

Analyzing an English Lesson Plan Through the Lens of Universal Design for Learning to Support Inclusive Learning

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ABSTRACT

In a classroom with diverse students, lesson plans are a fundamental element for ensuring the success of the inclusive English language learning process. The importance of lesson plans in classroom instruction is one reason to analyze the lesson plans used to support inclusive English classes. Although the world continues to evolve as digital tools facilitate learning and serve as resources within the Universal Design for Learning framework, their use, exploration, and implementation from a Universal Design for Learning perspective remain very limited, particularly in Indonesia. This study analyzed an 8th-grade English lesson plan using qualitative document analysis, focusing on two class sessions devoted to recount texts through the lens of Universal Design for Learning. The results of the analysis indicated that the lesson plans apply Universal Design for Learning principles, though not uniformly, with strengths in the variety of media and activity methods. However, they showed limitations in terms of focus on language elements. This indicated that teachers already possess and strive to implement an inclusive classroom approach in their lesson plans in line with Universal Design for Learning; therefore, deeper reinforcement of strategies is needed during implementation, covering both social

aspects and English language elements in classroom learning.

Keywords: Digital Tools, EFL, Inclusive Learning, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Lesson Plan, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

INTRODUCTION

The promises made by world leaders in September 2015 to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as the fundamental roadmap for peace and prosperity. In this context, education is seen as a fundamental right and an essential component in accomplishing other development goals (1). Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality education) calls on countries to provide excellent, inclusive, and equitable education and to promote lifelong learning for all by 2030 (2). This agenda acknowledges that education is important not just as a goal in itself, but also as a critical gateway to a brighter future.

In Indonesia, English is usually taught in official settings rather than in everyday life or in the community. Students who enroll in and attend English-language lessons, regardless of their background, needs, language ability, or parental education level, have a major influence on the quality of academic support they receive (3). In addition to having various origins, students'

English proficiency and reading ability vary significantly. Even when they are in the same class, their English skill levels vary. Some students have less exposure to English than others (4).

Existing research on inclusive education indicates that diverse students, such as students with disabilities, can learn alongside their peers and develop at a normal pace (3). However, accommodations, diverse approaches, and teaching methods are certainly needed in this process. In this context, inclusive education aligns with SDG 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and accessible education for all students. Although the goal aligns with SDG 4, its implementation in the field remains insufficient (2).

This discussion makes it clear that all people—especially students, with or without disabilities can master and use language appropriately in accordance with their individual needs and abilities. This is consistent with the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, which shows that flexible learning that considers student diversity can yield comprehensive results, particularly when digital tools are used as accommodations (5).

Previous research has indeed extensively discussed inclusive classrooms, lesson plan development, particularly for English language instruction, and the use of digital tools in English language instruction. However, little attention has been given to these components from a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) perspective in both research and classroom practice.

Therefore, this study analyzes all of these components—specifically, how lesson plans used in inclusive English language classrooms align with UDL principles. Since lesson plans play a crucial role in classroom learning for both teachers and students, this analysis demonstrates that the UDL framework—which aims to support the learning of all students with varying abilities—can provide insight into the extent to which a lesson plan supports an inclusive English classroom through a UDL lens.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive Learning

In the education sector, inclusive education is a flexible concept that has evolved from earlier approaches. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), inclusive education is “the process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to include all learners.” (6,7).

Inclusive education is an educational concept that focuses on the involvement and acceptance of all children, with or without disabilities, within the general school system. This concept of inclusion embodies the spirit of equality and non-discrimination, as guaranteed by national and international policies, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Indonesia’s National Education System Law (8,9).

As a strategic measure, inclusive education ensures that every child, with or without a disability, has fair and equal access to education. For children with special needs, inclusive education means integrating them into mainstream education alongside other students. The goal is to ensure that every child has equal opportunities and a supportive educational environment that fosters their development through an enjoyable learning process at school (8,9).

It is a well-known fact that children born with disabilities can contribute as long as they receive assistance and support from the wider community, in this context, their classmates and teachers. The diversity inherent in inclusive education is, of course, crucial for fostering equality and fairness in classroom learning (8). Providing equal learning opportunities to all children unlocks students’ full potential, fostering a more inclusive environment where both students and teachers value diversity (8).

