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Writing Learning Outcomes for English Language Lessons in Multilingual Schools

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Abstract

This article proposes a pedagogic innovation in teacher education by articulating a method for writing learning outcomes for English language lessons in multilingual school contexts. The argument for this approach is founded on curriculum studies; however, the practice also draws specifically on applied psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic theories of teaching and learning the English language. Examples support this five-step process of writing learning outcomes in detailing how to identify a focus, specify language, ensure appropriateness, create coherence, and revise. While the approach addresses the difficulties research studies report that experienced teachers encounter in lesson planning, here it is offered as a way of educating novice teachers to clarify their ideas about language teaching and assessment through reflection. Additionally, the process serves as a means for teachers to develop greater language awareness as subject content knowledge. This technique of writing learning outcomes for language lessons, therefore, may assist in developing language teacher professionalism.

Keywords: English teaching; learning outcomes; methods; multilingual contexts; teacher preparation; K-12 Grade; ESL/EFL; TESOL

Introduction

This article presents an approach to conceptualizing writing learning outcomes for English lessons in multilingual school contexts. It has a theoretical basis in applied linguistics and it is grounded in the practice of teacher education. The aim of developing this approach is to fill a gap in the lesson-planning literature for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) where guidance for teachers has tended to center rather on instructional method and the

long-term planning of curricula and syllabi than on the process of writing learning outcomes for the shorter term of single lessons. Some exceptions are Reed and Michaud (2010), Harmer (2007) and Farrell (2002). The article argues that this fresh approach helps teachers, in particular, novice teachers, to clarify their thinking about language teaching and assessment during their preparation of a lesson, and it serves as a tool for reflection once the lesson is over. The method, therefore, may assist teachers to become principled and professional educators. It is not, however, a prescription for a best method of writing learning outcomes and lesson planning. For an evaluative survey of models of lesson planning, see John (2006). Rather, the conceptualization of writing lesson outcomes is presented here as being most suited to English Language Teaching (ELT) in multilingual, postcolonial contexts of teaching, professional development, and teacher education.

These ELT contexts are those identified by Krachu (1985) as outer circle countries, such as Singapore, Nigeria, and India, where English has become institutionalized through colonialization, and where now it may be an officially recognized language and the medium of instruction, at least for higher education. Evidently, these contemporary contexts of ELT encompass large populations of multilingual pupils¹ learning English as part of their formal education in schools. It is therefore timely and productive to apply school-inspired concepts from curriculum studies to the discipline of TESOL. In so doing, this article proposes a theorized approach to the practice of planning English lessons for pupils in such multilingual contexts of mass education. These are settings where pupils have varying degrees of exposure to English outside lesson time, and where tradition or policy mandate whether English is the medium of instruction or a language subject on the curriculum.

The approach was devised in the context of Singaporean teacher education and is, therefore, specific to that context. However, the situation of Singaporean teacher education may, to some extent, represent other multilingual societies where English is the medium of instruction and where there is a bilingual policy in schools. The process of writing learning outcomes that is suggested in this article could, therefore, be applied in other similar multilingual educational settings. In Singapore, teachers in primary schools are generalist language teachers, that is, they

¹ For the sake of clarity, in this article I use student when referring to student teachers and pupils when referring to those studying in primary and secondary schools.

teach English language and other subjects, such as math and science, while teachers in secondary schools are language specialists. Lessons are an hour long on average even in primary schools. Moreover, the difficulties Singaporean student teachers experience when learning how to plan and write learning outcomes for language lessons are similar to those faced by experienced language teachers (Baecher, Farnsworth & Ediger, 2014). These problems may include writing outcomes which are unspecific, unfocused, or not centered on the actual intended learning of language, but instead on the activities to be carried out in lessons. The difficulties are also similar to those noted and anticipated by curriculum studies theorists such as Grigg (2015), Fautley and Savage (2013), and Gronlund and Brookhart (2009).

