Enhancing an Effective EFL Classroom through Lesson Planning

Thida Kyaw

Lecturer, Department of Engineering English, Technological University (Banmaw), Myanmar
thidakyaw44@gmail.com

Abstract

Outcome based education (OBE) is being carried out in university education in Myanmar. It involves assessments and evaluation practice to reflect certain specific outcomes. And there is also paradigm shift to learner centered learning in teaching learning situations. So in EFL classrooms in Myanmar, the effective use of interactive activities is essential for students being exposed to voluntary learning in a given time limit. To fulfill this gap, the author tried to ingest suitable interactive activities and structured activities in her lesson planning to save time and to meet expectations for the outcomes. The target students were 30 of the fourth year students at Technological University (Kyaukse). A case study using a carefully prepared lesson plan was done to find out effectiveness achieved. The results show that the involvement of students was raised up not only by the intrinsic nature of interactive activities but also by the assessment plans. So it is hoped that this paper would be able to point out that lesson planning ahead of time is necessarily needed so that adaptations and required activities can be made well and required assessment plans can be set as roadmaps for students and teachers alike.

Key Words- OBE, paradigm shift, learner-centered learning, case study, lesson planning, involvement of student

1. Introduction

In the technological universities, outcome based education is being carried out. As program outcomes and course outcomes are stated clearly, teachers are responsible for fulfilling these. In this situation as an EFL teacher, the author also would like to make her learners have many chances to be exposed to language and use language a nd achieve the respective outcomes. The author wants to create learner friendly environment or effective classrooms. Obviously, active learning takes place in effective classrooms. Meanwhile, most of the aims of lesson plans are to make the lesson effective and to make the learners learn what they have to learn willingly by their motivation aroused. So the author tried to encourage the students to make active learning by weaving interactive activities into planning her lessons. In doing so, adjustments for the lesson plan were made depending on many factors such as students' background knowledge, facilities, resources, aims and objectives, etc. The author felt that as a teaching professional, a teacher needs certain commitment to the preparation for the lesson plan for the betterment of teaching learning situation. In this paper, the author tries to mention how she followed the path of carefully prepared lesson plan and how much streamlined process of teaching learning took place. To know learners' engagement and more importantly how much intended outcomes were achieved, a case study was carried out for the effectiveness of the lesson.

2. Lesson Planning and Related Literature

Lesson planning for an EFL classroom is the hub of the teaching learning process. It involves synthesizing our understanding of second language acquisition and language teaching pedagogy with our knowledge of our learners, the curriculum, and the teaching context. It is important that learners are given the opportunities to develop productive skills throughout the course so that they would be able to engage in realistic talk and putting up reports. So teachers need to make sure that there is an alignment among knowledge, skills and attitudes the students are intended to attain in planning their lessons.

2.1. Why is there a Need to Plan?

Including variety of activities is important to get the motivation of students and it is the teacher who can moderate these activities using an accurate lesson plan according to the following:

"A good lesson plan needs to contain a judicious blend of coherence and variety. And a good plan needs to reflect this. The ideal compromise is to plan a lesson that has an internal coherence but which nevertheless allows students to do different things."(Jeremy Harmer)

2.1.1. Internal Issues. So there are internal issues for developing a lesson plan.
* To have a better idea of how to navigate the lesson
*To think thoroughly about content, materials, and presentation flow
* To think of learners' ability to cope with material
* To build confidence for the teacher in teaching
* To know the topic or subject better
* To anticipate questions and problems

2.1.2. External Issues. According to the following quotation, there are underlying issues for developing a lesson plan.

"A lesson plan is to provide a structure of the lesson, to provide a map for the teacher to follow, and to provide a record of what has been taught." (Jack Richards)
* To reflect learners' attributes got from the lesson
* To report to the supervisor in timely manners
* To guide a substitute teacher
* To leave as a reference for other teachers

2.2. Models of Lesson Plans

(a) Tyler (1949)
Rational-Linear Framework
Step1: Specify objectives
Step2: Select learning activities
Step 3: Organize learning
Step 4; Specify methods of evaluation

(b) Yinger (1980)
Stage1: Problem Conception (Integrating teacher's goals, knowledge and experience)
Stage 2: Formulation of problem and solution
Stage 3: Implementation and evaluation influenced by past lesson and what is expected to happen

(c)Bailey (1996)
Reasons for steering away from original plan
Serve the common good
Teach to the moment.
Further the Lesson
Accommodate learning styles
Promote students' involvement
Distribute benefits

2.3. Bloom's Taxomy for Lesson Plans

In the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy, there are levels starting from remembering to creating. So a good lesson plan goes step by step of the Bloom's taxonomy so that the students can learn in a streamlined manner. Suitable activities and tasks should be ingested into each step.

