

# AGENCY AT WORK: A METAPHOR ANALYSIS OF LESSON PLANNING AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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**Abstract:** Lesson planning is a core skill teachers need to develop in implementing lessons effectively in the classroom. While metaphor research has been used in a range of contexts including in teacher education, metaphors associated with lesson planning among teachers in developing regions in the world remain underrepresented. Due to the importance of lesson planning in the implementation of the curriculum, investigating metaphors of lesson planning provides helpful insights on the beliefs of teachers in classroom practice resulting in effective instruction. This investigation sought to identify the metaphors Filipino teachers associate with lesson planning and their connections to teacher agency. This study, which is part of a larger investigation, examined metaphors from 73 English Language teacher-respondents in professional development workshops. The metaphorical conceptualization process employed in analyzing the data consists of three phases (1) validating and coding data, (2) summarizing and representing codes, and (3) identifying and describing categories. Results reveal eleven distinct conceptual categories, including perceptions of lesson planning as a project-like endeavor, an act of molding, and a form of creative expression, all of which highlight teacher agency in the teaching-learning process. These suggest that teachers take different roles in lesson planning depending on the nature of the subject matter, conditions they face in their work contexts, and their beliefs about teaching and learning. However, some teachers perceive lesson planning as routine and question its purpose, which poses challenges in designing effective professional development programs tailored to their needs.

**Keywords:** lesson planning, metaphors, Philippine education, professional development, teacher agency

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Central to effective teacher training programs is highlighting the importance of teacher agency as a catalyst of effective change. Defined as the capacity to enact change in one's teaching context, teacher agency is an important aspect of training programs to help develop practitioners who can institute sustainable reforms in planning, implementing and evaluating curricular programs (Chisholm et al., 2019; Datnow, 2020; Imants & Van der Wal, 2020; Yakavets et al., 2022). Recent studies on teacher agency have shown that spaces of engagement among practitioners greatly influence the success (or failure) of educational programs. To illustrate, Chisholm et al. (2019) and Imants and Van der Wal (2020) highlighted that some key activities

in exercising teacher agency include collaborating with other stakeholders, making decisions in curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation as well as creating conditions to further improve professional development for others. Given the ever-complex work in the planning and implementation of the curriculum, teachers' involvement through decision making during lessons, collaboration among peers, and engagement with students are vital in reaching desired outcomes in the teaching-learning process (Contreras et al., 2020; Datnow, 2020). Embedded in these activities is the degree of autonomy where teachers can initiate, implement, and evaluate actions suitable for their respective work contexts (Yakavets et al., 2022). In the ELT context, the situatedness of learning is significant in developing agency among teachers. Specifically, the post-method movement highlights the importance of teachers' understanding of their current conditions as these greatly influence their theories of practice (Al-Kadi, 2020; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). As such, maximizing opportunities for learning engagement through meaningful language learning lessons that are attuned to the learner needs, current materials and social conditions put teachers in a transformative position to formulate their own theories of practice. One activity where teachers can exercise their agency is through lesson planning.

Lesson planning is an important activity for teachers in implementing the curriculum (Kola, 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2020; David & Nsengimana, 2022). As teachers gain relevant experience in strengthening content knowledge and pedagogical skills in honing their craft, lesson planning is a crucial activity which contributes greatly to the translation of teacher beliefs into concrete plans of action (Contreras et al 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Mante-Estacio et al, 2018; Nordgren et al., 2021). Similar to other contexts, lesson planning in the Philippines appears to be a "trivial, mundane or bureaucratic" practice (Uhrmacher et al., 2013, p. 2) as scarcity of materials, large classes, and administrative duties are constraints for teachers in achieving their professional development goals. However, with recent developments in curriculum reform in the Philippines through the establishment of the professional standards of teacher quality, resources have been devoted to revitalizing the professionalization of teachers through different activities such as training workshops, projects, and acquisition of material resources (Department of Education-Teacher Education Council, 2017). Considering that lesson planning reflects teachers' exercise of their agency in making nuanced decisions to help refine the teaching and learning process, it is essential to explore ways in identifying conceptualizations of educators on this activity.

