Theoretical Framework for an ESL Lesson Plan

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Abstract

For this application project a Unit Lesson Plan for adult, high-intermediate English as a Second Language (ESL) students was developed around the short story *Can-Can* by Arturo Vivante. Considering the theories of adult learning studied in EDAE 624 and the adult learning methods discussed in EDAE 620, a lesson plan was constructed, grounded in current research and sound theoretical constructs. Specifically, Knowles’ learning assumptions on Andragogy, and the theories of Self-Directed Learning, Constructivist Learning, Experiential Learning, and Narrative Learning were considered.
Theoretical Framework for an ESL Lesson Plan

For my Application Project in EDAE 624 I have designed a Unit Lesson Plan for students of English as a Second Language (ESL) around the reading and discussion of a short story, *Can-Can*, by Arturo Vivante. I invite you to look over the lesson plan (Appendix A) now, as well as the accompanying story (Appendix B), the homework assignments (Appendix C), grammar exercises (Appendix D), and a final writing assignment (Appendix E). Once you have familiarized yourself with this material, we can proceed to focus on the theoretical framework upon which this lesson was built.

**Knowles’ Assumptions on Andragogy**

Malcolm Knowles (as cited in Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007) defines six basic assumptions regarding the adult learner. At the root of these assumptions is the notion that adults are not children, and in fact demonstrate marked differences. Based on these assumptions the adult educator should always strive to treat adult students in a mature manner, allowing them respect and acceptance for who they are as unique individuals. With these assumptions in mind, I chose a short story with a mature and interesting theme, hoping to capture my students’ imaginations and provide food for thought.

Knowles also acknowledges that adults come to the learning table with a growing reservoir of experience, which can be tapped as a resource for further learning. Mindful of this, I have built into my lesson numerous discussion questions which will encourage the students to reflect on their prior experiences and share them with the class. Another of Knowles’ assumptions focuses on the adult’s need to know why they need to learn something. Hopefully by the end of this three-part lesson, my ESL students will have developed a deeper appreciation for the art of the short story. In addition, my hope is that they will understand and enjoy the deep
richness of language that can be found in great works of literature and feel a sense of accomplishment that they can, with some time and a little effort, make sense of the story.

**Self-directed Learners**

Knowles also notes that adults are self-directed learners. As such, they need not be told how to study and when. The “homework” that I assign for these lessons are intended to be used as a tool for further reflection, not a required, graded assignment.

One of the teaching strategies outlined by Dunlap and Grabinger (as cited in Merriam et al., 2007) to promote self-directed, lifelong learners is problem-based learning. By posing a problem (What should society do with adulterers?) I hope to foster critical thinking in my students, as well as open their minds to alternative solutions, based on the rich variety of cultures present in the class. The use of the debate format will hopefully aid in nurturing critical thought. As Brookfield (2004) notes, “Debate is a theatrical device with an element of playful swagger built into it. As such it draws in students who feel it won’t involve their ‘real’ selves in any serious consideration of new ideas” (p. 351). By making a ‘game’ of it, I hope to keep the tensions low and the stress minimal, while engaging the students in both dialectical and dialogical thinking.

**Constructivist Orientation**

This lesson plan stems from the constructivist viewpoint that learning is an active process of constructing meaning from experience. As such, the emphasis is on dialogue, collaborative and cooperative learning. On a very surface level, my students will be learning how to derive meaning out of the short story, *Can-Can*. But from a broader perspective, we will delve into the story from a more social constructivist view, engaging in conversation that includes the
viewpoints of several different cultures, and making meaning out of the social constructs of marriage and adultery.

**Experiential Learning**

In addition, this lesson plan is grounded on the basic tenets of experiential learning, as first proposed by John Dewey. I would like to employ Jarvis’s model of the transformation of the person through experience (Merriam et al., 2007). In this model we start with the whole person, who has his/her own unique *lifeworld*, through which s/he views all experiences. This person (my student) encounters a socially constructed experience (reading a short story). From this s/he responds with emotions, thoughts, and/or actions. A disjuncture occurs in which the student’s perception of the situation and his/her practical or theoretical knowledge of the situation are not in harmony, and the student must endeavor to reestablish this harmony through learning (in this case, the story may not be understandable to the student and so s/he must learn new vocabulary, new terminology, in order to make meaning out of the story). As Jarvis (2008) notes, “What is important about this observation is that we actually always learn from our experience, not from the social situation. . . learners do not learn from what we teach them, they learn from their experiences of what we teach them” (p. 560). Thus, the experience of reading the story in class, discussing the plot, analyzing the literary approach, and debating a constructed problem will all work together to produce a positive learning environment.

