



LESSON PLANNING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORKS, PRACTICES, AND IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

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Abstract:

Lesson planning is a core aspect of teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL). However, research on lesson planning extends beyond the production of written lesson plans and encompasses the development of teachers' ability to plan consistently, effectively and responsively. Literature broadly reflects four strands that are not always sufficiently interconnected: general planning components, skill-specific models, language-component models, and cross-cutting principles. This review pulls together these strands with a practical purpose: to identify the aspects of lesson-planning guidance that are backed by evidence and where important gaps exist. The search and screening process was guided by the PRISMA 2020 statement and resulted in the selection of 28 sources, mostly published after 2016, with independent verification of the bibliographic details of all the sources included. Selected literature was thematically synthesized based on planning components, frameworks, principles, obstacles, and prospects. The findings indicate that the technical aspects of lesson planning, such as the setting of learning objectives, the organization of language-skills lessons around pre-, while- and post-activity stages and the use of instructional frameworks such as Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), are fairly well established. Differentiation, inclusion and the ongoing incorporation of technology are still more difficult. Teachers usually find the principles valuable, but they do not always implement them consistently. The evidence reviewed suggests that this inconsistency is due less to teacher knowledge deficits than to contextual and structural constraints such as large class sizes, limited training opportunities, lack of planning time, and institutional barriers.

Keywords: lesson planning, ESL, EFL, task-based language teaching, differentiation, teacher education

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Lesson Planning

Good lesson planning is a critical element that allows teachers to meet their objectives by the end of every single session. Richards and Bohlke (2011) define lesson planning as the process through which teachers determine lesson objectives, select materials, decide on appropriate patterns of interaction, and establish methods for assessing learning outcomes. It is therefore far more than an administrative requirement. Harmer (2015) and Scrivener (2011) argue that planning is the stage at which educators translate their pedagogical beliefs into a coherent sequence of classroom activities. Against this background, Brown and Lee (2025) describe a lesson plan as a hypothesis about language learning rather than as a static administrative document. Every lesson is an opportunity to test that hypothesis out in practice. If a lesson fails to work, then the problem may not only be in poor organization, but also in underlying assumptions about language learning, which need to be critically evaluated before redesigning the lesson.

Research in the last decade has shifted from seeing lesson planning as a finished product to seeing it as an ongoing cognitive process. In a study of 200 pre-service teachers, Beckmann and Ehmke (2023) examined 121 lesson plans written during their school internships. Their results indicated that the more experience teachers had, the greater their planning competence and confidence. Yet, participants indicated that detailed written lesson plans became less useful with time, challenging the assumption that the more teaching experience one has, the more extensive documentation one needs. Likewise, Lammert and Godfrey (2025) in their review of 37 studies of elementary teacher preparation found that lesson planning is often taught as a procedural skill rather than as a form of professional reasoning. Novice teachers, for instance, are not often linked to evidence-based instructional practices to be implemented within their lesson plans. Overall, these findings suggest that many teacher education programmes give emphasis to the mastery of lesson planning formats but insufficient attention to the reasoning, decision-making and pedagogical thinking that underlies effective planning.

It is likely more difficult to plan lessons in ESL/EFL contexts because the instructor has to work on the linguistic accuracy and communicative competence of learners at the same time within a limited instructional period. In the study, Alghamdy (2023) surveyed 87 secondary school English teachers in Saudi Arabia and concluded that there was a statistically significant relationship between the depth of lesson preparation and teachers' self-reported behaviour management in the classroom. This result supports the argument by Richards and Bohlke (2011) that lesson planning is not only a pedagogical tool but also an important classroom management strategy.

These changes are part of a larger trend in the theory of language teaching. More flexible and learner-centred approaches, such as Task-Based Language Teaching, have been increasingly replacing traditional stage-based models, mainly Presentation–Practice–Production (PPP) (Willis & Willis, 2007; Spada, 2022). This transition is a move from transmission-orientated teaching, where knowledge is specifically transmitted by

the teacher, to negotiation-orientated teaching, where learning is constructed through interaction, collaboration and responsiveness to the learners' needs. Thus, contemporary lesson planning is highly orientated toward flexibility, meaningful communication, and student involvement, rather than rigidly following a pre-established instructional sequence. The components, frameworks and principles discussed in the following sections exemplify this evolution and provide a theoretical underpinning for understanding modern approaches to lesson planning in ESL/EFL classrooms.

1.2 Problem Statement

An abundance of literature exists on ESL/EFL lesson planning, but it remains scattered and lacks an integrated viewpoint. There are four key areas of literature that can be broadly classified. The first type is prescriptive texts, which detail the key elements and the structure of lesson planning and offer practical advice to teachers (Harmer, 2015; Richards & Bohlke, 2011; Scrivener, 2011). The second line of empirical research is related to the efficacy of various instructional approaches, such as Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBT) (Anderson, 2017; Bui & Newton, 2022; Xie & Lan, 2025). The third way is to plan each language skill separately. This has often resulted in a fragmented approach where reading, listening, speaking and writing skills are planned separately (Gebremariam & Weldeyohannes, 2025; Movva *et al.*, 2022; Taufiqulloh *et al.*, 2025). The fourth strand concerns the new challenges in lesson planning, such as differentiation, inclusive education and the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in language teaching (Howard, 2023; Lee & Hung, 2025; Asrori & Setyaningsih, 2025).

Although research on ESL/EFL lesson planning has expanded, there is still no comprehensive synthesis that brings the four strands together or evaluates how effectively the different components of lesson-planning frameworks support communicative language teaching. In particular, limited attention has been given to the extent to which these frameworks promote meaningful interaction and communicative use of language on the basis of empirical evidence. This gap highlights the need for a more integrated review of planning components, instructional frameworks, and their contribution to communicative classroom practice.

1.3 Purpose of the Review

The purpose of this review is to fill the gaps found in the literature by conducting a comprehensive and critical analysis of research about ESL/EFL lesson planning. It has three main aims. Firstly, the descriptive objective is to identify and discuss the salient elements that are invariably present in the descriptions of effective lesson planning in normative and practical terms. Second, an evaluative objective is to examine the major lesson planning frameworks of ESL/EFL education, both those organised around language skills and language components, and to evaluate the empirical evidence that supports their effectiveness. Finally, the critical principles of effective lesson planning, the challenges teachers face in making these principles work, and current trends that will

impact future practice are examined. Special consideration is given to issues of why technically sound lesson plans do not always translate into effective teaching in the classroom and how lesson planning can be enhanced to make teaching and learning more effective.