One promising approach in examining beliefs and practices is through metaphor analysis as this reveals various ways teachers make sense of activities they encounter (Mante-Estacio et al, 2018; Su & Yang, 2020;). As a reflective tool, a "metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5). In addition, MacCormac (1990) claims that, "[t]o describe the unknown, we must resort to concepts that we know and understand, and that is the essence of a metaphor—an unusual juxtaposition of the familiar with the unfamiliar" (p. 9). In the educational context, Saban (2006) elaborates this by identifying metaphors as a pedagogical tool, an instrument for reflection, a means of understanding the teaching and learning processes, and a way to understand identity construction. As a pedagogical tool, metaphors can help scaffold learning for students engaging with complex content (Lane et al., 2023; Norscini & Daniela, 2024). As a means for reflection, the use of metaphors allows teachers to articulate their cognitions about teaching and learning (Ulusoy, 2022). Further, metaphors can also help elucidate the varying roles teachers play in the education process

(Farrell, 2023; Shaw & Andrei, 2019). Given that teacher agency is multifaceted, an examination of metaphors in lesson planning can help our understanding of teachers' multiple spaces of engagement in planning, implementing and evaluating lessons.

Despite metaphor analysis having been used in a range of contexts including in teacher education, metaphors on specific teaching-learning processes, such as lesson planning, remain underexplored. This article, therefore, addresses the dearth in the literature exploring English teachers' metaphors about lesson planning with specific focus on (1) teacher agency and varying roles as manifestations of teachers' cognitions of lesson planning, and (2) the use of metaphors as an expression of such cognition. Such metaphors not only reflect the view of agency among teachers, but also pose challenges for developing suitable professional development programs in varying contexts. Thus, for this paper, we are guided by the following research questions:

1. What metaphors do teachers have for lesson planning?
2. How are these metaphors about lesson planning relate to teacher agency?

This study was conducted with English teachers in the Philippines. Similar to other developing contexts, the Philippine education system faces a range of challenges. Specifically, since the system is deemed as largely top down in terms of policy implementation, the government-mandated curriculum is expected to be uniformly applied across classrooms. However, reports evaluating the state of Philippine education over the years have indicated a host of problems. Structural issues such as poverty, lack of resources and infrastructure, problematic continuity in implementing prescribed educational standards, and inadequate research training and support have stifled the country's progress. Since lesson planning is vital for curriculum implementation, factors such as material constraints, diverse classroom conditions and differences in outcomes of teacher training programs pose challenges for teachers in effective instruction. Second, the inadequacy of teacher training programs in developing sound pedagogical skills contributes to challenges in delivering lessons that aim to enhance the core competencies students need to succeed in school and the workplace (Reyes et al., 2021; Trinidad, 2020).

### **Teacher Agency**

In recent years, teacher agency has gained prominence because of its critical role in implementing educational reform. As teachers are viewed as active agents in the development and implementation of curricula, research has explored agency from a range of perspectives. Specifically, studies conducted on teacher agency demonstrate the capacity of teachers to act within the confines of their spaces of engagement (Chisholm et al., 2019). To illustrate, teachers capitalize on available resources, learning experiences with students and other stakeholders, as well as their own efforts for professional development to address varying challenges in their workplaces. Imants and Van der Wal (2020) argue that teacher agency in the context of professional development and school reform is influenced by several factors such as work environment, organizational and individual characteristics, and outcomes from educational programs. This suggests that agency is not merely a characteristic an individual possesses but is developmental and relational in nature (Priestley et al., 2022).

According to Priestley et al. (2022), personal capacity and contextual conditions are influential in the curriculum development process as teachers' decision making hinges on their professional knowledge, beliefs and practices, as well as insights gained from previous experiences. As this interacts with the teachers' contextual conditions, it can either support or hinder the achievement of curriculum goals and the fulfillment of learner needs. In other words, teachers act as active agents in balancing the prescriptive demands of the curriculum with the realities of their individual teaching contexts (Chisholm et al., 2019; Estacio et al., 2018).