In regard to scholarship from curriculum studies, Pollard (2014), Fautley and Savage (2013), and Butt (2006), among others, observe that writing learning outcomes is fundamental to good lesson planning. In general, learning outcomes, sometimes called intended learning outcomes, learning objectives, or student-focused goals, are usually categorized as short-term planning for a week or a lesson. All these terms encompass ideas of intentionality and maintain a focus on pupils' learning. The process of writing learning outcomes, therefore, encourages teachers to predict exactly what they expect pupils will learn, reflecting the anticipated interplay between teaching and learning in lessons. Learning outcomes are, nevertheless, fundamentally discipline-specific since they are situated in particular curricular domains of teaching and learning. Considering this, Savage (2015), in reference to Goodson and Mangen (1998), argues that since learning outcomes are contextualized by school subject disciplines, they must necessarily be appropriately written for these different content areas of the school curriculum, such as English. The approach outlined in this article, therefore, draws on scholarship from the broad area of curriculum studies; it also employs theories from the particular subject discipline of English. Sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic theories from applied linguistics have been selected according to criteria of their usefulness in the practice of teacher education and their relevance through being aligned to the theoretical orientations of the Singaporean English language syllabus (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2009). The resulting blend of concepts from curriculum studies and applied linguistics achieves the goal of creating a principled, theory-based, and discipline-specific method for writing learning outcomes for English language lessons.

The article begins with a review of the pertinent lesson-planning literature from curriculum studies to draw out the benefits and challenges of writing learning outcomes for

lessons. This section also weaves in some of the particular concerns of TESOL. Relevant theory from applied linguistics is then presented. These two strands of thinking – from curriculum studies and from applied linguistics – lead to an explanation of the proposed practice of writing learning outcomes for language lessons in multilingual schools.

Review of the Lesson-Planning Literature from Curriculum Studies

A review of the lesson-planning literature in curriculum studies shows five major benefits from writing intended learning outcomes accruing to teaching and learning. First, the process of deciding what will be taught in a lesson allows the teacher clarity of purpose and enables a predictive focus on pupil learning. Even though lessons may include learning that is valued but unanticipated, identifying the outcomes means there is a clear focus to each lesson (Savage, 2015; Pollard, 2014). Second, Savage (2015) comments that writing learning outcomes for each lesson allows learning to be staged and sequenced because identifying the key learning of one lesson allows it to be connected to the next and built upon and integrated by pupils. Third, the explicit articulation of learning outcomes means that the assessment of the intended learning of each lesson can be precise (Pollard, 2014). This point relates to the benefits of formative assessment or assessment of learning (AfL). The importance of AfL in achieving effective teaching and learning cycles has been persuasively argued by Black and Wiliam (1998).

A fourth benefit is that clear and explicit learning outcomes become the drivers of lessons. If all the other elements such as teaching strategies, learning activities, materials/resources, planned teacher language, and assessment are selected according to the clear aims of the outcomes, lessons will be coherent and focused. Thus, it is precise statements of the intended learning of a lesson that enable internal coherence in that lesson and external coherence in the way it connects with others in a sequence of potential learning (Pollard, 2014; Gronlund & Brookhart, 2009).

Fifth, having specific learning outcomes planned does not prevent teachers from being flexible and creative. Individual teachers may teach a lesson with the same learning outcomes in very different ways. In purposefully and thoughtfully choosing activities and resources according to their own teaching styles, educational settings, and the needs and interests of their pupils, they

may provide different routes to the same learning goal. As a result, teaching is not dependent on methods, procedures, or lesson packages moved from one context to another, but on pupils' needs. Adding to the argument, Fautley and Savage (2013, p. 29) note a difference between the planned lesson and the delivered lesson. If the lesson plan is used as a guide to purposeful action, teachers have the freedom and the justification of principle and theory to respond to the interactional demands of a lesson by adapting, modifying, or even discarding their plan.

Just as the act of teaching is complex, so is that of planning and theorizing lessons. There are particular challenges inherent in predicting learning by writing intentions of learning. The first is that in order to identify learning, teachers have to have thorough knowledge of their subject discipline. According to Grigg (2015), a deep discipline-specific knowledge is necessary to enable teachers to achieve a focus on learning and to promote higher-order thinking among pupils in their lessons. In this regard, Savage (2015), Fautley and Savage (2013), and Gronlund and Brookhart (2009) note the tendency to state learning activities or teaching strategies in the outcomes, instead of pupils' learning. This perhaps illustrates teachers' immediate concern with how they will teach and what pupils will do in lessons. The focus on activity may be more evident in primary school planning in the UK where there is a greater use of cross-curricular approaches than in secondary education, as noted by Fautley and Savage (2013), and where one theme or topic may be used to teach various school subjects. Additionally, Grigg (2015) cites research by McCutcheon (1980) to demonstrate how teachers first determine activities when planning lessons in American elementary schools. Another reason for this tendency to focus on activity might be the emphasis from curriculum studies on pupils' performance as demonstrative of learning (Magar, 1997). Recent scholarship, however, explicitly warns against attending to *doing* when conceptualizing outcomes, and advises teachers to keep a consistent focus on pupil *learning*, for example, Fautley and Savage (2013).

