Unit 11
Lesson Planning

Content

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1. Aims and Objectives.

In planning language teaching courses, we have first of all to stipulate the aims of the course and the objectives which the learner may wish to achieve[1].

Attempts should be made to translate aims into objectives of what students can do in the target language. For example, the teaching of reading skills may be regarded as one aim of the language course. In order to translate this aim into specific objectives, the teacher then will lay down the immediate skills to be achieved[2]. and form them into behavioural objectives)[3]

A behavioural objective is then a statement of what a learner is expected to know or be able to do after completing all or part of an educational programme. A behavioural objective has three characteristics:

a.   It clearly describes the goals of learning in terms of observable behaviour.

b.   If describes the conditions under which the behavior will be expected to occur.

c.   It states an acceptable standard of performance (the criterion)[4].

It should be remembered that teaching methods should be governed by the long-term aims of the course. Such aims influence the teacher's choice of a particular method or approach, but not the content of particular lessons[5].

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[1] It should be remembered that the term "aims" refers to the long-term goals such as stating the reasons for teaching English. It is thus used for a global reference to the teaching of English. (see Supplementary No. 12)

[2] (which items should be read, and learned in terms of vocabulary, syntax or meaning).

[3] e.g. The students can distinguish the main idea from supporting details). Objectives then can be used for short-term goals such as the achievement of certain skills in a classroom or at the end of a lesson.

[4] For example one of the bechavioural objectives for a conversation course might be. Given an oral request, the learner will say his/ her name, address and telephone number to a native speaker of English and spell his/ her name, street, city, so that an interviewer can write down the data with 100 per cent accuracy. (Richard etal. 1985), p. 26-27.

[5] Lesson content is set as an immediate objective to be achieved at the end of the lesson.

But in order to define appropriate aims for language teaching courses, we have to know our students needs and their attitudes towards learning another language. This puts us in a better position to define appropriate objectives in a particular situation, choose a methodology and design courses.

For example, students who need reading ability most will be able to read to the extent that they are required to read materials in the language. In other words the teacher should focus on reading materials for this particular group of students. On the other hand, students who need speaking ability most should be provided with adequate occasions to develop their listening and speaking skills.

2. A Lesson plan

2.1. Related Factors.

Greenwood (1981) points out that teachers should take three factors into consideration when planning their teaching: the learners, the syllabus, and the schedule.

1. The Learners.

The teacher plans his lesson according to the learners' level of English their age, and purposes. On the basis of such information, he has to decide what sort of materials teaching activities are to be used.

2. The Syllabus.

The textbook might be based on a structural syllabus[1].

Or a functional syllabus[2]

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[1] (teaching the learners how to use the grammatical system of the language).

[2] (which is concerned with the learners' communicative ability to express themselves and give information in the target language).

3. The Schedule.

A knowledge of the time available during the year (excluding holidays and the possibility of some lessons being cancelled) is helpful for the language teacher. According to such information, the teacher can draw up an overall plan for the lessons he is going to teach around the year.

4. The Textbook.

The textbook provides the teacher with materials he is going to teach throughout the year. The teacher should not be the slave of the textbook" in River's terms (1981), but should be able to deal with the textbook in various ways[1].

If the textbook presents language items together[2], it would be better for the teacher to present them over a series of lessons and not consecutively. Thus, decisions have to be made about the order in which items appear. In addition, the teacher may wish to omit some sections of the textbook which he considers of less importance. At other points, he may provide additional materials and then return to the textbook.

In some textbooks language items are treated out of balance; some items are given a greater proportion of time than others[3].

In such a case, the teacher has to adapt language items presented in this way and give them almost equal consideration by omitting some materials and providing others.

[1] It is the teacher's responsibility to know the objectives of teaching English, and to be able to select, omit, and supplement materials as the class requires.

[2] –for example all types of relative clauses together –

[3] To take a particular instance, some books spend more time on the present continuous tense than on the simple present tense.