1.4 Research Questions

This review is an analysis of literature based on the following four research questions:

- 1) What is lesson planning in ESL/EFL education and how has it evolved?
- 2) What are the key elements of a good lesson plan for ESL/EFL?
- 3) What are the most commonly used lesson planning frameworks in ESL/EFL, and what is the empirical evidence of their effectiveness?
- 4) What are the principles for effective lesson planning? What are some of the difficulties that teachers face in consistently applying those principles? What are some potential future areas of change for the improvement of lesson planning and classroom practice?

2. Methodology

2.1 Systematic Review Design

This review is written in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 Statement (Page *et al.*, 2021), which is the most widely used reporting guideline for systematic reviews. The PRISMA checklist was designed for health care intervention reviews, but there has been an increasing number of uses of the checklist in education and applied linguistics. In the current study, the model was modified to be integrated into the current PPP lessons, creating a realistic and attainable method for incorporating more communicative strategies while maintaining the conceptual and pedagogical literature on ESL/EFL lesson planning.

Page *et al.* (2021) highlight the importance of having a clear explanation of the aim, search process, study selection criteria, and evidence synthesis of a systematic review. This transparency allows readers to judge the quality of the review and helps make it repeatable. For these reasons, the stages of the review process in this study are reported systematically and transparently.

The literature available consisted of both theoretical texts and teacher education materials, empirical studies of classrooms and emerging research on educational technology; thus, a narrative synthesis was most appropriate rather than a meta-analysis. The research designs, contexts, and results of the studies vary significantly, and hence, statistical aggregation is not appropriate. This methodological choice aligns with the recent systematic reviews conducted in applied linguistics that have applied PRISMA and used narrative synthesis (Xie & Lan, 2025). This means that the review does not include pooled statistical effect sizes but rather a structured critical synthesis of the literature.

2.2 Search Strategy

The author conducted an extensive literature search with Google Scholar, the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and academic databases via the Scopus and Web of Science index. Further searches were conducted using the major academic publishers such as ScienceDirect, SAGE, Springer, Taylor and Francis, Wiley, Oxford Academic and Frontiers.

The keywords used in the search strategy were combined such that keywords related to lesson planning were coupled with keywords that were related to language teaching. The keywords included were lesson planning, lesson plan design, ESL, EFL, teaching frameworks, Presentation–Practice–Production (PPP), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), ECRIF, differentiated instruction, inclusive education, generative artificial intelligence, and gamification. Various variations of these were incorporated to ensure that the maximum number of relevant studies were retrieved.

All included studies had their reference lists screened by hand to identify more relevant publications to enhance the completeness and accuracy of the review. All the sources retained were checked to ensure that the bibliographic information was correct and accurate by reference to the publisher's official record or a recognised bibliographic indexing database before being included in the review.

2.3 Inclusion Criteria

Sources were considered for the review if they met the following criteria:

- 1) They were published in English.
- 2) They studied lesson planning, defining it, analysing it, explaining it, and clarifying it in terms of either ESL/EFL or a clearly equivalent general education setting.
- 3) They were published in peer-reviewed journals and by a recognised academic publisher or reputable institutional organisation.
- 4) They are recent publications (last 10 years), unless they are seminal/landmark works which are still relevant to the field.
- 5) They were used directly from the original source instead of second-hand.

2.4 Exclusion Criteria

Sources were eliminated if they had any of the following:

- 1) They were found on sites that have not been peer-reviewed or crowdsourced, such as blog posts, wikis, discussion boards, or other websites.
- 2) They were unpublished or unverifiable research that could not be obtained from a recognised academic repository, such as a thesis or dissertation. An example of such a source was an unpublished master's thesis excluded from the review process because it was either unpublished or non-peer-reviewed.
- 3) They were submitted to journals or publications that could not be confirmed by the author as being of academic value or quality. Incomplete or unreliable reference information was also not included in the sources selected.

- 4) They are mentioned only in secondary sources and cannot be found and validated directly. Only first-hand sources were used to ensure that the review was accurate and credible.

2.5 Data Analysis

Before analysis, all studies retained were read entirely. The literature was next sorted by content based on the outline of this review. Themes involved were definitions of lesson planning, components of a lesson plan, frameworks for four language skills and language components, principles of effective lesson planning, implementation issues and future directions.

The results of various studies were compared and combined in each theme to identify agreements, disagreements, or trends. Special consideration was given to findings that were limited to specific educational or national settings, limitations of the evidence and inconsistencies across studies.

In cases where a conclusion was only based on one study, this was stated in the discussion. These were presented as preliminary rather than consensual. This will help the review to delineate between consensual conclusions and claims that may require additional exploration through empirical evidence.

3. Understanding Lesson Planning

3.1 Definition of Lesson Planning

The entire literature frames lesson planning as a thinking process and not a written product. Written lesson plans are beneficial instructional resources but are the visible product of the planning process. The more significant part is that of professional thinking, which provides guidance in lesson planning prior to instruction. Richards and Bohlke (2011) define planning as the thinking skills and practices that expert teachers use to ensure that a curricular goal is realized in a coherent classroom sequence by placing emphasis on thinking over paperwork. In the same way, Harmer (2015) points out that a lesson plan is the outward manifestation of judgements made regarding the students, learning goals, techniques, classroom activities and teaching methods. The concept is further developed in Scrivener (2011), who views lesson planning as a process in which teachers convert their beliefs about language learning into purposeful actions in the classroom. Brown and Lee (2025) offer another theoretical perspective, stressing that each lesson plan contains a hidden L2 acquisition theory. The sequence of grammar before communicative practice, for example, already assumes a certain belief about how learning takes place or not, even if the teacher does not openly declare it.

Based on these notions, this review presents ESL/EFL lesson planning as a systematic procedure in which teachers convert curriculum goals and language learning theories into a sequenced series of language learning activities, materials, assessment methods, and language class interactions. The aim of the process is to enable measurable

achievement of language learning, communicative competence and overall outcomes of learning in a prescribed time of instruction.

This approach to planning lessons is further supported by recent empirical research. Beckmann and Ehmke (2023) discovered that the informal planning process of pre-service teachers diverged more from the formal written lesson plans with increasing classroom experience. Experienced participants used more internal pedagogical reasoning than they used to make longer, more detailed plans that were written. These results demonstrate that written lesson plans were not a complete picture of the complex cognitive process of lesson planning.

