

From Module 3 Unit 9

Lesson planning and variety

Before you start to plan your lesson in detail, you should be very clear about the overall aim of the lesson. We noted above that a single lesson plan format was not appropriate because the focus of your lesson could vary quite significantly and hence the headings that you would need. In theory, your lesson could focus on one or other of the following:

1. a topic or theme (e.g. opening a bank account)
2. a function or notion (e.g. giving polite excuses)
3. an English structure (e.g. the Present Perfect tense)
4. a language skill (e.g. listening or writing)

In practice, you are likely to include two or three of these elements in your lesson plan. For example, your lesson could be set in a shop (topic/theme); the functional language could be making requests; the structures might include *I would like* *Please can I have* *Do you have*; all four language skills might be practised in the course of the lesson.

It is very likely that your students will have different strengths and different ways of learning. Some will learn better by speaking, while others will learn faster by reading. Some of them may learn best by speaking and writing. By providing your students with a variety of activities you will maximise their opportunities for learning. Apart from the students' strengths and weaknesses, all of your students will benefit from a change of activity in the course of the lesson. A switch from listening to speaking will immediately invigorate your students and give them something new to do. If the speaking goes on too long, they might start to wilt again. A switch to a writing activity will provide the spark to get them actively involved again. You will soon discover that one activity can be utilised in a variety of different ways. For example, you might start by asking the students questions, then move on to look at a table, then listen to a tape based on the table, and finally give the students a writing task based on the tape/table. This integration provides variety and a more interesting lesson for the students.

Some course books seem to concentrate on particular skills. For example, you may find that your course book has a large number of speaking activities. However, even the most ardent student does not want to spend consecutive lessons speaking in pairs and groups, so if this is the case with your course, it is important to supplement it with additional activities that cover all of the language skills. The language skills are mutually reinforcing and it is important to provide your students with practice that covers them all.

Lesson headings

What sorts of headings are you likely to need in your plan? Certainly you will want to make a note of the **class** (including the level e.g. pre-intermediate), the **date**, and the **time** at the top of your page.

- Class
- Date
- Time

You will want to say *what* it is that you want the students to be able to do by the end of the lesson and this will be the overall **aim** of the lesson. Your aim might say something like this: *By the end of the lesson the students should be able to* . An alternative might be *To enable the students to* .

- Aims

Task 2 *

Look at what these three teachers have to say about their lesson. Which one of them do you think has the clearest idea of the aim of the lesson?

Teacher 1 - *"I'm hoping for an enjoyable lesson today. The students will be talking about music and their favourite pop singers. That should really interest them."*

Teacher 2 - *"The students need a lot of writing practice so I'm going to try to get them to write about themselves."*

Teacher 3 - *"I want my students to be able to arrange a meeting for a date in the future."*

In achieving your lesson aim you are likely to involve the students in different activities, each of which will have its own particular objective. The **objectives** are the specific steps in the lesson that build towards achieving the overall lesson aim. For example, during the lesson we might want the students to practise a dialogue in pairs and the *objective* of this would be to provide them with speaking practice using the target language. The overall aim of the lesson might be to teach the students to arrange for a meeting in the future, like Teacher 3 in the task above.

- Objective(s)

You may also want to mention the **theme** or **context** of a particular piece of work. For example, you may be doing a piece of work around the theme of houses, so it would be helpful to mention this.

- Theme / Context

You will want to outline the language that you will be teaching, but you might want to show this in two different ways. First, you might want to specify the **function** or **notion** (see Unit 1) that will be the focus of the lesson. You might note in your plan that you are practising *polite questions* if this is what the students are practising.

- Language - Function / Notion

Second, you will want to be specific about the **target language** that the students will be using under the heading of polite questions. For example, you might include the fact that your students will be practising questions like *Would you like to come in? Would you like a cup of tea? Would you like to see the garden?* These examples would represent the new language in your lesson. Notice that you need to be aware of what other language the students have been taught previously before you move onto new structures. This is particularly important when the students are in the earlier stages of language learning. For example, it would be difficult to tackle the Present Perfect tense without first presenting the Past Simple and the present tense since the Present Perfect tense has a 'foot' in both the present and the past.

- Target language

Related to the target language, we have the **new vocabulary**. This consists of the new vocabulary that you feel you should teach. It is important to note that we do *not* have to teach each and every new word that appears in the lesson, only those words that are important in the context of the lesson. There may be other words that the students will not understand, but if these words are not important in that particular lesson they may not need to be taught.

- New vocabulary

It is important to specify the **language skills** that your students will be using: listening, speaking, reading and/or writing. It may well be that you will include some practice in all four language skills but you are very likely to have a significant amount of practice in, say, two of the skills, and your lesson plan should reflect this fact.