The second challenge for teachers is achieving a balance between a narrow outcome focus that is workable for the lesson and a level of generality that ensures the possibility of transfer of learning to future lessons and other contexts. Savage (2015) suggests that too many outcomes may dilute the efficacy of the lesson. He proposes one or two as sufficient. Additionally, Gronlund and Brookhart (2009) discuss the problem of over-packing outcomes with more than one statement of learning. These writers suggest employing action verbs as the "key element" (p. 25) to define learning, and limiting each outcome statement to one action verb

to ensure a clear focus on what pupils are expected to learn. They argue that outcomes should be specific enough to “convey instructional intent” (p. 26), yet not tied too closely to topic which would make them less useful and less transferable. They provide examples from biology to illustrate this point, and propose that “identifies parts of a given structure” is more suggestive of transfer than “identifies parts of the heart” (p. 26).

Third, outcomes can also be too broad and general when taken wholesale from syllabi and other documents. Curricula and syllabi are designed for long-term planning and schemes of work for the medium term (Grigg, 2015; Pollard, 2014; Fautley & Savage, 2013). These documents accordingly have a level of generality that has to be made specific to each lesson in a learning sequence. The precise intended learning outcomes of lessons, therefore, realize the more general aims of syllabi. In their study of language teachers’ planning, Baecher et al. (2014) note that even experienced teachers used statements taken directly from long-term planning documents as learning outcomes. The researchers concluded that this practice led to unfocused lessons.

Baecher et al. (2014) describe writing learning outcomes for TESOL as a particular challenge. In their study of lesson planning by teachers on an MA TESOL program, they found teachers’ lesson plans illustrated all three of the difficulties identified by commentators in curriculum studies, discussed above. As a result, Baecher et al. (2014) found that the planning for teaching English was not specific to the pupils of the classes, and it inhibited lesson coherence to the extent that the researchers considered it would affect pupil learning. There are two particular aspects of language teaching which might account for the difficulties noted by Baecher et al. (2014). These are the issues of content-based language teaching (Crandall, 2012; Lyster & Ballinger, 2011) and teacher language awareness (Andrews, 2003). Briefly, content-based language programs seek to develop pupils’ competence in both language and subject knowledge in the same program. In essence, the study of a curricular subject or content area provides the context for discipline-specific language use and learning. Such programs take various forms in different educational contexts, as outlined by Lyster and Ballinger (2011); for example, immersion or mainstreaming is deemed very useful in immigrant situations. Baecher et al. (2014) observe, however, that the balance between content and language is a difficult one to achieve, and Creese (2005) suggests that the default position is to prioritize learning subject matter over language.

The other cause of difficulty may stem from teachers' lack of language awareness, noted by Baecher et al. (2014) and Andrews (2003). Andrews proposes that the language awareness of teachers of English as a first and additional language comprises knowledge of language and metacognitive awareness as well as language proficiency. It is, according to Andrews (2003), teachers' language awareness, alternatively termed their discipline-specific knowledge by Grigg (2015), which enables them to analyze language and language processes. The concept of language awareness also includes understanding how pupils learn and knowledge of interlanguage forms. The depth of teachers' language awareness may, therefore, determine how far they are able to write outcomes based on specific language in preference to text content or activities.

For instance, to address the issue of low teacher language awareness, the institute of teacher education in Singapore provides courses in subject knowledge, that is, knowledge of language as grammar and as text. These courses are designed to support student teachers whose own learning of English in school was by communicative methods that prioritized fluency and proficiency and gave less attention to developing declarative knowledge of grammar. Since the notion of the *content* of a language lesson being also the *medium* in which it is taught is a complicated one for language teachers everywhere, this article proposes a five-step approach to writing learning outcomes that will produce coherent lessons focused on language learning. The use of the approach may, therefore, help teacher educators achieve the dual aims of guiding beginning teachers in planning lessons and helping them develop greater awareness of language in the process.

Review of the Theory Base from Applied Linguistics

The aim of this review of applied linguistics theories is to determine the discipline-specific content of language lessons. The two main criteria employed in the review are the usefulness of the theories in the practice of writing learning outcomes in teacher education and the fit with the Singaporean English language syllabus (MOE, 2009).

