

2021 Teacher Takeaways: Practical ideas for classroom teaching

Q&A List

**Reviewing lesson objectives, structure
and task design to help plan varied and
effective lessons**

Date: 28 September 2021

Time: 16.00 – 17.00

Question	Answer
<p>Can I apply typhoon to writing class, thanks</p>	<p>You may be able to, but the writing would have to be short and fairly quick. E.g., writing short phrases, words etc. Typhoon relies on getting back to the board and students making their choices after completing the task to keep motivation up. If the writing section is too long, then the game will be forgotten.</p> <p>Perhaps you could play the game over a few weeks? E.g., 5 minutes at the beginning of each class to choose based on homework. I have never tried that, but it might be a way to marry the two and have more detailed writing task.</p>
<p>Why do we need to change our techniques if the existing one can help achieve the desired outputs? For example, if PPP can help students get good test result , why should we change ?</p>	<p>I think that comes down to you, as a teacher and how you want to help your students. PPP, for example, is perhaps the easiest and safest type of lesson for a teacher to plan as they make all of the choices. For many traditional teaching styles this works well and as you say it may have benefits towards exams - specifically those that are based on explicit knowledge of language (e.g., CET) rather than proficiency in use (I.e., IELTS). PPP is a perfectly legitimate model of teaching but there are many things it does not do I.e., support Ss real needs, provide good opportunities for authentic language use and real communicative contexts, or provide Ss with much autonomy and choice in their learning.</p> <p>So, using your example, I think we have to ask ourselves: is how to take a test the only thing <u>we</u> want to teach? How can we do more?</p> <p>Obviously, tests are important, and have great significance in students' lives but the ultimate purpose of learning a language shouldn't be forgotten – to communicate. Sure, there are perhaps tips and tricks and discrete pieces of knowledge that may help students get through a test (and a whole industry has sprung up around this), but if they haven't effectively learned to use the language then can that still be deemed a success for them in the long run?</p>

	<p>Public education systems and national policy in China is now recognising the need to develop student's whole-self, their thinking quality and their ability to function as a global citizen. 素质教育 has been around for years in China! This all may sound somewhat wishy-washy to some, but the classroom is a safe environment to develop and Ss won't know how to deal with the real world until they are there and can adapt (if they have the skills to do so). By then, there will be no teacher to feed them the language or answer.</p> <p>So, helping Ss now by trying new techniques seems like it is worth experimenting with. We don't always have to settle for 'enough'. :-)</p>
<p>Are these characteristics somehow related to the Differentiated learning model?</p>	<p>I am not entirely sure what characteristics you are referring to here, but when you consider the concepts of differentiated learning presented by Tomlinson and Imbeau there are certainly similarities with what we discussed; especially when they talk about: readiness to learn, student preference and interest being categories of student need. These will all be important for our classroom tasks to succeed. These categories are also important in developing both motivated and autonomous learners!</p> <p>I did highlight some characteristics of task design in the session, which is slightly different as this focuses on the tasks themselves, and how we adapt them, rather than the students specifically. But they are of course connected.</p> <p>In ELT I do find that models, ideas and terminology can often overlap and ultimately be 'repackaged' so there will always be comparisons. My advice is simply to find what works for you and your students, but perhaps not worry too much about what it is called or who wrote it as it will inevitably pop up again somewhere else. 😊 Adopt, adapt, reject!</p>

<p>Is there some rough rate to each of the 3 task cycles?</p>	<p>Not really. Maybe 15- 20% / 50% / 30% ... but there is nothing specific here.</p> <p>Generally the setup stage is the shortest. If not, then we need to reflect on the instructions we are giving and how they can be improved!</p> <p>Sometimes, for more open and autonomous tasks, the feedback stage can take longer than the task itself if there is opportunity to exploit language, ideas or to allow more peer involvement. So, it may become 15- 20% / 30% / 50%. I would experiment with activities and see how they pan out – often you will work out the timing for yourself based on how you conduct them.</p>
<p>Would you please offer some useful methods and activities of teaching vocabulary?</p>	<p>Hi. I think this will certainly depend on the age group, type of vocabulary you are teaching and if you want to focus on student-centred or teacher-centred approaches, for example.</p> <p>Also, do keep in mind at the planning stage whether the activity you are using will: Teach, Review or Test. Even if it is one of the latter two, the teacher can still use the feedback stage of the task cycle to make the activity the source of teaching – so it is then the teacher rather than the task that is doing the teaching!</p> <p>Here are some useful links on vocabulary teaching from the British Council's TeachingEnglish website:</p> <p>Presenting vocabulary TeachingEnglish British Council BBC</p> <p>Vocabulary activities TeachingEnglish British Council BBC</p> <p>English Vocabulary British Council</p> <p>Spot the vocabulary TeachingEnglish British Council BBC</p> <p>B127c A1 TE Staff Room Posters 6.pdf (teachingenglish.org.uk)</p>

As a new English teacher, I realized that sometimes it's hard for me to narrow down my thoughts of the lesson into several key outcome or objectives, sometimes it may not be measurable, sometimes there may be too demanding for students to achieve, is there any tips that we can plan our lessons in a more effective way, please? Thank you so much!

