

Affordance-based lesson planning: How to plan positively for the unpredictable

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WARWICK
APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Plan

- What is 'affordance'?
- The structure-freedom tension in all teaching
- How our planning practices change over time
- 1. Novice teacher planning
- 2. Experienced teacher planning
- Evidence for affordance-based planning
- Questions, comments, critique

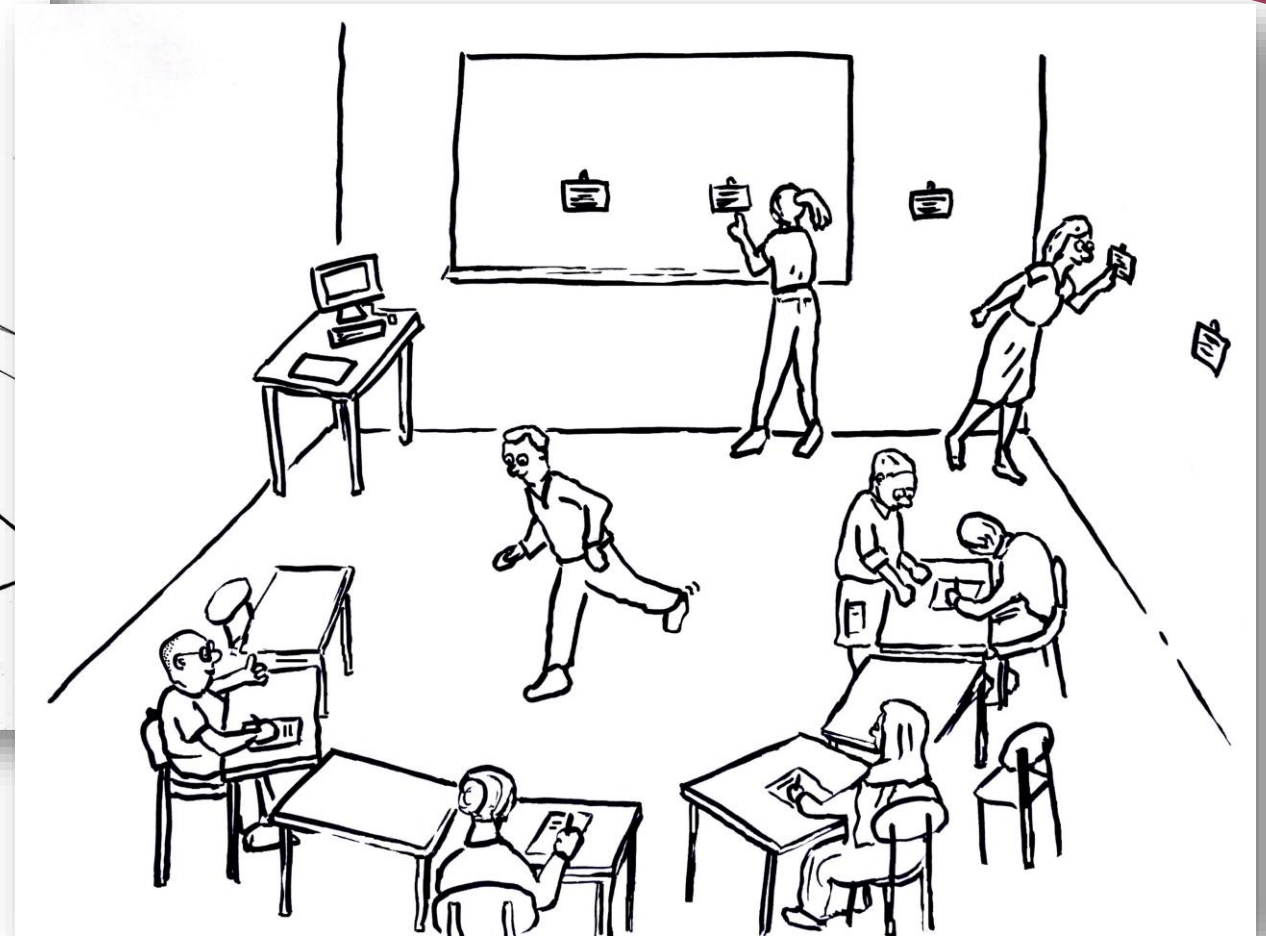
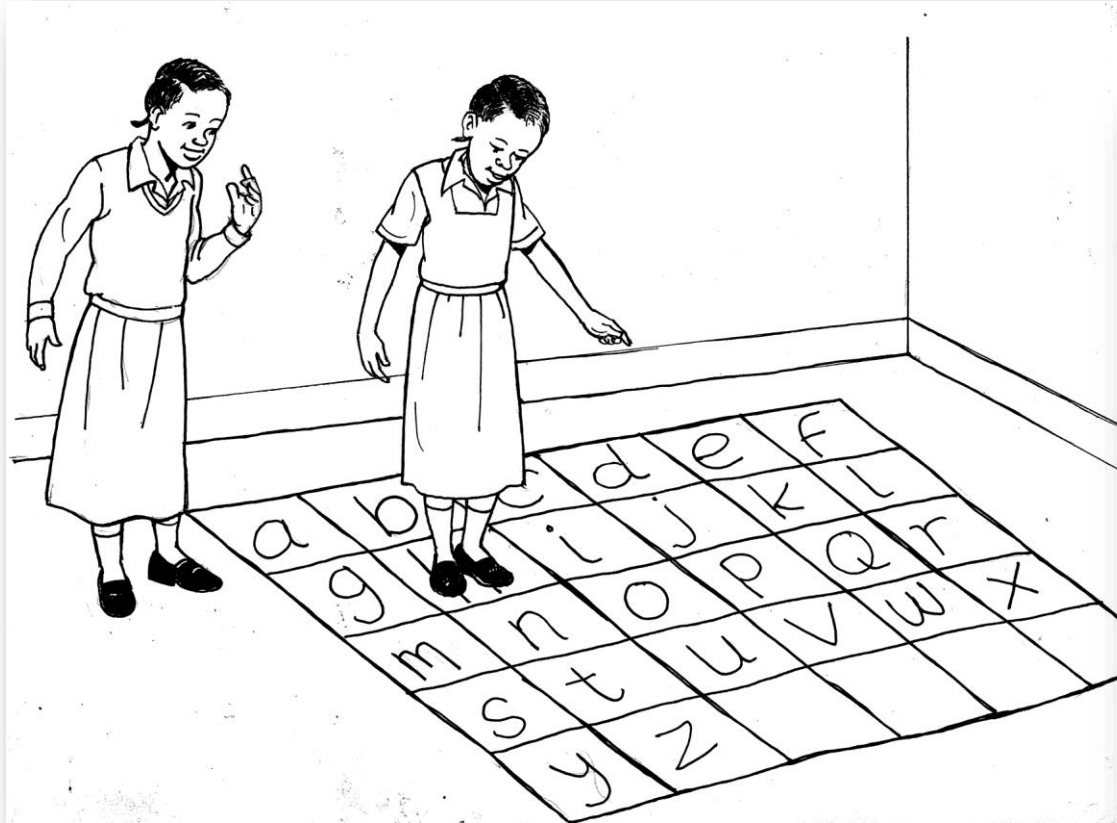
Should be useful for
novice and experienced
teachers, teacher
educators and ELT line
managers