The teaching and learning of language is concerned with the individual learner and the social context of language and learning. It is a socially situated, psycholinguistic process since a person's use of language is determined by individual cognition and affect as well as the purpose and the socio-cultural situation of use. Theories from the applied linguistics of sociolinguistics

and psycholinguistics can thus be usefully employed to determine the specific outcomes of language lessons. Systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1994), a branch of sociolinguistics, has been applied to language teaching and learning by educators such as Christie and Martin (2007) and Derewianka (1990). Additionally, Pressley (2002), Beard, Myhill, Riley, and Nystrand (2009), and Vandergrift and Goh (2012) have drawn on cognitive theories, such as schema theory (Anderson, 1994) and metacognition (Garner, 1994), with regard to teaching reading, writing, and speaking, respectively. Both these social and psycholinguistic theoretical approaches consider the language, the learner, and the text. The former achieves this through ideas of meaningful language use appropriate to context and purpose, and the latter through ideas of interactive, strategic processing to develop accuracy, flexibility, and fluency.

According to Halliday (1994), the goal of language use and learning is the construction of meaning in a social context. He further proposes that language use is governed by that contextual situation and the interlocutor's purpose, and it results in the production of an appropriate form. Halliday (1994) argues that the situation consists of the three ideas of field or subject matter, the tenor or relationships of the participants, and the mode or channel of communication (p. 32). Thus, the language or register of the text is appropriate to the situation and its purpose through specific linguistic choices. These theories of systemic functional linguistics underpin the concept of genre which Christie (1998), for example, applies to education. She defines a genre as a "staged, purposeful, goal-directed activity represented in language" (p. 53). Wing Jan (2001) and Derewianka (1990), among others, identify the common school genres or types of text as recounts, instructions, narratives, information reports, explanations, and arguments. The researchers propose that pupils should read and analyze examples of the genres so that teachers can use them as models for writing and as contexts from which to teach language explicitly in schools.

Halliday's influence is evident in the national Singaporean English language syllabus (MOE, 2009) in which contextualization is a stated principle of English language teaching and learning. One point of the syllabus philosophy of language learning states, "Language use is guided by our awareness of the purpose, audience, context and culture in which the communication takes place" (MOE, 2009, p. 8). Drawing on the work of Christie (1998) and others, the syllabus also presents a range of text types at each grade level and each skill section as appropriate contexts for language learning.

Turning to psycholinguistics, theories of skills, strategies, and schema derived from cognitive processing point to the importance of learners' knowledge (Anderson, 1994) of language, subject matter, and situation. Cognitive processing also includes ideas of the learners' employment of cognitive strategies by which knowledge is drawn upon in a context of use, as noted by Grabe and Stoller (2002, p. 15) and Urquart and Weir (1998, p. 84-85), for example. The flexible and appropriate application of cognitive strategies according to a communicative purpose is crucial for effective language use, and it is achieved through metacognitive monitoring and control (Garner, 1994). This monitoring also allows strategies to interact and even compensate for deficient or inappropriate use. Automaticity and fluency develop with practice, resulting in strategy use at one level dropping below conscious attention (Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974), leaving the individual with greater mental processing capacity to focus on other aspects of strategic language use and learning (Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977). Clearly, these theories of cognitive processing connect to Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl's (1956) seminal taxonomy of thinking and its revision by Anderson et al. (2001). The taxonomies are of generic thinking skills and provide a very useful disciplinary cross-check; however, this article argues that the discipline-specific thinking involved in language processing should be the subject of learning outcomes for language lessons.

In accord with psycholinguistic theory, the Singaporean English language syllabus (MOE, 2009) advises a process orientation in its principles of English language teaching and learning (p. 11). Skills and strategies are identified as potential outcomes of learning throughout. Examples taken from the section on speaking state that pupils ought to be able to "generate ideas" (p. 53), and the section on reading would have pupils be able to "make inferences" and "categorize" (p. 42).

In sum, applied sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic theories suggest the importance of taking into account the context, the language appropriate to the situation, and the strategies and skills to be used by learners as the discipline-specific content of learning outcomes of language lessons.

The Practice of Writing Learning Outcomes for English Language Lessons

This section of the article explains the approach to writing learning outcomes for language lessons in multilingual school contexts. The method supplements the TESOL lesson-planning

literature and connects theory and practice by integrating concepts from curriculum studies with theories from applied linguistics. Additionally, it espouses principles aligned with the practice of teacher education and the Singaporean English language syllabus (MOE, 2009) to advocate a method of writing focused, specific, appropriate, and coherent learning outcomes.