3. Why Incorporating Interactive Activities Should be in a Lesson

Today we are shifting to learner-centred learning in EFL classrooms of Myanmar. Learners are made to learn actively. According Stan Jagger (2018),

"Learning happens when we are active. We learn from actively reading, listening, participating in class and working with other people. Active learning means that we think about and try to understand what we are learning"

Making use of activities gives rise to active learning of students and makes a lesson flow smoothly and saves time. The teacher needs to make sure step by step lesson flow taking into consideration of what they are teaching but what learners are learning. So they need to adapt and vary the activities depending on the

learners and teaching contexts so that the class becomes active and a good learning environment is achieved.

Obviously, English as a foreign language skill is an integrated skill. So, activities concerned with all 4 skills and sub skills such as vocabulary skills, morphological, phonological, and grammatical skills should be applied in EFL classrooms.

3.1. The Nature of Activities and Types of Activities

Sometimes the teacher need to vary the pace of learning. And then they need to use various kinds of activities.

Teaching and learning activities are any tasks related to the learning objectives. They can be energetic (stir activities), where learners can move around and make some noise, or quiet (settle activities) with learners sitting at their desks thinking. Some activities are individual work, pair work and group work or class as a whole. (Mote Oo Education)

3.1.1. Roles of Activities in Stages of Lessons

There are some stages in a typical lesson structure.
(a) Teaching of receptive skills_ pre-while- post activities are used.
(b) Teaching of language components _ presentation practice and produce activities are used.
(c) Teaching productive skills_ pre-while (presentation practice produce)-post activities are used.

3.1.2. The Characteristics of Communicative Activities. The interactive activities will have the following characteristics.
*They involve using language for a purpose.
*They create a desire to communicate.
*They encourage students to be creative and contribute `their ideas.
* They focus on the message and students concentrate on what they are saying rather than how they are saying.
* The students work independently of the teacher.
* The students determine what they want to say or write.

4. The Case Study

4.1. Boundary of the Case study

Considering all the factors of a good and effective lesson, suitable and reasonable amount of activities were ingested in the lesson of 4th Year EFL Class. The material reference was English Unlimited B2. Some adaptations and variations had to be made.

The organization of the material is that warming up activities are introduced first and then some input language either in the form of reading or listening is given and after that either notable or useful vocabulary and expressions are highlighted. Grammar reference and grammar practice activities are also provided. Speaking exercise is usually followed as a practice for productive skill. Writing practice is usually given alongside with

modeling. It is found that as receptive skills, listening and reading are introduced first and productive skills are intended to be achieved.

4.2. A Sample Lesson Plan

Depending on the amount of results or outcomes intended by the textbook, the teacher needs to tailor the lesson accordingly. Balancing curriculums, students' background knowledge and government objectives, a sample lesson plan for improving integrated skills was made to engage the students in their class as follows:

4.2.1. Information of the Lesson

Table 4.1 Information of the Lesson

Target students	IV Year BE students from TU (Kyaukse)
Level	Upper Intermediate
Lecturer	Daw Thida Kyaw, Lecturer M.A.(English for Specific purposes)
Target Skill	Reading Comprehension Skill
Integrated Skills	Skimming and scanning skills, Reading for interpretation, critical thinking skill, speaking skill
Materials used	1 page of hand out
Stages Used	Pre-reading stage While reading stage Post- reading stage Review stage
Time Allotted	36 minutes