2.2. General principles.

Rivers (1981) states the following principles as general guidelines for the inexperienced teachers to follow when designing their lesson plans.

1. The teacher is *not the slave of the text-book…*. The textbook provides the teacher with material which can be used in innumerable ways[1].

2. Each lesson must be based on *clearly established aims*. A lesson is not a haphazard collection of more or less items, but a progression of interrelated activities which reinforce each other in establishing and consolidating the learning toward which both the teacher and students are directing their efforts.

3. Each lesson should move smartly, the teacher leading the class from one activity to another with assurance, never allowing time to be wasted because of hesitancy or indecision, while always remaining alert to student needs.

4. The class should *not* be kept for too long at one type of activity, even when the students appear to be enjoying it[2].

5. The teacher should plan to do in class what cannot be done out of class. This requires careful thought[3].

6. The lesson should be planned so that the class is on its toes, *never sure of what is coming next*. Nothing is more tedious for the students than lessons which always follow the same pattern.

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[1] It is essential to know what is in the textbook and to be able to select, omit, recombine, and supplement this material as the class situation indicates.

[2] Too much drilling, especially of difficult structures, can lead to emotional fatigue, absent-mindedness, and boredom. It can also cause the students to become so fixed in the use of certain patterns that they are incapable of using them flexibly in communication.

[3] It means that the student must have plenty of classroom time for practice in communication with the teacher's encouragement and help.

7. The teacher should be ready to toss aside the plan or change it as the lesson evolves[1].

* The progression of activities must be clearly indicated and interrelated: some activities test what others have been teaching; others teach what has not been taught properly, while still others are designed for refreshing student memories and so on.

* The plan should move smartly with the teacher leading the class from one step to another.

* Activities should be provided to consolidate each other: and a change of activities maintains the interest and energy level of the class[2].

* The teacher should use various techniques to present and practise materials in all the skills of language.

* He should also add some "spice" (a language game or anecdote) which will interest and amuse the students: songs can be used to relax and refresh the class and bring variety to the lesson plan.

* Finally, the teacher should note whether students found the lesson interesting or dull, whether he offered original contribution or practised routinised patterns[3].

2.3. Possibilities for Lesson Plans.

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[1] * The mood of the class,
* the unexpected difficulty or simplicity of some section of the work,
* an interesting possibility which did not occur to the teacher when drawing up the plan,
* student initiative – all of these things, and many others, may lead to a change in the progression.
(PP. 484-85)

[2] This does not mean that the teacher should provide practice in listening speaking, reading, and writing the same materials during one lesson; materials from previous lessons can be used for communicative interaction in the present lesson. On the other hand, what has already been practised orally can be used as a preparation for reading and writing. In this way, a continued interplay among new elements and familiar ones is displayed and ensured.

[3] An effective way of analyzing one's performance is to make an audio-tape of the lesson and examine it critically afterwards. This sort of analysis will help the teacher perceive the effective techniques of improving teaching.

In what follows we present some possibilities, taken from various sources, as suggestions for potential lesson plans.

River's Plan:

Rivers (1981) suggests the following procedures for a language lesson:

* The first thing is to begin the lesson with a warm-up: students are encouraged to talk about topics of interest[1].

The teacher sometimes uses a wall picture to build the conversation about and to expand the students vocabulary[2].

Thus, the warm-up stage provides valuable opportunity for the students to retrieve and reuse much materials from previous lessons in real communicative situations.

* New work: the new work builds on previous work, so that students learn aspects of the language in connected series of learning procedures/ experiences.

* Some structures will emerge from the new work which must be practised in oral exercises of some form. The teacher makes sure that the new structures are thoroughly mastered by the students.

* The students need a period for the practical application of the materials they have learnt. And the teacher needs to know whether the students have assimilated the material or not. He may engage the learners in some sort of communicative task using what they have learnt and drawing on earlier lessons so that combined elements of the language are interwoven[3].

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[1] (what they do on weekends or a noticeable event in the news).

[2] This will provide practice in the language items the students have already acquired, and a chance to acquire new vocabulary in a meaningful context.

