

CHAPTER 3: ENHANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ELT METHODOLOGY: A FOCUS ON EFFECTIVE SESSION DESIGN

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Abstract

In 2016, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the British Council Ukraine launched the New Generation School Teacher project, which aimed to change traditional approaches to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher training at universities in Ukraine. The collaboration resulted in a Core Curriculum for English Language Teaching (ELT) Methodology at Bachelor's level (2020). The new methodology programme has become central to EFL teacher education at Nizhyn Gogol State University and has adopted a practice-based approach to the design of ELT methodology courses, focusing on what teachers should be able to do rather than what they should know in order to ensure effective student learning. Through the course, pre-service EFL teachers are expected to acquire essential methodological knowledge and familiarise themselves with the principles of effective learning and teaching, develop a range of practical skills for teaching English to school learners and demonstrate their ability to apply their skills in a real teaching context.

The competency-based approach to teaching methodology required a significant change in the training model in general and in the design of the sessions in particular. This chapter discusses the principles and approaches to designing and delivering ELT methodology sessions providing some practical samples.

Keywords: EFL teacher training, curriculum, practice-based approach, competency-based approach, session design.

1. Introduction

In 2016 the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the British Council Ukraine launched the New Generation School Teacher project aimed at changing traditional approaches to English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher training at universities in Ukraine. The collaboration resulted in Core Curriculum for English Language Teaching (ELT) Methodology

at Bachelor's Level (2020). The new methodology program has become central to EFL teacher education at Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University (NMGSU) and has adopted practice-based approach to ELT methodology course design with a focus on what teachers should be able to *do* rather than *know* in order to ensure effective student learning. Doing the course, pre-service EFL teachers are expected to acquire essential methodological knowledge and familiarize with the principles of effective learning and teaching, develop a range of practical skills for teaching English to school learners and demonstrate their ability to apply their skills in a real teaching context.

Before the launch of the New Generation School Teacher project (<https://www.britishcouncil.org.ua/teach/projects/presett>) and adoption of the Core Curriculum for ELT Methodology, lecture-style teaching of methodology course prevailed at NMGSU which put theory over practice by default and often treated these two components of the course as discrete elements. According to Bolitho (2015), this kind of teaching can negatively tell on the quality of teacher preparation as the latter 'needs to be practically oriented and to include assessable outcomes which are clearly relevant to students' future career as teachers'. The new Core Curriculum is based on the premise that EFL teacher training must be competency and practice-based and that the quality of teaching students receive contributes sufficiently to their self-efficacy and preparedness to teach.

The study does not provide any empirical evidence, relying on the positive evaluation of the New Core Curriculum and its implementation by Alan Mackenzie (2019).

2. English as a Medium of Instruction

It is worth mentioning that English Medium Instruction (EMI) is applied, i.e. the English language is used to teach Methodology, thus developing pre-service teachers' ELT methodology and EFL competence. The findings of the study "English as a medium of instruction – a growing global phenomenon" by Julie Dearden (2014) might describe our results of the adoption of the Core Curriculum for ELT Methodology too. University trainers support the idea that "EMI was beneficial to students and more specifically, that students made progress in English when they studied through EMI" (Dearden, 2014, p. 28). The students improve their English by being exposed to it through speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The improvement in EFL proficiency happens as a by-product of the carefully designed ELT Methodology sessions. For example, Alan Mackenzie (2019) points out that the students' language proficiency level was C1 in comparison to B2 in traditional methodology teaching. However, University trainers are responsible for their students' understanding the content of

sessions. So, they help with their students' knowledge of English by adapting the materials, paraphrasing, teaching subject-specific vocabulary, in particular some methodology terms.

Besides, according to the findings of the TAEC Project (2020), there are three different conceptualizations or explanations of what English as medium of instruction means for the classroom: 1) change of language, 2) change of language + change of teaching style, 3) change of language + change of teaching style + change of student population. In NMGSU the trainers change the language and the teaching style. In this case, "switching to EMI means that although the context or setting of the event you are in remains the same, you change not only the language, but also the way you teach" (TAEC Project, 2020, p. 8). For example, our teaching includes a lot of pair and groupwork, discussion, etc. purposefully planned in methodology sessions.