4.2.2. The Actual Lesson Plan. There are four stages for the lesson and the material used is attached as appendix A.

Table 4.2 Stage 1 of a Reading Lesson

Teaching stage	Pre reading stage
Tasks	1.Listing dos and don'ts in an interview 2.Comparing the lists asking agree with all the advice
Learning outcomes	Students will be able to list down dos and donts
Skills achieved	Speaking skill ,critical thinking skill, compromising skill
Instruction methods	Individual work ,pair work, class work(eliciting)
Assessment	Randomly checked pair answer on board
Time allotted	4 minutes

Table 4.3 Stage 2 of a Reading Lesson

Teaching stage	While reading stage
Tasks	1.Reading the introduction and imagining possible unusual behaviours 2. Deciding which stories are difficult to believe reading the rest paragraphs 3. Dividing the interviewees into three groups
Learning outcomes	-Students will be able -to state unusual behaviours -to decide which ones are difficult to believe -to discriminate the interviewees among three groups
Skills achieved	Skimming and scanning skills, Critical thinking, reading for interpretation skill
Instruction methods & strategies	Brainstorming, Think-pair–share-present, Collborative learning
Assessment	Randomly checked pair answer on board
Time allotted	16 minutes

Table 4.4 Stage 3 of a Reading Lesson

Teaching stage	Post reading stage
Tasks	1.Comparing the answers 2.Explaining the answers "why"
Learning outcomes	Students will be able to compare and contrast ideas explaining "why"
Skills achieved	Speaking skill ,critical thinking skill, compromising skill
Instruction methods	Individual work ,pair work, class work(eliciting)
Assessment	Comparing the answers on board, Eliciting "why" opinions
Time allotted	6 minutes

Table 4.5 Stage 4 of a Reading Lesson

Teaching stage	Review stage
Tasks	Talking about own experiences of interview for jobs or courses
Learning outcomes	Students will be able to share their own experiences and give reasons of why they think good or bad experiences
Skills achieved	Speaking skill ,critical thinking skill, compromising skill
Instruction methods	Individual work ,pair work, class discussion(eliciting)
Assessment	Eliciting "why" opinions
Time allotted	10 minutes

5. Observations and Analysis on the Use of a Lesson Plan for the Case Study

5.1. Observations of Students' Involvement in Each Stage

In a lesson, introduction or pre-stage is always essential to arouse the learners' background knowledge and to know the learners' level of existing knowledge for the teachers. Based on these, the teacher can vary the tasks that proceed.

Actually in this case, the students became engaged in finding out dos and don'ts in Stage 1. The teacher had to make sure they really did the task by making them into pairs. There were just about 5% students who were reluctant to do the task. The teacher needed to facilitate some of the learners with just names of some issues in an eliciting manner. The teacher made sure they acquired the needed skills by randomly checking the pairs.

In stage 2, while reading stage, students had to do the tasks by indirectly being asked to read the whole passage. Of course, they had to use thinking skills of comparing and contrasting with dos and don'ts as norms. In this case, it was found that to get to the right track of deciding unusual behaviour, the teacher need to facilitate them with unusual behaviour. But they could easily find what are difficult to believe. And the teacher facilitated them with the usage of 'over confident' and 'aggressive' in ahead so that they found no difficulty in discriminating the groups of interviewees.

In stage 3, post reading stage, the students had to compare their answers and give reasons of why they chose their answers in a small discussion. In this case, they had to share their ideas and had a chance to express their ideas. Students' involvement as an active participation could be seen 100%.

In stage 4, review stage, the students had to express their own experiences and they had a chance to exchange their ideas. In this case, speaking skill exercise was used as a task related task. Based on the knowledge they got from reading exercise, they could create their experiences. Over 90 % of students were found to be responsive to the why questions.

5.2. Analysis on Findings

In each stage of the lesson, it was found that motivation of the students can be achieved by engagement. By assigning as pairs, they were engaged and had a sense of duty to carry out the task and to make interaction between them. Peer interaction has many benefits of self- corrections and finding out the best possible ways to communicate and have a chance to learn language as being part of the cooperative and collaborative work. So it is clearly seen that the teacher's clear instruction was essential to start the ball rolling. So just about 5% of students must also be helped by finding out what's the problem for them. It was inquired that the problem might be he or she was unfamiliar with the teaching style so as to be paired and to be part of a group. Moreover, the source of the problem might be they are weak at language proficiency.

