Charles University in Prague

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BACHELOR THESIS

Openings and Closures of English Lessons

Úvod a závěr hodiny anglického jazyka

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Authorship declaration

I am aware of the plagiarism laws and declare that I have done this bachelor thesis myself using only the books and online sources listed on the Bibliography page.

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Acknowledgments

Abstract

The bachelor thesis is based on openings and closures of English lessons. As one of the sources it uses observation sheets from several schools, i.e. nursery, primary and secondary, and also data from English language courses for adults. The work aims to compare educational theory with school practices.

Key words: lesson planning, openings and endings of lessons, observations, the teacher, the learner.

Anotace

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na plánování ve výuce anglického jazyka, konkrétně na postupy využívané na začátku a konci hodiny. Cílem je zjistit, jak se informace uváděné v odborné literatuře realizují v praxi. Hlavní metodou je zpracování dat z observačních archů, které byly použity při pozorování vyučovacích hodin na různých typech škol od mateřských po jazykové kurzy dospělých.

Klíčová slova: plánování hodin, začátky a konce hodin, observace, učitel, žák/student.

Table of contents

I.   Introduction

The subject of the present thesis is a comparison between educational theory and school practices. As a student teacher, I was interested in the theme of beginnings and endings of English lessons and in lesson planning overall since it is important to realize how the lesson should be planned and prepared. I believe that for this reason, the topic could be useful for all teacher trainees. Moreover, it may help the inexperienced teachers[1] in planning their lessons of English as a foreign language. Therefore the initial part of the thesis is dedicated to lesson planning in general. The main aim is to investigate the structure of the lesson and the process of creating the lesson plan is to be researched.

The bachelor thesis is divided into two parts, the theoretical and practical one. The theoretical part deals with lesson planning and openings and closures of English lessons. Not only the planning process but also the content of the lesson belong to very important phenomena, and that is what I am trying to illustrate in my thesis. Openings and endings of English lessons are further examined to show how important they are.

The practical part of the bachelor thesis strives to put theory into practice. Typical activities to start or end the lesson are to be researched. In order to collect data for my research, I used some of the observation sheets which we worked with in our seminars Introduction to English Didactics (see Appendix). My goal is to describe what happened in the observed lessons paying special attention to their openings and closures. For the purposes of this thesis I use my own observations as well as those of my colleagues, student-teachers, and their observation sheets. For the present thesis, I chose three out of five observation sheets from the course Introduction to English Didactics. Altogether I work with twenty-one of them, eight of which are my own and thirteen were elaborated by my colleagues. The observations are structured according to the age and level of

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[1] As most of the teachers in the Czech Republic are women, I decided to use the pronoun 'she' in the whole text.

learners and are compared to the theoretical patterns of how the lesson should be taught. Most of the English lessons were observed in Prague schools but there were certain exceptions. During these twenty-one observations, only three teachers were native speakers.

I am sure that the observations of English lessons will show the differences or similarities in comparison with the theory and they will also make it clear whether age groups influence the type of exercises chosen for openings and closures of lessons.

II.   Theoretical part

1. Lesson planning

Before examining the topic of openings and closures of English lessons, it is advisable to pay attention to lesson description and planning. Lesson planning represents creating a lesson plan, which presupposes knowledge of stages, activities, timing of the lesson, knowledge of the class, students' aims, attitudes and efforts. Lesson planning also means using the lesson plan correctly. The teacher should take into consideration the goals which she wants to reach, which textbook should be involved in a course or a lesson and the activities which could improve the English lesson.

There was a lot of discussion about lesson planning: whether it is useful for the teacher or not and if it is, to what degree. A very useful rule is presented in the book *Learning Teaching* by Jim Scrivener: "Prepare thoroughly. But in class, teach the learners, not the plan." (109) It is important to be flexible, to be able to react to various situations which can occur in the class. It is, nevertheless, useful to have the lesson planned. When planning a lesson, there is a number of areas to consider, such as atmosphere, the learners, the aims, the teaching point, the tasks and teaching procedures, the challenge, materials and classroom management. (Scrivener 109-110) For inexperienced teachers, lesson plan is a good lead. However, it should not become a detailed manual to teaching since flexibility is expected from the teacher. "Inexperienced teachers frequently over-prepare." (Lewis 58) The lesson which is based only on reading the accurate plan will lead to nonparticipation and boredom of the students. The plan should help both the students and the teacher and if it does not have this function, it should not be used. According to R.C. Mishra, "Lesson planning can be defined as a systematic development of instructional requirements, arrangement, conditions, and materials and activities, as well as testing and evaluation of teaching and learning. It involves analysis of the learning needs and the development of a delivery structure to meet those needs." (6-7)

There is also the side of the learners and the teachers and their common contributions to lesson planning. "For students, evidence of a plan shows them that the teacher has devoted time to thinking about the class." (Harmer 121) It shows how professional the teacher is and how serious she is about teaching. The other side of this topic is created by teachers, who can find the lesson plan very useful, giving the lesson a structure. Even an experienced teacher may find it helpful to have something in the class to rely on. It reminds the teacher of activities she was going to include in the lesson and it gives both the teacher and the students confidence. (Harmer 121)

Scrivener contributes to the topic with the opinion that it is possible to teach without any former planning, and it sometimes helps to a very good lesson, but the better the teacher is prepared, the more prepared she would be in case of any problems and complications. Planning is an ability to think about the lesson and the act of "imagining the lesson before it happens. It involves prediction, anticipation, sequencing, organizing and simplifying." (Scrivener 109) The lesson plan serves as an evidence that the teacher thought about the lesson from many perspectives.

