

Lesson openings: How teachers begin lessons in an English class

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Abstract

A lesson opening is the first phase of a lesson structure. Generally, it is the first 3-15 minutes of the lesson when teachers start to interact with students and the commencement of the first major activity. It plays a significant role in the lesson as it could determine whether learning would occur. This study aims to investigate how English teachers begin lessons and to discuss the rationales underlying their lesson openings. Video recordings of five English teachers teaching undergraduate students in a natural setting were analyzed and followed up by interviews. The findings revealed variations in types and orders of lesson opening activities used by these teachers. Establishing an affective and cognitive framework and fulfilling the required institutional roles seemed to be the main guiding principles of their lesson openings.

1. Introduction

According to Richards and Lockhart (1994), lessons have a recognizable structure. They begin in a particular way, proceed through a series of teaching and learning activities, and reach a conclusion. The way classes are structured or the lessons are organized into sequences is referred to as “Structuring” and there are four dimensions: Opening, Sequencing, Pacing and Closure. The opening consists of the procedures the teacher uses to focus the students’ attention on the learning aim of the lesson. The sequencing means the sequence of the activities used to attain the goals of a lesson. The pacing is the extent to which a lesson maintains its momentum and communicates a sense of development. In other words, it is concerned with the time allocated to each sub-activity. The closing is bringing a lesson to a close effectively and refers to (1) the concluding parts of a lesson which serve to reinforce what has been learned in a lesson, (2) the integration and the review of the content of a lesson and (3) the preparation of the students for further learning.

The opening or entry of a lesson generally occupies the first five minutes and it usually consists of “the procedures the teacher uses to focus the students’ attention on the learning aims of the lesson” (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Watson Todd (1997) also states that the beginning of the lesson is also called the start or the opening and it refers to the first few minutes of the lesson. He defines lesson beginnings as “the procedures the teacher uses to prepare students for learning in that lesson”. In addition, McGrath, Davies and Mulphin (1992) define the beginning as the part of a lesson between the moment when the teacher starts to interact with students and the commencement of the first major activity. It may last as little as three minutes or as long as fifteen minutes and it may also consist of anything between one and six short activities. From these literatures, it could be seen that the opening is the first structure of the lesson and it ranges from 3-15 minutes.

The opening or beginning of the lesson plays a significant role in the lesson. It seems to be the moment that the teacher can decide whether the learners would be engaged in the lesson or not. If something goes wrong at this stage, it can affect the rest of the lesson (Scrivener, 2012). So, it is important to attract students and cultivate their desire for learning at the beginning of the teaching (Turkey, 1975). According to Lindsay (2006), in the opening, the teachers should explain to the learners about the aims of the lesson, how the lesson links to previous ones and what activities they are going to do. In the study of Velandia (2008), it was found that warm-ups, used in the opening stage, acted as an attention injector for students and they helped to promote students’ involvement in an English class.

The study about the role of warm-up activity in language classroom by Akther (2014) also showed that it was helpful in the following aspects: 1) to establish a good relationship between students and teacher and set a positive learning environment, 2) to motivate students, 3) to get students' attention at the beginning of the class, 4) to recall their background knowledge and 5) to discuss and set a clear goal of the lesson. Interestingly, greetings in lesson beginnings formalize orientation between the teachers and students. Topic talk in lesson beginnings also provides an opportunity to undertake talk unrelated to the lesson, and is a significant aspect of student participation. Finally, in encouraging students to perform the tasks, the teachers move from the lesson beginnings towards lesson tasks, and exert their responsibility of their role (Siang Lee, 2016). Therefore, lesson beginnings appear to be effective for getting students involved and engaged with the lesson.

The beginning of a lesson is an unstable period of transitions because of many reasons that can undermine the main lesson, for example, students coming from other classrooms or somewhere outside the school (Arendas, 1989 cited in Watson Todd, 1997). So, the first few minutes of the lesson allow the students to settle down and tune in to the lesson, the language and the environment. The opening sets the tone for the whole lesson by creating a certain atmosphere or by providing expectations of what will happen in the lesson (Watson Todd, 1997). In this way, it enhances students' learning throughout the whole lesson. So, it can be assumed that the ways of beginning the lessons play an important role in getting students' attention and involvement, activating students' background knowledge and establishing the appropriate atmosphere. So, McGrath, Davies and Mulphin (1992) concluded that teachers should attach greater importance of lesson opening to affective consideration such as creating the atmosphere, and encouraging motivation, confidence or participation, than cognitive consideration which includes preparing the students to be ready for the lesson, eliciting relevant knowledge and experience, providing an organizing framework for the lesson, etc. Based on these literatures and research, it could be seen that lesson openings or beginnings have different functions and they can serve a variety of purposes. There are five main purposes of lesson beginnings: 1) to establish an appropriate affective framework, 2) to establish an appropriate cognitive framework, 3) to encourage student responsibility and independence, 4) to fulfill a required institutional role, and 5) to overcome pragmatic difficulty (McGrath, Davies & Mulphin, 1992). In each main purpose, there are further specific purposes. Establishing the appropriate Affective Framework includes creating atmosphere or encouraging motivation, confidence or participation. Establishing the appropriate Cognitive Framework consists of eliciting relevant knowledge and experience, providing an organizing framework for the lesson and stimulating awareness of linguistic or cultural needs. Encouraging Students' Responsibility and Independence involves strategy training and raising awareness of strategies that students use to perform a task or activity. Fulfilling a Required Institutional Role includes going over homework or checking previous learning. Overcoming Pragmatic Difficulty consists of minimizing the problems of students arriving late. They also include shouting at others, sending text messages under the table, name calling, talking, and so on (Scrivener, 2012). These pragmatic problems can weaken the main lesson and should be dealt with appropriately.