Defining affordance

- From James Gibson's work (e.g., 1979), also see van Lier (2004).
- 'Affordance' can describe accurately how the learning environment provides opportunities (positive or negative, effective or ineffective) for the learner to learn.
- It enables us to see the learner as an active participant in the process, such that "learning opportunities arise as a consequence of participation and use" (van Lier, 2004, p. 92). The learner directly perceives and acts on the occurrences and ambient language around her/him (Anderson, 2015).
- Today I'm contrasting ABLP with 'Outcomes-based LP', which implies a simplistic, undifferentiated teleological 'input' -> 'uptake' model.

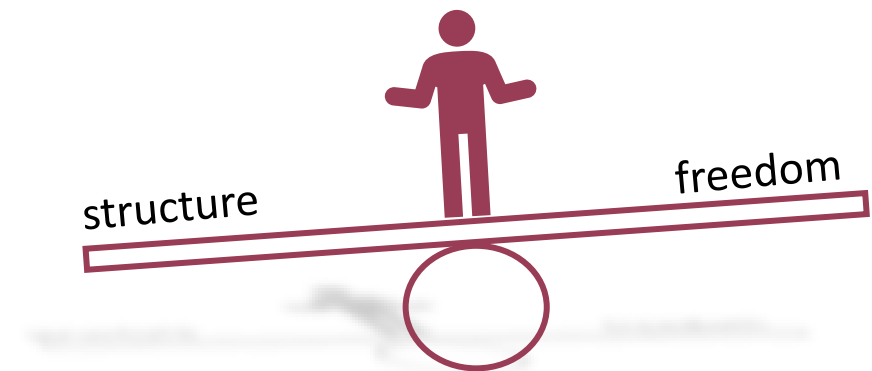
Affordance – in the classroom

What learning may happen during these activities... both planned and unplanned? Feel free to reflect in the chat.