This distinction matters especially for teacher preparation and professional development. The effectiveness of a lesson plan cannot be judged by the quality, completeness or technical accuracy of the written document alone. More focus should be given to the pedagogical reasoning behind teachers' instructional decisions, in particular the reasons for choosing specific goals, activities, materials, interaction patterns and assessment approaches. This review therefore focuses on the key components of lesson planning, instructional frameworks, and underlying planning principles, rather than treating lesson plans merely as administrative checklists to be completed.

3.2 Why is Lesson Planning Important?

Lesson planning is always acknowledged in theoretical and empirical studies. At its most fundamental level, it provides teachers with a clear and logical structure for organising learning objectives, classroom activities, teaching materials, and assessment procedures. Careful preparation enables teachers to approach their lessons with more confidence, coherence and a clearer sense of direction, helping to systematically achieve intended learning outcomes (Harmer, 2015; Scrivener, 2011).

Planning plays an important role in classroom management as well. Alghamdy (2023) studied the depth of lesson preparation of 87 English teachers in Saudi Arabia's secondary schools. It was found that there is a statistically significant relationship between teachers' reports of classroom behaviour management and depth of lesson preparation. Those instructors who spent more time on planning felt more capable of maintaining order in the classroom and more prepared to deal with any unusual situation. The findings show that lesson planning is helpful for both effective instruction and classroom management.

Another value in lesson planning is allowing teachers to reflect on their teaching practices. Teachers need to schedule time for each part of the lesson to predict learning difficulties and ways of dealing with them. These plans can be useful when reflecting on and evaluating the lessons after they have been taught. However, Lammert and Godfrey (2025) accentuated that many teacher education programmes tend to focus on the technicalities of lesson planning and less on reflective planning and pedagogical decision-making. Therefore, novice teachers tend to develop lesson planning skills without having a clear grasp of the logic behind it.

Lesson planning brings essential benefits for both the teacher and the student in ESL/EFL classrooms. Lessons are well structured, with clear learning goals, and a logical sequence of activities and opportunities for students to consolidate what they have learned. Richards and Bohlke (2011) maintain that this clarity makes students more motivated to learn as they can see the purpose and direction of each lesson. Empirical evidence also highlights that improvements in classroom practice, in terms of learner outcomes, are linked to better lesson planning. Mengistu *et al.* (2023) explored a 6-week lesson study intervention with primary school English teachers in Ethiopia. Researchers have found that when teachers plan and reflect on their lessons systematically, they improve their teaching skills, which in turn makes a measurable difference in how well their students learn. Various forms of research methods have been used to collect evidence. These include teacher self-reports, classroom observations and intervention studies. Although the research designs differ, the results mostly point to the same: good lesson planning really matters for how well lessons are taught and how well students learn.

All these together suggest that lesson planning is much more than a task of administration. It is a professional practice that will develop the quality of the instruction, improve classroom management, boost reflective teaching, and support the engagement and achievement of the learners. It is not the product of written documents but the quality of the pedagogical thinking that becomes apparent in effective classroom instruction.

4. Components of an Effective Lesson Plan

4.1 Administrative Information

The basis of a professional lesson plan is administrative information. Although sometimes considered a mundane piece of paperwork, this information provides essential contextual details that inform instructional decision-making. It typically includes the date, lesson duration, grade level, number of students and teaching time. Richards and Bohlke (2011) state that these details are not only administrative but also pedagogical. Having accurate and up-to-date knowledge about the learners and their learning situation greatly helps teachers make decisions about pacing, grouping, classroom management and selection of learning activities.

Although contextual information is a critical component of lesson planning, it has received relatively limited attention in empirical research on ESL/EFL lesson planning. Much of the discussion appears instead in the broader teacher education literature, where lesson-planning practices are sometimes criticised for being too generic and insufficiently responsive to specific classroom contexts. Teachers need to be prepared to plan for actual learners in actual classroom contexts, not as an abstract exercise in lesson planning (Lammert & Godfrey, 2025). This means that beginner teachers can come up with lesson plans that are technically correct but do not reflect the realities, needs and characteristics of the learners enough. This points to the need to develop lesson plans for specific learners and specific teaching contexts rather than generic planning templates.

4.2 Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are well known to be one of the most crucial elements of effective lesson planning. They provide clear directions for instruction, lead classroom activities, and set the criteria for the assessment of learning outcomes. For most teacher education programmes, writing objectives using the SMART framework with the criteria of Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound is recommended. For example, a measurable lesson objective might state: *“By the end of the lesson, students will be able to form spoken sentences using five words correctly related to travel.”*

Clearly stated, learning goals also reflect theories on second language acquisition as explained by Brown and Lee (2025). Measurable objectives allow teachers and students to track progress and link classroom activities, teaching, and assessment with learning outcomes. Yet, experience shows that it is still difficult to consistently apply the SMART criteria. While teachers were explicitly trained to write SMART objectives, Lammert and Godfrey (2025) reported that many failed to write an objective that emphasised L2 meaningful language use or L2 communicative performance. This result stresses that conceptualising the SMART framework is not enough to make it applicable in the classroom. Therefore, teachers' training courses should not only teach how to write objectives but how these can facilitate authentic language learning sessions.

4.3 Materials and Resources

Another critical element of lesson planning is the selection of appropriate teaching materials and resources. These might include books, worksheets, flashcards, audio-visual resources, digital presentations, internet resources, and, increasingly, generative AI (AI). Scrivener (2011) asserts that the choice of material should always be based on the instructional objectives and communicative learning needs. The choice of materials determines the classroom activities that learners engage in, the language they are exposed to and the communicative functions they are expected to develop. Materials should therefore not be treated as stand-alone resources, but should be carefully selected and integrated into the overall lesson plan to support its objectives, activities, and intended learning outcomes.

Recent studies have illuminated the emerging phenomenon of generative AI in lesson planning. Asrori and Setyaningsih (2025) found that perceived usefulness and ease of use are the main factors influencing teachers' willingness to use AI. Teachers would generally edit the AI-generated material before using it; instead, they adapted and modified their content for their learners' needs and specific learning objectives. These findings should highlight that AI tools are not intended to replace professional judgement but rather to help in planning.

Similarly, Hu *et al.* (2025) concluded that lesson plans created through iterative cycles of AI planning, teaching, reflecting, and re-planning were significantly better than those produced by a single application of AI. The results emphasize that AI is most effective as part of an iterative planning process that encourages teacher reflection, continuous improvement, and adaptation. Thus, standard artificial intelligence can be

used not only as a lesson plan generator, but also as a supportive tool in the continuous process of professional planning and reflective practice.