- Language skills.

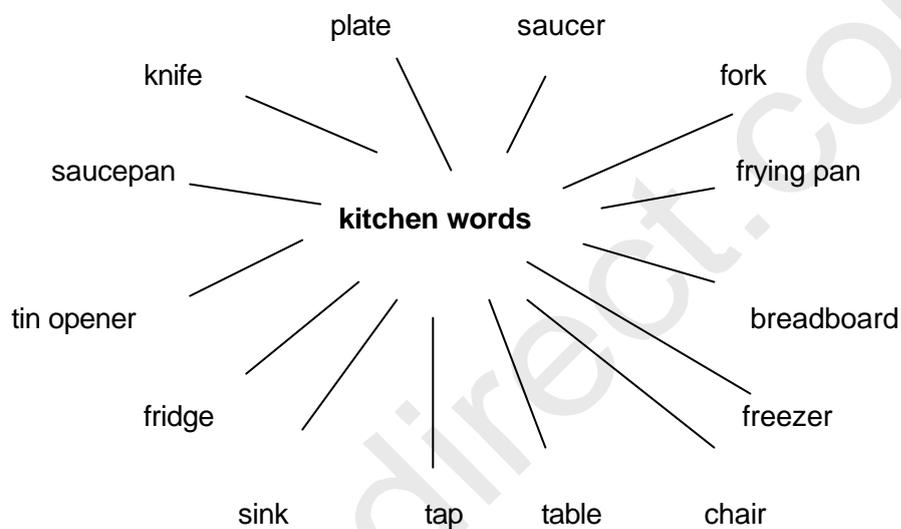
In the course of your lesson you may use certain **teaching aids** (realia, pictures, taped dialogues and so on) and these should be noted in your plan. You will not want to come in to every lesson loaded with an armful of pictures and objects because this could make your lessons more like conjuring tricks than lessons, and the repetitive use of aids might dull their significance. It is important to try to use teaching aids in a way that is both meaningful and memorable. Teaching aids (including the board) are most effective when they are integrated into the lesson as a whole and help both the teacher and the students to move forwards. If you are using a tape, always check to see that it is set at the right place before the start of the lesson. There is nothing worse than having to hunt through a tape for the passage that you want to play. It is embarrassing and makes you look unprepared.

- Teaching aids

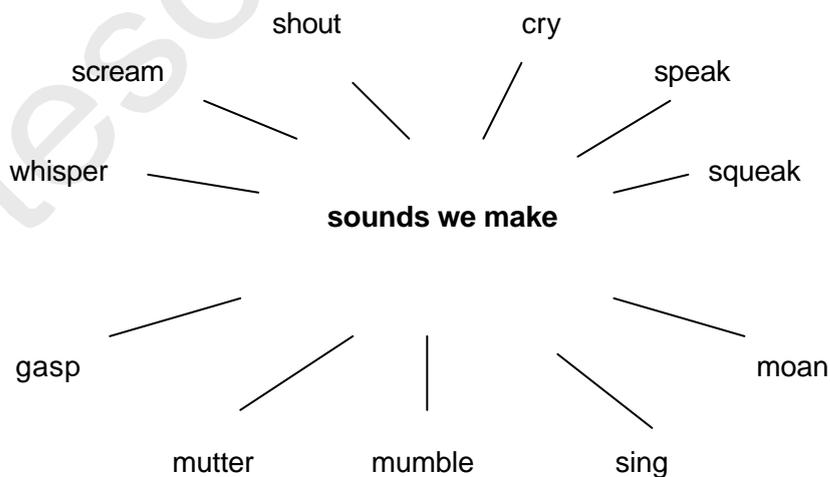
From Module 3 Unit 10

Word webs

A similar approach can also be used to create a word web of items that could come under a particular heading, for example, *clothes* or *kitchen words*. The students could begin individually, then work in pairs and then combine with another pair. In this way, their web of words would expand. You could then further develop their class list with selected items that they did not know but which you felt to be important.



They could also use the same approach to develop a wider vocabulary of action words.



None of these activities should be conducted in isolation but should be linked into other work (reading, listening, writing and so on) around the same topic. This will provide a full context for real understanding.

At a more elementary level, the students could be *given* a mixed bag of words together with two separate headings (for example, cold things and hot things) and then asked to place them under a particular heading. These activities can start individually but they are most effective if they progress to pair work or small group work in order to encourage collaborative work and to expand the students' vocabulary knowledge.