The teacher should think primarily about two issues, the aims of the lesson and the procedure. (Scrivener 110) Scrivener then advices the inexperienced teachers, saying that if they are not able to prepare a plan, they should imagine the class, the students' behavior, skills and attitudes and try to think of the plan first before writing it down. (110)

"The purpose of the lesson plan is to provide a practical and usable guide to the teaching and learning activities that will occur within a particular lesson." (Butt 18) A well-prepared lesson plan can be recognized when a different teacher who does not know the class would be able to teach according to it. Therefore every teacher should be a good manager.

1.1. Division of a lesson into stages

Each lesson should have several stages. These normally include introduction, presentation, practice and transfer. For each stage, there is a certain timing, typical activities to do and specific goals and aims to reach. Considering the fact whether the lesson is aimed at accuracy or fluency, the introduction stage can

consist of a test, revision, a song, a game, or checking homework. The second stage of the lesson, presentation, is oriented to the teacher, who presents new grammar or vocabulary, or to the students who interact. "The teacher guides the presentation, but there may be student input or interaction." (Henrichsen). The presentation may be inductive or deductive. Inductive presentation deals with presenting examples to the students who draw conclusions based on them. The deductive presentation means more teacher talking time, with the teacher presenting new rules and explaining or illustrating them. (Henrichsen) In the third stage the theory should turn into practice and the fourth stage is there usually to transfer the topic into the real life. Following these four stages within one lesson is an ideal since it is useful and easier to learn when the teacher balances all of them. The division of a lesson into stages also depends on the age of the learners. The lower the level, the more stages but at the same time less information should be involved. The higher the level, the less stages and activities are needed since the learners are able to master new grammar and vocabulary easily and do not require to alter activities at regular intervals of time.

In some sources only three stages of a lesson are mentioned. This can be found in a book *Learning and Teaching English* by L. Cora and P. Knight. The author claims that every lesson has three stages, the opening, the middle and the ending. (108)

There are language skills which should be practised in every English lesson, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing and then parts of the language system, subskills, such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. They should be balanced within a lesson or it should be set if the lesson will focus on a particular skill or subskill.

1.2. The content and form of the plan

The greatest emphasis should be put on students' interaction since it is important for the lesson how many of them there are in the class, what their ages and sexes are or what type of personality they have. For experienced teachers, naturally, this information is not needed to be included in a plan.

Another aspect of a lesson plan is what is going to be taught, what the students and the teachers want to do in a lesson and how. Teaching techniques express how it is going to be taught. When the teacher realizes what the lesson will approximately look like, she should write down what materials and aids she will need during the lesson. The plan should also tell the teacher what can go wrong and how the lesson is interconnected with the previous and following ones. (Harmer 123)

The activities which are included into the plan should follow certain rules, for example the more difficult exercises should come before the easier ones. The concentration at the beginning should be used for reading complicated texts or learning new vocabulary or grammar. Also, quieter activities should come before the louder ones since it would be difficult to calm the class down. An exception can be seen when teaching tired adults. In that case a lively activity is truly beneficial. P. Ur than says that it is important to start and end the lesson with the whole class, therefore it should be included in the lesson plan. (Ur 218)

Even though some schools have their own lesson plans which should be filled in by all teachers, there is no given layout. The concrete lesson plan should be created in a way which would help the teacher or an observer. There are lesson plans written on separate cards, plans divided into sections such as timing, stages etc., and also very detailed plans with almost every sentence written down. (Harmer 125)

Every teacher has a specific technique of preparing lesson plans. Besides the commonly used ones, there are other approaches to planning, e.g. "running order" (Scrivener 129), which can be done shortly before the English lesson starts since it is written in brief notes. Another approach which can be used is "flow chart" (Scrivener 129), which is written in boxes with arrows that suggest the direction of the procedure. Scrivener than suggests further approaches, e.g. to concentrate on the possible problems in the class or not to plan. It is more important to work with the learners than with the plan. (131)

1.3. Criteria in planning lessons and teaching English accordingly

Different authors suggest different activities which should be included in a lesson. There are criteria to be examined before planning the lesson. These are usually the age or the level of the learners and the method used while teaching. They are very important in the preparation of the course, therefore we will now focus on them.

One of the main criteria is the age of students. It is obvious that teachers prepare their plans according to the level and age of learners in the class and because of this lesson planning would be different if one teaches pre-school children or adults. The range of the exercises for young learners contains mainly songs and games. On the other hand, materials for adults would include less varied range of activities. It then depends on the main aim of the lesson. If the teacher has a lesson with advanced students, no games or songs will probably be included. There will be space for exercises which can develop the learners' vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, listening, writing or reading skills.

Depending on the methods the teachers use, this paragraph is to be focused on them. The mostly used methods are the Grammar-Translation Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, the Communicative Approach, Total Physical Response, Community Language Learning, the Natural Approach, Task-Based Learning, the Silent Way, Person-Centred Approaches, Lexical Approaches and Dogme. (Scrivener 38-39) Each method puts emphasis on a different feature of the language. The Grammar-Translation Method presents an attitude of hardly using the target language. Students spend a great deal of time in a lesson reading texts, translating vocabulary and sentences, however almost no time is spent on speaking or listening practice. This method has been used for many years and it still occurs at some schools so far. Another method is called the Audio-Lingual Method. The students listen and repeat or drill the dialogues they overheard but the teacher does not provide any explanations. The communicative Approach, as the name suggests, focuses on communication in the class and it becomes still more popular these days. Total Physical Response is aimed at lower-level students, almost no speaking is demanded from them since they are told to listen to the teacher and respond accordingly. The Natural Approach functions similarly to the acquisition of the mother tongue. The Task-Based Approach focuses on the outcome of the lesson, not

on accuracy, using tasks from the everyday life. In the Silent Method, which is not considered a major method by theoreticians, students are encouraged to participate, to express their opinions and attitudes, under the control of the teacher. The Person-Centred Approaches prefer the needs of the learners and there is no syllabus prepared before the course since it depends on the communication between the teacher and the students. The Lexical Approach focuses on lexis rather than grammar and it does not follow ordinary textbooks since the language practised in them is not used in everyday speech. The Dogme Method focuses on the communication in the lesson rather than on textbooks. (Scrivener 38-39)