[3] For example, the teacher may involve the students with reading and discussing a passage for which the previous lesson has prepared the class.

*   The teacher now prepares the students for their homework which will be discussed in the next class[1].

*   At the end of the lesson an enjoyable activity can be introduced: some arousing discussion, a song, a short talk on aspects of the culture, or an oral presentation from one of the students. Such activities allow the students to enjoy the language lesson and consider the classroom a cheerful place.

It can be said that River's suggestions reflect common procedures which might be used by many teachers of English. However, it should be made clear that teachers have different styles and therefore they use different lesson plans.

Doff's Plan.

Doff (1988) suggests the following stages for a lesson plan:

*   Presentation: The teacher presents new words or structures, gives examples, writes them on the board, etc.

*   Practice: Students practise using words or structures in a controlled way[2].

Practice can be oral or written.

*   Production: Students use language they have learnt to express themselves more freely,

e.g. to

*   talk to or write about their own lives and interests

*   express opinions,

*   imagine themselves in different situations.

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[1] The teacher should make sure that students understand fully what is required of them. He should make sure that they understand the new vocabulary which occurs in the assignment, and explain to them the grammatical terminology in it.

[2] e.g. making sentences from prompts,
* asking and answering questions,
* giving sentences based on a picture.

Like practice, production can be oral or written.

* Reading: Students read a text and answer questions or do a simple 'task' (e.g. complete a table).

* Listening: The teacher reads a text or dialogue while students listen and answer questions, or the students listen to a cassette.

* Review: The teacher reviews language learnt in an earlier lesson, to refresh students' memories, or as a preparation for a new presentation. (p. 97).

These stages are not in fixed order, each stage could occur twice or more before the start of another stage[1].

Doff makes it clear that "a single lesson would not of course, normally, include all these stages". (p. 97). What the teacher should ensure, Doff believes, is that he knows four basic things before going into the class:

* The aim of the lesson,

* the new language it contains,

* the stages of the lesson (division into different activities) and

* what to do at each stage.

Greenwood's Plan.

Greenwood (1981) suggests that the new inexperienced teacher make lesson notes which will probably include:

(i) (a) Class, date, etc.

(b) Objectives – often expressed as the desired terminal behaviour of the learners[2].

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[1] In other words, these stages overlap; for example, reading might be part of the presentation stage or treated as a separate stage.

[2] e.g. to be able to use the comparative form more + Adj. + than.

(c) Materials/ aids – minimum details needed to remind the teacher what to prepare and bring[1].

 (ii) (a) introduction – may briefly revise some previously taught material which will be needed for this lesson, or otherwise prepare for the main teaching item.

(b) Body – divided into stages to indicate the development of the lesson, giving details of what the learners will do at each stage.

(c) Conclusion – could take various forms[2];

(iii) Evaluation – some comments written after the lesson to try to answer the questions: what worked? What did not work? What needs further work? (pp. 256-257).

As for the substance of the lesson, Greenwood suggests that the teacher provide a variety in:

(i) The content[3]

 (ii) The language skills[4]

 (iii) The teacher activity[5]

 (iv) The aids[6]

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[1] e.g. 15 car advertisements from magazines (1 per pair).

[2] e.g. a recap, a test, a game, a song, issuing of homework, etc.

[3] a whole lesson on one tense, for example, can be boring: a few minutes' work on something totally different is needed

[4] Oral work for 50 minutes, for example, usually means exhaustion, restlessness and boredom.

[5] Using group or pair work the whole time, for example, can also be dull and therefore ineffective;

[6] an over-used wall picture, for example, will soon lose its appeal

(v) the pace[1]

2. 4. Presentation of a Reading Lesson[2].

1. Pre-reading Activities.

Reasons for reading.

The reasons for reading a particular text must be clear. The clarity of purpose helps learners know what do do and what details are required from them. It helps them skim over the text and attend to particular details.

The use of questions is helpful to direct the students' attention to important points in the text. It also prevents them from going off on a flase track[3].

