



Adaptable Lesson Planning Template to Meet the Needs of English Language Learners

In an effort to support teachers of English Language learners in their understanding of economics concepts, I have created a modifiable lesson plan template that addresses multiple approaches to the delivery of content for students whose primary language is not English. Examples of classroom-tested templates are provided.

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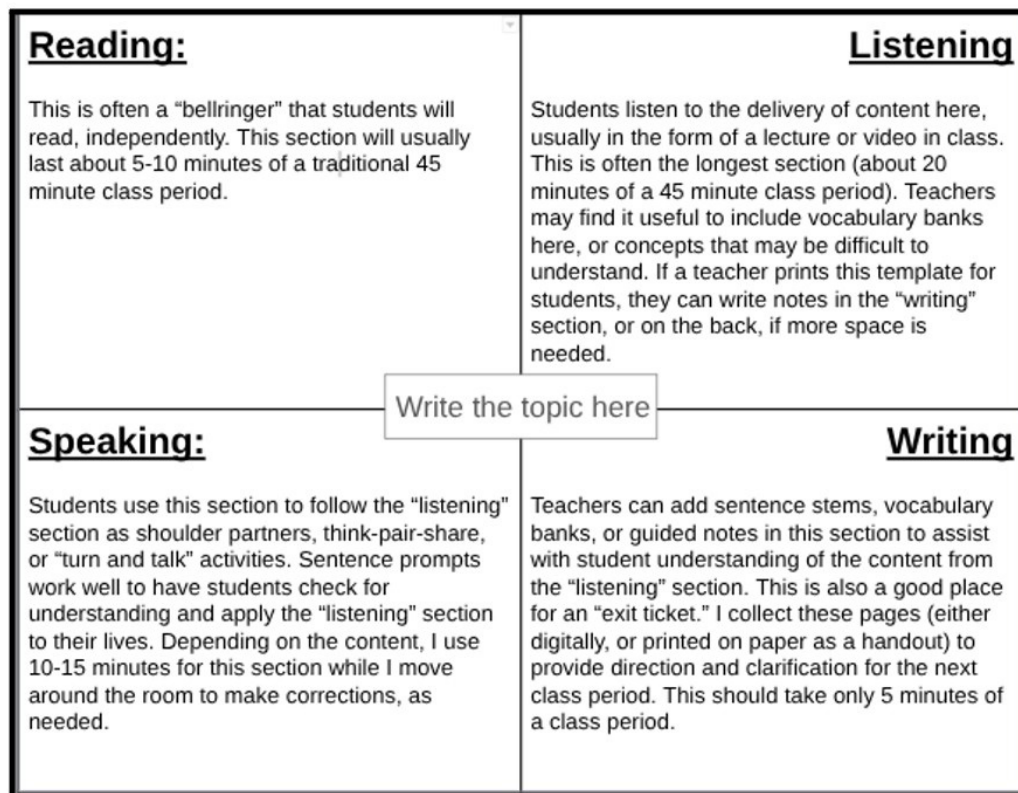
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1. Introduction

As of 2021, the number of students in the United States receiving English Language (EL) instruction was just over 10%. Furthermore, 38 states have seen an increase in the percentage of EL learners in the past decade. (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.) At the same time, over half of all states require an economics course as part of the high school graduation requirements (Council for Economic Education, 2024). This note provides a lesson plan template and ready-made lessons for eight economics concepts to help bridge the gap between what EL students require for language acquisition and what they require for economics comprehension. In this note, I will introduce the four-quadrant template, explain why it is helpful for EL learners, and provide a specific example of how to teach the concept of tradeoffs and opportunity costs using the template.

Figure 1



2. Template Overview

The EL lesson plan template is split into four quadrants, each representing a domain of language acquisition based on the Center for Applied Linguistics Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (CAL SIOP) Model: reading, writing, speaking, listening (Center for Applied Linguistics, n.d.). Research suggests that integrating all four language skills into a single lesson improves learner comprehension and linguistic proficiency. (Ahmed, Ali, & Keri, 2024).

Figure 1 provides an overview of the EL lesson plan template, along with a description of what types of activities are represented in each quadrant. Figure 2 shows how to teach tradeoffs and opportunity costs using this template, while I provide general guidance about each quadrant.

At the start of class, I provide students with a digital copy of the template. A digital copy allows students to read the text in their own language, using programs like Google Translate.

Figure 2

<p>Reading:</p> <p>"Our inclination is to focus on immediate financial trade-offs, but trade-offs can involve other areas of personal or professional well-being as well—in the short and long run.</p> <p>That's why Caceres-Santamaria challenges us to consider not only explicit alternatives—the choices and costs present at the time of decision-making—but also implicit alternatives, which are "unseen" opportunity costs.</p> <p>"It's about thinking beyond the present and assessing alternative uses for the money—that is, not being shortsighted," she writes.</p> <p>What are some other examples of opportunity cost?</p> <p>A student spends three hours and \$20 at the movies the night before an exam. The opportunity cost is time spent studying and that money to spend on something else.</p> <p>A farmer chooses to plant wheat; the opportunity cost is planting a different crop, or an alternate use of the resources (land and farm equipment).</p> <p>A commuter takes the train to work instead of driving. It takes 70 minutes on the train, while driving takes 40 minutes. The opportunity cost is an hour spent elsewhere each day."</p> <p>https://www.vocabulary.com/open/vault/2020/january/real-life-examples-opportunity-cost</p>	<p>Listening</p> <p>Distinguish between a tradeoff and an opportunity cost.</p>
<p>Speaking:</p> <p>Take turns with a shoulder partner.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain a time when you had to make a difficult decision. 2. Identify the tradeoffs of your decision. 3. Identify the opportunity cost of your decision. 	<p>Writing</p> <p>Explain, in your own words, what the difference is between a tradeoff and an opportunity cost in Economics. (Explain, using your examples from the "Speaking" assignment, to the left.)</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Reading Quadrant

