar kelimeler:* İngilizce öğretimi, yöntembilim, öğretim teknikleri, ders planı, öğretmen yetiştirme.