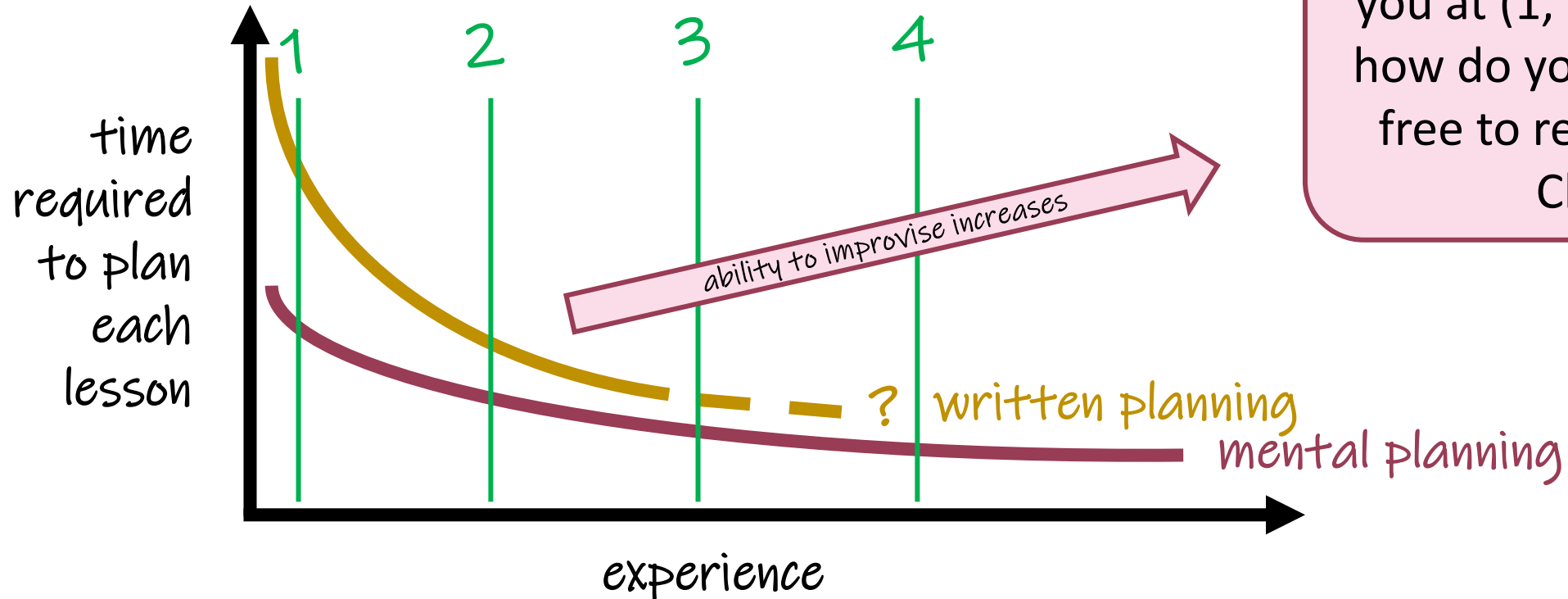


The structure-freedom tension in education

- Formalising learning always leads to the need for structure (e.g., time, content, rules) esp. mainstream education
- Yet learners need freedom to apply, experiment, develop ideas, communicate
- There is ample evidence that some aspects of learning don't follow a structured syllabus (esp. implicit grammar learning; Ellis & Shintani, 2014)
- Many interesting and enjoyable lesson 'moments' are often unplanned
- Numerous approaches emphasise this: 'improvisational performance' (Yinger, 1987; Sorensen, 2022); 'responsive teaching' (Robertson et al., 2015), 'reactive teaching' (e.g., Sayed, 2016); Dogme ELT (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009), 'working with emergent language' (Chinn and Norrington-Davies, 2023). Any others?



Planning practices over time



What career stage are you at (1, 2, 3, 4?) and how do you plan? Feel free to reflect in the Chat.

“Planning is essentially a thinking skill... imagining the lesson before it happens. ... Prepare thoroughly. But in class, teach the learners, not the plan.” (Scrivener, 2005, p. 109)

1. Novice teacher planning



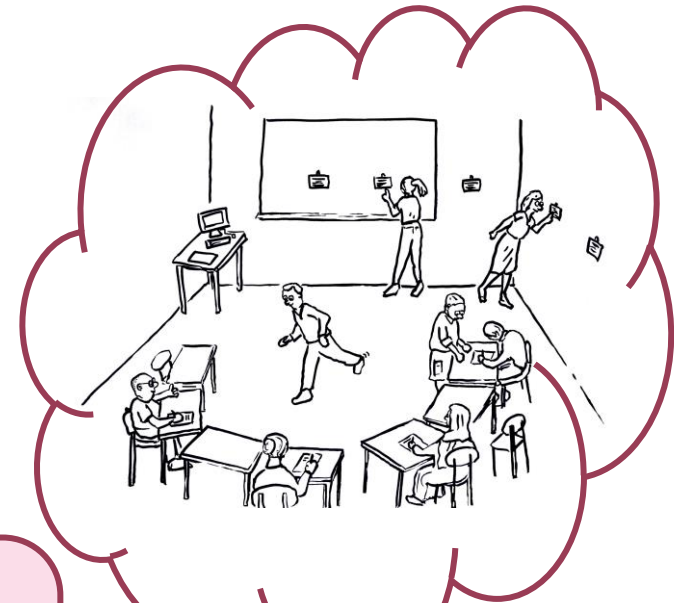
1. Novice teacher planning

- Written planning is essential to early teacher learning
- It is required in initial training, often after (e.g., mainstream education)
- Both mental and written planning take a lot of time at this stage
- Lesson plan pro formas available are typically outcomes-based, but sometimes editable/negotiable
- Ideas here come mainly from my own research and proposals (Anderson, 2015), but also from Melissa Lamb (IH London).