4.4 Procedures

The main purpose of the procedures section is to write the lesson objectives and then break them down into a logical sequence of classroom procedures. It outlines what will happen during the lesson in terms of the learning activities, the presentation of the material, the guided practice, communication exercises, feedback to the students, and the lesson closure.

Harmer (2015) argues that lesson procedures should be clearly structured, but also flexible. They need to be sufficiently detailed to give a clear sequence of teaching/learning activities and allow another teacher to teach the lesson if necessary. Procedures should also enable teachers to respond to learners' contributions, to alter the direction or pace of the lesson and to adapt classroom interaction as appropriate. This balance of structure and flexibility is consistent with the larger principles of adaptability and responsiveness to learners that are central to effective ESL/EFL teaching.

4.5 Assessment

The assessment is part of the lesson planning process since it allows the teachers to find out whether the learning objectives are met or not. Assessment in the classroom can be diagnostic, formative, summative, etc., and can be conducted through observation, questioning, quizzes, checklists, rubrics, self-assessment and peer assessment. Richards and Bohlke (2011) highlight the value of formative assessment as a way to obtain immediate feedback on how well students are meeting the lesson goals. An instructional process can be used by instructors to embed assessment to monitor students' understanding and to guide instruction as it occurs.

However, Lammert and Godfrey (2025) identified one major flaw in several lesson plans. Even when learning objectives were well-defined, the subsequent assessment tasks usually tested factual knowledge rather than the communicative skills targeted in the learning objectives. Such discrepancy diminishes the internal consistency of lesson planning and the effectiveness of assessment. Teachers are thus expected to make sure that the assessments given are directly related to the knowledge and skills in the learning objectives.

4.6 Mode of Work

Learners' participation at each stage of a lesson is determined by the patterns of interaction. Activities can be done individually, in pairs, in groups or as a whole class. Whether or not learners are grouped makes a difference in their engagement and opportunities to use the language.

According to Scrivener (2011), the use of different patterns of interaction is significant. The researcher highlights that educators can employ various interaction modes for both pedagogical and managerial purposes. The use of pair and group work

provides more opportunities for practicing the target language, and more chances to participate and communicate actively, than teacher-centred instruction. Grouping can also meet the needs of learners with different abilities, learning preferences and participation styles, and this is central to differentiation and inclusive teaching.

4.7 Homework

Homework is a continuation of learning outside the classroom, by giving learners opportunities to further practice, consolidate and independently apply knowledge and skills developed in class. Its main goal should be to complement and supplement classroom learning, not just to add more content. Well-designed homework can provide occasions for learners to explore learning more deeply than they might in class time (Harmer, 2015). It can also foster learner autonomy by motivating students to take more responsibility for studying, practicing and using the language on their own.

Homework is most effective when it is closely linked to classroom teaching. Well-structured homework can reinforce what learners have already learned, provide additional practice, and prepare them for subsequent lessons. Tasks that are poorly aligned with lesson objectives may offer minimal learning value and result in missed opportunities for meaningful learning.

4.8 Potential Issues and Solutions

It is generally accepted that one of the hallmarks of effective lesson planning is to foresee challenges that may arise in the classroom. In this part, teachers are asked to consider potential instructional, linguistic, behavioural and organisational problems that may arise during instruction and develop effective solutions.

One of the differences between novice and expert teachers is that the latter conducts anticipatory planning, according to Richards and Bohlke (2011). While less experienced teachers are less likely to predict a learner's misconceptions, classroom management problems, timing or technology issues, more experienced teachers may be better able to do so due to their accumulated classroom experience.

Forecasting potential challenges increases the flexibility and responsiveness of teachers during teaching. Teachers can act on issues before they arise and implement a solution that reduces disruption and maintains continuity in lessons.

Table 1: Common Anticipated Problems and Proposed Solutions in ESL/EFL Lesson Planning

Anticipated Problem	Proposed Solution
Learners lack the vocabulary needed to complete the planned task.	Pre-teach key vocabulary items before the task begins, using visual support or concept checking questions.
Some learners finish a task well before others.	Prepare a brief extension activity that deepens the same language point rather than introducing new content.
Equipment or technology fails during the lesson.	Maintain a low-technology backup version of the same activity that requires no digital tools.

Source: Synthesised from Richards and Bohlke (2011) and Scrivener (2011).

5. Lesson Planning Frameworks for Teaching Language Skills

5.1 Four Skills Framework

One of the most popular methods of ESL/EFL lesson planning is to structure lessons based on the four language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. While each skill will need different instructional strategies, most lesson plans for skills will have a similar three-part structure: pre-, while-, and post-activities. This framework is designed to help students prepare for the learning task and participate in the learning process while giving them the opportunity to consolidate what they have learned later. Although the evidence is different in the four skills, this three-stage model is one of the most widely used in language teaching and is used as a common structure to organise lesson design.

A. Reading Lessons

Reading lessons are usually broken down into three parts. Qasserras, L. (2023) conducted a study on how to teach reading interactively, providing deep details about the three stages. For example, the pre-reading stage builds the background knowledge of the learners, introduces the key words and creates interest in the text. In the while-reading stage, students perform skimming, scanning, identifying main ideas, making inferences, etc. The post-reading phase allows for discussion, critical reflection, summarising or written responses to extend the learning.

This sequence is effective according to empirical evidence. For example, Gebremariam and Weldeyohannes (2025) investigated the impacts of explicit instruction on early adolescent students at the three levels of reading. The students who had been provided with structured instruction throughout the entire sequence had an increase of 14% in post-reading comprehension compared to the control group. There was no difference, however, in the reading motivation of the learners. The findings indicate that the three stages, if used together, provided instructional benefits rather than any one stage. Hence, skipping the pre-reading phase to save class time can affect learners' understanding of the text because it provides insufficient space for them to draw on their prior knowledge and make meaningful connections with it.

B. Listening Lessons

Typically, lessons for listening are taught in three stages. Pre-listening activities engage learners' background knowledge, present new vocabulary, and establish a purpose for listening. While-listening activities focus learners' attention on a particular piece of information or meaning. Post-listening activities help to monitor understanding, to carry out discussion and to provide opportunities for productive language use.

Movva *et al.* (2022) compared 60 graduate EFL learners who took part in the pre-, while- and post-listening activities to those who only engaged in the while- and post-listening activities to test the effectiveness of this framework. Listening comprehension was far greater in the whole sequence group than in the short-version group. The results

show that the pre-listening stage is of paramount importance to promote understanding, as it prepares learners cognitively prior to the execution of authentic listening tasks.

