

MAKING THE AIMS SMART IN LESSON PLANNING

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Abstract

This paper provides a discussion of aim setting in designing a course as a SMART approach. It examines the factors which are important in choosing the right aims while making the syllabus or set of lessons, such as approach; syllabus or text book; size of class; level, timing. It also explains the acronym SMART and determines the practical usage of aims in planning the lessons.

Keywords: lesson aims, SMART aims approach, lesson planning.

Aim setting is vital for development and results in learning process. It also encourages students' self-improvement in different aspect of learning as it plays an essential component of decision making which related to the mental processes that result in selection of appropriate actions to make accomplishment. To make the process of choosing aims easy it is recommended to choose SMART aims in language learning. Therefore, in order to promote learning in classroom especially students' goals of achievement, it is essential for the educators to understand the concepts of SMART aims setting theory before planning any teaching strategy.

The factors affecting the choice of aims should be considered as following: approach; syllabus or text book; size of class; level, timing.

The approach to teaching influences the kinds of aims. If learning is believed to be provided in a communicative environment, this will influence how to choose aims. The lessons with other approaches will require different aims. Moreover, the difference in choosing aims also depends on whether a teacher explains the grammar rules to L1 or L2 learners.

The existence of a syllabus or a specified course book will clearly have a direct influence on the choice of aims. A scheme of work may even exist that specifies the content, chapter of the book or others to be used each week. On the other hand, the syllabus may be worded quite generally and provide scope for personal choice.

The size of class will influence not only the scope of the aims but also their type as well. With one-to-one classes, it is reasonable to focus on very specific aims, such as specific pronunciation issues, whereas for a large class this would be inappropriate.

The general level of English of the group will influence the selection of aims and will be closely linked to the next point: time. The degree to which grammar and vocabulary are already known will have a direct influence on what can be achieved, and aims will have to be tailored accordingly.

Timing is very important in ant lesson planning process, and it is likewise important to make sure that the aims are suitable for the length of time available to achieve them.

The SMART acronym can be very helpful in writing aims:

Specific—What exactly are we going to do, with or for whom?

Be precise about what you are going to achieve.

Measurable—Is it measurable and can WE measure it?

Quantify your objectives.

Achievable—Can we get it done in the proposed timeframe for this amount of money?

The objective must be realistic given available resources, time period, etc.

Results-oriented—Will this objective lead to the desired results?

The outcomes/results of the project directly support the overall goal.

Time-limited—When will we accomplish this objective?

A clear statement of when the objective will be achieved.

Aims that are too general are difficult to work with. An aim to improve the pronunciation of the learners will not only lead to a difficult lesson to plan, but will also be likely to end in failure An aim that specifies an area of pronunciation to work on has more chance of success.

Measuring anything in language learning is notoriously difficult. However, you may be able to have some kind of formative assessment, or the aim may be such that feedback from the learners is sufficient.

An aim 'to increase the confidence of the learners on the telephone' would be easily measurable in this way.

Aims that are not achieved can demotivate both learners and teachers. Attainability can relate to level of learners, time available, scope of the aim and size of the group, among others.

Relevance is also highly important for motivation. Learners want to know that what they are learning is relevant to their own goals for learning the language. Relevance may be established simply by reference to the syllabus or course book, in which case the relevance of the aim may need explaining to students. On the other hand, it may be apparent within the context of the course.

The need for aims to be bound to a time framework is less significant for lesson planning. The aims are generally specified as those that relate to the course of one lesson. However, sometimes it is necessary to extend aims beyond a single lesson, in which the timeframe becomes more important and the need to accomplish an aim within a sensible time needs to be considered.

Implementing SMART aims approach in designing the class or syllabus develops such factors as autonomy, self-directedness, criticality and a more elaborate oral production. Besides, this system demonstrates the flexibility in defining needs, requirements and academic demands in every specific teaching concept.

References

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