3. Principles of ELT Methodology Session Design

One of the ways to ensure teaching quality is through session design. We approach methodology session design from active involvement in learning perspective and session development itself is informed by the key principles behind teacher training activities suggested by Bolitho and Wright (2007), Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives and backward design approach. Backward design prioritizes learning objectives as a starting point of class session elaboration followed by determining acceptable evidence of learning and finally planning instruction and learning experiences (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011).

Session learning objectives are formulated in the student-centered manner, namely 'By the end of the session students will be able to...'. And this is where Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives is made use of prioritizing learning and its stages rather than content. When choosing a verb to describe the knowledge or skill students are expected to obtain, it is important to make your learning objectives SMART i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. Once class session objectives are set, it is necessary to think of assessments that can gauge students' attainment of learning objectives and in case of a single class session formative assessment is the best choice. The next step of the backward design process is to elaborate class session activities that are aligned with the learning objectives and help students meet them.

One of the trainers for the New Generation School Teachers project was Rod Bolitho who shared some main principles to stick to while developing and sequencing activities for PRESETT. The first important principle is starting where your learners are i.e., engaging with their previous knowledge and experiences (Starting from). What previous experiences might

pre-service EFL teachers have? They are language learners themselves and can share their experience from this perspective. Pre-service teachers' vicarious experience can also be informed by the models supplied by their school or university language teachers.

Another key principle to consider is that we work from practice towards principles (theory). This can be achieved by setting a shared task which can help learners acquire shared experience along with guiding their reflection on the experience through answering teacher's questions. This is where we "move away from a transmission approach to training towards a more participatory one" (Wright & Bolitho, 2007, p. 122). This way learners are able to contribute to the construction of new knowledge. Theory on the topic in focus can be presented later in the session in the form of a mini-lecture, reading or any other kind of input. Bolitho and Wright (1995) recognize the central "role of talk in processing of new ideas" (p. 8), that is why it is important to comment on and analyze them in plenary discussions. Assigning follow-up reading is advisable for students to explore the topic for themselves and make sense of what is taught. This practice enables to realize another principle of training activity consisting in giving your students time for ideas to settle.

Finally, it is time for the plan-for-action phase of the session when pre-service teachers' experience has to become concrete and individual. For example, students can be asked to prepare an activity or a lesson putting into practice new principles. This new individual experience is a basis for reflection which has a vital part to play in pre-service teacher development and helps them to become reflective practitioners.

A formative assessment task is an excellent ending of a session. In online Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>), assessment is defined as a methodical way of acquiring, reviewing and using information about someone or something, so as to make improvements where necessary. Assessment is concerned with individual student (assessee) learning and conducted by a teacher (assessor) who observes or collects evidence about an assessee's performance or outcome. The criteria for assessment are set by both parties jointly. The variety of course assessments, namely formative and summative assessments (quizzes, exams, final papers, final projects [text-based or multimedia], peer assessments, self-assessments, and reflection) is a key feature of this ELT Methodology course.

It is useful to think about different types of assessment in terms of its purpose. For example, formative assessment refers to assessments conducted while students are learning and is used by teachers to adjust their classroom teaching practices and by students to improve their performance as needed. The purpose of formative assessment is to improve students' learning

and not for grading or judging students' achievement of learning objectives (Popham, 2021). In self-assessment learners are encouraged to assess their own progress, in peer assessment – each other using specific criteria.

It is important to maintain students' engagement through the session by making objectives explicit, using a variety of activities and interaction patterns, altering the pace when needed and giving time and space to think and reflect while slowly increasing the level of challenge as the session proceeds.

4. ELT Methodology Session Sample

Following the incorporation of the suggested principles and approaches, a carefully designed methodology session was implemented during the third year of study, specifically within Module 3: Preparing to Teach 2. More specifically, this session focused on Unit 3.1, which explored the essential theme of language skills, with a particular emphasis on teaching listening skills. This session was carefully designed to meet the specific needs and developmental stage of the pre-service teachers, ensuring their comprehensive understanding and effective application of listening teaching techniques.