Grading words

It is often quite difficult for learners to distinguish the subtle differences between words with similar meanings. For example, they may have problems managing the differences between *walking, striding, stumbling, staggering* and so on. They can be helped with the occasional 'grading' activity where they place words in a list according to particular criteria. For example the difference in closeness between:

friend acquaintance comrade partner neighbour mate companion

Even native speakers may be hard put to agree an order here from closest to more distant, but the value of an activity like this is that it provides students with the opportunity to explore differences between words, and broadens the learners' knowledge of the language. Another list of words that could be used to describe a *welcome* might include *icy warm cold cordial effusive enthusiastic cool and frigid*.

The students could work individually, then in pairs, and possibly in pairs of pairs, using a framework looking like this:

<i>a welcome you'd like to receive</i>

<i>a welcome you wouldn't want to receive</i>

Ordering

A similar activity can be used to place events or actions in the correct order. The focus here will be on the vocabulary, and once again the students should be able to work in pairs even if they have an initial period of individual work. Here is an example, although of course the items would be out of order when given to the students. In this case, the correct order even produces a rather attractive pattern, which is another memorable feature!

walk to the centre
talk to the nurse
read the notes
sign the form
wait for your turn
lie down on the bed
feel the needle going in
think about something else
feel the needle being removed
firmly press on a piece of cotton wool
get up slowly
have a drink and a biscuit
walk home happily, having donated a pint of blood

Don't forget that an activity like this should not be done in isolation but should be linked to a reading passage or a listening activity on the same or a similar theme.

Collaborative gap filling

We have already considered gap-filling activities as an approach to language practice in general, but collaborative gap-filling can also provide an excellent basis on which to develop students' vocabulary skills. The style and the level of the passage will depend totally on the characteristics and the skills of your students but this approach can be used with learners at quite an early stage through to advanced students. The core to this activity is that the students work together to decide on the best possible words to place in the various gaps. They may start off by working in pairs, before moving into small groups; finally the class may work together to agree on the best choices. As the teacher, you can select the gaps very precisely in order to target particular words, or particular

types of words. As with many of the other activities, you will link this work in with other activities that focus on the same theme, or the same grammatical or lexical point of interest. Below are two examples, one at a pre-intermediate level and one at a more advanced level.

The number of gaps that you leave will depend on the ability level of your students. You need not leave them in a regular way, so you will have the freedom to select the words quite carefully. The words chosen by the students may not be the words from the original, but this is not important. What is important is that they work in a collaborative way to come to a consensus on the most appropriate words, and in doing so they expand the range of their vocabulary. However, half the fun of this activity is letting the students know what the original words actually were, because this can provide a lot of surprise and laughter, as well as another opportunity for vocabulary development.

Pre-intermediate:

Mount Kilimanjaro

Mount Kilimanjaro is 5,895m high and to the border between Tanzania and Kenya. The mountain is in Tanzania. It is the highest in Africa. It is the mountain in the world that stands alone. Many people climbing the mountain. They start their by flying into Kilimanjaro Airport. The takes five days. It takes three days of slow to the top. It takes two days back down again. It is about 88 km The countryside is There are three huts for climbers: Mandara Hut, Horombo Hut and Mawenzi Hut. The are made of wood. climbers cook their own food. Some employ to cook it for them. There is at the top of the mountain. The climbers who get to the top can see views.

Advanced:

Earthquakes

Dean Smith was working high above the harbour in his crane, when suddenly he found that it was shaking him. As the shaking got worse, the arm of the

..... began to flip backwards and forwards like a long The wheels of the crane came clear of the tracks and the crane began to 'walk around like a stiff-legged' Dean scrambled down the crane and tried to run away, but all around him were opening up in the ground, and getting all the time.

Close by, Edmund Endresen, was running away as well, but he felt as if he was running 'on a rubber' and he kept and falling. Ahead of him, was a railway line, and behind that was high ground. Edmund under one of the carriages and, as he did so, he fell into a crack one metre wide, and perhaps 10 or 15 metres deep. As he on to the edge of the opening, water flooded into the crack, and him to the surface. He jumped to his and ran for the high ground. He looked back, and was just in time to see the carriages disappear into an crack in the ground.

These are just two of the stories of men and women who experienced the great Alaska earthquake which occurred at dusk on Good Friday, 1964. The earthquake did a lot of to the towns of Anchorage, Kodiak and Seward although, the death in the whole of Alaska was only 115. However, the centre of the shake was out at sea, so towns on the coastline were damaged. Ships were flung onto the; pipelines were broken and oil storage depots were set on ; buildings were destroyed.