Each of the above method consists of a number of techniques or strategies which the teacher can use during the lesson. Most frequently, instead of sticking to one single method only, teachers combine strategies particular to individual methods in order to reach optimal results. The age and the method which we want to use in the class give us constraints, on the other hand it shapes the lesson in a certain way.

The present thesis strives to focus on the organizational matters which seem to be at times neglected. Whereas teachers concentrate on the content together with the discipline matters, this thesis depicts the organizational aspects of the lesson. Most of the theoreticians remind us of the importance of beginnings and endings of lessons and their careful preparation. For this reason, the following chapters are to be focused on them.

2. Openings and endings of English lessons

Although openings and closures are often ignored, they are crucial for the success or failure of the lesson. They have their own functions. The openings are there to create certain atmosphere, to state the aims of the lesson, to make the students interested. The endings should conclude the lesson, summarize what has been told and foreshadow the following lesson. There are more of the aims and tasks of the starts and ends of the lesson which will be dealt with in the following part of the thesis.

2.1. Openings of English lessons

The opening is considered to be one of the most important parts of the lesson since it determines the initial atmosphere, pace and aim of the lesson. It influences the learning process in a certain way if the teacher starts very quickly and lively, uses English only and makes students communicate in English too. If the lesson starts slowly and quietly, the learners can become bored and ignorant to what the teacher is trying to tell them. Another important rule is that the lesson should start with an activity which is intended for the whole class. Pair work and group work come later in the lesson to prevent it from becoming monotonous.

Before starting the lesson a teacher should decide whether she wants to set clear or fluid boundaries. Clear boundaries mean that both the teacher and the students have to arrive on time. If a student does not, the teacher has to "have a procedure for late students" (Woodward 48). On the other hand teacher can follow fluid boundaries, which means that the door can be opened not to humiliate or punish students for coming late. The teacher does not have to draw attention to herself but distributes papers or writes on the board instead. The students should feel that there is no need of a clear start. (Woodward 48-49) The inexperienced teachers try to set clear boundaries at first, but as the time flows, the boundaries change into fluid. However, the ideal should be to set the clear boundaries.

According to M. Underwood teacher should be able to arrive to the class with everything which is needed for the class not to confuse the learners. It is useful

to check if everything is prepared in the classroom, including the technical equipment and also the seating order. It is necessary to make a clear start which should include the plan of the English lesson. The way of beginning the lesson can become a rule and it can establish a nice atmosphere and safe environment for the learners. (73-4)

Teaching Practice Handbook suggests that it is recommended to be in the class before the learners arrive to prepare for the lesson and to check the equipment. The lesson should start on time to create a positive atmosphere, to affirm the teacher's authority and solve individual problems of the learners not to interrupt the class. The timing of the lesson is important since if the teacher arrives late, the learners will get used to it and will take an example from it. (Gower 52) Gower and Underwood agree on the point of making the start of the lesson clear. There should be the feeling of community which is there to learn something new. The teacher should use some signal to focus the students' attention to her, for example clapping the hands or tapping the pen. R. Gower than expresses his opinions whether the teacher should announce the plan of the lesson or let it as a moment of surprise. It obviously depends on the teacher whether she wants to make a clear connection between the separate lessons or to let the students guess what is the lesson going to be about.

The clear beginning of the lesson is also dealt with in Harmer's book *How to Teach English.* According to him, even if it is good sometimes include the moment of surprise, the lesson has to have certain rules to be recognized. The author mentions the methods which can be used to keep learners' attention. These include the above mentioned clapping the hands, speaking louder or raising a hand. (17-18)

T. Woodward and R. Gower both agree on the importance of starting with the preparations before the lesson starts. The teacher needs to be there to clean the board, open windows, change the seating order and generally make the space her own. Woodward admits that only some of the teachers have the choice to be in the classroom before the bell rings since there are many schools where the classes change very frequently and on time. Unlike other authors, T. Woodward comes up with a very interesting idea which is that the learners can very often influence the teacher's own habits of coming on time or later.

In the book *Planning Lessons and Courses*, T. Woodward talks about another possible interesting openings of English lessons. The teacher can link to the previous lesson to revise, explain the goals of the lesson and explain to the learners how it corresponds to previous and following ones, and immediately start working on the lesson. (49)

L. Cora, in *Learning and Teaching English*, considers the opening of the lesson a lead-in. Revision of vocabulary and grammar should be included, as well as homework checking. (109)

N. Moir, the author of *Starting and Ending Lessons*, aims her book at teaching English to children. "Teaching young learners can be very unpredictable" (6), therefore she advices to start the lesson with something which is already known to the learners and helps children to concentrate. "Learning is like exercise for the brain! Without a warm-up and a cool-down, the brain can easily feel the strain and this can put children off learning as it 'hurts', or feels too difficult." (7)

There is sometimes a tendency to let the students make their own start of the lesson. For example, when a topic is introduced, the students may be asked to come up with their suggestions, ideas and attitudes toward the topic. Some teachers arrive later to see the learners starting the lesson on their own. This is obviously not a recommended beginning of the lesson since certain rules have to be followed. Whichever start of the lesson is chosen, it is always important to set boundaries and state the aim of the lesson.