By strategically aligning the session with the overarching curriculum framework, the integration of the proposed principles and approaches seamlessly enhanced the learning experience for the pre-service teachers. The session aimed to equip them with the necessary knowledge, skills and pedagogical strategies to effectively teach listening skills in the English language classroom.

Throughout the session, a structured and interactive approach was used to actively engage the pre-service teachers. Various pedagogical techniques such as modelling effective listening strategies, engaging in collaborative discussions and analysing authentic audio materials were used to foster a deep understanding of the intricacies of teaching listening skills. The session also encouraged critical thinking and reflective practice, enabling pre-service teachers to evaluate their own teaching methods and explore innovative approaches to promoting active listening in their future students.

In addition, the session design included opportunities for pre-service teachers to apply their learning through practical activities and micro-teaching exercises. By providing a supportive and constructive learning environment, the pre-service teachers were able to actively practice their teaching techniques and receive valuable feedback from their peers and trainers. This experiential learning approach facilitated the development of their pedagogical competence and confidence in teaching listening skills effectively.

Tables 1-4 below show the session templates and associated handouts, providing a visual representation of the carefully designed teaching materials and resources. These templates acted as a comprehensive guide for both trainers and pre-service teachers, ensuring a structured and coherent delivery of the session content.

Taken together, these session templates and handouts exemplify the careful planning and delivery of the methodology session. They serve as valuable resources that not only guide the trainers, but also enhance the learning experience of the pre-service teachers. By using these materials, pre-service teachers will be equipped with the necessary tools and resources to effectively teach listening skills and promote language development in their future classrooms.

Table 1. ELT Methodology course session framework

Module	3 Preparing to teach 2			
Unit	3.1 Language Skills – Teaching Listening			
Session	4			
Topic	Purposes for Listening			
Objectives	By the end of the session students will be able to identify the purposes for listening; to use and develop activities according to the purpose of listening.			
Time	80 minutes			
Materials and equipment	Handouts, PowerPoint presentation			
Activity	Aim	Procedure	Interaction	Time
Lead-in	to explore students' background knowledge on purposes for listening	Ask students to comment on the quotation: <i>People never listen without a purpose, except perhaps in a language class.</i> (Gary Buck)	SS-SS groups of 4	2 mins
Comment	The quotation is demonstrated on the slide. It is a warmer activity which can help students to predict the topic of the session and activate their background knowledge and critical thinking. Trainer might ask some guiding questions to boost the discussion, for example: <i>1. What did Gary Buck mean? Do you agree with him?</i>			
Reflection on previous experience	to explore students' previous experience of listening to L1 outside the classroom and L2 in the classroom	Ask students to reflect on their listening experience in the classroom and in the real world. Ask them to write down the things they listened to in the past 24 hours in and out of the classroom and reasons why they listened to them. Invite students to discuss the differences between listening to	T-S (individually) Pair-Share-Compare SSS (plenary)	5 mins