Objectives, with the exception of training environments, are often a personal thing so how you write them and in what language will be up to you.

For me, after deciding what I want to teach– or indeed what I want Ss to discover or guide I will write a draft objective. Maybe 2 or 3 to show where I am going with the lesson.

Then, I try to visualise the lesson stages in large chunks. I want to make sure there will be a balance of input and output as Ss need to express themselves, but I might play about with the order to see how much I can get the students to be involved. As per my own steps in our session I am trying to maximise collaboration and student engagement. For most classroom models where language is taught the input will come first, and we then need to make sure that we include output for balance. In some models, such as TBL input will come later. But it is important to have both.

So, first think where the input will be (and what) and where the output will be within the time you have.

Then think, does your objective still reflect this design – think of the verbs you are using in the objective, can you confirm you have achieved what you want based on this statement i.e., if you say Ss will know sth... then this is not measurable or achievable as you cannot check it; whereas if you say Ss will be introduced to XXXX and practice XXX then we can confirm that this has happened as we can confirm it.

Three other tips are – try adding stage objectives at the beginning – over time you may not use these in your lesson, but they can be a helpful guide to see what is achievable. Think about why you are doing tasks at each stage and connect these to your lesson objective. Are they relevant or do

	<p>you just want them there for fun? What is their purpose? Does their presence change your overall objective?</p> <p>Remember, almost no activities are 1 -2 minutes. If you think of the task cycle, which is in almost every task to do this meaningfully it simply cannot be done in such a short time period. I would not go below 5 minutes in a lesson plan stage to ensure your tasks and lesson are achievable time wise.</p> <p>Finally, turn your objectives into Yes / No questions at the end of the lesson – can you answer them with a ‘yes’?</p> <p>This is often a good test of their effectiveness – and by checking them at the beginning of the lesson to see if they can be changed into questions also helps to keep them achievable at the writing stage.</p>
<p>Could I possibly get the access to the recording of previous webinar?</p>	<p>Yes, all webinar links for the series are available through the QR code provided in the webinar PPT. Or check out this link: https://www.britishcouncil.cn/en/teach/2021webinar</p>
<p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to add the past tense aspect ed when they encounter a regular verb.</p>	<p>Thank you for submitting your objective to the chat! I apologise as we ran out of time near the end, but it was great to receive your suggestion.</p> <p>Overall your objective is clear, and covers S, R,T but I might question its Achievability and whether it is better to focus on adding the -ed form to specific word endings within the lesson.</p> <p>This will be a question for you as a teacher: can you effectively address all verbs + -ed forms and their spelling rules in one lesson or should you select specific ones that are more challenging for students? Will all Ss be able to do this after only one lesson?</p>

	<p>This Achievability question also impacts on how you might be able to check you have achieved the objective (Measurability) as if you can't tell how many you are presenting, then how can we measure it?</p> <p>Perhaps,</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students <u>will have been introduced</u> to and <u>practiced</u> applying <u>past tense aspect ed</u> to regular verb ending in <u>XX,XX,XX,XX</u>.</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, students will <u>have improved their understanding</u> of how to apply the past tense aspect -ed to regular verbs ending in XXX. XXX.XXX (Note: Test, Teach, Test - could help measure this improvement)</p>
<p>Is using Freyer model justified for simple words like 'turtle' when a picture will do?</p>	<p>Probably not. But it could possibly be used in lower level classes as animals are often taught in very simplistic terms – this offers an opportunity to go beyond that if the teacher wanted e.g., turtle/tortoise; rabbit/hare; monkey/gorilla etc; albeit I would do groups of words rather than only one word.</p> <p>I used 'turtle' as a simple illustration of the model. I would normally create a worksheet or similar resources with a number of key terms and words that Ss should investigate as a group or as a project. E.g., there could be 6 tables like the one shown on my PPT slide on a single worksheet. The words selected would be based on what we are teaching or are going to teach if the task is a pre-lesson preparative exercise. I suggested in the session that this might also be useful for things such as metaphor, analogy, or similar abstracts in addition to more gular vocabulary.</p>