While there are many differing opinions regarding the context and interpretation of inclusive education, one thing is certain: inclusive education aims to support students with and without disabilities in the learning process, which requires changes to teaching

methods, learning strategies, structural aspects of learning, and the curriculum land(Keles et al., 2024; Olsson & Hansson, 2026).

Universal Design for Learning

For the past 20 years, the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework has been a leading instructional approach aimed at addressing the traditional “one-size-fits-all” curriculum, which, unfortunately, is still widely used in many countries (5,11,12). UDL recognizes the diversity within the student population and provides more flexible guidance and a wider range of options tailored to how students learn, while still ensuring they master the content. As evidence of UDL’s effectiveness in inclusive learning continues to grow, so does interest in implementing UDL within education systems (13).

In recent years, the United States has incorporated UDL into its national education policy (12). Similarly, South Africa is committed to inclusive education and views UDL as a key component of its policy (14). This is also the case in Australia, where UDL principles have been integrated into the national curriculum (15). Similarly, Ireland’s latest curriculum reform highlights the important role of UDL in the learning process at different levels of education, specifically in higher education (13).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) focuses on creating a flexible and accessible learning environment for all students with diverse needs and abilities. Teachers need to identify and implement learning processes and accommodations that can meet and support students’ diverse needs through the lens of UDL. This includes the use of assistive technology as a supplement and support for the learning process (16).

In principle, UDL can help students with or without disabilities understand and master the material while maintaining their motivation and engagement in learning (17). This statement is also discussed in the book “Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age” by Rose and Meyer, which provides a

comprehensive and in-depth explanation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Students with or without disabilities may have different learning needs. Therefore, rigid and inflexible learning materials and methods will not be fully effective for all students (18).

As a framework, UDL provides guidelines for setting goals, selecting instructional materials, and determining teaching and assessment methods so that all students, without exception, can participate in and understand the learning process (18). The UDL guidelines include three main frameworks developed by CAST, namely: 1) Multiple Means of Representation, 2) Multiple Means of Action and Expression, and 3) Multiple Means of Engagement (5,18).

Multiple Means of Representation involves design choices regarding perception, language, and symbols, as well as building knowledge through various methods to convey information and provide support (5). Under this principle, UDL also helps guide the delivery of information, ideas, and instructional materials through various options such as discussions, readings, digital texts, multimedia presentations, and other learning activities using digital tools that can accommodate students’ diverse abilities and needs in the learning process (19).

Multiple Means of Action and Expression is a principle that focuses on interaction, communication, and development strategies that provide students with a variety of alternatives to engage in activities and apply what they have learned fully (5). Facilitating students’ ability to assess their understanding of the material through various methods, adapting to differences in ability, and allowing students to practice according to their own needs are also part of this second UDL principle. By incorporating a wide variety of actions, activities, and forms of expression into the learning process, teachers can continue to support students’ abilities while staying focused on learning goals, paying attention to self-monitoring, and

managing students' information and resources (19).

Multiple Means of Engagement, as the third principle of UDL, encompasses welcoming diverse interests and identities, sustaining effort and persistence, and fostering emotional capacity and self-regulation (5). In UDL, self-regulation here refers to the ability to manage goal-oriented motivation, maintain effort toward achieving goals, and monitor the balance between internal and external resources. This also extends to students' ability to ask questions and seek help from others—such as teachers or peers—and to adjust their expectations and strategies according to their needs (19). This third principle fosters student engagement by providing access to content, tools, and motivation, while also addressing students' emotional needs, all while maintaining their engagement through more realistic examples and tasks tied to needs or situations, they are familiar with (5).

[NO_PRINTED_FORM] (20) recommend that teachers apply the three principles of UDL in their teaching and assessment processes, as these principles are linked to the three brain networks: the affective, cognitive, and strategic networks (19). Incorporating these three UDL principles into teaching, learning, and assessment guides, designing instruction for all students, with or without disabilities (Hall Ed. et al., 2012; Kelly et al., 2022).

In the context of EFL, teachers can also prepare UDL-based lessons tailored to students' diverse abilities in the classroom. UDL views differences among students as predictable and, in fact, encourages proactive instructional design aimed at reducing barriers and providing various ways for students to engage, understand, and express themselves. However, UDL often remains merely a general principle rather than a form of trained teacher skills and measurable classroom learning processes (21).