### **Metaphors**

Tait-McCutcheon and Drake (2016, p. 2) describe a metaphor as a “cognitive, linguistic, and experiential conceptual process commonly used in thinking and communication.” To elaborate, the use of metaphors allows people to create mental models that make abstract concepts more concrete. For instance, in political discourse, metaphors can outline goals or courses of action for leaders to take with the public. Similarly, in the technology sector, metaphors simplify complex concepts and processes to enhance consumer experiences. In educational research, examining metaphors helps facilitate pre-service and in-service teachers' reflection on their professional development, in terms of what they know, believe, and think, which are crucial factors in teaching and learning (Borg, 2003; Lynch & Fisher-Ari, 2017; Mahlios et al., 2010; Ungar, 2016). This has been evident in several research studies that have used metaphor analysis to raise teachers' awareness, foster reflective practice, challenge core beliefs, and promote changes in classroom practices (Ungar, 2016). Steen (2007) explains that metaphors help generate and understand the meanings of unfamiliar, novel, challenging, and abstract constructs by drawing analogies from familiar or concrete reference points. In the Contemporary Theory of Metaphor (CTM), Lakoff (1993, cited in Lynch & Fisher-Ari, 2017) states that metaphors reflect the conceptual frameworks of the speaker and reveal their positionality in expressing concepts and experiences. Teachers' knowledge and beliefs are often personal, contextual, and difficult to articulate (De Laurentiis Brandão, 2020; Thompson & Campbell, 2003) but metaphors could be used as a good starting point to gain new insights (Jensen, 2001) from teachers in their professional knowledge base and practices. As De Laurentiis Brandão (2020) elaborates, given that a teacher's identity is greatly shaped over time through personal experiences within the profession, metaphors are helpful for expressing their learning in practice, as well as their aspirations and future goals. Through this, metaphor analysis is instrumental in mapping out the nuances in a teacher's professional development over time. In the ELT context, metaphor research in context of professional development of teachers shows growth in the profession in terms shifting views of teaching and learning from one that controls to eventually that facilitates (Farrell, 2023), developing identities because of significant teaching experiences (De Laurentiis Brandão, 2020) and changing goals in engaging in the profession (Shaw and Andrei, 2019).

Thus, metaphors are safe spaces for ideas when the appropriate language is not readily available to the speaker (Steen, 2007). For example, the humorous and non-threatening use of different types of jackets as metaphors was examined in the study of Tait-McCutcheon and Drake (2016). The study illustrated that this metaphor allowed potentially emotional or

problematic issues, such as negative dispositions toward professional learning and development, to be addressed. Moreover, the metaphor created a safe environment where teachers felt more at ease expressing their honest thoughts, airing their concerns, seeking understanding, reconciling differences, and collaborating. Bowdle and Gentner (2005) adds that theoretical constructs are invented, organized and illuminated through the use of metaphors. In this regard, conceptual metaphors are not only considered a tool for eliciting and analyzing data in qualitative research studies, but they also serve as the study's theoretical framework (Alarcon et al., 2019).

### **Lesson Planning**

Lesson plans are among the documents we refer to for the intended curriculum (Ding & Carlson, 2013; Kola, 2021), reflecting teachers' thinking about how a lesson should be taught (Stein, et al., 2007). Thus, lesson planning is very much a part of teaching as is the actual performance itself and competence in this task is what constitutes the essence of quality teaching (Pang, 2016). Lesson plan serves both as a valuable framework (Boyd, 2012; Gün 2014) and a resource reflecting teachers' contingent decision making in their course of content delivery through strategies to engage students in learning (Kola, 2021; Lee et al., 2016).