2.2. Endings of English lessons

Endings have the function of concluding the lesson, setting homework and explaining it to the class, answering students' questions and presenting plans for the following lesson.

According to R. Gower, timing is very important in the lesson since it creates boundaries which are crucial for the students. It is useful to make the finishing of the lesson clear by using sentences such as "Well done. Close your books please." (54) Evaluating and summarizing the lesson can help the learners, especially adults, understand the aim and content of the lesson. "Adults often appreciate being reminded of the aims of the lesson and an assessment of what has

been achieved." (Gower 54) Ending of the lesson should enable the students to express their opinions – "whether they found the topic interesting or not, whether the language practice was useful, easy, difficult, whether they enjoyed the activities, whether they would like more or less of anything" (Gower 55). When talking about students' opinions and attitudes, we should mention a very interesting method. Community Language Learning is a teaching method which takes into consideration not only intelligence, but also the psychical state of the learners. At the end of the lesson, the students express their attitudes and feelings about the lesson (however in their mother tongue) and they discuss the course of the following ones. (Larsen-Freeman 102-3) Another important part of the ending is making announcements which are best remembered when mentioned at the end of the lesson. Talking to individuals as the bell rings helps to improve the relationship between the teacher and the students. (Gower 55)

M. Underwood, in her book *Effective Class Management,* suggests what a teacher should do at the end of the lesson. This includes checking the time to prevent stopping the activity in the middle. Another issue to be dealt with is setting homework which should not be given too early to avert students doing it during the lesson. However, giving it too late may cause misunderstanding on the side of the students. Underwood claims that the lesson should end with an activity which would help the students in managing the homework. It is important to finish the lesson with a sentence which indicates its ending. (78-79)

T. Woodward has the same opinion as Gower and Underwood. Ends of the lessons should start "long before the bell goes or finishing time arrives" (65) because the students will hurry home and they will be mentally out of the school. There are certain procedures which should be included into the end of the lesson. These involve reviewing the lesson, giving back homework or setting a new task, planning the following lesson and tidying the room for the next teacher. It is up to the teacher whether she wants to stop the lesson suddenly, interrupting an activity or make the students feel well by ending on time. (65)

It is a good idea to set new homework towards the finishing point of the lesson. The best way for the students to remember it and to write it down correctly is to write it on the board and then explain it to the whole class. (Woodward 66)

An important activity which can be done at the end of the lesson is called dialogue journals. It is not usual in the Czech Republic, however very useful since the aim is not to correct student's errors. It resembles a dialogue between the teacher and the student who ends the lesson with a creative activity. (Woodward 67)

One of the most important parts of the ending of the lesson is a question what has been done and why. "It is useful feedback for the teacher and useful clarification for the students to restate things." (Woodward 68)

Woodward then talks about the plans for the next lesson and filling the remaining minutes or seconds. The fillers may be "Name in English all the contents of someone's bag or pencil case." Or "Suggest 20 things an ordinary subject can be used for apart from its normal purpose." (70)

P. Ur claims that it is useful to end the lesson with a positive attitude. It does not necessarily have to be achieved by a joke. The students like to hear a summary of the lesson or "a positive evaluation of something the class has done." (Ur 218) The positive atmosphere can be achieved by an activity which the students are likely to manage. "The point is to have students leave the classroom feeling good." (Ur 218) At the end of the lesson, the students should understand the aim of the lesson, remember the basis of the new grammar or vocabulary and know approximately what is going to be taught in the next lesson. The closure of the lesson should not be demanding because of the attention span of the learners, therefore games can be used with different levels and ages.

III. Practical part

Before proceeding to the practical issues, the summary of the collected material and important terms has to be made.

Lesson planning has many factors. It concerns both teachers and learners. Creating a lesson plan also depends on the fact whether the teacher is experienced or not an on the method she uses. The form of a plan can be given by the concrete school, or it can take an individual form, e.g. running order or flow chart. The purpose of the plan is a lead and guide to the teaching.

Each lesson should have several stages, commonly there are three or four and ideally, all language skills and subskills should be included in every lesson.

What is going to be taught and how, these are very important factors of teaching. The teacher should take into consideration the age and level of the students, as well as the activities which would suit them. The openings and endings of English lessons have typical function and so they should have a certain structure.

In the Practical part, the theory will be compared to English lessons observed. Moreover, useful activities will be suggested.

The second part of the thesis will focus on the data collected from the observation sheets provided by my colleagues and my own observations in the lessons of the English language. It will also concentrate on short feedback discussions with teachers from selected Prague schools.

The main aim of the practical part is to prove whether beginnings and endings of English lessons are determined by different age groups of learners. My hypothesis is that openings and closures differ according to the age and level of the learners. The end of the thesis will offer suitable activities that can be used for all levels and ages.

There were various sources used for working out the thesis, primary and secondary ones. The primary sources are represented by my own visits to Prague schools and my observations in the lessons of English language. I also asked the English teachers a general question about planning their lessons. The secondary sources were represented by the observation sheets elaborated by my colleagues.

1. Observation sheets

A part of the course of Introduction to English Didactics was dedicated to observation sheets which were used for observations of English lessons at schools. There was a chance to choose three out of five observation sheets which could be used with different levels and ages of students.

I have chosen three observation sheets that can be seen in Appendices 1,2 and 3. I find them very useful for the aims of the present thesis. All observation sheets include the name of the student who was observing an English lesson, date, school, age and class or level of the students as well as the number of the students, the teacher's name and the coursebook used.