Introducing the text.

An introduction to the text might be essential before allowing students to start working on it. But the information presented should have a direct relevance to the content of the passage, so that it gives students the right direction and creates the interest for them to read the passage[4].

If the text is too difficult to understand, it is essential to deduce some information from it. The students must have the necessary facts, and it is better to let the students give these facts by asking the right questions. The teacher simply draws the questions out and lets the students provide the answers[5].

Nuttall (1983) suggests that a good introduction has the following qualities:

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[1] a uniform rate of presentation and practice, whether fast or slow, can induce fatigue. (p. 257).

[2] For presentation of a conversation lesson (see supplementary No. 13).

[3] This gives them a purpose to read and to find the answer in order to complete the task.

[4] However the introduction must not include specific information that the students can find in the text.

[5] For example, the teacher can ask questions like: have you ever…? What would you do if…? Or what's your opinion of… such questions can arouse the students' interest in the text and show the relevance of the information to the text.

(i) it is usually short.

(ii) it does not tell the student any thing that he can find out himself by reading the text.

(iii) it makes the student want to read the text.

(iv) it helps the student to relate the text to his own experience, interests, aims.

(v) it involves the students actively, for example by means of questioning (p. 155).

Dividing the Text.

It seems difficult for the unskilled students to read long passages. While the skilled learners can finish reading the passage in the time allowed, the slow learners take a longer time to read a long passage[1].

Therefore, long texts should be divided into short sections.

If the teacher introduces short texts, the fast learner will not need to wait for his fellow slow learners for more than a couple of minutes for each section.[2]

And the text that can be divided into sections gives a simple way of dividing the work between the periods. It can also hold the students' interest.

Obviously, handling the sections one at a time can lead to more effective learning and more thorough understanding. By working on one separate section at a time the students can learn the skills of anticipation and prediction[3].

But, how can the teacher break up the text?[4]

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[1] This factor would give the better students the chance to make disturbances while they wait for their fellow students to finish reading the text.

[2] In addition, it is easier for the teacher to work on a short section than on a complete long text: it is easier to locate words or sentences for comments on a short passage.

[3] The teacher, for example, can ask the students to think what the writer is likely to say in the next section or what will be the end of the story… etc.

[4] Obviously, the text can be divided by identifying natural boundaries between parts of the text.

If this can not be done, what would you do?[1]

The approach to follow in teaching short sections can be varied: for some sections silent reading is preferable, for others scanning or skimming practices are helpful. For difficult sections, the teacher is advised to read the text aloud by himself.

For each section, the teacher can work on three things:

* the important learning points in the section,

* how they relate to the whole text,

* the problems the students are likely to have in understanding the language and the text (the stumbling blocks).

Dealing with the New Language.

Some teachers teach all the words and the new structures before reading begins.

What do you think of this sort of teaching?[2]

Teaching reading must aim at teaching students how to read and not how to practice the language. Language items must be guessed through the context. In other words, learners need to know how to utilize the context to interpret the meaning of the new items in the text.

2. Reading in Progress: some Guidelines.

Class Organization.

When the reading process is in progress, some procedures of class organization are necessary.

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[1] The text can be split arbitrarily. It is better to break the text than leave it as a whole.

[2] This procedure can be boring and dull. New structures do not need to be explained if taken in context. There is no point in special teaching of these structures if they can be understood from the context.

*   First, students can work on their own on an individual basis for much of the time. Each student should be able to read materials that suit him and can progress at his own pace.[1]

*   Second, students may work in groups in which the guidance comes from fellow students rather than from the teacher. The students co-operate to arrive at a better understanding of the text[2].

*   Third, students can work together in a teacher-centred class. The students here work on one text only, and the text is controlled by the teacher who sets tasks, checks learning and ensures that every student participates in the activity. The whole class works in roughly the same way and at the same speed[3].

In large classes, as is the case in Syrian basic and secondary schools, the class is organized according to the third principle: the teacher-centred class. The teacher works on an interpretation of the lesson to the whole class. Questions are addressed to all of the students in the class before a single student is selected to give a response.