		L1 outside the classroom and listening to English inside the classroom.		
Comment	Give students an example, <i>In the morning I listened to the weather forecast on the radio to find out if it will rain today.</i> (Listening in the real world) If students have problems comparing the two types of listening experience, guide them by asking questions, for example: <i>Do you choose what to listen to in the classroom? And in real life?</i> It is important to conclude that listening to L2 in the classroom has to become as purposeful as listening to L1 in the real world.			
Setting learning objectives	to find out what students expect to learn during the session and to set the objectives	Announce the topic and ask students to share their expectations of the session. Set the objectives for the session.	T-S	3 mins
Comment	Sharing their expectations students contribute to the agenda for learning and engage in practices of autonomous learners. Learning objectives make student involvement in the session conscious and allow them to use metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning.			
Shared experiences	to allow students to focus on their English classroom listening experience and identify purposes for listening	Ask students what they listened to last in their English class and what was the purpose for it.	T-S	2 mins
Comment	Ask students to remember all cases of listening in the classroom. Draw students' attention to the idea that we listen not only to specially prepared recordings but also to peers' answers or teacher's instructions and explanations. Ask students to 'put on teachers' hats' and comment on purposes for listening from teacher's perspective as well as learners.			
Pre-teaching key words and grouping students	to pre-teach the key words for a reading activity to group students	Ask students to draw a strip of paper either with a word missing some letters or letters to complete one of the words. Get students to mingle and find their partner for the reading activity.	SSS (mingling)	3 mins
Comment	Doing this activity, we pre-teach some words whose meaning or form we find difficult for students, for example, <i>inferential</i>. Once students did the matching and found their partners, we ask them to read the words aloud and explain their meaning. Sometimes we have to convey the meaning of some words through example sentences, context, etc.			
Input	to raise students' awareness of	Get students to read the text about purposes for listening inserting missing phrases and	S-S (pairs)	10 mins

	purposes for listening	sentences into appropriate place in the table.		
Comment	Doing this task, students get theoretical input which helps to clarify and consolidate their understanding of the topic in question. This stage of the session can use loop input approach too if you choose to get students to listen to a mini-lecture each group with a different purpose for listening. For example, group 1 can listen and make notes which makes it listening for details. After the activity students reflect on their experience. Another tweak is to present this input in a jigsaw reading activity.			
Metaphors	to assess students understanding of purposes for listening	Students are shown pictures metaphorically representing different purposes for listening. Get them to say and explain what purpose is illustrated.	SSS (plenary)	5 mins
Comment	This activity serves as formative assessment. Pictures are shown on slides, e.g. a detective searching for clues with a magnifying glass (listening in detail), a bird flying over a city (listening for gist), a dog sniffing a suitcase at the customs (listening for specific information), a boy with a 'thinking' cap on (inferential listening). We can ask students not only to explain metaphors but also suggest their own which will demonstrate their deeper insight into the topic.			
Listening tasks	to get students to match purposes for listening with listening tasks	Give students a list of instructions for listening tasks. Get them choose the right purpose for these listening tasks.	S-S	5 mins
Comment	This activity helps students to draw connections between purposes for listening and instructions for listening tasks. It also prepares them for the next activity.			
Applying to action (planning)	to get students to devise a listening activity	Ask students to create an activity for the stated listening purpose using the script. Get students to try the activity on their groupmates who will define the purpose for listening.	SS-SS (4 groups)	30 mins
Comment	First students study the script of the listening text and class profile. Next, they are divided into 4 groups. Each group is assigned a purpose for listening to devise their activity on. Other groups do not know each other's purposes. Groups microteach their activities and get feedback from their peers. They might argue that the task matches the purpose and can suggest their improvements. Summing up the activity trainer asks what order students might use their listening activities in the classroom and why and if they would make their students listen to one and the same text twice. It is also advisable to discuss the challenges students had while working on the task.			
Reflection on the session	to summarize the session	Ask students if their expectations of the sessions have been met. Ask students if the objectives of the session have been met.	SSS	10 mins

Comment	It is one of the most important stages of the session as it informs us of students understanding and degree of engagement with the topic. Reflection encourages pre-service teachers to be more considerate of their learning. To guide reflection some additional questions can be asked, for example, <i>What did you want to know before we got started? What issue was addressed? What new skills did you learn? What surprised you? What worked or didn't work? What did you like or dislike about the experience? What things will you do differently or the same next time? How can you apply this in the future?</i>			
Homework	to set homework, to reflect on the session	Ask students to consider their experience of today's session and dwell on the suggested points on Flip. Something that I have learned today. Something that surprised me. Something that I will use in my own teaching. Something I'd like to work on/ find out. Something that I would have done differently in the session. Any other comments. Ask them to watch their peers' videos and like the best one from their point of view.	T-S	5 mins
Comment	It is formative assessment combining self-assessment and peer assessment. Getting students to reflect on and get involved with their own and their peers' learning process is a part of developing reflective practitioners. Learning journals are an excellent way of doing this, students use their webcam or mobile phone to record a short video after the session and post it on Flip. Flip (https://info.flip.com/) is a video discussion app that can be used for rehearsed speaking.			