The findings are like those found for reading instructions. The combined outcomes of these studies stress that pre-task activities are not an optional extra but a vital part of a successful lesson plan that is designed to develop skills. Teachers who wish to reduce lesson time should therefore not remove the pre-stage, as this decision can lead to a decrease in subsequent learning.

C. Speaking Lessons

The organisation of speaking lessons is more varied than that seen for reading and listening lessons. In the many speaking lessons that follow a PPP model, as described in the next few sections of this review, the PPP sequence is the pre-stage, while-stage and post-stage.

Bui and Newton (2022) revamped three TBL lessons from textbooks for Grade 4 learners in Vietnam. The revised lessons produced a higher rate of learner activity due to the open-ended communicative tasks at the end of the lesson that allowed the learners to use the language naturally. The restructured lessons, however, demanded much more teacher preparation than the textbook activities.

The results point to an important trade-off in planning lessons. Communicative approaches are supported by instructional frameworks that encourage meaningful interaction and active use of language. Still, the success of these approaches may require more planning, pedagogical expertise, and careful preparation (L. Qasserras, 2023). Teachers, then, may have to balance pedagogical effectiveness with the pragmatism of lesson preparation. Chapter 8 discusses the challenges of lesson planning, which further develops this tension between effective instructional planning and practical constraints.

D. Writing Lessons

Writing lessons tend to be structured by means of pre-writing, during-writing and post-writing phases, which align with the process-writing methodology. In the pre-writing phase, a student brainstorms ideas, discusses the writing task, and plans the ideas he or she wants to include in the text. During the while-writing phase, students engage in drafting and developing ideas, while post-writing activities involve revising, editing, proofreading, and reflecting on the text.

The present study sought to explore the writing practices of sixty-two (62) undergraduate EFL students of an Indonesian university (Taufiqulloh *et al.*, 2025). Research manifested that most students began writing without planning, and few used exploratory planning strategies. Most of them did not go back to their writing and edit for grammatical accuracy or write reflective pieces after writing. The results revealed that learners had knowledge about the writing process, but they did not use it effectively and consistently.

The findings of the present review are consistent with those of Palanisamy and Abdul Aziz (2021), who carried out a systematic review to examine the challenges faced

by upper-secondary learners in writing in English as an additional language. The most common difficulties reported were vocabulary choice, grammatical accuracy, organization of ideas and coherence. These findings indicate that the implementation of a process-writing approach alone might not be enough to enhance learners' writing skills effectively. Ongoing teacher feedback and instructional support during the writing process is also important, especially in the revising and editing stages, when learners need help in identifying problems, refining their ideas, and improving the overall quality of their writing.

6. Language Components Lesson Plans

6.1 Presentation–Practice–Production (PPP) Model

One of the most popular lesson planning models in ESL/EFL teaching is the Presentation–Practice–Production (PPP) model, which consists of three instructional stages. During the presentation phase, the teacher presents the target language, usually within a meaningful context. This is followed by the Practice stage, in which learners use the new language through structured and controlled activities designed to develop accuracy and confidence. Finally, learners shift to the production stage, where they express themselves more freely in the target language in a communicative setting. The model therefore moves progressively from teacher-supported language input to controlled practice and, ultimately, freer language use.

The PPP model has been much discussed and debated despite its prevalence. Anderson (2017), in his review of 50 years of ELT Journal publications, argued that a lot of the criticism of PPP has stemmed from the fact that the term is used to refer to a range of classroom practices and not only one teaching method.

The framework is very effective for teaching grammar and vocabulary that require accuracy before communication. But Anderson (2017) doubts that production is necessary for effective communication. In many PPP lessons, students' language use is limited to only the language they have just learned, instead of allowing them to use all their language skills. This approach can therefore be restricted to practice and not actual language production. This constraint implies that teachers should develop production tasks which involve spontaneity rather than only the target structure.

6.2 Observe–Hypothesise–Experiment (OHE) Model

The Observe–Hypothesise–Experiment (OHE) is an inductive language learning model that differs from the deductive one of PPP. The learning process starts with the presentation of authentic language samples, and learners make hypotheses about the patterns or meaning of the language and then test their hypotheses to gain communicative usage.

The framework is based on the Lexical Approach by Lewis (1993), who argues that language is more likely to be acquired by learners if they see it in meaningful patterns rather than learn isolated grammatical rules. The model is consistent with learner-centred

approaches to teaching in that it is based on the idea that learners actively construct grammatical knowledge through observation and experimentation with the language.

The OHE approach is theoretically attractive, yet with a limited empirical base. There are few studies that have compared it with the other two methods, PPP and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), in terms of classroom effectiveness. Thus, while it has a solid theoretical basis, there is limited empirical evidence to establish whether learning outcomes in using OHE are always effective. This indicates a significant research void in the literature and calls for continued research in the classroom to make definitive statements regarding effectiveness.

6.3 Encounter–Clarify–Remember–Internalise–Fluently Use (ECRIF) Model

Unlike PPP and OHE, the Encounter–Clarify–Remember–Internalise–Fluently Use (ECRIF) is from the learner's perspective and not a succession of the teacher's actions. The model follows the learning process from first exposure to listening and comprehending the meaning and form of the new language, to memory, to internalisation, to fluency and automaticity.

Tosuncuoğlu (2017) contends that ECRIF should be considered more of a diagnostic tool than a model for teaching. This framework differs from the assumption that all learners pass through the same stages of learning at the same time; it allows the teacher to identify the current stage of learning as well as to personalise instruction. This focus creates synergies with differentiated instruction, addressing the needs of students. Another aspect of ECRIF is the recognition of the recursive nature of language acquisition, not a linear one. When learners encounter new language or revisit their previous understanding, they tend to return to earlier stages of comprehension (Tosuncuoğlu, 2017). This recursive approach is closer to the actual process of second language acquisition than models that envision forward movement through predetermined learning stages. As a result, ECRIF provides teachers with a more flexible model of learner development monitoring while recognising that learners may progress at different rates and move between stages according to their individual learning needs.

6.4 Task-Based Learning (TBL) Framework

Task-based Learning (TBL) structures learning around a set of meaningful communicative tasks rather than the systematic teaching of language forms. In general, the framework has three stages: pre-task – presenting the topic with the activation of related language; task cycle – performing a communicative task and reporting the results, and language focus – providing attention to linguistic forms that arose during task performance (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Willis & Willis, 2007).

Spada (2022) contextualises task-based language teaching within instructed second language learning. This view puts communicative tasks in the centre of teaching and assessment processes. The emphasis of attention is shifted from the presentation of the language to be learned to its meaningful use.