Key suggestion for novice teachers

- Focus on the main activities you plan to include in your lesson. These offer **predictable affordances**.
- Try them out yourself, or in pairs with an observer.
- Notice:
 - what skills you use
 - what language you need
 - what language you use
 - what other skills you need (e.g. mathematical; emotional; literacy)
 - what other knowledge you require (e.g. content-related)
- These are potential **learning opportunities**.
- With experience, you will learn to imagine them happening.

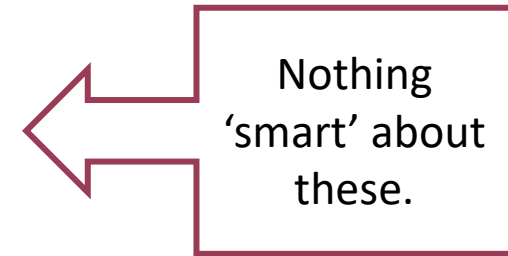
How to facilitate this through planning tools?



From 'Learning outcomes'...

By the end of the lesson, the learners will...

- be able to listen to identify key opinions
- have learnt 10 new words to describe social networking
- etc.



...to 'Predicted learning opportunities'

Learners...

1. improve their listening skills (listening for and identifying opinions expressed by speakers).
 2. consolidate and expand their current vocabulary in relation to the lexical field of online social networking.
 3. notice and deepen understanding of a range of useful expressions for expressing opinions.
 4. develop their speaking/conversation skills (expressing/responding to opinions).
 5. develop critical thinking skills through justifying opinions (especially AM, NM, and JP).
 6. improve strategies for selecting words from a text for checking in a dictionary (especially JP and BG).
- (from Anderson, 2015, p. 232)

Procedure section of the plan

Stage	Time frame (mins.)	Procedure (indicate if stage is optional)	Reasons	Possible occurrences and responses
6	3–4	Ls listen again and match the opinions on a handout to the speakers.	To provide opportunities for listening practice, noticing of relevant language, and ideas for discussions.	If NM and BG (weak listeners) struggled with 1st listening task, I'll give them the option to read the tapescript this time.
7	2–3	Ls compare answers in pairs. T monitors without confirming answers.	To help Ls develop analytical skills, correct minor errors, and to allow T to check task achievement.	If pairs agree, they may forget to provide reasons. Watch for this and encourage early finishers to recall what they understood.

Time frame

Optional stages possible

Note final column: Not 'anticipated' and certainly not 'problems'.

POs can be positive, negative or neutral, and learner specific

From Anderson (2015, p. 235)

Lesson Plan – Front Page



Teacher	Teacher's Name:	Teacher's Lesson Number:	Date of Lesson:
Lesson	Length of lesson:	Level of lesson (e.g. A2, B1, etc.):	
Student Context	Number of Students:	Approximate age range:	Nationalities:
	How will this lesson be useful or interesting to them?		
Predicted learning opportunities Predict what happens using present tenses: "Learners improve/expand/notice..."		Personal action points for this lesson What would you like to change or experiment with in your own teaching?	



Lesson Plan: Lesson Stages Page

#	Time frame (mins)	Procedure: What will happen? (indicate if stage is optional)	Reasons Why did you include this stage?	Possible Occurrences & Responses What else might happen—positive or negative—and what will you do if it does?
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

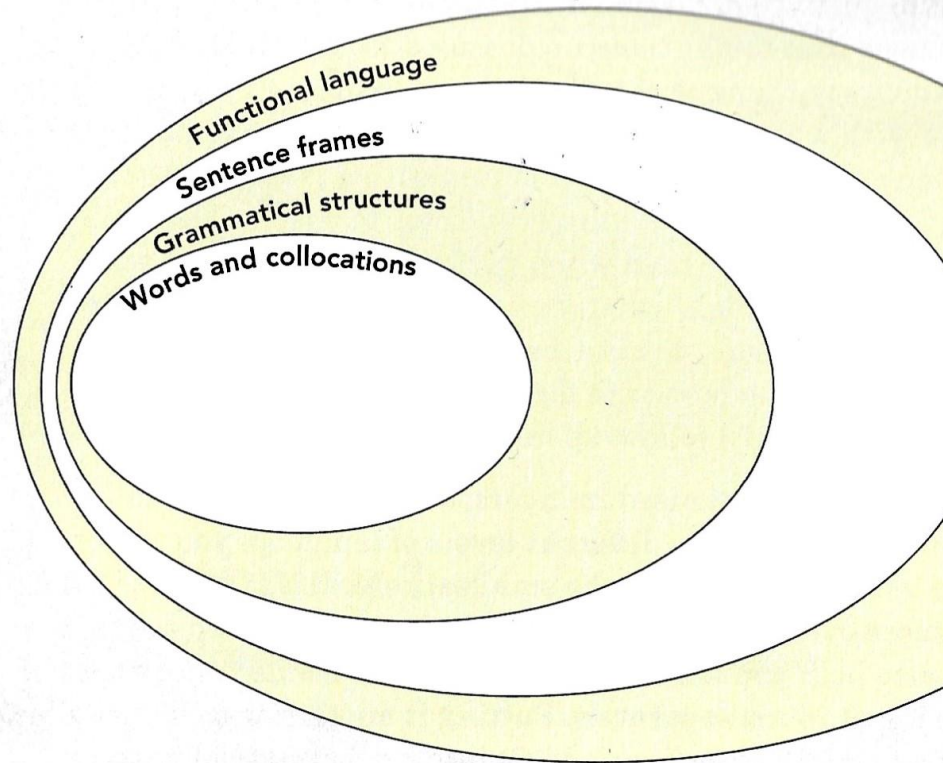
Learning indicators
What signs do you expect?