Table 1 illustrates the overall session framework, outlining the key components, objectives and learning outcomes. It serves as a roadmap for trainers, providing a clear overview of the session flow and progression of activities. The framework emphasises the integration of the proposed principles and approaches, stressing the importance of starting where the learners are, working from practice to theory and planning for action.

Table 2. Handout 1 to accompany the ELT Methodology course session framework

Unit 3.1. Language Skills – Teaching Listening	
Session 4: Purposes for Listening	
Handout 1 Key Vocabulary	
Draw a strip of paper. Complete the words and find your partner.	
DE__AIL	T
IN__ER	F
G__ST	I
SP__CIFIC	E
INFORM__TION	A

Handout 1 (Table 2.) is used as a pre-teaching activity to introduce and familiarise students with key vocabulary words that may be challenging or unfamiliar. Students are given a strip of paper with incomplete words and their task is to complete the words by filling in the missing letters. Once completed, students find a partner who has a strip of paper with a matching word. They then take turns reading out the words and explaining their meaning. This activity promotes vocabulary acquisition and comprehension by encouraging students to discuss and clarify the meaning of words through examples, context and other strategies.

Table 3. Handout 2 to accompany the ELT Methodology course session framework

Unit 3.1. Language Skills – Teaching Listening Session 4: Purposes for Listening Handout 2 Purposes for Listening	
Insert missing phrases and sentences into appropriate place in the table. Dwell on the characteristics of each purpose for listening.	
1. _____	This refers to the occasions when we want to know the general idea of what is being said, as well as who is speaking to whom and why, and how successful they are in communicating their point. Students only focus on the main ideas. This type of listening is like standing in a waterfall. It washes over you and you get the general feeling / understanding.
Listening for specific information	This refers to the occasions when we don't need to understand everything, but only a very specific part. 2. _____ We ignore everything else.
3. _____	This refers to the type of listening we do when, for example, we need to find errors or determine differences between one passage and another. 4. _____
5. _____	This refers to the type of listening we do when we wish to know how the speaker feels. 6. _____
A. Listening in detail	D. We cannot afford to ignore anything because, unlike listening to a list of delayed trains, we don't know exactly what information will help us to achieve our task.
B. Inferential listening	E. We make deductions by going beyond what is actually stated. It is all about making analogies to situations that we recognize. Such listening requires a 'model' in our heads of how the situation might unfold.
C. Listening for gist	F. For example, while listening to a list of delayed trains, we are only interested in hearing news about one particular train – the one we want to catch – and so we listen selectively for this very information.
(*Adapted from Wilson, J.J. (2008) <i>How to Teach Listening</i> . Pearson Longman, p.10)	

The purpose of Handout 2 (Table 3.) is to deepen students' understanding of different listening purposes. Students are given a table with missing phrases and sentences related to different listening purposes. Their task is to fill in the missing phrases and sentences in the appropriate places in the table. This task provides the students with theoretical input and allows them to consolidate their understanding of the topic. Alternatively, teachers can use a loop input approach where each group listens to a mini-lecture with a different listening purpose. After completing the task, students reflect on their experience and engage in discussions to further analyse the characteristics of each purpose for listening. This activity promotes critical thinking and helps students to develop a comprehensive understanding of the different purposes of listening.

Table 4. Handout 3 to accompany the ELT Methodology course session framework

Unit 3.1. Language Skills – Teaching Listening Session 4: Purposes for Listening Handout 3 Listening Instructions	
<i>Choose the right purpose for these listening tasks.</i>	
Purpose for Listening	Listening Task
	Listen to the conversation and take notes to complete the table.
	Listen and match conversations 1-5 to photos a-e.
	Listen to Mike and Emma discussing city life. How do they feel about living in the city?
	Listen to eight short extracts. After each one, discuss with a partner how you think each person is feeling.
	Listen and decide if the sentences below are true (T), false (F), or we don't know (?).
	Listen and follow the instructions to make an origami model.