The first observation sheet to be used was called An English Lesson – Free Description. Each student who selected this observation sheet was supposed to describe the lesson freely, without any concrete instructions.

The observation sheet called Guided Lesson Description was aimed at timing of the lesson. The task was to watch the learners and take notes. Stages, steps and activities were examined, as well as individual comments to each of them. The final part of this sheet constituted a sentence completion task and a question 'What have you learned?'.

The third and the last one was the observation sheet called Focus on the Teacher – Classroom Management. The task was to watch the teacher, take notes and fill in the sheet. The sheet consisted of fifteen questions of which two were crucial for the aims of this thesis. These were 'How did the teacher begin the lesson?' and 'How did the teacher end the lesson?'.

All the observation sheets were very useful for the purpose of writing my bachelor thesis. However, none of them focused precisely on openings and closures of lessons. I have chosen three sheets which focused on the division of a lesson into stages, classroom management and free lesson description, where both openings and closures are to be found.

2. Openings and endings of English lessons

Each lesson should start with a short introduction, reminding students of what was done last time and what is the plan for this concrete session. In the theoretical part of the present thesis we learned that the teacher should arrive to the class to check if the technical equipment is prepared. (Underwood 73) According to R. Gower, the lesson should start on time to create nice atmosphere and to assure the students about the teacher's preparation. (52) The optimal beginning of the lesson is the frontal work with the whole class. According to the activity at the start of the lesson, we can come to the conclusion in terms of the method which the teacher uses. When the teacher starts the lesson with a game, we can assume that she uses the communicative approach. When the teacher chooses a test or revision at the beginning, it might be a sign that one of the cognitive methods will be used. When the teacher lets the students start the lesson on their own, her role may be very liberal and the style of teaching comes out of humanistic philosophy. Besides the method of teaching, another important criterion for choosing activities for the beginning of English lessons is the age of learners.

The closure of the lesson should bring conclusion of what was taught, setting homework, or a well-known activity that helps to maintain a pleasant atmosphere. Some teachers like to inform the learners about the plans for the next lesson. According to R. Gower, timing is very important. The end of the lesson should have certain structure. The summary of the lesson is useful especially for the adult learners since they usually need to realize the relation to other lessons. M. Underwood claims that setting homework should not come too late to prevent the learners from misunderstanding. However, it should not come too early not to let the learners doing it in the class. The last activity should help the learners in managing their homework. According to T. Woodward, there are many fillers to be included at the end of the lesson. P. Ur then reminds us of the importance of a positive atmosphere, with which the learners and the teacher leave the class. At the end of the lesson, the learners should be able to understand the relation of the lesson to other ones, know the aim of the lesson, understand homework which was set and know the plan for the following lesson.

In the following paragraphs, the thesis will focus on the openings and closures of lessons at individual levels of schools which I and my colleagues visited during the observation practice.

2.1. Nursery schools

At nursery school, the lesson of English should begin with a song, a game or with nursery rhymes. Young children appreciate a ritual at the beginning, which can be accompanied by one of the activities mentioned. The children appreciate activities which require movement as well as singing an already known song. It is not advisable to start with revision of what was done in the previous lesson since young learners will not pay much attention to it.

Case suggests fifteen activities which can be used as starters of the lesson. He talks about entrance drill, choral greeting, hello song, action song, stand up sit down, use their energy, warmers, something familiar, personal questions, personal interaction with the teacher, puppet, passing, tag/it. When the author talks about hello songs, he points out: "The main problem I find with these is that, unlike goodbye songs, there is not an obvious action to do when saying hello."

2.1.1. My own observations

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 9	Czech	20	3-5 years old	new vocabulary

Opening: The lesson started with three songs which the learners had already known and they liked this type of beginning the lesson. The first song was the hello song which A. Case does not find useful for the beginning of the lesson. The other two songs were action songs which enable the learners to move at the beginning and then focus on learning and acquiring the language.

Closure: The lesson ended with setting homework and with a song Old MacDonald had a farm.

Comments: The lesson was lead by a Czech university student who informed me that she had only basic knowledge of English but that it does not matter if one teaches young children. In reality, it matters unless the teacher has at least professional skills in methodology. Except for the incorrect pronunciation of some words, the activities were suitable for this level and age and seemed to be popular among the children.

2.1.2. Observations of my colleagues

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Hýskov	native speaker	11	3-5 years old	new vocabulary

Opening: The lesson started with a song Hello everyone. The teacher played the guitar and the children sang. Then came checking homework which was done in an interactive way and also led to revision of vocabulary.

Closure: The lesson ended with a game Bingo.

Comments: The activities done in the opening and ending of the lesson were enjoyable and useful. The children liked it, except for the Bingo game which lasted about ten minutes and was rather difficult for the beginners.

According to Hanšpachová, there are many games to be included in the lesson. For the pre-school learners, the beginning of the lesson can start with Molecules, Simon says, Postman, Grab it, Bingo, Pass the secret or Who is talking.

2.2. Primary schools

Since responsibility is demanded from the students even in the lower stages of primary school, it is useful to remind them of homework which is to be done, to sum up the gist of the lesson and to tell them the plan for the following one. Young children at primary school, unlike teenagers, like to have homework and it makes them feel responsible.

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 9	Czech	19	6th grade	practising verb forms

Opening: The teacher greeted the students and the beginning was spent on solving a problem with an unfinished homework. It lasted six minutes, in which one of the learners who has disciplinary problems in most subjects, ignored the teacher.

Closure: The lesson ended with the teacher saying 'Stand up, please. Goodbye children.' And the learners answered 'Goodbye Ms teacher.' There was no conclusion and homework was set in the middle of the lesson.