There is a large amount of empirical evidence to prove the effectiveness of TBL. Xie and Lan (2025) synthesised the results of 64 studies using PRISMA methodology and observed consistent enhancement in learners' speaking fluency, listening comprehension, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development and confidence. The review also highlighted some recurrent problems, such as institutional limitations, cultural expectations on teacher-led teaching and learning, and limited teachers' capacity building and training. The model was successful, but these factors often limited the success of its implementation in the classroom.

There is no implication that TBL and PPP are mutually exclusive. In fact, some recent studies have suggested that TBL can be complementary to PPP. Bui and Newton (2022) demonstrated that the lessons in the textbook are designed on the basis of the PPP framework and can be systematically reconstructed in line with the principles of TBL design, without replacing the existing teaching materials. This discovery is essential for practical purposes because many teachers must carry out teaching within the frameworks of the designed curriculum and commercially available textbooks. Consequently, it is beneficial to explore the integration of task-based activities into the existing PPP lessons to formulate a practical and achievable approach for boosting communicative strategies while maintaining curriculum standards.

7. Principles of Effective Learning

7.1 Variety

Variety is a purposeful use of activities, materials, interaction patterns, and instructional strategies in a lesson. It keeps the students' attention and provides them with multiple opportunities for meaningful language practice. Variety is highlighted as a means to avoid learner disengagement (Scrivener, 2011) and to cope with differences in learner preferences, skills and participation in the classroom (Harmer, 2015).

Variety should not be looked upon separately, though. Some of the principles listed in this section – such as differentiation, skills integration, and learner-centeredness – are, in practice, the results of employing a range of instructional strategies. Hence, it is not only a matter of switching activities rapidly but also choosing alternative methods that can facilitate a variety of learning objectives and needs.

7.2 Flexibility

Flexibility is the ability of the teacher to modify a lesson while teaching, if necessary, depending on the learner, classroom context or unexpected situations. Effective lesson plans should offer enough structure to direct teaching and learning but need to be flexible enough to enable responsive decisions to be taken.

According to Beckmann and Ehmke (2023), planning flexibility increases with teaching experience. Their research found that the real planning pre-service teachers did in the classroom became more different from their written lesson plans as they progressed through their teaching placements. This would suggest that teachers, as they

gain experience in the classroom, may be less dependent on predetermined procedures and more dependent on professional judgment and responsiveness to classroom situations. Consequently, experienced teachers may use written plans as flexible guides rather than inflexible scripts, enabling their teaching to be responsive to the needs of learners and the realities of the classroom.

The results of this finding have implications for teacher education. Assessment of teachers based on adherence to written plans could harm the very adaptive behaviours needed for effective teaching. Teacher preparation programmes should prepare teachers to make informed changes rather than just detailed lesson plans.

7.3 Authenticity

Authenticity is manifested in the use of realistic language, texts, and communicative activities that reflect the use of language outside the classroom. Authentic methods allow learners to be exposed to authentic language, rather than using simplified examples to illustrate the grammatical forms.

The importance of authenticity in redesigning textbook lessons that emphasise authentic communicative tasks was shown by Bui and Newton (2022). The more enjoyable the activity was, such as an unscripted production phase with meaningful interaction, the more engaged the learners were. In a review of 64 studies on task-based instruction, Xie and Lan (2025) also found that when tasks were based on authentic communication in the classroom, students' fluency and confidence were enhanced.

While there is some preparation time required for authentic materials and tasks, there is growing evidence that they offer better chances for productive language learning than the highly controlled dialogues found in textbooks. Educators need to view the concept of authenticity as a key factor in designing effective lessons rather than as an add-on.

7.4 Learner-Centredness

Learner-centredness is a shift of emphasis from the teacher's intention to teach to the learner's needs for learning and how they can be involved. It demands that the teacher has to plan lessons that highly engage the learner, give him/her some independence, and have him/her build their knowledge.

This concept is captured in the following, earlier-mentioned instructional frameworks. The Observe–Hypothesise–Experiment (OHE) model allows students to explore the cognitive process of identifying patterns and formulating explanations instead of the teacher giving rules (Lewis, 1993). The same holds for the ECRIF framework, which advocates learning from the learner's perspective and focuses on the learners' development from initial learning to fluent use of language (Tosuncuoğlu, 2017). The presence of learner-centredness in a number of theoretical models clarifies that it is not just another planning technique. Instead, it is a core pedagogical principle that guides how teachers plan activities, choose resources and assess learning.

7.5 Skills Integration

Skills integration is the blending of two or more language skills in a single lesson, including reading, writing, listening and speaking. For instance, students could read a text and then discuss its contents, or write a response to the information provided.

The literature examined in this study does not yield much direct evidence of research that investigates skills integration as an independent instructional variable. There is limited evidence supporting this principle. As shown in the four-skills frameworks presented in Section 5, post-reading and post-listening exercises often include speaking or writing activities to further engage learners in responding to their input. As a result, while skills integration looks logically accurate with the communicative methodology of teaching language, more empirical studies are required to establish what role this approach plays in the process of language acquisition.

7.6 Formative Assessment

Assessment for learning is an ongoing formative activity utilised for informing future instruction and increasing learner growth. Unlike summative assessment, which occurs at the end of an instructional time frame, formative assessment happens during the learning process.

This concept is closely related to the assessment aspect mentioned in Section 4.5. Lammert & Godfrey (2025) found a large mismatch between learning goals and assessment. To clarify, learning goals were more skills-based, while assessment was based on facts. This difference suggests that assessment for learning has been developed more as a theoretical construct than as a classroom practice. In this respect, teachers should design assessment activities to support learning that is meaningful, representative of the abilities of learners and closely aligned to the learning outcomes.

7.7. Differentiation

Differentiation is the adjustment of instruction, learning activities and assessment products based on learner readiness, interests, abilities, and learning profiles. This is particularly the case in mixed-ability classes where learners may require different types of support in an effort to achieve the same learning objectives.

Rahmani (2024) studied 108 English teachers in junior high schools in Indonesian Borneo. The research revealed the positive attitude of instructors toward the implementation of differentiated teaching. Teachers, however, faced challenges like time constraints, larger class sizes, and lack of administrative support, among others, which hampered their ability to consistently implement differentiation.

In a similar fashion, Qasserras and Qasserras (2023) in their study “Gardner’s Theory’s Impact on ELT” emphasise the necessity of acknowledging the diversity of learners in the EFL classroom. Their work confirms that learners have different strengths, needs, motivations and ways of engaging in their learning. These differences are a reason to differentiate instruction so that teachers can vary tasks, materials, support and participation. Differentiation allows for flexible paths to learning, instead of assigning

learners to fixed intelligence types. Responsive teaching can therefore improve engagement, inclusion and learning outcomes.