Writing a lesson plan has many advantages (David & Nsengimana, 2022). Teachers assess their own understanding of the curriculum as they translate the learning goals and objectives into tangible actions of course delivery that could affect student learning through lesson planning (David & Nsengimana, 2021). In the study conducted by Lee et al. (2016), pre-service teachers reported the following uses of lesson plans: to monitor student progress, to manage time, to design differentiated instructions and accommodations, to organize activities for effective instruction, to provide a guide for teachers, to prepare materials in advance, to refine teacher content knowledge, for administrative use (e.g., for submission to administrators and for the substitute teachers' reference), to incorporate real-world connections, for classroom and time management, to improve future teaching, to prepare questions and statements, and to develop instructional strategies.

Effective lesson planning fosters good teaching and successful execution of curriculum policy (Kola, 2021). It also requires teachers to assess and reflect on their instructional strategies to find ways to improve their teaching and accomplish the lesson objectives (Nesari & Heidari 2014), build up their confidence (Owen-Jackson 2012), curate appropriate resources, manage time (Hall & Smith 2006), provide a sense of coherence (Jensen 2001; Mishra, 2008), and stimulate learners' cognitive skills and maximize their potential (Mishra, 2008).

Since students' learning depends largely on the activities teachers plan and prepare prior to classroom instruction (Gonzalez et al., 2020) and since much of what transpires in the class are based on the lesson plan, lesson planning has been deemed influential and able to make an impact to students (McMillan, 2003). Given the many benefits and purposes that lesson planning serves, it is an indispensable task of teaching (Mutton et al., 2011; Strangis, et al., 2006). However, considering the various components in a lesson plan makes lesson planning a complex process (Fernandez & Cannon, 2005). Lesson planning is greatly influenced by teachers' understanding of the subject matter, their philosophy, beliefs, and orientation of the curriculum,

their, understanding of students, and their personal teaching styles (Baecher et al., 2014; Ding & Carlson, 2013; Farrell, 2002; Li & Zou, 2017; Simwa & Modiba, 2015; Stein et al., 2007).

Teachers often adapt and customize available instructional materials based on their understanding of learners' prior knowledge, and alternative conceptions of the lesson topic (Choy et al., 2013). Thus, as teachers play an active role in lesson planning, they must have the necessary competencies in crafting (Alarcon et al., 2019; Li & Zou, 2017) and translating lesson plans into effective classroom practice. Preparing a lesson plan is very important for a teacher's classroom performance (Süral, 2019).

## METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach. For data collection, one of the authors conducted workshops in the Philippines and a short survey was also administered. Two major teacher training workshops were conducted in an educational institution and teachers from different schools participated in these activities. In terms of recruitment, a survey was part of the workshop activity but consent was obtained to through a form soliciting biographical information and inclusion in the research was deemed optional. Of those who participated in these workshops, 395 responded to the survey for this investigation. The workshop participants were asked to provide their demographic information, including age, gender, courses taught, and years of teaching experience. Of the 395 respondents, there were 73 who were teaching courses relevant to English Language learning including English reading in primary school, creative writing in college, and English teaching pedagogy in a graduate school program. To gather the metaphors related to lesson planning, the respondents were asked to complete the following prompt:

*Lesson planning is like \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.*

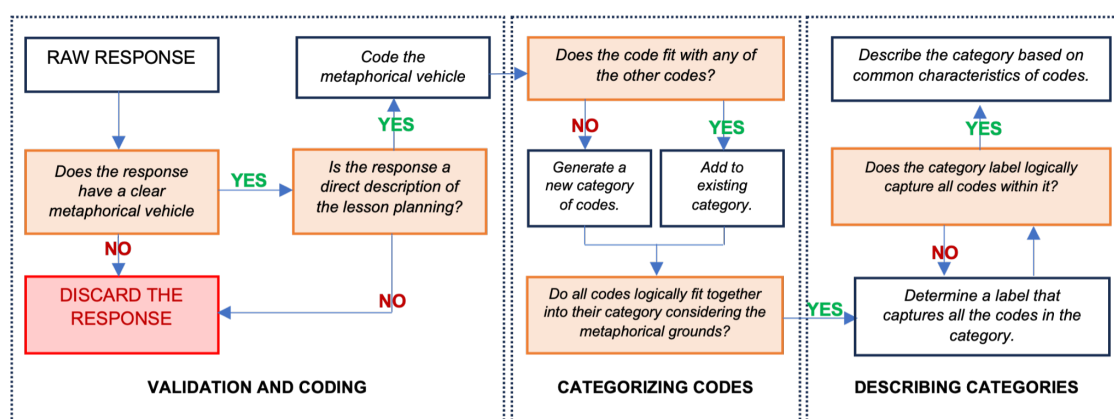
Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the English language teachers who participated in the study.