http://www.jasonanderson.org.uk/downloads/Lesson_plan_pro_forma_Jason_Anderson.docx

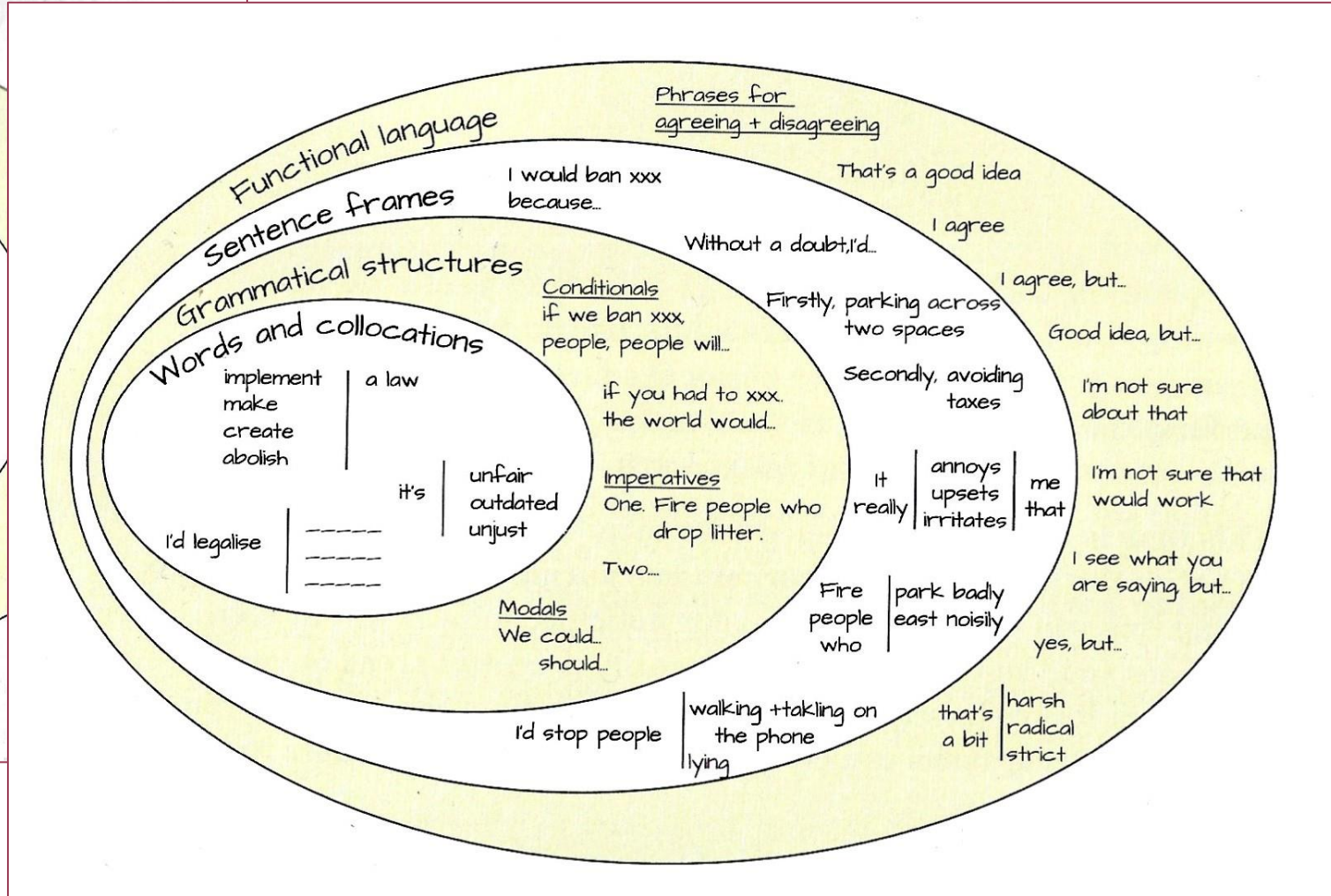
Melissa Lamb's suggestion

From Chinn & Norrington-Davies, 2023, pp. 176-177

C. Emergent language planning template



Photocopiable task



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2. Experienced teacher planning