**Learning Through Narrative**

One final theoretical construct used in the lesson plan involves learning through narrative. Rossiter and Clark (as cited in Merriam et al., 2007) identify three ways to learn through narrative – “storying” the curriculum, storytelling, and autobiography. My lesson plan employs at least the first two, and perhaps the third, if a student decides to share a portion of his/her own
life story with the class. Through use of the discussion questions, students attempt to answer them by ‘narrativizing’ their understanding of the story. And of course, what better way to employ storytelling than to read a short story! Through an understanding of the story, students can vicariously experience, or imagine, what it might be like to conduct an extra-marital affair or to know that your spouse is conducting one.

Summary

In this application project, I have tried to create a lesson plan utilizing sound theoretical constructs, grounded in current research. With the volume and variety of adult learning theories currently in vogue, it was a daunting task. While I believe that I have covered many of the philosophies that ground my practice, I no doubt have missed a few others. With time and more experience I hope to improve my teaching skills and utilize a more complete theoretical framework for practice.
References


Appendix A

Unit Lesson Plan

Can-Can – A Short Story for ESL Students

Lesson Creator: Connie Henry

Brief Description/Overview:
In this three-part lesson, ESL students will read and discuss a short story, Can-Can by Arturo Vivante. We will focus on irony as a literary form and review the gerund and present participle. Students will practice listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Level: high intermediate – advanced
Total Length of lesson: ___3____ class(es) ___60____ minutes each

Rooms Required:
Large classroom with moveable desks/chairs and computer with projector/screen

Communicative Goals/Objectives:
At the completion of this lesson, the learner will be able to:
~ read the short story, Can-Can aloud
~ demonstrate understanding of the story by summarizing the plot
~ imagine why the characters act the way they do in the story
~ define irony and find examples in the story
~ explore cultural differences regarding marriage and adultery
~ define gerund and present participle and distinguish them from verbs in the progressive tense
~ satisfactorily complete one of two writing assignments demonstrating an understanding of the story and accurately utilizing gerunds and present participles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Procedures Followed</th>
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| ___10____ Minutes | **CLASS #1:**  
**Warm-up Activity:** All Tangled Up  
Everyone in a group stands in a circle with their eyes closed. Each person then extends an arm into the middle of the circle and grips whichever hand they come into contact with. When everyone has a partner, the other hand is brought in. When all hands are linked, eyes are opened and the group must disentangle itself without anyone letting go of their partners.  
Once everyone is disentangled and seated again, explain that this activity can be a metaphor (may need to explain the meaning of the word metaphor) for what it is like to read literature, especially something not in one’s native tongue. When we first read the story, it can seem incomprehensible, but by taking it apart, disentangling it, so to speak, looking at the words more carefully, more thoughtfully, we can slowly make sense/meaning of the story. |

| Materials/Text/Rooms Required | Large Classroom with extra space to form large circle |
### Demonstration/ Input stage including vocabulary:
**Pre-Reading** -
Ask students if they know what the “can-can” is. Provide some background on the origins of the dance and show video clip of the dance: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lK0gYi1YEZ8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lK0gYi1YEZ8)

**First Reading** -
Have students take turns reading the story aloud, a few lines at a time. After each brief section, take time to confirm vocabulary comprehension.

### Activity stage 1:
**Thinking about the story – “Pair-Square-Share” Activity:**
Now that you’ve read Can-Can, consider what you would do if you suspected that your spouse or significant other was cheating on you. Do you sympathize with any of the characters – the husband, the wife, or the mistress? Explain your choice(s).

### Closing:
**Understanding the Plot** -
Explain that we will be reading and discussing the story again in the next class, but in order to confirm a basic understanding of the plot, please consider the 10 questions on the Homework #1 page before the next class. You may jot down your answers, but homework will not be collected for a grade. It is merely to assist with further discussion of the story in our next class.