Lesson Plan in an Inclusive EFL Context

Many factors can determine the success of a learning process. One of them is the

preparation that teachers must undertake before the learning process begins, namely, developing a lesson plan (22).

Developing a lesson plan requires teachers to organize all learning activities in a structured manner to achieve the learning objectives. This implies that if teachers do not properly develop lesson plans, they are likely to have difficulty achieving the learning objectives within a specific timeframe (22).

A study in China found that teachers can develop effective EFL lesson plans (23). However, the situation in Indonesia is quite different. Currently, the curriculum no longer provides examples of lesson plans, so research on this topic is quite limited (22). Nevertheless, lesson plans remain crucial to the learning process (24). The steps to be taken in the classroom are outlined in the lesson plan, which helps teachers achieve the learning objectives (25).

Previous research has demonstrated a strong positive correlation between teaching effectiveness and lesson plans, which are influenced by factors such as clarity of objectives, cultural relevance, and adaptability (26–28). The time-consuming process of developing lesson plans, which involves careful consideration of grammar and vocabulary, as well as language skills such as reading and writing, must be accompanied by a solid understanding and strong proficiency so that the lesson plans will greatly enhance EFL students' proficiency (28).

Previous research has examined how teachers plan inclusive instruction. This process inevitably involves considerations regarding the variety of learning activities and instructional materials to be used to accommodate students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, and interests (29,30). Therefore, UDL can serve as a framework for determining whether a lesson plan supports an inclusive English classroom.

MATERIALS & METHODS

This study employed a qualitative document analysis design to examine an English lesson

plan through the lens of Universal Design of Learning (UDL). The research was conducted at a private school in Semarang, Indonesia. The lesson plan was a part of the grade 8 English lesson, with the main topic being recount text. The lesson plan consists of 2 meetings using the same material: a recount text.

Data was collected using lesson plans employed by teachers in 8th-grade English classes. The lesson plans were then analyzed using document analysis, guided by CAST's UDL guidelines as the analytical framework. The deductive qualitative content analysis process began with obtaining the lesson plans, followed by reading, examining, and reducing the data. The reduced data were organized into existing UDL categories, and conclusions were drawn after all the data had been properly categorized.

RESULT

Multiple Means of Representation

The results in "Design Options for Perception" showed that teachers provided various media, such as Padlet.com, which students used to demonstrate their understanding of recount texts, allowing them to flexibly write their interpretations in the provided space, even though the display options were still limited. In addition, teachers presented various ways to obtain information about the material being studied, namely through YouTube videos on recount texts and by preparing practice exercises using Wordwall, Edpuzzle, and Liveworksheet.com.

Each activity in the lesson plan provided students with opportunities to read, see, and hear information in diverse ways, rather than relying solely on the teacher's explanations or textbooks. To support a learning process that encouraged diverse ways of acquiring information and highlights differing perspectives, the teacher also provided clear, relevant contexts and examples from students' daily lives. In this way, students were also encouraged to recognize comparisons between examples in local, national, and international contexts.

In "Design Options for Language & Symbols," the data provided has limitations. The lesson plan lists only opportunities the teacher provided for students to learn about recount texts through other media, such as YouTube and Edpuzzle, in addition to the teacher's explanations, of course. In this section, the lesson plan did not include further details regarding text decoding, symbols, notation, or cross-linguistic and cross-dialectal understanding and respect. The absence of explicit evidence on vocabulary and language structure in this lesson plan was noteworthy, given that English language learning typically focuses on these areas.

In "Design Options for Building Knowledge," the lesson plan included various activities that provide students with opportunities to conduct investigations to find information using the NHT (Numbered Heads Together) method. After watching videos, understanding the material, and completing practice exercises on recount texts and the past tense, students are guided from the basics to the final step of creating their own texts. This learning process was integral to the discussions students had with their groupmates, as they exchanged information and offered one another help. Furthermore, the students' study tour to Yogyakarta served as a concrete example of how academic content is linked to their real-life experiences. The entire sequence of activities, carried out according to the lesson plan, is designed to build students' knowledge of the material they are studying.

Multiple Means of Action and Expression

The results in "Design Options for Interaction" showed that, in the lesson plan, the teacher provided access to materials, tools, and technology that students would use to create recount texts in groups. The teacher provided initial information and guidance throughout the process through discussions with the teacher and group members. Unfortunately, the lesson plan does not indicate how specific the teacher's guidance is during this process.