Comments: I think that solving problems in discipline should not become a part of the lesson since it breaks the concentration of the learners and it does not motivate the student to cooperate in the lesson. Homework should be set at the end of the lesson with clear instructions and examples. When it comes in the middle, the learners are likely to finish it in the lesson.

2.2.2. Observations of my colleagues

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Hýskov	Czech	16	3rd grade	new vocabulary (toys)

Opening: The lesson started with a greeting in English and a warm-up activity – a vocabulary game. Children competed in pairs. The one who was faster to answer the teacher's question remained standing, the slower one sat down. The last standing person won and got mark one. Then followed songs about Christmas and an alphabet song. The first part of the lesson ended with a game, Hangman.

Closure: The lesson was concluded by setting homework and giving instructions for the following lesson.

Comments: For the beginners, the activities at the beginning of the lesson were suitable and not demanding. Although the ending lacked a conclusion of the lesson, it was a useful one.

Hanšpachová, in her book *Angličtina plná her*, suggests games for primary level. These include Suitcase, Electricity, Scrooge, Card scrabble, Tongue twisters or Alphabet race. The author claims that such games can be very useful and enjoyable and they can help the atmosphere of the lesson.

2.3. Lower secondary schools

There is a large variety of sources for the teachers to find activities for their lessons. Teachers can use their textbooks or resource books for teachers. Many activities can be found in a work written by the 4th year student-teachers of Faculty of Education. The work, led by PaedDr. Marie Hofmannová, is called 'Activities for out-of-school English with children living in foster homes'. It was created in Prague within the project Language as a means for equal opportunities in 2010 (CZ.1.07./1.2.05/02.0027). The activities are aimed at the children aged 7-15. The work brings many activities for the beginners as well as for more advanced learners and therefore it can make a very useful source for English teachers.

2.3.1. My own observations

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 9	Czech	17	8th grade	learn the rules of future tense

Opening: The lesson started with a greeting ritual. The teacher said 'Good morning, children.' and the learners answered 'Good morning Ms teacher.' Then followed checking homework which some learners had problems with.
Closure: The lesson ended with a greeting.
Comments: Even though the start of the lesson was not a common one and not correct, it seems that it works. I had a chance to observe a lesson with the same

teacher in the fifth grade of the primary school and the beginning was the same with the learners answering to the teacher's greeting. The teacher should definitely start the lesson in a different way to draw students' attention and to prepare them for the following tasks. At the end, the teacher did not inform the learners about the plan of the following lesson.

2.3.2. Observations of my colleagues

School	Teacher	Number of	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 5	Czech	15	7th grade	communicate fluently, learn facts about

Opening: The lesson started with handing out tests and setting homework, which led to chaos.

Closure: The lesson ended with listening to a song and a gap-fill task in a related exercise.

Comments: Homework should be set at the end of the lesson not to create the impression that everything important has been told and the students know what they are required to do. Listening is usually placed at the beginning of the lesson since it requires full attention. Although listening to a song is not a difficult activity, it might be demanding if the related exercise lasts eight minutes. The ending lacked a summary.

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 9	Czech	15	6th grade	learn new vocabulary

Opening: The lesson started with a game aimed at practising vocabulary. The learners competed in pairs. The faster of the two remained standing, the slower one sat down. The last standing person won the game.

Closure: The lesson ended with praising learners for different activities, saying goodbye and then came discussion in Czech.

Comments: It was a good choice to begin the lesson with a game since it encouraged the learners to be among the best. There was a positive attitude at the end of the lesson when the teacher was praising the learners.

School	Teacher	Number of	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 1	Czech	13	6th grade	practise adverbial phrases

Opening: The lesson started with reading a lesson plan which was written on the board. After a very short introduction, the presentation of new grammar followed.

Closure: The lesson ended with setting homework. There were five minutes left and everything which was in the lesson plan on the board was covered and therefore the teacher told the learners to start doing their homework in the class.

Comments: It is important for the students to know the content of the lesson. However, it is not the only activity which should be done at the beginning. When there are five minutes left, there are a lot of activities to do, e.g. short game-like activities that are used to reward the learners for the successful course of the lesson.

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 1	Czech	5	6th grade	learn contracted forms

Opening: The teacher came ten minutes late. The lesson started with greeting the students who were allowed to sit down after a response to the greeting. The teacher then gave the pupils their corrected tests from the last lesson and the students were asked to write down in their notebooks the most common mistakes from their tests.

Closure: The lesson ended with the bell and the learners were leaving regardless of what the teacher was saying about their homework.

Comments: It is not a good start of the lesson when the teacher comes late. Writing down mistakes from a test can lead to memorizing them. Instead, the teacher should insist on a careful written correction in the students' exercise-books. Ideally, the

lesson should end long before the bell rings to summarize new grammar or vocabulary, to set homework so that the whole class is able to work on it at home. As was stated above, it also a good idea to inform the learners about the plans for the following lesson.

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Krnov	Czech	13	7th class	practice of all language skills

Opening: The lesson started with a warm-up activity. The learners were asked to write as many words as they know which start with letter P. They were allowed to work in pairs.

Closure: The lesson ended with a vocabulary game.

Comments: The activity at the beginning of the lesson was very useful, but it lacked the frontal work with the whole class. The lesson can be concluded with a game if homework has been set and the content of the lesson has been summarized.

2.4. Upper secondary schools

2.4.1. My own observations

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 1	Czech	9	beginners	giving directions

Opening: The lesson started with checking homework from the Bridge magazine. The teacher monitored if everyone had understood and reminded the students of grammar rules needed for filling in the following exercises.