2. Experienced teacher planning

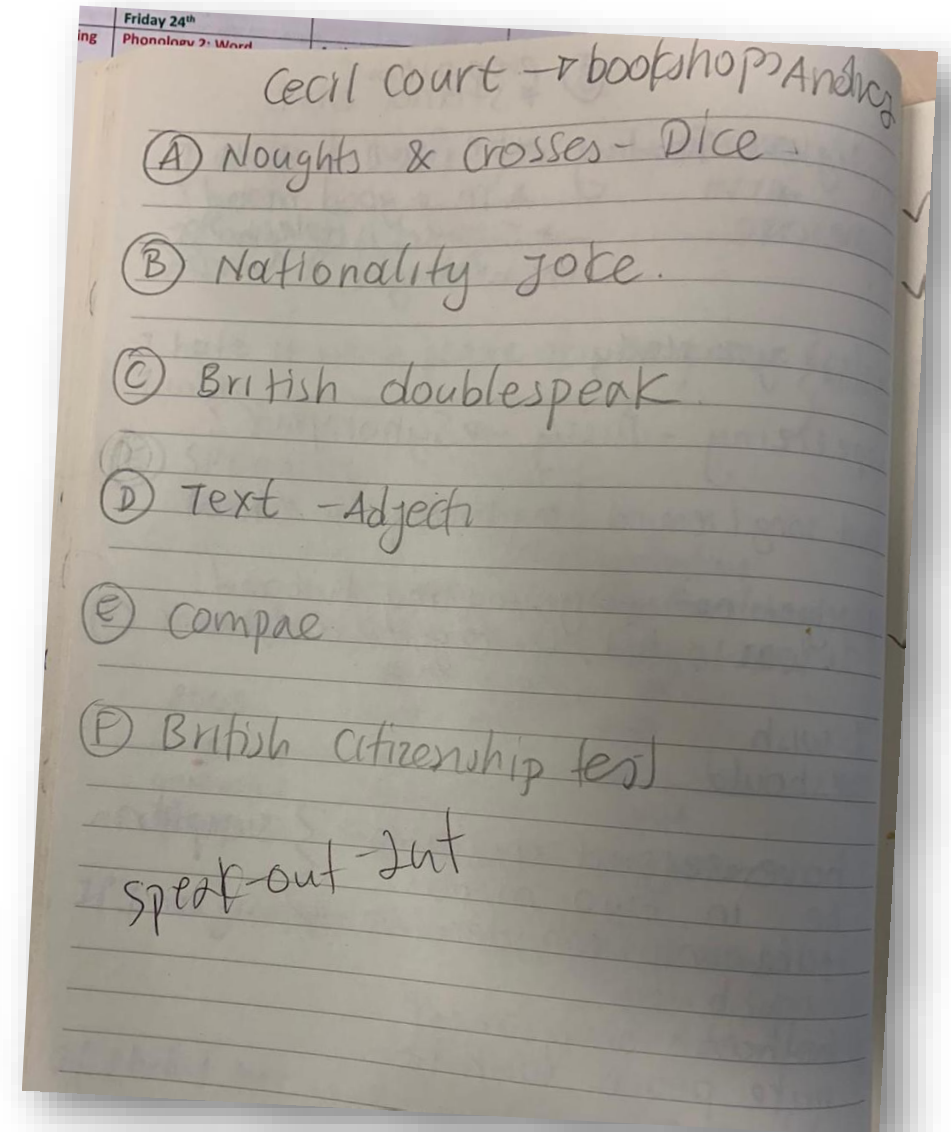
Experienced teachers:
How true is this about
you? Feel free to reflect
in the Chat.

- Written planning is not always done (most do brief notes)
- Mental planning is still required (rough time frames are calculated and stored)
- Materials often act as aide memoires
- Lesson plan pro formas are only required for senior observations
- Ideas here from varied sources (own experience; Anderson, 2017, 2020), also Richard Chinn and Danny Norrington-Davies' work on emergent language (Chinn & Norrington-Davies, 2023) and Melissa Lamb (again)!

Experienced teacher planning examples: Lists, running orders

RUNNING ORDER

1. Discussion
2. Reading
3. Discussion
4. Listening
5. Lexis
6. Rant about a flatmate or family
7. Polite language
8. Role play the situation
9. Hot seat
10. FB



Experienced teacher planning examples: Materials narration

GET THE IMPRESSION

VOCABULARY Describing people

1 Choose the correct option.

- 1 He's a complete snob / snob. He only talks to people who went to the "right" school.
- 2 He's so cynical / cynic. He thinks everyone's got an agenda.
- 3 She has strong principles / principles. I completely trust her.
- 4 He's ever so charming / charm. He makes everyone feel special.
- 5 She's a real / really bitchy. She can be quite nasty about people.
- 6 She's a bit of a painful / a pain. She really makes life difficult.
- 7 It's his sheer arrogant / arrogance that I hate. He thinks he knows it all.
- 8 She's completely incompetent / incompetence. She's really messed things up.
- 9 He's got a real stubborn / stubbornness streak. You won't get him to change his mind.
- 10 She's incredibly intense / intensity. We always seem to end up having quite heavy conversations.
- 11 She's very willing / willful to listen. I'm sure you'll get a good response if you tell her what the problem is.
- 12 He's a right laid-back / slacker. He just seems to lie around all day.