Meanwhile, regarding "Design Options for Expression & Communication," the data revealed more specific details; for instance, the lesson plan stated that students collaborate with peers to create a video based on a recount text using Canva or other applications—the choice of which is left to the students—to be shared on Instagram, with the results of their discussions presented as a group. Nevertheless, the diversity still has limitations in the options available to students, as some of the media used were not entirely of the students' own initiative. In the aspect of fluency, the lesson plan also included points regarding communication between students and the teacher as a form of support, encompassing reflection and feedback delivered in various ways—such as through Padlet.com or orally—although there is still limited information on the extent to which the teacher can provide such reflection to students.

In "Design Options for Strategy Development," the lesson plan indicated that the teacher has established learning objectives aligned with the material, which stated that students are expected to be able to identify, organize, and analyze the social functions, text structure, and linguistic elements of a recount text. However, the lesson plan stated that these objectives are communicated verbally at the beginning of the lesson, without any alternative actions, such as displaying the main learning objectives or periodically reminding students throughout the lesson.

In this case, the teacher also provided Padlet.com as a platform for students to engage in free reflection on the material, the learning process, or the projects they are working on, either verbally or through this platform. This process was not limited to the teacher; students also engage in it, both individually and in groups.

In addition to reflection, students had the opportunity to work individually or in groups—such as understanding the introductory material and completing practice exercises on their own, discussing how to compose a recount text with their

group, and creating a group video of a recount text. Although there were many notes regarding the strategies implemented during the lesson, the lesson plan does not provide more detailed information, such as separate notes, data, or other guidelines, beyond the teacher-created lesson plan and platforms like Padlet.com, which directly store students' notes.

Multiple Means of Engagement

In "Design Options for Welcoming Interest & Identities," it was evident that in the lesson plan, the teacher provides various approaches, such as having students study the introductory material through YouTube videos and Edpuzzle, engage in oral Q&A sessions about the videos they watched, complete practice exercises via Wordwall and liveworksheet.com, discuss with group members, and review other groups' work, all as opportunities for students to explore during the learning process.

However, among the listed activities, it was only when students worked on a recount video project with their groups that the teacher did not dictate the medium or method of discussion; students had the opportunity to choose how they approached it. The activities designed in the lesson plan also provided opportunities for students to be creative, collaborate, and use their imagination through activities that are more directly relevant to them.

In "Design Options for Sustaining Effort & Persistence," the data showed that lesson plans state the learning objectives at the beginning of the lesson. Gradually throughout the lesson plan, teachers also provided information such as the lesson rationale, examples relevant to students, and comparisons at the local, national, and international levels.

In addition, students collaborated with group members through project discussions or assignments using media of their own choosing, and reflected on their own group's work or on other groups' work. These opportunities provided students with a platform to collaborate and exchange ideas,

helping them understand a wider range of perspectives.

The “Design Options for Emotional Capacity” section of the lesson plan clearly stated expectations: students are expected to identify, organize, and design the social functions, text structure, and linguistic elements of a recount text. In addition, the teacher is motivated at the beginning and supports throughout the learning process until the end. Furthermore, the lesson plan outlines student activities that involve self- and group reflection through various methods, ranging from verbal discussions to the use of platforms such as Padlet.com.

DISCUSSION

This study in Representation Design shows that the lesson plans used in Inclusive English classrooms already incorporate a variety of media, including both teacher-prepared materials for classroom instruction and student-selected materials for their recount video projects. This finding aligns with the principle of Representation, which holds that learners have diverse ways of understanding and interpreting information; thus, the use of various methods and media can support this diversity among students (5). Diverse representations not only support students with disabilities but also facilitate access and understanding for other students, ensuring that learning proceeds in a way that all students can grasp (5).

However, it is regrettable that, throughout this sequence of lesson plans, explicit strategies for vocabulary and language structure are minimal. The lesson plan's sole activity focuses on language structure: watching an explanation of the simple past tense and completing related exercises. Meanwhile, during peer discussions and the writing of recount texts, there is no emphasis on vocabulary or language structure. This is certainly a cause for concern, as in an English class, vocabulary and language structure are key elements that require attention (31).