These studies show that regardless of the context of education, educators tend to know about the principles of differentiation and have difficulties when it comes to implementing it in the classroom. The discrepancy makes a difference in teacher preparation since the focus is not on what teachers know, but on what they need to know and how to put content into action so that it can meet the diverse learning needs of students.

7.8 Inclusivity

Inclusivity builds on differentiation by acknowledging that learners might have a variety of additional learning needs, such as disabilities, additional learning needs, and varying cognitive, emotional or sensory profiles. It defies the notion that every learner can be taught in the same way.

According to Howard (2023), the assumptions regarding communicative and cognitive abilities have made foreign language learning alienating for learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). He notes that lesson planning should not be based on general accommodations but on purposeful strategies to meet the needs of learners for communication, cognition, emotion and sensory responses. This notion extends the concept of differentiation. A lesson plan that is differentiated only based on ability can neglect important variations in learner diversity. Hence, it is significant to carefully differentiate by being inclusive and recognising individual learning needs and abilities.

7.9 Use of Technology

Technology integration is now an integral part of the ESL/EFL planning process. It includes the use of learning management systems, interactive digital platforms, online content and new technologies such as generative artificial intelligence.

Some gamification elements such as feedback systems, points, and digital badges can positively impact language learning and language motivation. This can be seen in the review of 40 empirical studies on gamification in ESL/EFL contexts by Zhang and Hasim (2023). They also found significant constraints. For instance, competitive features can be detrimental to individuals who are not confident in their learning; novel technology advantages may erode over time.

Technology should be used not because it is innovative but as the right match between the learning objectives, the learner's properties and the pedagogical design. It can enhance engagement and learning when used and planned appropriately. Technology can distract from learning or create inequity when used poorly.

8. Challenges in Planning Lessons

8.1 Challenges Related to Teachers

The most common problems identified in the literature reviewed are related to teacher factors such as lack of preparation, time to prepare and workload. This issue is attributed to the use of lesson planning in teacher education programmes. Lammert and Godfrey (2025) identify this issue as a contributing factor. Planning is seen by many as a formula to learn, rather than a skill developed over time and reflection. Thus, teachers new to the profession may have a satisfactory understanding of the contents of a lesson plan but may not be ready to make the right decisions to design an effective lesson in context.

Another major difficulty is time constraints. Bui and Newton (2022) have reported that it was more time-consuming to prepare for the task-based speaking lessons than it was to use the pre-made tasks from the textbook. While such redesign might yield more communicative results, it might be challenging for instructors who are used to preparing several lessons per week within the classroom setting.

However, the relationship between planning and experience is not linear. Pre-service teachers with more classroom experience were more independent and less dependent on detailed written lesson plans (Beckmann & Ehmke, 2023). As teachers gain experience, they are more likely to use their planning knowledge, professional judgment and awareness of the context of the classroom, rather than simply following formal plans in detail. This presents an essential challenge for teacher education, as greater experience may result in less visible planning without necessarily indicating less thoughtful preparation. Teacher education programmes should therefore move beyond simply requiring teachers to produce lesson plans and instead develop their ability to plan reflectively, efficiently, and adaptively in response to learners and classroom realities.

8.2 Student-Related Challenges

The concept of differentiation discussed in Section 7.7 closely relates to student-related challenges. The most common problems faced are mixed-ability teaching, diverse educational needs and learner motivation.

Rahmani (2024) found that senior high school English teachers in Indonesia had high overall knowledge and support for differentiated instruction. Yet, those teachers had issues when the learners in the classroom were very different in their preparedness. Similarly, Lee and Hung (2025) deduced that while flexible grouping strategies were feasible, many university EFL teachers in Taiwan still had difficulties in developing fair and reliable assessment items for differentiated tasks and activities.

Although the studies varied in their settings and the target groups, they all revealed similar challenges. Mixed-ability classes are a problem not just for individual teachers but for planning. It is central for teachers to clearly understand the practical implications of differentiation, such as through strategies, assessment models and institutional support, for differentiation to be effectively implemented.

8.3 Structural and Contextual Challenges

Contextual factors can also influence teachers' ability to implement effective instructional practices. Class size, the availability of resources, and institutional constraints may limit what teachers can realistically achieve in the classroom. Even when teachers know the benefits of evidence-based approaches, these factors can inhibit their ability to use them. Xie and Lan (2025) identified a few common challenges faced in the implementation of task-based teaching, such as institutional limitations, cultural expectations, and lack of teacher preparation. Likewise, Palanisamy and Abdul Aziz (2021) argued that the recurring problems of ESL writers are related to vocabulary, grammar, word choice and planning. These challenges are likely to be more manageable where instructors have smaller classes and adequate resources and support within the institution.

One theme common to the previous studies is that teachers are forced to make up for structural shortcomings by working hard individually and increasing the planning time. Lesson planning, on the contrary, is not detached from the conditions of education within which teaching is conducted. There is a need to improve teachers' planning capacity and to create an enabling institutional environment for effective implementation to tackle these issues.

9. Moving Forward

9.1 Support for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Planning

One area that is rapidly developing in the ESL/EFL field as a consequence of this review is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in lesson planning. Research suggests that AI tools can produce draft lesson plans quickly and efficiently, but the quality and usefulness of those plans depend on the teacher's interaction and feedback with the AI.

Asrori and Setyaningsih (2025) argued that the generative AI tools were perceived as useful and easy to use by secondary EFL teachers. Teachers often edited materials created by AI before using them. They instead modified the material to fit the needs of the learner, the learning objectives and classroom circumstances. Hu *et al.* (2025) further found that iterative AI-assisted lesson planning, lesson simulation, and reflection created better lesson plans than the first iteration of lesson planning with AI.

This research shows that AI does not appear to have a future in replacing the professional judgment of teachers in lesson planning. Rather, it will more likely be used as a co-planning tool for generating ideas, building resources, and thinking through improvement. The effectiveness of using AI does not only rely on its technical capacity but also on the critical evaluation and ability of teachers to adapt to content generated by AI.

9.2 Digital Platforms and Personalised Learning

Another new trend in ESL/EFL education is digital lesson-planning systems and learning management platforms. These systems, however, have been studied relatively little in the reviewed literature as compared with AI-based tools for planning. This is an essential

research gap because such technologies are increasingly observed in educational environments.