2 Work in pairs. Think of typical things the people in Exercise 1 might say.

a snob / I couldn't possibly stay in a cheap hotel like that.

DRILL

cynical principled arrogant incompetent stubborn

3 Complete the sentences below with these pairs of words. Underline the whole phrase each word forms part of. The first one is done for you.

back + undermine	mind + phrase each
bothered + notice	easiest + lighten up
boss + get ahead	shy + centre
exaggerating + seriously	stands up for + principles

1 Once he's made up his mind, he won't back down even if he's in the wrong.

2 She's constantly going behind my back and saying things to undermine my authority.

3 He never seems that bothered by criticism or bad comments. He just takes no notice of it all.

4 She stands up for what she believes in and she sticks to her principles. She's not easily bullied.

5 He's one of those people who never paries. He just takes everything in his stride.

6 She's not exactly shy and retiring. She loves to be the centre of attention.

7 He's not the easiest person to talk to. I wish he lightened up a little.

8 You'll need to remind her about it. She is prone to forgetting things like that.

9 He's a bit prone to exaggerating so I wouldn't take what he said too seriously.

10 She's the kind of person who's constantly sucking up to the boss in order to get ahead.

4 Work in pairs. Think of adjectives or nouns you could use to describe each of the people in Exercise 3.

Work in pairs, Student A and B. Student A: say the sentences in Exercise 3. Student B: close your books. Respond to Student A using the adjectives you thought of in Exercise 4.

A: Once he's made up his mind, he won't back down even if he's in the wrong.
B: I know, he's so stubborn. It drives me crazy sometimes!

DEVELOPING CONVERSATIONS

Giving your impression

If we want to give our impression of people in the public eye or people we haven't met many times, we often use these structures.

He seems fairly laid-back.
She strikes me as someone you can trust.
He comes across as a real gentleman.
I get the impression / feeling she's very principled.

6 Work in pairs. Together, think of five people currently in the public eye. Then spend a few minutes thinking about your individual impressions of them and why you feel like this.

7 Share your impressions of each person using the structures in the box. Use the questions below in your conversation.

So what do you think of...?
What do you make of...?
What's your impression of...?

*Beit some celebs to me beard
Emma Watson Saoirse Ronaldos Obama The Rock
Megan Mullally Kate Winslet George Clooney*

CONVERSATION PRACTICE

11 Write a name for each of the five kinds of people below. Think about: the words and phrases from this lesson you could use to describe them; examples of their behaviour or habits; the kinds of things they say or do; how you feel about them.

Someone:

- 1 in your family
- 2 that can be described with one or more words from Exercise 1
- 3 you get on really well with
- 4 quite unusual, eccentric or annoying
- 5 you admire

12 Work in pairs. Swap names. Ask and tell each other about the people on the lists. Find out as much as you can.

2 To watch the video and do the activities, see the DVD ROM.

Unit 2 Relationships 17

father's profession & location
2) descriptions of the campus houses
3) descriptions of the trees & plants

An Encounter of a Special Kind

My father was a medical professional working for a private company in Raniganj in West Bengal. The officers of the company were housed in individual bungalows inside a large campus. Our house was in a corner of the campus. The officer's club was adjacent to the boundary wall of our garden. The compound was luxurious with green grass, colourful flowers and a host of tall and majestic trees. The seasonal vegetables in the kitchen gardens of the households and the magnificent trees constantly attracted squirrels and many species of birds; a group of langurs had even made their den in an *aswatha* tree nearby. They had all become a part and parcel of our existence and daily life.

A small incident on a Saturday afternoon left a profound effect on me and **unfolded** before my eyes a **whole new dimension** to the wonders of God's creation. It was a few days into the Puja vacation. Just like for any other child, the holidays provided an opportunity for me to become **engrossed** in various magazines and storybooks published specially for children in the festive season.

After a **hearty** lunch, my parents and my younger sisters lay down for an afternoon nap and I settled down with a storybook. The quiet afternoon presented the perfect backdrop for reading an adventure story. The silence was occasionally broken by the sound of my family snoring, the **intermittent** chirping of house sparrows, the harsh cawing of a crow the **shrill** call of a kite flying high above the ground. Minutes ticked by. I became deeply absorbed in the book.

Suddenly, I heard a group of street dogs barking furiously in the distance. I chose to ignore the commotion thinking that the pack of dogs might have cornered a **hapless** pig. But soon, the barking became louder and more aggressive and the alarmed cawing of a flock of crows added to the **cacophony**. I also heard the disturbance approaching closer.