The purpose of Handout 3 (Table 4.) is to help students make a clear link between the purposes of listening and the corresponding instructions for listening tasks. Students are given a list of listening tasks and a set of purpose statements. Their aim is to carefully analyse the purpose statements and determine the appropriate purpose for each listening task. By engaging in this activity, students will develop their ability to decipher the underlying goals of listening tasks and to understand how different instructions align with specific listening purposes.

As students work through Handout 3, they actively make connections between the intended outcomes of the listening tasks and the purposes they serve. This activity encourages students to think critically and evaluate the relationship between effective listening strategies and the overall aims of listening activities. By identifying the appropriate purpose for each task,

students improve their overall understanding of how listening instructions are tailored to achieve specific learning objectives.

Table 5. Handout 4 to accompany the ELT Methodology course session framework

Unit 3.1. Language Skills – Teaching Listening Session 4: Purposes for Listening Handout 4
<i>Design an activity for the stated listening purpose using the script.</i> Class Profile • 16-year-olds • Pre-intermediate level • Class has English two times a week for 45 minutes Offline Day Yesterday, I had a whole day without the Internet. It was quite different from my usual routine. Instead of spending hours surfing the web and checking social media, I found myself engaging in various activities. In the morning, I picked up a book that had been sitting on my shelf for months. It was refreshing to immerse myself in a captivating story without any distractions. Later, I went for a long walk in the park, enjoying the beauty of nature and breathing in the fresh air. I also spent quality time with my family, playing board games and having meaningful conversations. Without the Internet, I realized how much I had been missing out on these simple yet fulfilling experiences. Although it was challenging at times, not being connected to the online world for 24 hours allowed me to appreciate the offline world and find joy in the little things.

Handout 4 (Table 5.) enables students to actively design listening activities based on a provided script and class profile. After studying the script and considering the learners' needs, students are divided into groups, each with a specific purpose for listening. They work together to create activities that engage learners in active listening, comprehension and response.

Once the activities have been developed, each group presents and micro-teaches their activity to the class. This allows for peer feedback and discussion to assess the effectiveness of the activity in achieving its intended purpose. Pupils reflect on the order of implementation of the activity and explore the advantages and disadvantages of multiple listening.

This hands-on activity encourages creativity, critical thinking and an understanding of the relationship between instructional design and the purpose of listening. Through active participation and reflection, students gain insight into creating purposeful and effective listening activities.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the design of ELT methodology sessions for pre-service teachers, thereby addressing a significant gap in the existing literature on this topic. The findings highlight key aspects that contribute to the successful design of these sessions, including the implementation of EMI, the use of Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Objectives, the adoption of a backward design approach, and the incorporation of key principles for sequencing session activities, namely starting where learners are, working from practice to theory, and planning for action.

The study shows that pre-service teachers improve their ELT methodology and professional competence through their participation in ELT methodology courses using EMI. However, it is crucial for trainers to take responsibility for ensuring that their students understand the session content and to adapt their teaching style in line with the session design principles outlined above in order to provide engaging and purposeful structured learning experiences in methodology courses.

Despite the advantages discussed, it is important to acknowledge some limitations. One notable limitation is the time and energy required to develop a coherent sequence of sessions in an ELT methodology course, mainly due to the lack of comprehensive methodology textbooks. It is therefore advisable to work with a team of designers to alleviate this challenge.

Thus, the present study contributes significantly to the understanding of designing ELT methodology sessions for pre-service teachers. By adopting these recommendations, teacher educators can create engaging and purposeful structured learning in methodology courses, thereby promoting the development of ELT methodology and professionalism among pre-service teachers. This holistic approach not only equips future educators with the necessary skills, but also encourages a shift in teaching styles to align with the principles of lesson design. Ultimately, these efforts will contribute to the continuous improvement of language teaching and the professional growth of pre-service teachers.

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