Reading

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"It's about thinking beyond the present and assessing alternative uses for the money—that is, not being shortsighted," she writes.

What are some other examples of opportunity cost?

A student spends three hours and \$20 at the movies the night before an exam. The opportunity cost is time spent studying and that money to spend on something else.

A farmer chooses to plant wheat; the opportunity cost is planting a different crop, or an alternate use of the resources (land and farm equipment).

A commuter takes the train to work instead of driving. It takes 70 minutes on the train, while driving takes 40 minutes. The opportunity cost is an hour spent elsewhere each day."

<https://www.stlouisd.edu/open-vault/2020/january/real-life-examples-opportunity-cost>

For the reading portion of the tradeoffs and opportunity cost example provided, students are asked to individually read a short excerpt of an article to start the class (Fagan, 2020). The excerpt takes students about 5 minutes to complete. If they finish before the time allotted, they prepare for the listening section by opening slides or watching the assigned video.

More generally, the reading quadrant can be as simple as a "bellringer" activity or something more in-depth, like a chapter of text. It is important to remember that practicing reading will help EL students improve their fluency, pronunciation, and general ability to read better (Drucker, 2003). This gives students an idea of what we will learn in class that day.

Listening Quadrant

To complete the listening quadrant, students listen to a whole-class lecture about decision-making, tradeoffs, and opportunity costs. They take notes in the space provided. This lecture includes definitions of terms as well as a teacher-generated example, followed by student-generated examples. This section should take 20 minutes.

Listening

Distinguish between a tradeoff and an opportunity cost.

Lectures certainly fall under the category of listening, but other common listening activities that could be included are YouTube videos (e.g., ACDC Economics, NPR's Planet Money, or Marginal Revolution University). The benefit of assigning video clips is that students can slow down or pause the content, individually, without impacting the pace of the rest of the class. Many YouTube videos also offer closed captioning. This greater flexibility allows teachers to customize and personalize learning to the needs of individual learners.

Speaking Quadrant

The speaking activity occurred after the lecture/listening section. In this example, students shared real-world applications of a decision that they have made. This activity will take about 15 minutes. If partners finish early, merge partner groups for more examples and applications.

Speaking

Take turns with a shoulder partner.

1. Explain a time when you had to make a difficult decision.
2. Identify the tradeoffs of your decision.
3. Identify the opportunity cost of your decision.

A summary of the reading or lecture also works here. "Turn and talk" or "shoulder partners" can be useful as a way for students to summarize the content they just heard (Ferlazzo & Hull-Sypniewski, 2018). Students can assess one another for their level of understanding as the teacher moves around the room to do the same.

Writing Quadrant

Finally, in the writing section, students answer questions as an “exit ticket” to be turned in at the end of the period. The goal is to have students use content from the listening and speaking quadrants of the lesson and apply the definitions of tradeoffs and opportunity costs in a meaningful way to their own experiences. This activity takes about five minutes of class, and students then upload a copy to their learning management system. Educators can use this section to gauge student understanding and inform pacing for the next class.

Some teachers use guided notes as a motivating strategy, and this template can also be used for that purpose. There is research that guided notes can increase the skill of note-taking, while also improving academic performance (Konrad, 2009). Teachers could also include some sentence starters or fill-in-the-blank to meet this requirement.

Writing

Explain, in your own words, what the difference is between a tradeoff and an opportunity cost in Economics. (Explain, using your examples from the “Speaking” assignment, to the left.)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slightly aged or off-white appearance.

The example provided above, as well as the additional content-specific examples provided in the slides, were designed for EL students who score a three or better on the WIDA Access assessment. Student proficiency scores are provided on a scale of one to six in the domains of writing, speaking, listening, and reading (WIDA, n.d.). However, if support personnel are assigned to the teacher's classroom, the sample templates work with students who score at a proficiency score of two. Reviewing student scores in each domain provides insights into individual students' strengths, making this template particularly useful for teachers wanting to emphasize areas of growth.

Keep in mind that this template is editable and intended to be adaptable for one's own classroom. Some examples of strategies to reach EL students who need more support include, but are not limited to sentence stems, guided reading questions, vocabulary lists, guided notes, etc., depending on the needs of the particular class. Teachers could also choose to print their template, which would provide more writing space on the back side. The sample templates provided in the slides feature some of the aforementioned supports.

3. Conclusion

As educators, we are asked to reach the students in front of us. They come to us with different abilities and needs. As you adapt this template to the needs of your own students, you may discover that you lean towards some quadrants over others. What this template ensures is that all four strategies will be addressed in every period, reaching a greater number of students in multiple ways.

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