Although the process of lesson planning and writing learning outcomes is time-consuming and laborious for beginning teachers at first, it does become progressively more fluent and apparently instinctive not only because of the experience of being in the classroom, as noted by John (2006), but also because of the support provided by a groundwork of theory. Referring to the theories and principles presented in this article in the creation of lesson outcomes right at the start of the planning process guides novice teachers to focus on the language they aim to teach. At any other time during planning and reflecting, reference to these principles helps teachers to clarify their thinking and deepen their understanding of practice and language.

The application of theories from cognitive processing and systemic functional linguistics to writing learning outcomes may be accomplished through the five steps outlined below. However, this is not to say that lesson planning is a linear process; rather, it is iterative and recursive as teachers consider outcomes in relation to activities, materials, and pupils, and vice versa. In a teaching situation of large classes of pupils and short lessons such as is typical in multilingual Singapore, the lesson outcomes rather than the lesson activities have to direct planning. In other words, clarity about *what* is to be taught is needed before a consideration of *how* it is to be taught. The *how* may then be determined in the selection of activities and materials to achieve the goals of the lesson. This might be unlike lesson planning in some settings where teachers have more time in their classes and children speak English as a home language and where, therefore, the *how* might be a greater influence on planning than the *what*. McCutcheon (1980) shows this effect in research on lesson planning in the USA.

Another point to clarify is that this approach to writing learning outcomes is offered solely as a guide for teacher planning and reflection and not as a set of targets to be presented to pupils at the start of a lesson. For a discussion on this topic, see Grigg (2015, p. 275-6). While it is desirable to make the purposes of lessons clear to pupils, this can be done in age-appropriate language and as suited to the activities of the lessons that may seek to encourage noticing (Schmidt, 1990) of language either directly or indirectly. Explicit teaching might necessitate

direct statements of outcomes at the beginning of a lesson, whereas guiding pupils to discover, explore, or deduce rules might require explanations at the end of a lesson so that their interest and engagement can be sparked and maintained from the start.

The Five-Step Process of Writing Learning Outcomes for English Language Lessons

Identifying the focus

In order to achieve clarity in a lesson, it is necessary to have a guiding focus. This enables the teacher to signpost the stages of the lesson, making each stage and the lesson intention apparent and accessible to pupils. The first step of identifying the focus of a lesson begins with considering how language is described pedagogically. This is usually in terms of knowledge about language or KAL (Carter, 1995) and language skills, strategies, or processes. The Singaporean English language syllabus (MOE, 2009) lists six areas of language knowledge and skills: listening, reading, speaking, writing, grammar, and vocabulary (viewing and representing are included with the respective productive and receptive skills). Even though the teacher and pupils *use* various skills and a great deal of language in any one lesson, it is beneficial for the teacher to consider exactly what aspect of language is to be *learnt*. Using an active verb to state the outcome is consonant with recommendations from curriculum studies (Grigg, 2015; Gronlund & Brookhart, 2009) where the verb is usually selected from a cognitive taxonomy, for example, Bloom et al. (1956) and Anderson et al. (2001). In language lessons, this part of the learning outcome, which clearly locates the focus, can be written by referring to psycholinguistic theory. It will thus indicate the precise, discipline-specific cognitive and linguistic processing that pupils will engage in during the lesson. For example, in a reading lesson, a teacher could teach processes such as inferring, visualizing, skimming, or predicting while in a vocabulary lesson, processes could include categorizing, generating, or making analogies.

Specifying the language

The first step of identifying the focus of the lesson has already narrowed the outcome from, for instance, the process of reading to the skills of inferring or skimming. Next, outcomes can be made more specific to the lesson and to the language that will enable them. The examples in Table 1. show how the language included in the learning outcome (in bold) is that which pupils will have to notice (Schmidt, 1990) in order to apply the skill or strategy.

Table 1. Specifying the Language

Lesson aim	Example skills or aspects of knowledge to be taught in the lesson, enabled by specific language
reading	<i>visualize</i> character appearance by noting figurative language
	<i>skim</i> for details by using adverbials of time
vocabulary	<i>categorize</i> words by using the prefixes “ re ”, “ in ”, and “ un ”
writing	<i>write to explain</i> cause and effect by employing connectors such as consequently and as a result