In the first stage, students' involvement result was found to be satisfying because it was not very difficult for them to imagine the dos and don'ts. The teacher had to make sure that assigning duties for finding dos and don'ts as pairs and sharing to the class .Giving time limit was critical for the teacher to make justification for what it should be .It was needed to take into considerations of the   level of exercise in the pre-stage. It should not be too complicated and it should be as to introduce the proceeding lesson.

In the second stage, it was found that reading for main ideas and reading for interpretation were practised. These exercises were made sure as learner-centered learning exercises so that the students could learn actively and made their own decisions. The teacher just needed to facilitate them to get to the right track for sometimes they have various kinds of distractions. The scaffolding from teachers such as giving examples was essential for the weak learners. Scaffolding techniques were made use of as facilitation.

In the third stage, they had to recheck again their answers and so they had to read the passage with a purpose. They had to make decision consulting with what they have acquired as knowledge by discussing with other people. Now speaking skills of comparing and contrasting and compromising had to be used. The teacher can ingest interactive activities such as cooperative and collaborative work so that team spirit was nurtured in their learning situation and they learn more when learning with friends.

In the fourth stage, the students were extended to learn to speak a short talk or discussion In this stage, the exercise demanded analysis and evaluation such as "Do You think interviews are good ways of choosing people? "So some students found them challenging. They had to use critical thinking skills.

6. Suggestions & Recommendations

In our engineering community, our engineering students are expected to have some attributes after graduation. Some of them are
-they will be able to communicate effectively on complex engineering activities with the engineering community and with society at large, such as being able to comprehend and write effective reports and design documentation, make effective presentations, give and receive clear instructions.
- they will be able to function effectively as an individual, and as a member or leader in diverse teams and in multi- displinary settings.
- they will have the preparation and ability to engage in independent and life- long learning. (Myanmar Engineering Council)

To meet these requirements, language teachers also play an important role to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes in their language teaching learning contexts. For example, email ethics, ethics for report writing, dos and don'ts of an oral presentation should also be woven into the lessons. Seeing these needs and norms as core values, language teachers should make sure implementation of a lesson plan dedicated to practise the needed skills. By going beyond tangible assets, a lesson plan reflecting these outcomes is very essential. The teacher should take into consideration of the Bloom's taxonomy and he should check what the

students learn from the lesson and impacts achieved. In this way, the teacher gaggles the designs of teaching learning situations so that the class becomes learner friendly and effective for outcome based education. From head to heart and hand, the carefully designed lesson planning can forge a realistic learning process of what to learn and how to learn.

In balancing the amount of lesson, the teacher's judgement of how to facilitate learning to learn depends on the teacher's knowledge and practice of teaching methodology and subject matter. To realize the teacher's conditions, it is advisable to keep a check- list and they can be used as parameters for the teacher practice in the classroom.

7. Conclusion

From the case study done, it is clearly seen that lesson planning ahead of time could bring advantages not only in terms of time and management but also in terms of intangible assets such as raising up manners and attitudes. It was seen that by following a systematic lesson plan which had been taken into account of how to manage a classroom through pedagogy, activities and techniques, the class became really interactive and student's involvement was raised up by their self-motivation to learn. So it is hoped that this paper would be able to point out first that teacher's commitment to the devotion of enough of his time to prepare to get a lesson plan is important. Secondly, it is needed to give teachers enough knowledge and practice for teaching methodology of using Bloom's taxonomy in their teaching steps so that the lesson plan can be systematic. Thirdly, correct pedagogy, activities and techniques should be employed in place by the teachers in implementing their lesson plan so that the class becomes effective. And last but not the least students should know what they are doing at the start of the lesson and teachers let them know their strengths and weaknesses while giving feedback and let them practice for improvements in weak areas.

In conclusion, a good lesson planning is a critical point for enhancing an effective EFL class room. It can create both tangible and intangible assets for students dramatically. And teachers should not under mime the lesson plans and they should realize that they are really their personality and road maps for them and their students.

8. Acknowledgement

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