A powerful earthquake is a shaking of the ground, normally lasting a or so, although the great Alaskan earthquake lasted for seven minutes before the world stood still again. Earthquakes can be caused in several different, but in most cases they are caused when the ground drops, or slips sideways, and this can the area around this fault to vibrate like the surface of a

There have been many other earthquakes since One of the most serious was in Kobe, Japan, in January 1995. The earthquake at Kobe was caused by a of the ground very close to the surface. This is the most dangerous and type of earthquake. The area was populated so that about 5,000

were killed, 25,000 people were injured and 300,000 were made Many tall buildings in Japan have been built to make them to earthquakes because it is an that has many small quakes each year, and these buildings survived very well. However, in the poorer, older of Kobe, people live in traditional-style wooden houses with heavy tiled, there were many

Adapted from *Exploring English* by Max Ophani and Kate Barclay OUP 2000

From Module 3 Unit 11

Many of the games and activities outlined in this unit are designed to enable students to express themselves more freely than they might otherwise do during class activities. You are already aware that communication and communicative approaches are very important aspects of current teaching approaches, and these activities reflect that fact.

Many of the activities outlined here are designed to encourage language use in a natural way. In the past, students might have been encouraged to speak in a rather formal, unnatural way through presentations and debates and so on. Sometimes these activities were part of oral English classes as if *speaking* was somehow a separate part of language learning. Nevertheless, these oral English classes were themselves a step away from very traditional teaching styles and a move towards the more natural use of language that we encourage today. These days, teachers try integrate speaking with the other language skills and exploit natural situations that give their students a clear purpose. When the students know *why* they are talking, they are more likely to get actively and creatively involved in the activity. When the students have a *reason* to speak, they are likely to make a considerable effort to use the language that they have. Interaction will almost always take place where the students have a purposeful task to fulfil.

A number of the activities in this unit involve the teacher standing back from the students and allowing them to use their own language despite the errors that might occur from time to time. At first, a teacher may want to step in and correct the students immediately

but in many cases it is more effective to note errors so that they can be addressed at a later stage, while leaving the students clear to engage themselves in the struggle to communicate. This can be a very effective route to language acquisition and fluency. However, this should not stop the teacher from sometimes contributing a point to a discussion or sometimes correcting a student when they have made an error. As the teacher, you will have to decide when to withhold your advice or corrections, and when to offer them. There will be times when you can provide the support that the students need to move forward or when an immediate correction can illustrate a point very clearly. At other times, you will want to make a note of the problem and deal with it at a later stage. These are decisions that you will have to make at the time. (Note: If you *do* spot a language problem that you want to deal with later, always make a note of it in a file because otherwise you are likely to forget the example.)

Many of the activities here are group-based activities, although there are also plenty of pair-work activities and some class-based activities as well. Whatever the organisation of your class, it is important that you give *all* of the students the opportunity to talk as much as possible. With some class-based activities there may be opportunities for some of the more retiring students to hide away very effectively unless there is a clear purpose and direction in the task - unless they have a reason to participate actively, in other words. Clearly, pair work will maximise this opportunity because where two students are working together they will have no opportunities for sitting back and letting others do the work. The activities outlined here can provide that purpose.

While no-one can guarantee that these activities are going to work with every class, every time, they have been tried and tested in many classrooms and have often been found to work very well. If you do find difficulties when you first try an activity, do not despair but try to think through the way in which you approached the work, and try to find ways in which you can change your approach in order to enable the activity to be more effective. On occasions, you may find that your initial presentation of the task was not clear enough and needs to be revised. On other occasions, a very slight change of approach, for example, saying less and requiring the students to say more, can pay huge dividends. Standing back and passing the responsibility to the students can have very positive results.

Many of these tasks will require preparation in some way or other. This is an important stage because it is the time when you prepare the items that you will need, and you divide up the minutes of the lesson. Both types of preparation will help you in the future. Many of the items can be used again in subsequent lessons, and the lesson plan will provide you with ideas on how to modify your approach the next time you do the same or a similar activity. Referring back to examples of materials in a file containing your lesson plans is a great help when approaching a new block of work.

Timing is important because you don't want to be nine-tenths of the way through an activity when time runs out. You can of course carry activities into a second lesson but this should be done where you have *planned* to do it rather than where you have been *obliged* to do it. The timing difficulties will generally be solved by giving students very clear guidelines on how much time to spend on a particular activity. In fact without such guidance, they might feel unclear about how to approach their task. In addition, you will often want time not only for them to complete the activity but also to allow them the opportunity to talk about what they have learnt. So, give clear instructions. For example: 'You have 8 minutes to complete this task!'

In the games/activities that follow, the title, the focus and the language skill are all detailed. In addition, the organisational arrangement of the students is suggested, together with likely proficiency levels. These are suggestions rather than instructions, and almost any activities here can be simplified for elementary students or developed in a variety of ways for more advanced learners.