Ensuring appropriateness

The applied sociolinguistics of, for example, Christie and Martin (2007) and Derewianka (1990) suggests that the language register and the form of a text are influenced by the situational and cultural context. Thus, each aspect of the context, namely, the nature of the subject matter (field), the relationship between the communicators (tenor), and the communicative mode, has a bearing on the language, making it appropriate to the purpose of the communication. Specifying the genre of the text to be used in the lesson is hence a very helpful practice when considering the intention of learning because the genre indicates how the language to be learnt functions appropriately in a particular context. For example, the function of the present tense in a recount of daily activities may express habit while in an information report it often expresses timelessness. The genres specified in outcomes may be from the range of those established by research in schools such as the recount, procedure, or explanation (Wing Jan, 2001; Derewianka, 1990). Equally, they may be from those found in school practice such as show and tell or morning news. The underlined examples in Table 2. demonstrate how to include the genre of the text in a learning outcome, ensuring that what is to be taught is suited to the situational context provided by the genre. In considering texts here, it is important to recognize that in lessons focusing on language knowledge, teachers will usually employ familiar texts that children have first read or listened to and understood. In this way, these lessons may have an analytic focus on the form and function of the grammar or vocabulary items, without the extra cognitive load of comprehension.

Table 2. Ensuring Appropriateness

Lesson aim	Example skills or aspects of knowledge to be taught in the lesson, enabled by specific language	Context
reading	<i>skim</i> for details by noting adverbials of time	in a <u>factual recount</u> .
	use headings and subheadings to <i>anticipate</i> classifications	in an <u>information report</u>
	<i>recognize and read</i> “s” blends at the beginning of words	in a <u>children’s big book narrative</u>
speaking	<i>stress</i> linking words in order to <i>emphasize</i> key points and guide listeners	in a <u>spoken explanation</u>
	<i>pause</i> before each action in a sequence to create <i>suspense</i>	in a <u>historical narrative</u>
listening	<i>listen</i> for the details of prepositional phrases in order to <i>identify</i> the relative location of key items	in an <u>information report</u>
	<i>listen to visualize</i> setting through the use of descriptive detail of the senses	in a <u>fantasy narrative</u>
grammar	<i>compose</i> imperative verbs accurately to make	a <u>list</u> of rules
	<i>deduce</i> the rule governing the creation of the regular past tense	in a <u>narrative</u>
writing	<i>draft</i> a main idea using connectors of cause and effect	of a paragraph of <u>explanation</u>
	<i>review and revise</i> by adding and deleting words to do with thinking and feeling to improve the cohesion	of a <u>personal recount</u>
vocabulary	<i>deduce</i> the meanings of words from semantic cues and roots of words	in a <u>fairy tale</u>
	<i>categorize</i> adverbs and adjectives by applying the spelling rules governing the suffixes “ly” “ily”	in a <u>fairy tale</u>

Below is an example of a learning outcome written out in full. It includes the beginning stem suggested by writers in curriculum studies (Pollard, 2014; Fautley & Savage, 2013). Italics indicate the focus; bold shows the language to be noticed; underlining indicates the genre that provides the language context.

By the end of the lesson, pupils will² be able to *skim* for details using **adverbials of time** in a factual recount.

Creating lesson coherence

The two steps of identifying a focus and writing specific language into learning outcomes both help to achieve lesson coherence. This is important because it may help pupils to follow the thinking and consequent staging of the lesson. Learning outcomes should also be unified and concentrate on the lesson aim of teaching reading, vocabulary, or writing, for instance. Since a typical lesson is about one hour, three or four related outcomes may be appropriate and achievable in a single purposeful activity centered on one text. Below are some examples.

Table 3. Creating Lesson Coherence

<p>Example A. A speaking lesson on saying a poem aloud with young children</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. enjoy and respond to the creative use of metaphor in a poem;2. identify and accurately pronounce the short “i”, “o”, and long “ou” (as in “round”) vowel sounds in the words of a poem;3. identify and accurately pronounce the final consonant cluster “ck” in the words of a poem;4. say the poem aloud, accurately pronouncing the sounds to appropriately affect the pace and rhythm of the poem.
<p>Example B. A reading lesson of an information text with older children</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. preview an information report to understand that the purpose is to provide the reader with information about a topic usually presented in categories;2. formulate questions about the categories of a topic in order to guide a detailed reading for information in a report;3. use the structure of the information report to scan for information;4. distinguish similarity and difference through the use of comparative and superlative adverbs and adverb connectors in an information report.

² The choice of will instead of should in the outcome stem is to preserve intentionality rather than to give any sense of moral obligation through the use of should.