Reading aloud.

In the teacher-centred approach, reading aloud first by the teacher and then by the students is a widely used procedure in most language classrooms. Although reading aloud is not a useful exercise, we must look at it briefly.

Byrne (1989) criticizes this procedure for the following reasons:

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[1] But the text should contain all the guidance the students need. It might contain questions and answers against which the students can check their own understanding.

[2] This motivates them to work as a group and helps them create an excellent opportunity for learning.

[3] These three ways of learning: individualized learning, groupwork, and teacher-centred approaches can be combined together in one reading lesson. A lesson might begin with individual reading, move to group work and end with a teacher-centred approach.

*   First it does not help students to read more efficiently because normally reading is silent reading.

*   Secondly, it is not an effective way of improving pronunciation… if we want to improve pronunciation, this is normally best done without reference to a written text.

*   Finally, it takes up a lot of class time. (p. 136)[1].

However, reading aloud can be considered a useful procedure for helping elementary students to read in sense groups[2].

West describes the method as follows:

(i) Break up the text into manageable sense units, (the length will depend on both the reader and text; about five to ten words is likely to be the most any one can recall easily)…. How can this be done?[3]

(ii) Once the text is marked, the students who is to read aloud silently assimilates the words in the first sense group.

(iii) Then he looks up from his text and looks at his audience.

(iv) Now he speaks the words without referring to the text, addressing them directly to the listeners and making every effort to convey the meaning.

(v) Then he continues with steps (ii-iv) with each subsequent sense group.

This method has the advantage of forcing the reader to take in a chunk of text, retain it in his mind long enough to look up and speak it. In this way, the student reads in sense groups instead of word by word. This will increase his

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[1] Byrne indicates that the only person who gets any benefit from this sort of reading is the one who is reading aloud; the rest of the class may not listen with any interest. Reading aloud may be beneficial when conducted as choral work in small groups.

[2] This method is described by Michael West (1960 referred to in Nuttall 1983) as the 'read and look up' technique. It can develop good reading habits at an elementary level.

[3] With students who need support, mark the sense groups by means of an oblique or other pencil marking in the text, for example:
John looked out of the window./ It was raining again/ and the sky was very dark./ Why does it always rain on Saturdays? He thought/.

reading speed and his comprehension. In addition this method will teach students to read for meaning. The teacher should not worry if students miss the exact words of the original as they convey the meaning.

Nuttall (1983) gives the teacher who wants to use the method of reading aloud the following advice:

1. Use it after you have worked out an interpretation of the text, not before;

2. Use the 'read-and-look up' technique;

3. Use it sparingly. (p. 140).

It should be remembered that reading aloud should not be overdone as students need to practice other language skills. Students, for example, need to read the text silently. It is suggested that silent reading will develop the students' ability to read rapidly and read for pleasure. In addition students will have a better chance to get a thorough comprehension of the text provided that silent reading is guided by content questions or other language purposes.

Finally, a little work on language practice may be recommended for mastering some of the language structures contained in the text.

3. Post-Reading Activities.

When the work on the section by section is over, global understanding of the text is essential. The teacher must ensure that the students have a good idea about the text.

Questions are helpful devices both for explaining the text and for checking the students' understanding of the text. Therefore, the teacher should use as many questions as possible and devise his own questions rather than limiting himself to those questions annexed to a reading passage[1].

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[1] Such questions should be left for the students to do as homework.

The content of the questions may revolve around the writer's aims, the main message of the text, and an evaluation of the text. Questions of evaluation and eliciting personal response are necessary to help the students relate the text to the world outside. It is time to evaluate the arguments, to react to them, and to assess the effectiveness of the text. It is time to evaluate the passage in the overall theme of the book.

The kind of work that can be done at this stage may vary according to the type of the text which requires different sorts of treatment.