### Activity stage 2:
**Second Reading**
Have the students read the story aloud again, this time with no stopping to discuss vocabulary. Write the following questions on the board and ask the students to consider them as they are reading:
1. What is the significance of the can-can in the story?
2. Does the wife do the can-can for her child or for her husband? Explain your answer.
3. What effect does the dance have on her husband?
4. What does the couple expect from each other in marriage? Does each fulfill the other’s expectations?

### Activity stage 3:
**Exploring Themes** –
Discuss the questions on the board.
| Activity stage 4: | Analyzing the Author’s Style –
Introduce the term irony and give explanations and examples. Give two examples of irony from the story, Can-Can, and then ask the students to work in groups of 2-4 and find more examples within the story. Meet back together to discuss. |
| 20 Minutes |
| Closing: | Making Connections -
In preparation for our next class, please consider the 4 questions on the Homework #2 page before the next class. You may jot down your answers, but homework will not be collected for a grade. It is merely to assist with further discussion of the story in our next class. |
| 5 Minutes |
| CLASS #3 | Warm-up Activity: |
| 10 Minutes |
| Activity Stage 5: | Expressing Opinions –
Write the following statement on the board: Adultery is a crime and should be punished by law. Have the students choose which side of the issue they are on, then have them debate the issue, taking the opposite side. Give them 10 minutes to work in groups and prepare their arguments, then debate. |
| 25 Minutes |
| Activity Stage 6: | Improving Language Skills –
“Can-Can” contains several examples of **gerunds** and **present participles**. Review the differences between these two verbals and the **progressive tense** of a verb. Provide several examples from the story. Have students work in pairs to complete the Grammar Exercise #1. Review correct answers. |
| 20 Minutes |
| Activity Stage 7: | Writing Activity –
As a final summative, graded activity, have the students choose between the two writing activities listed on the Writing Activity Worksheet. Assign a completion date and provide a grading rubric for the assignment. |
| 5 Minutes |
| Resources/Websites used: |


http://www.eslteachersboard.com/cgi-bin/lessons/index.pl?read=3549

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1K0qYi1YEZ8
Appendix B

Can-Can
by Arturo Vivante

A husband arranges a secret meeting with a woman and is surprised by the outcome.

“I’m going to go for a drive,” he said to his wife. “I’ll be back in an hour or two.”

He didn’t often leave the house for more than the few minutes it took him to go to the post office or to a store, but spent his time hanging around\(^1\), doing odd jobs—Mr. Fix-it, his wife called him—and also, though not nearly enough of it, painting—which he made his living\(^2\) from.

“All right,” his wife said brightly, as though he were doing her a favor. As a matter of fact, she didn’t really like him to leave; she felt safer with him at home, and he helped look after the children, especially the baby.

“You’re glad to be rid of\(^3\) me, aren’t you?” he said.

“Uh-huh,” she said with a smile that suddenly made her look very pretty—someone to be missed.

She didn’t ask him where he was going for his drive. She wasn’t the least bit inquisitive,\(^4\) though jealous she was in silent, subtle\(^5\) ways.

As he put his coat on, he watched her. She was in the living room with their elder daughter. “Do the can-can, mother,” the child said, at which she held up her skirt and did the can-can, kicking her legs up high in his direction.

He wasn’t simply going out for a drive, as he had said, but going to a café, to meet Sarah, whom his wife knew but did not suspect, and with her go to a house on a lake his wife knew nothing about—a summer cottage to which he had the key.

“Well, goodbye,” he said.

“Bye,” she called back, still dancing.

This wasn’t the way a husband expected his wife—whom he was about to leave at home to go to another woman—to behave at all, he thought. He expected her to be sewing or washing, not doing the can-can, for God’s sake. Yes, doing something uninteresting and unattractive, like darning\(^6\) children’s clothes. She had no stockings on, no shoes, and her legs looked very white and smooth, secret, as though he had never touched them or come near them. Her feet, swinging up and down high in the air, seemed to be nodding to him. She held her skirt bunched up,\(^7\) attractively. Why was she doing that of all times now? He lingered.\(^8\) Her eyes had mockery\(^9\) in them, and she laughed. The child laughed with her as she danced. She was still dancing as he left the house.