Further studies in digital planning systems and their implications on teacher decision-making, implementation in the classroom and learner outcomes in ESL/EFL settings are recommended. It is important to focus on the extent to which these platforms really enable pedagogical decision-making or merely replicate current planning processes.

9.3 Gamification and Learner Engagement

Gamified lesson planning is an extension of the concepts of learner engagement, motivation and interactive learning that were raised in the previous parts of this review. In their study on the value of using online games in ESL classrooms, Qasserras & Qasserras (2023) discovered that gamification increased motivation, built good rapport between the teacher and learners, and boosted 21st-century skills such as communication and critical thinking in ESL/EFL classrooms.

The authors were also aware of several significant shortcomings, such as noise, chaos and lost instructional time in classrooms. The study also highlighted that Kahoot was the most frequently used online game by the participating Moroccan EFL teachers. Hence, to effectively implement gamification in the future, it is vital to prioritise engagement and meaningful feedback, collaboration, and learner progress rather than reward systems, as being more superficial.

9.4 Inclusive and Differentiated Lesson Planning

Inclusivity needs to be addressed through a more systematic and planned approach to better improve lessons. Howard (2023) states that the communication, cognitive, emotional and sensory needs of learners should be considered when planning the lesson and not as an afterthought when making decisions on inclusion. This is a follow-up to the earlier findings on differentiation. Future frameworks should not only adjust tasks for proficiencies but also the learning variations that exist in today's classrooms.

In general, lesson planning in ESL/EFL will not depend on the development of an altogether new paradigm of instruction. Instead, improvements should focus on enhancing current practices by providing better teacher education, increasing institutional support, implementing appropriate technology, and addressing learner diversity. It appears that the emphasis should not be on a lack of effective planning models but on the disconnect between knowledge of planning models and successful implementation in actual classroom settings, as evidenced throughout this research.

10. Pedagogical Implications

10.1 Recommendations for Teachers

A consistent pattern is seen in Sections 4, 7, and 8: teachers have a general knowledge of the elements and principles of effective lesson planning but feel challenged to use them

consistently in response to stress in the classroom. This implies that the focus is not on lack of knowledge but on the need to transfer the planning principles to concrete teaching decisions.

It is essential to recognise that planning is a reflective activity and should not be seen as a one-off process before a lesson but, instead, should be undertaken as a continuous process. Observation, adjustment and reflection continue throughout and after teaching as effective planning takes place. Within the short time frame, educators can use some practical strategies that boost the quality of their lessons.

For instance, teachers can have expected difficulties and solutions incorporated into their lesson plans, modify existing lesson materials in the textbook to make them more communicative or task-based, or utilise short formative assessment exercises that directly assess the skills stated in the learning objectives. These small changes can accomplish significant results in making planning more effective with relatively modest increases in resources.

10.2 Recommendations for Teacher Trainers

The planning competence gap found in this review needs to be tackled in teacher training to avoid it being a problem for practising teachers. There is evidence that the more time a teacher spends in the classroom, the less formal written lesson plans are a reflection of how teachers actually plan. Teacher preparation programmes should consider more planning to be an evolving professional reasoning experience, rather than focusing on the final written product.

Teacher preparation programmes must offer extended time for planned practice, experimentation in the classroom and reflective practice. Special consideration needs to be given to places where implementation challenges are commonly reported, such as differentiation, designing lessons for inclusion, and linking learning goals to assessment activities. Training should not be about new planning frameworks teachers need to remember but about making good, informed decisions about when and how various approaches should be used.

10.3 Recommendations for Curriculum Designers

Curriculum developers and materials designers can play a crucial role in minimising the time and effort required for communicative, differentiated, and inclusive lesson planning. Many educators make heavy use of published textbooks and teaching resources; hence, designing these has an impact on classroom practice.

The use of task-based sequences from the start of the lesson should minimise the need for teachers to adapt presentation-orientated lessons to become communicative. Likewise, incorporating differentiation methods and accessibility into published materials will help eliminate the need for any individual teacher to create their own plans for differentiation and accessibility. Since effective lesson planning is informed by current best practices, materials developed with this in mind can lessen teachers' workload while simultaneously increasing the probability that evidence-based practices are adhered to.

10.4 Recommendations for Educational Policymakers

Some of the issues raised in this review, such as large class cohorts, limited resources and planning time, are factors beyond the responsibility of individual instructors, trainers and/or curriculum designers. These are the kind of questions that need answering at the policy level.

Lesson planning must be a core element of teachers' professional duties, with sufficient time allocated for preparation, reflection and professional learning. Furthermore, policies need to support teachers' continuous professional development in areas such as inclusive education, differentiation and ICT to address the implementation gaps identified in the specific areas above. Improving lesson planning requires attention not only to what teachers know, but also to the institutional conditions in which their knowledge and plans are put into practice.

11. Conclusion

There is a consistent finding in the literature reviewed that the technical foundations of ESL/EFL lesson planning are relatively well established. Elements such as the development of measurable learning objectives, the division of reading and listening lessons into pre-, while- and post-activity phases, and the organization of teaching through frameworks such as Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) or Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) are well known and frequently debated across a variety of educational contexts.

However, implementing these approaches effectively proves to be more complex. The review identifies the inconsistent application of differentiation, inclusivity, learner-centredness, and effective use of technology in the classroom, despite their theoretical support and promotion. The evidence that has been considered indicates that teachers generally know about these and have positive attitudes towards them, but the institutional context often restricts teachers' capacities to apply them systematically.

The central issue identified in this review is therefore not the lack of effective lesson-planning frameworks, but the gap between established planning principles and their implementation in classroom practice. Effective lesson planning is not only a matter of teachers' knowledge of appropriate planning principles but also of the conditions that enable them to apply this knowledge successfully. These are adequate preparation time, reasonable class sizes, appropriate professional training, institutional support, and adequate teaching resources.

The finding has significant implications for future research in applied linguistics. We need to pay more attention to understanding why current lesson planning models are difficult to implement in practice, and how educational systems can better support teachers to use them effectively, rather than developing increasingly complicated models. So, the field needs not necessarily more planning frameworks but stronger connections between teachers' professional knowledge, continuing professional development and the realities of the classroom contexts in which planning takes place.

The key to improving ESL/EFL lesson planning is not necessarily the development of new lesson plans but investment in teachers, teacher education systems, resources and institutional structures that help current systems to work effectively. The future of lesson planning, then, is not simply in teacher knowledge progress but rather in fostering factors leading to effective use of that knowledge.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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