**Table 1.** Demographic profile of the English language teacher-respondents

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Relative Frequencies	Cumulative Percentages
Sex			
Female	57	78.08%	
Male	16	29.92%	
Education Level			
Bachelor's degree	57	78.08%	
with Master's degree units	16	29.92%	
Age (in years)			
25 or younger	34	46.57%	46.57%
26 to 30	16	21.92%	68.49%
31 to 35	4	5.48%	73.97%
36 to 40	7	9.59%	83.56%
41 to 45	5	6.85%	90.41%

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Relative Frequencies	Cumulative Percentages
46 to 50	4	5.48%	95.89%
51 or older	3	4.11%	100.00%
Teaching Experience (in years)			
3 or less	29	39.72%	39.72%
4 to 5	16	21.92%	61.64%
6 to 10	14	19.18%	80.82%
11 to 15	6	8.22%	89.04%
16 to 20	2	2.74%	91.78%
21 or more	6	8.22%	100.00%

The analysis of the teachers' metaphorical conceptualizations was done in three phases: validating and coding responses, summarizing and representing codes, and identifying and describing categories. Figure 1 maps this process.



**Figure 1.** Qualitative analysis of metaphors of lesson planning

*Validating and coding responses.* The initial phase of the process involved screening individual responses. Each response was evaluated to determine its validity. For a response to be valid, it must contain two essential components: (a) a *metaphorical vehicle*, which is the object or phenomenon used by the teacher-respondent to describe their view of lesson planning; and (b) a *metaphorical ground*, which is the short explanation given by the teacher-respondents to justify their perceived association between the metaphorical vehicle and lesson planning. Valid responses were then further classified using the aforementioned nomenclature. Notes and preliminary categories were also simultaneously generated.

*Summarizing and representing codes.* After all responses were checked and coded, distinct metaphorical vehicles from the valid responses were listed with corresponding frequencies. That is, the number of teachers using the same metaphorical vehicles referring to lesson planning was included in the dataset.

*Identifying and describing categories.* Categories of codes were determined based on the similarities of both metaphorical vehicles and metaphorical grounds. The resulting initial

categories were further evaluated to ensure that each was distinct, and that there was a distinguishing characteristic that bound all responses classified under the same category. The final step was to generate a set of parallel labels that best captured the distinguishing characteristics of the categories.

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of respondents according to the validity of their responses. It also shows the number of distinct metaphorical images used and the number of categories generated from the analysis of data.

**Table 2.** Distribution of teacher-respondents based on the initial appraisal of their metaphorical conceptualization of lesson planning

<b>Response Evaluation Type</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Valid Responses	61
Distinct Metaphorical Images Used	36
Eliminated Responses	12
No Response	1
Weak or Nonexistent Metaphorical Image	7
Weak or Nonexistent Metaphorical Ground	1
Weak Vehicle-Ground Association	3
Total recorded responses	73

Some responses were discarded from the analysis due to weak or nonexistent metaphor image or ground, and weak association between the vehicle and ground. Table 3 provides examples of these discarded responses.

**Table 3.** Examples of discarded responses from the database

<b>Raw Response</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
[Lesson planning is] a very critical part of teaching because it shows the creativity and effectiveness of the teachers when it comes to providing learning activities.	There is no metaphorical image.
Lesson planning is like an armor (sic) because before you go to war you need to bring your bullets.	The metaphorical vehicle, armor, is not justified by the ground.
Lesson planning is like a landscape painting.	There is no metaphorical ground.
[Lesson planning is a] list of whatever you want the learners will learn every day so they are ready [for] whatever battle they will encounter.	The metaphorical vehicle is ambiguous and the ground weakly explains the association between lesson planning and the vehicle.



## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

To address the first question concerning the metaphors teachers hold about lesson planning, analysis of 61 valid entries, 36 distinct metaphorical images were identified. The succeeding sections elaborate on the 11 conceptual categories identified from the data. Table 4 shows the metaphorical images elicited from the data.

**Table 4.** Frequency of conceptual categories of lesson planning and their metaphorical images

Conceptual Category	Metaphorical Images	frequency
Artist (art making)	writing a record (writing music); fashion styling; painting; courting a girl	4
Builder (structure building)	preparing a blueprint; designing a building; structuring house; constructing a building; following a manual; skeleton	13
Food Expert (creating food)	preparing a recipe; recipe book; cooking; preparing a meal; preparing a menu	8
Dreamer (forecasting)	foreshadowing an event	1
Navigator (navigating)	creating a map; using GPS; using a compass; voyage planning; planning for a journey; preparing for a trip	14
Writer (writing stories)	journal writing; writing a travel journal; keeping a diary writing a book (novel)	6
Event Organizer (organizing events)	maintaining an organizer (planner) personalized calendar; creating a diet plan	3
Life Coach	giving birth	1
Tactician (formulating strategies)	developing a strategy, tactic, game plan; doing a puzzle; preparing for war, battle; creating a military strategy	9
Routineer (following routines)	cleaning the house	1
Nonconformist	suffering	1

Among the 36 metaphorical images identified, the succeeding sections describe the 11 conceptual categories from the data.

#### *Artist (Art making)*

An artist describes lesson planning as a *creative process* that leads to the *production of an artwork* (lesson plan). With the lesson being a product, the artist appreciates the importance of preparing a plan and makes an effort to structure parts they assume to be appealing to the

audience (students). Furthermore, these teachers may not necessarily follow a strict structure in writing the lesson plan. The sample below contextualizes this metaphor.

[164] *Lesson planning is like writing a record because a great amount of preparation will be done to generate a record worthy to be applauded by audience [sic]. Just like in writing music, lesson planning takes creativity, effort and passion to showcase the potentials of the learners. Moreover, a good song would not be accomplished without any beautifully written lyrics, same as an engaging class that needs to have a comprehensive written plan.*

### ***Builder (Building a structure)***

Builders perceive lesson planning as a process of creating a structure. That is, these teachers find planning to be essential towards achieving instructional objectives. They examine details of the structure (how the lesson is organized) and its boundaries (clarifying the breadth, depth, and scope of the lesson), and design the lesson based on the available resources. These are teachers who are likely to produce plans that strictly conform to a structured format. Sample 173 shows the builder metaphor:

*Lesson planning is like a **blueprint** [that] engineers [use] because it is through a lesson plan that a teacher sees, in advance, the things that s/he wants to happen in a session in his/her classroom.*

### ***Culinary Expert (Cooking food)***

Culinary experts can be chefs or cooks who consider lesson planning similar to food preparation because the process requires following procedures. This involves *selecting the right ingredients* (elements of the lesson), *and measuring* (balancing activities and managing time) *everything to get the right mix*, all meant at satisfying the appetite and dietary needs of the customers (students). Sample 168 illustrates this metaphor:

*[Writing a] lesson plan is like **cooking**. You always need the right kind and amount of ingredients to put in to make a good outcome. One wrong measure and the product could turn out a huge mess.*

Further classifying the data, some culinary experts are creative, student-oriented and are willing to deviate from the recipe to improve the final product. On the other hand, cooks are systematic planners who stick to what works and are less likely to innovate.