Describe the campus where the writer's family lived.

engrossed: occupied in

unfolded: revealed

new dimension: new factor

hearty: sufficient and wholesome

intermittent: frequent

shrill: very high and loud sound/voice

commotion: noise and confusion

hapless: unfortunate

cacophony: loud, harsh noises

Children engaged in

Diverse activities

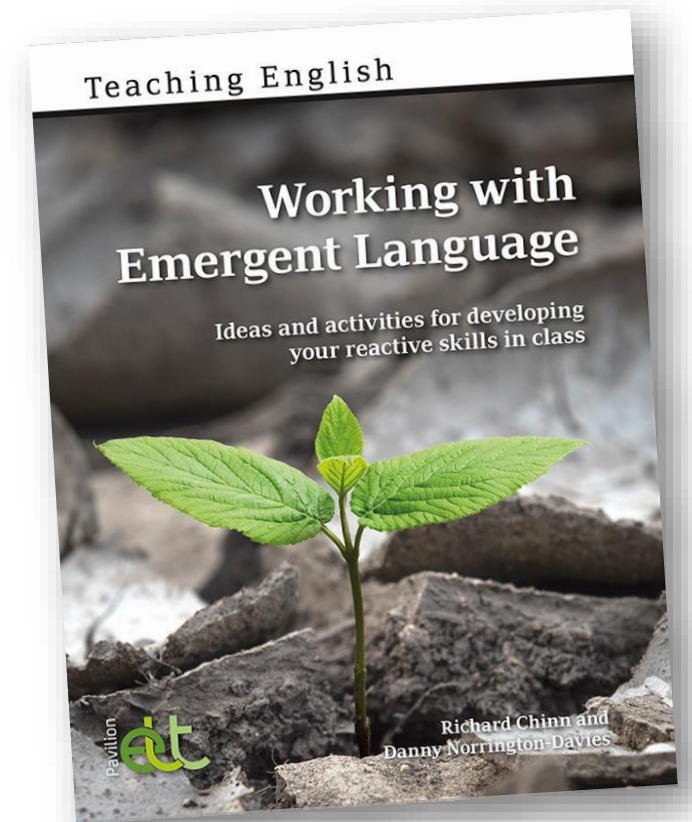
various sounds heard by the writer

8

Planning for emergent language

- Definition: “Language that arises naturally during the learning process, often produced or needed by learners, that is then focused on through clarification with the support of the teacher.” (Anderson, 2017, p. 226)
- Chinn and Norrington-Davies (2023) contrast it with “target language” and see a range of lesson shapes as appropriate for emergent language work, from more structured (PPP, CAP) to less (TBLT and Dogme).
- They discuss 5 lesson stages where EL work can happen (p. 31):
 - lead ins
 - responses to texts
 - grammaticalization tasks
 - communicative tasks
 - feedback stages

i.e., language
that is the
product of
affordance



Potential frameworks for an emergent language focus?

Anderson's TATE framework (2020)



Phase	Description	Examples of potential implicit processes	Examples of potential explicit processes
<i>Text^a</i>	Receptive skills practice through meaningful engagement with a written or aural text	Lexical priming Reinforcement	Inferring meaning from context
<i>Analysis^b</i>	Learner- or teacher-led focus on target features (TF) of lexis or grammar related to the text and/or task	Noticing Translanguaging Proceduralisation activities	Raising awareness Focus on lexis Form-function focus Contrastive analysis
<i>Task^c</i>	Meaningful, mainly productive skills practice that may include opportunities to use lexis or grammar from previous phases	Pushed output Negotiation of meaning Translanguaging Automatization of TF	Use of TF (optional) Incidental form focus
<i>Exploration^d</i>	Evaluation, review and form-focus responsive to task success and challenge	Uptake / Noticing the gap Reinforcement	Raising awareness Emergent language focus Reflection Planning for future

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Reflective questions for experienced educators

Feel free to choose one and offer your thoughts in the Chat.

1. Do I often spend more time on early activities, and have to rush later ones?
2. Do I ever get annoyed that I didn't have time for something?
3. How do I decide whether to 'follow a tangent' or not?
4. How do I know whether one student's 'emergent language' is useful for everyone in the class?
5. When negotiating content choice with learners, how can I make sure that all voices are equally heard?
6. What feedback have I received from my students on issues of pace, curriculum coverage, time management?

(Also useful for pairwork discussions)

Senior observations of experienced teachers

Suggestions for line managers

- Have a flexible lesson plan pro forma that they can adapt, reword, etc.
- Consider using the affordance-based pro forma (adaptable)
- Recognise that if they normally teach without a detailed lesson plan, by asking them to complete one, **YOU** are guaranteeing that **you will not see a normal lesson**.
- Which is likely to be most useful for your purposes (M&E) or their development? The real lesson or the **overplanned** one?

Do you really want to exacerbate the observer effect?



Evidence supporting ABLP

- Experimental study by Sayed (2016)
- Test-retest (general language proficiency)
- All 4 skills
- 59 students in two groups
- Study for 45 days, 3 hrs per day
- Experimental group outperformed control group on general proficiency as well as speaking, writing and reading scores (but not listening) over the period.
- https://jrciet.journals.ekb.eg/article_24499_f7b6cbdc55a9dbf0bbe30b378cbd3e5b.pdf



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