The outcomes shown above include “skills” such as enjoy and respond which are categorized in taxonomies of educational objectives as affective (Gronlund & Brookhart, 2009). While not exactly quantifiable, these learning outcomes are particularly appropriate for English language and literature lessons since they exemplify Rosenblatt’s (1994) theory about how readers take up positions in relation to texts they read on a continuum of stances from aesthetic to efferent. These more aesthetic outcomes can be assessed by the teacher monitoring pupils’ engagement in lessons through observation (Goodman, 1985) or by means of personal response tasks. Grigg (2015, p. 275) argues that this type of more open outcome – less specific and measurable than generally advised by writers in curriculum studies – is especially important in potentially engaging pupils in higher-order thinking. Another related point concerns demonstrability and measurability. In writing about curriculum studies, Magar (1997), for example, proposes that statements of learning outcomes ought to include ideas of how learning is to be demonstrated as well as precise indicators of measurement. This article, by contrast, and in accord with Fautley and Savage (2013), advocates that learning outcomes for language lessons be simply statements of intended learning. This is to maintain a lesson focus on *learning* rather than *doing*. The design of activities and materials can readily include the techniques by which learning outcomes may be measured since the incorporation of teaching and assessment activities in the outcomes could relocate the focus away from the discipline-specific content to be learnt.

Revising and evaluating

Revising and evaluating learning outcomes against the criteria provided by theoretical principles may help teachers avoid the common pitfalls noted by Baecher et al. (2014) in their research. In order to exemplify the revising and evaluating process, a discussion using negative examples follows. Some of the difficulties observed by Baecher et al. (2014) were prioritizing the learning of subject matter over language, writing about lesson activities, lifting outcomes from syllabi, or writing outcomes that were too broad or too vague.

The first difficulty of including subject knowledge in the language outcome, resulting in a lesson prioritizing content over language, as noted by Creese (2005), might mean that the negative examples given below are produced, instead of the originals of **Example A. 1.** and **Example B. 2.** in *Table 3. Creating Lesson Coherence*.

Original Example A. 1.

enjoy and respond to the creative use of metaphor in a poem

Negative Example A. 1.

understand that the word “rocket” in the title refers to the ice-lolly of the poem

Original Example B. 2.

formulate questions about the categories of a topic in order to guide a detailed reading for information in a report

Negative Example B. 2.

formulate questions about habitat, diet, and appearance in order to guide a detailed reading for information about bears

These negative examples do appear to be quite specific and appropriate to the textual context, and some incidental learning of vocabulary will probably occur in the lessons. When these negative examples are compared to the originals, however, they demonstrate that giving the topic priority over language limits the potential of the lesson for language learning.

Instead of the original attention to the *concept* of categories appropriate to the context of an information report, the **Negative Example B. 2.** outcome steers the lesson to *content* or the topic of bears. When the teacher assesses the learning of the lesson against the intended outcome, questioning, reading about, and retaining facts about bears might indicate success. This would be misleading since the predominant outcome of an English lesson ought to be learning language or skills which can then be transferred to other genres, situations, and topics. Theories of transfer of learning in first and second language teaching, for example, James (2006), Paris (2005), and Nunan (1999), suggest this. Formulating questions about reading is a well-documented reading strategy (MOE, 2009, p. 42; Koda, 2008, p. 208), and it should be the aim of the lesson, rather than learning about the topic of bears. If so, the outcome would follow Gronlund and Brookhart’s (2009) advice about being specific enough to “convey instructional intent” (p. 26) while not being too closely tied to topic.

Another difficulty identified by Baecher et al. (2014) is writing teaching activities into the learning outcomes. Negative example outcomes illustrating this difficulty are shown below. The originals are taken from *Table 3. Creating Lesson Coherence*.

Original Example A. 2.

identify and accurately pronounce the short “i”, “o”, and long “ou” (as in “round”) vowel sounds in the words of a poem

Negative Example A. 2.

underline the words in the poem which contain the short “i” and “o” vowel sounds

Original Example B. 4.

distinguish similarity and difference through the use of comparative and superlative adverbs and adverb connectors in an information report

Negative Example B. 4.

complete a comparison chart to show similarities and differences between bears and pandas

A comparison of the negative examples with the originals shows the cognitive process of identifying is replaced by the behavior of underlining in **Negative Example A. 2**. Similarly, the thinking required to distinguish similarity and difference while attending to language is replaced by the action of completing a chart in **Negative Example B. 4**. Despite the fact that underlining and completing a chart are excellent teaching actions that will indeed constitute evidence of thinking, they indicate *behavior* rather than *cognition* or *affect*. The aim of English lessons, however, is to guide cognitive change in pupils. This may be achieved by supporting the learning outcomes with activities and materials, selected according to the identification of pupils’ learning needs and interests as well as preferred teaching styles. Outcomes should therefore state aspects of cognition, affect, and language instead of behavior. This may fasten the focus of the lesson more securely on *learning* rather than *doing* and allow for individual teacher flexibility and creativity in the selection and design of activities.