Nuttall (1983) provides the following activities:

a. eliciting a personal response from the reader (agree/ disagree; like/ dislike, etc.).

b. linking the content with the reader's own experience/ knowledge.

c. drawing comparisons/ contrasts between facts etc… in this text and others.

  - recognizing relationships of cause and effect.

  - tracing the development of thought/ argument.

  - distinguishing fact from opinion.

  - discussing/ evaluating characters, incidents, ideas, arguments.

* Speculating about what had happened before, would happen afterwards, or about motives, reasons, feelings, etc. where these are unexpressed. (pp. 164-165).

These are some of the activities that can be done at this stage. There will, of course, be other sorts of activities that can be exploited after reading the text. The teacher himself is expected to be in a better position to devise those activities that will suit the level and age of his students.

3. Conclusion.

In conclusion, this unit has presented some suggestions and procedures for lesson planning. It should be remembered that a plan helps teachers to know what they will do and how to go about teaching.

In addition, teachers can use the plan at the end to evaluate their lessons (did they teach according to the plan or not?)[1]

However, the teacher should not use the plan as a rigid procedure which he has to follow in every lesson; instead, he should be prepared to meet.

* the unexpected difficulty or simplicity of some sections of the work,

* the interesting possibilities that might arise from the students' initiatives in the lesson and many others.

What have been discussed so far are guidelines or suggestions rather than rigid plans.

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[1] Of course there is no correct way to write a lesson plan, but a good lesson plan gives a clear picture about the lesson. However the danger in choosing a certain plan is that some teachers might take it to be the only plan and continue to follow it from one lesson to another.

Supplementary No. 12: Aims and Objectives

Rivers (1981) mentions seven classes of aims and calls them "long-range objectives". Thus, Rivers writes:

The seven classes of objectives are as follows:

*   To develop the students intellectual powers through the study of another language;

*   to increase the students' personal culture through the study of the great literature and philosophy to which the new language is the key;

*   to increase the students' understanding of how language functions and to bring them, through the study of another language, to a greater awareness of the functioning of their own language;

*   to teach students' to read another language with comprehension so that they may keep abreast of modern writing, research, and information;

*   to give students the experience of expressing themselves within another framework, linguistically, kinesically, and culturally;

*   to bring students to a greater understanding of people across national barriers, by giving them a sympathetic insight into the ways of life and ways of thinking of the people who speak the language they are learning.

*   to provide students with the skills that will enable them to communicate orally, and to some degree in writing, in personal or career contexts, with the speakers of another language and with people of other nationalities who have also learned this language.

Each of these objectives has at some time or in some place predominated in the stated aims of language teachers. (p. 8). In the past, the objective of the development of the students' intellectual powers was emphasized at a time when the study of classical languages was of great value. Teachers focused on the

traditional features of the teaching of Greek and Latin as intellectual disciplines. Lessons were devoted to the teaching of rules and the logical application of these rules in very well-constructed sentences which preserve the details of the structures of the language. Students were encouraged to memorize lengthy vocabulary lists. At the university level, language was taught as a key to the literature and philosophy of another culture.

At present, the objectives of teaching English lie within the scope of the last five aims mentioned above. There is a rising interest in the acquisition of language and the way language is spoken within societies. Nowadays, language teaching methods focus on the development of rapid communications and the ability to communicate with people who speak other languages and to understand their ways of thinking. In addition, with the rapid advances in knowledge, it becomes necessary to read the enormous amounts of specialized information, instructions, and directions. It follows that the aim of teaching reading should also be kept in mind when developing a language programme.

One can easily realize that the last five aims of River's list of objectives are interrelated. The ability to communicate requires understanding of the culture of the speakers of the language. Fluency in reading is a by-product of the ability to think in the foreign language which is made easier by mastering the skills of listening and speaking.

Supplementary No. 13: Presentation of Conversation Lesson

4. Presentation of a Conversation Lesson.

Based on the data of his research, and as an implication of his study, Hasan (1988) suggests the following plan for a conversation lesson[1].