In the “Action & Expression” category, lesson plans generally indicate that teachers already use a variety of methods and media

in their teaching, which, on occasion, aligns with students' own choices. However, the diversity in teachers' lesson plans is mostly not based on student choice but rather on a process that ensures students in inclusive classrooms have the opportunity to learn in different ways under the teacher's guidance (5,32).

Furthermore, the feedback cycle outlined in the lesson plan aligns with both classical and modern theories of self-regulated learning: it begins with planning or goal-setting, followed by student action, teacher and peer monitoring, and concludes with self-reflection (33,34).

Based on the data, various methods and media are used to support inclusive classrooms. However, the data also show that some media and methods serve two overlapping functions: both as inputs and outputs (5,11). One example is the use of Padlet.com, which serves as a platform for students to record information they have learned after watching a video on the simple past tense, and is subsequently reused as a medium for writing self-reflections.

Similarly, group reflection within students' own groups can lead to this overlap, as students express their opinions and receive ideas from both their own group members and members of other groups. However, this is indeed a key aspect of learning from a UDL perspective, as every UDL principle is interconnected and does not stand alone. (5,11).

Another aspect of the lesson plan's engagement is the diversity of media and methods used, which indicates that the teacher is aware of students' abilities and needs (5,33). This awareness provides students with a variety of options. Although the lesson plan does not explicitly state that tools or methods were chosen for specific reasons, the information provided still reflects the classroom's inclusivity. The diversity provided to students still has limitations, such as being able to choose media, methods, or tools only for specific activities. Every student activity in the learning process—regardless of the media or

method used—is always conducted under the teacher's guidance, demonstrating the teacher's awareness of the classroom's inclusive environment rather than a weakness or shortcoming.

Other activities, such as providing feedback to students, are indeed clearly outlined in the lesson plan. However, details regarding the process, the specificity of the feedback, and the steps involved remain limited. Nevertheless, students still have the right to continue learning in accordance with the “Nurture and Joy” principle, which aligns with “Emotional Capacity”, an aspect that prioritizes students’ emotional well-being and can be cultivated through individual and group activities. Of course, the lesson plan cannot determine whether students’ emotional states have changed without further research (5,35). This is evident in [NO_PRINTED_FORM] (35)’s study, which implemented UDL. There was a 42.8% increase in the principle of engagement, and students with disabilities’ sense of belonging also increased by 51% over 24 months, both in practice and statistically.

CONCLUSION

Based on an analysis of the 8th-grade lesson plan covering recount texts in an inclusive classroom through the lens of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), it was concluded that the lesson plan developed and used in the classroom incorporates UDL elements. However, these elements are not yet fully integrated, as evidenced by the diversity of media and methods used; yet, the use of language in instruction remains limited (5,31).

Across the principles, two main patterns emerge in the lesson plans. First, diverse learning strategies, ranging from individual to group activities, are repeatedly implemented, demonstrating a variety of approaches that support student engagement and communication. However, the activities in the lesson plans appear more consistent in terms of social interaction than in language (36).

Furthermore, regarding the UDL principle of student freedom, it is consistently guided by clear teacher direction. This can be interpreted as the teacher’s response to classroom diversity, even though it is not explicitly mentioned in the lesson plan. The diverse needs within the classroom signal to the teacher the need to address students’ varied abilities, leading to the creation of varied activities, media, and methods (5,12), though these remain under the teacher's control rather than being based on students' free choices, as in UDL principles.

All findings in this study contribute to the UDL literature by demonstrating how the UDL framework can be applied to identify strengths and address gaps in lesson plan design for inclusive classrooms, particularly English language classes.

The limited number of lesson plans available for analysis makes it difficult to generalize the nasstudy's findings broadly. However, this study also offers the perspective that, in practice, teachers can strengthen their strategies for designing and teaching English more explicitly by focusing on core elements of English language learning, such as vocabulary and language structure (Language & Symbols) (31). This is because the focus on English language content and students' ability to use it effectively should take precedence (36). Furthermore, school support is crucial to improving learning quality through consistent teacher training and the provision of necessary learning facilities, given that implementing UDL is not a short-term effort but requires consistency and sustainability (16). A more equitable implementation of UDL will ultimately help fulfill one of the SDGs commitments, quality education (1), which states that education should be equitable for all students without exception, regardless of their diversity (6),

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