### ***Dreamers (predicting the future)***

Dreamers believe that planning a lesson is *foreseeing the future* (what students need to know about), hence they try to develop activities that will bring these to the present. They can anticipate students' reactions and are motivated by what they dream to accomplish. Sample 199 indicates this metaphor:

[199] *Lesson planning is like **foreshadowing the entire event** for a school year because it takes you a really good skill in planning what's coming ahead to make the school year productive.*

### ***Drivers (Navigating a trip)***

Teachers who think like navigators describe the process of lesson planning as *creating a guide* that directs students from one point to a destination, viewing this as essential. Like travelling, they know that effective instruction must guide learning. However, being goal-oriented, navigators may struggle with adopting a more flexible approach to how students learn concepts. Sample 233 represents this case:

*Lesson planning is like **a journey** because it shows you where you start, where you finish and the route to take to get there.*

However, unlike dreamers who are future-oriented, navigators tend to be more specific about their approach to planning and focus on individual content units rather than the contribution of each unit to the achievement of an overarching objective.

### ***Writers (writing stories)***

Writers develop lessons as if these are stories that inspire or scripts that entertain. They can be creative like the artists, but they choose to invest their creativity on the process (how a story is told) rather than the product. In sample 375, this metaphor is apparent:

*Lesson planning is like **writing a story** because a story needs to be written properly and with sense in order to be understood and apply in daily life.*

Moreover, they *value reflection* in planning their lessons. These are teachers who find planning by the details important. They know that not all plans will work out, but it is helpful to document these experiences to improve them.

### ***Event Organizer (organizing events)***

Event organizers share some similarities with writers because they also *value details*. They *create lessons procedurally* and organize activities following a structure to ensure that nothing is left uncertain. Sample 52 shows this type of metaphor:

[52] *Lesson planning is like an organizer because it makes our teaching organized and orderly. Without it, we will be at a lost [sic] also in our teaching procedure, as an organizer, a part of any individual and so w/ lesson planning, as a part of a teacher.*

### ***Life Coach (making life choices)***

These are teachers who design lessons that ultimately aim to impart values. They see the plan as a holy book that the teacher respects because it is a guide to the philosophy they advocate in their practice. The life coach metaphor is illustrated in sample 205:

*Lesson planning or module making is like **giving birth** to a baby. Much care has to be given to "incubate" ideas and let these turn into awesome activities that students will appreciate and learn a*

*new concept through. Like giving birth, finishing a module is also such a joy, but rearing the fruits of the module also takes effort in the same way that a mother still needs to care for her newborn.*

### ***Tactician (formulating strategies)***

Tacticians consider planning to be crucial for success. They *strategize* by *examining options and selecting one that will most likely work*. There are two types: gamers and warriors. Gamers believe in visualizing the whole (goal) to understand how to deal with the parts (elements of the lesson), while Warriors see the classroom as a battleground and the lesson plan as a potent weapon that must be prepared. The tactician metaphor can be seen in sample 368:

*Lesson planning is like **placing domino tiles** in line. You have to be careful with your moves. Every detail is important.*

### ***Routineers (following routines)***

Routineers adopt a rather simplistic view of lesson planning. They consider the process to be systematic to the point that it may seem robotic and highly uncreative to them. This suggests that the teaching and learning process appears to be routine. Sample 161 is an example of this metaphor:

*Lesson planning is like **cleaning the house** because it is tedious, time consuming but necessary and helpful. When you're done with it, doing your daily tasks and moving around would be easier and more comfortable.*

### ***Nonconformists (contesting the purpose of lesson plans)***

These are teachers who either do not believe lesson planning to be crucial to teaching or consider this process to be unnecessary, meaningless, and difficult, thus, a waste of time. For them, plans represent what is ideal (similar to dreamers), but believe that these ideals do not occur in the classroom. This metaphor can be seen in sample 65.

*[Lesson planning] is like **suffering** because there's no end writing, planning. It is often unnecessary.*

## **Discussion**

Based on the 11 metaphorical images derived from the data, the succeeding sections discuss the connections of these conceptualizations of lesson planning to teacher agency.