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1. *hanging around* not having anything specific to do
2. *made his living* earned enough money to live on
3. *be rid of* be free of
4. *inquisitive* curious
5. *subtle* slyly clever, difficult to detect
6. *darning* sewing a tear in material
7. *bunched up* pulled together in folds
8. *lingered* stayed behind
9. *mockery* making fun of (negatively)
He thought of the difficulties he had had arranging this rendezvous — going out to a call box; phoning Sarah at her office (she was married, too); her being out; his calling her again; the busy signal; the coin falling out of sight, his opening the door of the phone box in order to retrieve it; at last getting her on the line; her asking him to call again next week, finally setting a date.

Waiting for her at the café, he surprised himself hoping that she wouldn’t come. The appointment was at three. It was now ten past. Well, she was often late. He looked at the clock, and at the picture window for her car. A car like hers, and yet not hers—no luggage rack on it. The smooth hardtop gave him a peculiar pleasure. Why? It was 3:15 now. Perhaps she wouldn’t come. No, if she was going to come at all, this was the most likely time for her to arrive. Twenty past. Ah, now there was some hope. Hope? How strange he should be hoping for her absence. Why had he made the appointment if he was hoping she would miss it? He didn’t know why, but simpler, simpler if she didn’t come. Because all he wanted now was to smoke that cigarette, drink that cup of coffee for the sake of them, and not to give himself something to do. And he wished he could go for a drive, free and easy, as he had said he would. But he waited, and at 3:30 she arrived. “I had almost given up hope,” he said.

They drove to the house on the lake. As he held her in his arms he couldn’t think of her; for the life of him he couldn’t.

“What are you thinking about?” she said afterwards, sensing his detachment.

For a moment he didn’t answer, then he said, “You really want to know what I was thinking of?”

“Yes,” she said, a little anxiously.

He suppressed a laugh, as though what he was going to tell her was too absurd or silly.

“I was thinking of someone doing the can-can.”

“Oh,” she said, reassured. “For a moment I was afraid you were thinking of your wife.”

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10 rendezvous a meeting at a particular time and place
11 free and easy with a clear conscience
12 for the life of him even with the utmost effort
13 detachment indifference, uninvolve
14 suppressed restrained, held back
Appendix C

Homework #1:

1. What does the husband do for a living?
   
   _____________________________________________

2. Is the husband a hard worker?
   
   _____________________________________________

3. Whom is the husband going to meet?
   
   _____________________________________________

4. Does the wife suspect her husband of adultery?
   
   _____________________________________________

5. Why was it so difficult for the husband and Sarah to arrange a meeting?
   
   _____________________________________________

6. What is the husband’s state of mind as he sits waiting for his lover?
   
   _____________________________________________

7. To whom does the pronoun “them” refer? (line 45)
   
   _____________________________________________

8. What happened when the husband and his lover reached their rendezvous?
   
   _____________________________________________

9. What was the husband’s lover concerned about?
   
   _____________________________________________

10. Is Sarah reassured by his answer to her question?
    
    _____________________________________________
Homework #2:

1. How is adultery viewed in your culture?

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

2. Does the couple’s marriage in “Can-Can” reflect the kind of marriage common in your culture?

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

3. In your country, would politicians or other public figures be denied or forced to leave office if they committed adultery? What do you think should happen to them?

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

4. Is honest communication between couples encouraged in your culture? If marriages run into difficulties, is family therapy an option?

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D

Grammar Exercise #1:

In each sentence that follows, decide if the italicized word is a gerund (G), present participle (P), or part of a verb in the progressive tense (V). Write your choice on the line.

1. “I’m going for a drive,” he said to his wife. _____
2. She hated sewing for the family. _____
3. She held up her skirt and did the can-can, kicking her legs up high in his direction. _____
4. He objected to seeing her in this new role. _____
5. Waiting so long for his lover at the café made him feel nervous. _____
6. He looked at his watch, hoping she wouldn’t come. _____
7. How strange he should be hoping for her absence. _____
8. Smoking a cigarette helped steady his nerves. _____
9. “What are you thinking about?” she said, sensing his detachment. _____ _____
10. Suppressing a laugh, he answered her honestly. _____
Appendix E

Writing Activity:

Choose 1 of the following. Try to use gerunds and present participles in your writing.

1. Imagine a scene in which the wife in “Can-Can” is waiting for her husband to return. Write about her thoughts and feelings as the hours go by.

2. Write a letter offering advice to a close friend who has confided in you that he or she is in love with a married person.