The third difficulty mentioned by Baecher et al. (2014) is the impulse to take outcomes wholesale from syllabi, educational documents, published teaching materials, or other lesson plans, causing outcomes to be too broad or too vague. Syllabi outcomes are delineated for particular courses or periods of time and are, of necessity, broad and general. They need to be refined to be specific and precise for individual lessons. This article has described a thinking process to help teachers write focused, specific, appropriate, and coherent outcomes for each lesson. It is true that sometimes lifting outcomes from published materials results in ones that are exactly appropriate for a lesson because although lessons are specific to context, they may not be unique. In this situation, the lesson would nevertheless be effective, and planning would be less time-consuming; however, the opportunity for teachers to engage in the thinking afforded by

these five steps to writing learning outcomes would have been missed. The lessons would appear the same, but the teachers' awareness of language underpinning them might be different. Therefore, when writing learning outcomes it may be crucial for teachers to engage in the processes of reflecting, revising, and evaluating to sustain the development of their language awareness (Andrews, 2003) and expertise in their own teaching and learning contexts.

As a resource for teacher educators and teachers, Table 4. provides a summary of the five-step process for writing learning outcomes for language lessons that has been described in the article.

Table 4. A Five-Step Process for Writing Learning Outcomes for English Language Lessons

<p><i>Step 1. Identifying the focus</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the specific knowledge about language or the language skills to be learnt in the lesson. For example, a reading lesson could teach skills such as inferring, visualizing, skimming, or predicting, while a vocabulary lesson could include categorizing, generating, or making analogies. • Remember that the skill should be transferable to other situations and texts and hence should not refer to a classroom activity or the subject matter of a text. <p>Example skim for details of information³</p>
<p><i>Step 2. Specifying the language</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the language that pupils will have to notice in order to apply the skill identified in the first step. <p>Example by noting adverbials of time</p>
<p><i>Step 3. Ensuring appropriateness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about the context in which the language is to be used. Include the genre of the text in the learning outcome to ensure that what is to be taught fits the situational context provided by the genre. <p>Example</p>

³ All the examples given in this table are for a reading lesson.

	in a factual recount
<i>Step 4. Creating lesson coherence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all the lesson outcomes are geared towards achieving the main lesson aim of teaching reading, writing, or grammar, for example. • Aim to unify the learning outcomes around a central, purposeful lesson activity. <p>Example</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, pupils will be able to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. read to anticipate the main ideas of paragraphs by using topic sentences in a factual recount; 2. skim for details of information by noting adverbials of time in a factual recount; 3. read to gather information from reported speech in a factual recount.
<i>Step 5. Revising and evaluating</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the outcomes against the criteria provided by the first four steps of identifying the focus, specifying the language, ensuring appropriateness, and creating coherence. • Evaluate the outcomes against some of the common difficulties that teachers experience. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Check that the outcomes do not refer to a classroom activity instead of language. ○ Check that the outcomes do not relate to subject matter or topic instead of language. ○ Check that the outcomes are specific to the lesson and pupils' needs and not directly lifted from elsewhere.

Conclusion

Some may argue that identifying the steps to writing learning outcomes is a mechanical way to approach the process. On the contrary, the approach proposed in this article is capable of being creative and generative and is a guide for a thinking process supported by applied psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic theory. Referring to the process is likely to assist teachers in making principled decisions in the planning of coherent English language lessons. These will be lessons that pupils can follow and that will enable them to transfer their learning of language

knowledge and skills to other contexts, texts, and lessons. The approach is particularly appropriate for multilingual learning contexts where teacher awareness of language is crucial. For novice teachers, this approach to thinking about their teaching provides a theoretical tool to guide their practice because it helps them to clarify and reflect on what they aim to teach and assess during lesson planning. Additionally, the principles constitute criteria against which outcomes can be revised and evaluated and they help teachers to avoid the pitfalls encountered even by experienced teachers of language (Baecher et al., 2014). The method, therefore, can help both novices and experts to increase professionalism by providing theoretical principles exemplified in the five practical steps for discussion, collaboration, and education. In summary, through linking theory and practice and highlighting discipline-specific skills and language as the content of lessons, this approach to writing learning outcomes may enable teachers to be flexible and creative in planning for their pupils' learning in their particular educational contexts.

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