Closure: The lesson ended with evaluating and summarizing, setting homework and role play.

Comments: The beginning of the lesson was well-prepared, useful and the students obviously liked it. The lesson ended according to the recommended pattern.

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 9	non-native	13	15/16 years old	memorizing sentence patterns

Opening: The lesson started with translation of sentences.

Closure: The lesson ended with copying sentences from the board and correcting mistakes in them. Who managed to finish first, had a chance to get mark one. Unfortunately, nobody was able to correct the sentences.

Comments: Drill can be useful but it should not be implemented in the whole lesson. Nowadays, drilling as a part of the Audio-Lingual Method is seen as dated. As a result, learners were so exhausted and demotivated at the end of the lesson that they did not even try to get mark one.

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 9	non-native	14	18/19 years old	develop listening skills

Opening: The lesson started with a greeting and then immediately came the first listening.

Closure: The lesson ended with setting homework. The learners were asked to read the task to understand it.

Comments: The beginning of the lesson did not have the function it should have had. It started with instructions 'Stand up. Good morning. Sit down. Take your pencils.' There should have been an introduction which would include the plan and aim of the lesson to help the students organize the following steps. There was no connection to the previous and the following lesson. Although the beginning of this lesson does not correspond to the knowledge gained in the Introduction to English

Didactics, it seemed that the learners were used to it. I appreciated the closure of the lesson since it is not common to see the teacher explaining homework in this way.

2.4.2. Observations of my colleagues

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of	Aim of the lesson
Mladá Boleslav	native speaker	14	18/19 years old	speaking

Opening: The lesson started with a fifteen-minute discussion about the current political situation in the Czech Republic, sport and important anniversaries which will come.

Closure: The lesson ended with a discussion. There were two groups and each of them had to vindicate their arguments.

Comments: Since the aim of the lesson was speaking, the opening and closure were well-chosen. The teacher did not talk too much in the lesson so the learners had a chance to develop their speaking skills.

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
České Budějovice	Czech	15	16/17 years old	correct using of articles

Opening: The lessons started with short discussion about weather and checking homework.

Closure: The lesson ended with a ten-minute test.

Comments: The content of a lesson which ends with a test usually changes to a whole-lesson preparation. The test should come at the beginning or without knowing about it at the end of the lesson.

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of	Aim of the lesson
Krnov	Czech	13	18/19 years old	school-leaving exam preparation

Opening: The lesson started with four-minute test on translation of sentences. The second activity at the beginning of the lesson was distributing homework – essay about family – which two students were asked to read aloud.

Closure: The lesson ended one minute before the bell rang. The teacher set homework for the following lesson.

Comments: Both the opening and the closure of the lesson lacked connection to other English lessons. On the other hand, the activities chosen were suitable for the beginning and ending of a lesson.

School	Teacher	Number of	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 2	native speaker	11	16/17 years old	improve speaking skills

Opening: The lesson started with greeting.

Closure: The lesson ended with setting homework.

Comments: I would say that the opening and closure of the lesson is not a mistake of the teacher, but rather a mistake of one of my colleagues since the observation sheet was not completely filled in. Otherwise the lesson was well-structured and thought of and the teacher used a variety of activities.

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Česká Třebová	Czech	10	15/16 years old	use comparatives

Opening: The lesson started with the teacher announcing the plan of the lesson. One learner was asked to collect homework.

Closure: The lesson ended with a recap and with a plan for the following one.

Comments: I appreciate that the teacher has informed the learners about the plan of the lesson and linked it to the following one.

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 4	Czech	12	15 years old	expressing opinions

Opening: The lesson started with checking homework.

Closure: The lesson ended with the teacher telling the learners the plan of the following lesson, setting homework and reminding the learners about a writing assignment deadline.

Comments: According to my colleague's observation sheet, the teacher's time management was very good. The lesson ended two minutes before so that the teacher could inform the learners about their duties.

2.5. Adult learners

A.Case suggests many activities for the adult learners. The starter activities include chat, physical warmer, checking homework, student presentations, word bag, mini test or silent reading. The author talks about physical warmers and games that work well with adults, e.g. Untie ourselves, Guess which hand, Spin the bottle, Slap, 'Do you have' (a passing game), Blindfold directions or Treasure hunt.

2.5.1. My own observations

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 1	Czech	9	beginners	giving directions

Opening: The lesson started with an activity. The learners were asked to go to the whiteboard and write one thing which people can see in the city or countryside.

Closure: The lesson ended with a short summary, plans for the following lesson and setting homework.

Comments: The opening and ending were both useful, on the other hand there should have been a plan of the lesson at the beginning. Still the opening was an enjoyable activity to do.

School	Teacher	Number of learners	Age/level of learners	Aim of the lesson
Prague 9	native	4	intermediate	speaking

Opening: The lesson started with a conversation about an ideal holiday.

Closure: The lesson ended with setting homework.

Comments: The opening was suitable for a conversation lesson and everyone had chance to speak. The ending lacked the link to the following lesson.

According to R. Gower, the adult learners can deal with guessing what is the aim of the lesson but it is useful to mention it as often as possible. The students need to realize what the lesson is going to be about and see the connection between lessons.

3. What did the interviews with English teachers prove?

As a part of my observations in Prague schools, I talked to eight English teachers. My question was whether they plan their lessons and if so, to what degree. Except for one teacher who had her lesson nicely planned step by step, the answer was that the teachers know what they are going to teach so they do not have to write it down. The teacher who plans her lessons told me that she had so many English lessons to teach that she needed some written preparation. She had her notes highlighted and underlined to help her orientation in the lesson plan. It was an English lesson for adults who require a certain structure and plan of the lesson.