Teachers manifest their agency by prioritizing specific aspects of lesson planning in terms of order and focus (Pang, 2016; Uhrmacher et al., 2013). As regards structure, lesson planning appears to be viewed as a forward-looking process (e.g., Builders, Tacticians, Navigators) where certain procedures are followed in sequence to obtain desired outcomes. On the other hand, lesson planning can also be viewed as a recursive process (Writers, Event Organizers, Artists) where adjustments are made throughout to achieve intended outcomes. These points suggest two things. First, lesson planning is a manifestation of teachers' acknowledgement of the prescribed parts of the document (objectives, methodological strategies, content focus, resources available,

and assessment practices), but is also a reflection of teachers' ideas in executing their plans (Alarcón et al., 2019; Contreras et al., 2020; Hatch & Clark, 2021; Kola, 2021). Second, given that lesson planning entails the creation of favorable conditions for learning, teachers' agency is apparent in considering their available resources, experience and skills to achieve the intended outcomes of the curriculum (David & Nsengimana, 2021; Tan & Estacio, 2021)

In terms of focus, it appears that there are two observations across the data. Some metaphorical representations on lesson planning suggest a holistic view to achieve results (e.g. Artists, Builders, Writers, Businessmen, Culinary Experts, Tactician). That is, the teachers view learning outcomes as influential in designing lessons. On the other hand, metaphorical representations drawn from categories such as Event Organizer, Routineer, Life Coach, and Navigator, seem to focus on specific details in crafting lessons. The foci suggest the differences in teacher interpretations of subject matter and their representations through manageable goals with the help of lesson design (Li & Zou, 2017; Schmidt, 2005). Further, the findings suggest that teachers acknowledge the role of work environment, and the organizational and individual characteristics and outcomes from educational programs in the lesson planning process to achieve the intended curricular goals, but at the same time, they make necessary adjustments to address learner needs (Priestly et al., 2023).

Another inference from the data is that the metaphorical representations show the potential trajectories (whether short- or long-term) in achieving goals. For instance, Routineers and even Non-conformist metaphors suggest tasks that can be done immediately. While Tactician, and Builder metaphors seem to acknowledge the developmental nature of accomplishing goals. These can be attributed to the nature of the subject matter taught, conditions the teachers face in their work contexts, and beliefs about teaching and learning. Overall, these different representations of lesson planning suggest that they take particular roles in assuring that teaching and learning is effective given their unique conditions. Further, the metaphors produced indicate the role of lesson planning in practicing teacher agency through their extent of participation in the teaching-learning process. Acknowledging the situatedness of classroom practices (Al-Kadi, 2020), lesson planning becomes a means for teachers to develop their own theories of practice that can be tested, confirmed or challenged. In other words, the metaphors provide a glimpse of the teachers' application of their beliefs in teaching and learning which they deem meaningful in fulfilling their goals in the profession (Farell, 2023; Shaw & Andrei, 2019).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, it appears that there are diverse conceptualizations of teachers regarding lesson planning which are closely tied to teacher agency. Specifically, the metaphors on lesson planning provided by the English language teachers show their creative uses of their spaces of engagement to prepare lessons that address diverse needs of learners, varying conditions of classrooms and goals of teaching and learning. While their roles greatly vary in terms of lesson design, the metaphors presented show that the teachers are actively engaged in making learning possible. Further, the metaphors of lesson planning among English language teachers in our study, have varying degrees of focus (general vis-à-vis specific) goals of language and language learning which may be influenced by their experiences, content and

pedagogical knowledge and current teaching conditions. As such, the it can be argued lesson planning much like other professional development activities provides room for teachers to grow in terms of constructing theories of practice which may evolve over time.

Since metaphor analysis helps teachers make sense of their different practices, further researchers may find this method insightful in understanding concepts vital in the profession. For instance, curriculum reforms, assessments, and the learners – all of which are essential in the teaching-learning process – could be subjected to the same analysis as these can help shape professional development programs. Second, while metaphor analysis cannot ascertain specific conditions that may pose challenges for teachers in designing lessons, other interpretive methodologies, such as classroom ethnographies or case studies, can provide further insights into how agency manifests in teachers' work. Third, given that teachers assume complex roles in lesson design and implementation, linking metaphors and conceptual categories to factors such as the subject matter taught, years of teaching experience, and level of professional development can help researchers better understand the nuances of teacher beliefs and practices.

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