Topic of conversation: Marriage in my Country

Stage 1. Teacher prepares the students for the lesson and familiarises them with the topic of conversation. The aim here is to arouse their interest in the topic and create their expectations.

The teacher asks "referential" questions to elicit information from the students about marriage in their country, say Algeria. The following questions are some examples:

- What is the best age to get married in Algeria?

- Does the bride have to pay money?

- Do people get divorced easily?

- Do you have arranged marriage in Algeria?

- Do women stay at home or go for work?

When students find it difficult to give a response, the teacher uses some strategies for the negotiation of meaning to get appropriate responses. He uses "echoic" questions or "reformulating" strategies as in the following example:

1. T: Do people get divorced easily?

2. S: xxx.

3. T: Do you know the word "divorce"?

4. S: xxx ah, ah.

5. T: Do people get separated after marriage?

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[1] The content of this section is taken literally from Hasan (1988).

6. S: Yes, no problem.

7. T: OK.

In this example, the teacher uses a comprehension check (turn 3) and a reformulating strategy (turn 5).

This is a standard introduction to a conversation class. The students, by talking, demonstrate the language they need: this is provided by the teacher where necessary, and kept on the blackboard for reference.

Stage 2.

Teacher directs the students to listen to a tape about the topic of marriage in a different country to that of the students, say England. The teacher makes sure that the students know what to do. They are going to focus on the message rather than the language of the tape.

At this stage – with the use of the blackboard earlier and the introduction of the tape-recorder here, the extent to which the lesson is really as "natural" as the informal atmosphere might suggest is becoming clear. The teacher shapes the lesson and suggests the language: he invites students' attention to the board and tape, and so on.

Stage 3.

Upon listening to the tape, the teacher finds out by asking "reasoning" or "referential" questions whether the students' concept of marriage in Algeria contradicts that in England. The following questions are some examples:

- What do you think of what you have heard?

- Do you like the way marriage takes place in Algeria or in England?

- To what extent do you think the role of women in a British society is different from that in Algeria?

During this stage, the teacher writes incorrect responses on the board. He also uses strategies for the negotiation of meanings as described above in stage 1, when no appropriate response is provided by the students.

With the introduction of teacher judgment (correctness" and "error" – we are, at this stage, firmly back in the classroom. It is easy to see that the actual interaction taking place here would be rather traditional.

Stage 4.

Teacher follows up students' answers with feedback. He finds out how well they have done. He checks the answers he writes on the board and draws their attention to language mistakes. Perhaps he devises drills for practising the correct forms. And here we have stepped right out of the discussion and into the classroom.

How would this lesson normally be defended? Probably as follows:

It can be seen that the above lesson plan contains some of the principles of the natural approach to language teaching:

* it emphasises the provision of comprehensible input;

* it focuses on the content of the conversation rather than the form;

* it minimizes learners' stress in that the learners are not supposed to say antying unless they are prepared to do so;

* it maximizes the learners' self-confidence in that the learners are expected to answer teacher's questions.

The teacher is the main provider of comprehensible input. His role, it would normally be argued, is no doubt central, but the emphasis on meaningful interaction in this lesson plan allows the opportunity for an informal interaction in which the learners lose themselves in a kind of fluent discourse.

The interaction is of a sort in which there is a low affective filter for learning. This is achieved by techniques not demanding speech from the learners before they are ready; not correcting their errors during the interaction; and by providing subject matter for conversation of high interest to the learners.

The significance of this lesson plan lies in its emphasis on comprehensible and meaningful classroom activities rather than the production of accurate sentences, though accuracy is not ignored completely but given marginal attention at the end of the lesson period.

This sort of lesson has the additional merit–not often brought to the fore–that it is easy to train teachers in the use of appropriate question types and therefore easy to offer them the tools to shape a lesson that might otherwise ramble.

So it would be said. But this line of argument is no longer entirely satisfactory. Dealing with the issue, as I have done here, on a purely methodological level, overlooks too much of what language use involves.