Planning lessons in nursery schools is surely a different case. I talked to the previously mentioned university student who teaches in the nursery school in Prague 9. She admitted that with young children careful planning is not necessary since the lesson lasts only thirty minutes so the sequence of activities is easy to remember.

Other interviews proved that teachers try to stick to the official plan, have it in minds but do not write their own preparations so that they can be flexible in the lesson.

The responses of the teachers were surprising to me since lesson planning is a very important phenomenon. On the other hand, it is logical that the experienced teachers do not find lesson planning so important as any beginning teacher.

IV. Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to stress the importance of lesson planning and to prove that openings and endings create essential borders of each lesson.

In the theoretical part, lesson planning together with openings and endings of English lessons were described to create background to the practical part.

For the practical part of the thesis, the main source of information were the observation sheets of my colleagues and my own observations.

The observation showed interesting results. At nursery and primary schools, songs appeared three times at the beginning of the lesson. Checking homework could be found in four observation sheets from nursery to upper secondary schools. Only two out of twenty one teachers used the advance organizer, i.e. announced the plan of the lesson at the beginning. This was observed with the learners of lower and upper secondary schools. A game appeared three times as an activity at the beginning with lower and secondary students. There was one case in which homework was set at the onset of the lesson. Discussion appeared four times with upper secondary and adult learners. One observation sheet showed that it was common to use a test at the beginning of the lesson with upper secondary learners. In ten cases, the closures of the lessons included setting homework. In three cases there was a game (from nursery to upper secondary school), the summary (upper secondary school and adults classes) or plans for the following lesson (upper secondary and adult learners). At nursery and lower secondary schools a song was used in two observed lessons. One lesson ended with a test, one with a discussion and one with a competition (correcting mistakes). It was also discovered that in four cases there was no closure of the lesson and in four cases there was no beginning. The interviews with the teachers proved that most of them do not prepare their lessons in a written form but they know how the lesson should be taught and while teaching, they try to stick to their prior ideas about the lesson procedure.

To sum up, there are many activities which can be included in the beginnings and endings of English lessons. Teachers may find inspiration in resource books for teachers, 'Five-Minute Activities', 'Activities for out-of-school

English with children living in foster homes' and in many other sources, including the ones provided online.

The findings of this thesis confirm that the activities mostly differ according to the age and level of the learners. However, all the activities should be varied and changed to fit the level of the learners. With young learners, games and songs are more likely to be successful than with more advanced learners. Children learn better through physical activities, drawing and songs. With adults, young adults or teenagers, discussions and presentations seem to be very popular as well as advance organizers and summaries of what has been taught.

I consider it very useful to investigate lesson planning during my research and to learn about the best practices used in openings and endings of lessons. I hope that my bachelor thesis might also serve as a tool for teacher-trainees and help them in their initial teaching practice to create well-structured lesson plans and to start and conclude their lessons in the most effective way appropriate for the level and age of their future learners.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Charles University Prague, Faculty of Education   **Name:**

Department of English Language and Literature

Year 3

Observation Sheet No.2: An English Lesson - Free Description

School: **Class/level:**   **Date:**

Teacher's name: **No. of learners:**   **Coursebook:**

Appendix 2

Charles University Prague, Faculty of Education　　　　　　　**Name:**

Department of English Language and Literature

Year 3

Observation Sheet No.3: Guided Lesson Description

School:　　　　　　　　**Class/level:**　　　　　**Date:**

Teacher's name:　　　　　　**No. of learners:**　　　**Coursebook:**

Task: Watch the learners (Ls), take notes and fill in this sheet.

Timing: Stage / Step / Activity:　　　　　　　　Comments:

The best thing about the lesson was …………………………………………………….

As a result of the lesson I now see …………………………………………………...

I would have liked to see more ……………………………………………………

The learners were working …………………………………………………………...

The hardest thing for me as an observer was …………………………….................

What have you learned? ……………………………………………………......

Appendix 3

Charles University Prague, Faculty of Education   **Name:**

Department of English Language and Literature

Year 3

Observation Sheet No.4: Focus on the Teacher – Classroom Management

School: **Class/level:**   **Date:**

Teacher's name: **No. of learners:**   **Coursebook:**

Task: Watch the teacher, take notes and fill in this sheet.

1. What does the teacher hope her / his learners will have achieved by the end of the lesson? Discuss with the teacher.

By the end of the lesson the learners will be better able to (will have) …

2. How did the teacher begin the lesson?

3. Write four things the teacher does to achieve a good, purposeful atmosphere:

4. Write some of the phrases of encouragement which s/he uses:

5. Focus on the teacher's eye contact. What does s/he want to achieve?

6. Did the teacher stand or sit where all learners could see her / his face?

7. Did the teacher rearrange the seating when necessary?

8. How did the teacher deal with the discipline?

9. Teachers often support instructions with gestures and they develop a range of facial expressions to save themselves repeating basic instructions. Thus they maximize learner talking. Which gestures / facial expressions does the teacher use? What do they indicate?

10. How did the teacher end the lesson?

11. Which activities in the lesson do you think were the most valuable for the learners. Why?

12. What abilities and qualities does the teacher have that help her / him in her / his teaching?

13. Teacher talk:

  personal mastery of English

  uses appropriate intonation, speed and volume

  her / his voice is clearly audible

  gives clear instructions and explanations

  checks that the learners have understood the instructions

  uses unnecessary repetition, echo or interrupts in mid-flow

  her / his body language corresponds with what s/he says

14. How would you describe the teacher's role:

  manager – model – monitor – counselor – informant – facilitator – social worker – friend

  other?

15. What have you learned?