My aim here is to demonstrate a point not often made – the sometimes rather uneasy way in which the teacher drifts from discussion to class and back again. While the teacher does, in the end, exert his right to direct the lesson, even to the extent (as here) that he retains the right to switch from a "formal classroom" situation to one of "Informal Discussion", the result is unnatural and may confuse.

One aspect of this is that there are plenty of examples in the data of the present research – and in other lessons recorded at the same time – of the teacher choosing to reject a direction in which the class want to take the discussion. Here is an example of interaction that might be considered.

1. T: Tell me again.

2. S: They say it's a wonderful country.

3. T: OK. Lovely. They say it is a wonderful country.

4. S: They say it's a wonderful country.

5. T: Jolly good, they say it's a wonderful country.

6. T: Please..?

7. S: Take, could you take me.

8. T: Please could you take me yes. Please could you take me. OK, right.

9. S: Tony isn't honest man, he talk to his, so is not honest man.

10. T: OK. Here is the story with some words missing. (T. distributes handouts) OK. Can you write the missing words please.

In this example, the teacher is trying to check the students' comprehension of the story of the lesson by evaluating their responses. In turn (9) the student wants to take the lesson into a different direction by evaluating one of the characters of the story: Tony. In particular, he wants to put his honesty into question. The teacher (in turn 10) ignores the student's attempt and carries on with the other step of the lesson as planned and starts distributing handouts of the story with some words missing to be filled in by the students.

This is typical of the more constrained teacher – centred kind of lesson, one in which a prepared lesson plan has to be adhered to and completed: the switch from inner to outer discourse is not acceptable.

A procedure therefore much harder than simple class teaching is one in which the teacher steps more genuinely and more completely out of the picture, and permits the conversation to develop its own impetus, rather than an impetus superimposed and guided by the teacher himself.

Note that in the sort of lesson plan given above (Marriage in my country) the conversation is not likely to be permitted to develop – the teacher is likely to intervene if the going gets a little rough.

An alternative would be to promote precisely the sort of lively interaction one finds in, say, the following interchange (the question is whether women should go out to work or not). I have omitted from the following transcription some of the repetitions and background noise, which the participants do not seem to "feel" as important, to emphasise, the sudden impetus the conversation develops:

1. AZ: Not like England.

2. LA: Not like England, no problem, you can't go in her house.

3. AZ: The women hasn't right to smoke or to drink like English girl, Britain girl.

4. T. British girl.

5. AZ British girl.

6. T. What do you think? What would you prefer? You obviously… do you like the way it is in Algeria or….?

7. LA. I like is very good.

8. T. What about the way it is here? What do you think it is?

9. LA.: It is many problem between men and women here.

10. T: What problem?

11. LA. because the women, women must work in house.

12. T. In Britain you can't affored to, there is, most people now, they can't. Both people go out to work because there is not enough money.

13. S. In Algeria.

14. T. Most of the time you can't afford to have one person just to stay.

15. RA In Algeria women work, but it is not good for her, we think it is not good for woman.

16. T. Why?

17. RA. because she has children and there is many thing.

18. DR. She will feel love with other.

19. S .. (Ss. Laugh).

20. DR. It is true, you know why, because mens when he see, he saw his wife look for another man he is very angry.

21. T. What happens, what happens if somebody's wife goes out with another man? What happens then? (Ss. Laugh).

22. DR. So kill her and or divorce.

23. AZ. Don't believe him. He is criminal. (Ss. Laugh).

24. S. He is crazy. (Ss. And T. laugh).

Notice how this extract starts in a typically class-like manner, with teacher and students sharing turns more or less equally – and with the teacher, in fact, offering an explicit correction. Then, there is a sudden change, at T. 15: the teacher begins to say less, the students to say more, and the interchange – a point marked by the frequent laughter more natural. Notice too the additional dimension to the conversation, as students begin, for the first time, to comment in a friendly way on each other (T. 23-4).

Above all, notice how the discussion here genuinely unfolds. A particular point is raised, and is then discussed in a fashion which is entirely normal. This interaction develops a theme, and therefore a life of its own.