In my view, the teacher should not go straight to the main task or activity. If it is touched on right away when the class starts, some students might not be ready and it will fail to achieve the intended outcomes. So, some lesson opening activities should occur in the beginning of the lesson because it is the best time to attract students' attention or to be engaged in the lesson before they fall asleep or their curiosity fades away. In other words, the students' expectations can be drawn in this stage by explaining to them what they are going to learn, the importance of the lesson and what will occur next in the lesson.

To fulfill the functions of lesson beginnings, techniques or activities that can be used are also suggested in Table 1.

Table 1. Planning Lesson beginnings: relating activities to purposes

Purposes	Illustrative task/activity
I. To establish appropriate Affective Framework	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) create friendly, relaxed atmosphere b) create suitable physical environment c) focus attention d) make class enjoyable e) get everyone involved f) raise confidence g) stimulate interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - music, introductions, greetings, jokes, chat (personal, topical) - get students to re-arrange furniture - greetings, listening activity, visual stimulus (incl. video) - game, lighthearted oral activity - game, pair-work activity, go over homework - chat (familiar questions, topical issues), controlled activities, review, homework (because prepared), plenary choral activity - anything lively or unusual – vary the beginning!
II. To establish appropriate Cognitive Framework	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) provide organizing framework b) stimulate awareness of need (ling/cult.) c) elicit relevant linguistic knowledge d) elicit relevant experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make connections with last lesson, describe activities or objectives for part of/whole lesson, introduce topic - questions (e.g., based on picture), quiz - brainstorming, oral activity - questions
III. To encourage Student Responsibility and Independence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) make students aware of learning skills and strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consciousness-raising activities (e.g. memorization game), elicitation of students' individual strategies
IV. To fulfill Required Institutional Role	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) give feedback b) check on previous learning c) give value for time/money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - go through (previous) homework - quiz, game, brainstorm, ask for summary, questions, check homework - This has more to do with how you start – e.g., punctuality and relevance – than what you do)

V. To overcome Pragmatic Difficulty	
a) minimize problems of (and for) students arriving late	- short (e.g. revision) activities, chat

These lesson beginnings will be used as a framework to analyze the data in this study. It is suitable to be used in this study because this framework covers different aspects of purposes concerning the opening stage.

There are a number of ways or choices that teachers could start a lesson. The way a lesson opens reflects a number of decisions that a teacher makes consciously or unconsciously, depending on such factors as the content of the lesson, practical factors, teacher and students' preferences, etc. (Watson Todd, 1997). For example, the opening technique should relate with the content of the lesson. If informal talk or chatting will be used to open the lessons, the content will also determine the topic of the informal talk. In conclusion, I have discussed the concept, the significant role, the techniques and the purposes of the lesson opening and a framework of lesson beginnings_ relating activities to purposes.

In this study, techniques or activities used in the opening sessions and the rationale for employing them from the lesson recordings and the interviews were investigated.

2. Purpose of the study

This study was conducted to investigate the lesson openings of five teachers who are teaching English in fundamental courses to undergraduate students at a public university in Bangkok. It was conducted to find out how teachers manage the first stage of the lesson or how they start the lessons and make use of the first few minutes at the beginning of the lesson based on the following research questions:

- 1) How do the teachers begin the lessons in an English class?
- 2) Why do the teachers begin the lessons in that way?

3. Research Methodology

The subjects of this study were five English teachers teaching foundation English courses at an undergraduate level. All five teachers had been teaching English for more than ten years. They were selected on a voluntary basis. They were asked for permission to be video-taped for the first 15 minutes of a lesson in a natural setting at their convenience. So, in the data collection, they were teaching different courses. Teaching different courses or different lessons did not matter in this study as the focus is on how teachers begin a lesson in a class. However, all the courses lasted about three hours for each meeting.

In this study, two research instruments, Video recording and Semi-structured Interview, were used. The video recording was used to collect the data on what really happened in the class. In other words, the purpose of recording video was to observe what teachers really did and how they started the lessons in the beginning of the class period. The semi-structured interview was used to clarify their rationales or purposes of the opening techniques used. The major questions inquired:

1. what they usually do to open the lessons
2. what they did in the recorded lesson and why they did so
3. what they think about that opening technique

4. Data Analysis

In Data Analysis, the opening activities of all five teachers were identified for the types of activities used and the time spent as well as the order of the activities. Then the purposes of the teachers why they did such activities were grouped based on the framework of McGrath, Davies and Mulphin (1992), “Lesson-beginnings_ relating activities to purpose”.

5. Data Presentation and Discussion

In this section, the analysis of the data obtained will be presented and the findings will be discussed. It will consist of two main parts. The first part will discuss lesson opening activities used by the teachers and the second part will discuss the underlying purposes of using lesson opening activities by the teachers.

5.1. Lesson Opening Activities Used by the Teachers

The data from the video-recordings were analyzed and the activities used by the teachers in lesson openings were summarized as follows.

Table 2. Lesson Opening Activities Used by the Teachers

Lesson Opening Activities	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Total
1. Greeting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
2. Informal talk (chatting)				✓	✓	2
3. Giving Announcement	✓		✓			2
4. Checking Attendance	✓			✓	✓	3
5. Reviewing the lesson		✓		✓	✓	3
6. Previewing the lesson			✓	✓	✓	3
7. Reading activity	✓					1
8. Lead-in to the topic/lesson	✓					1
Total number of Activities	5	2	3	5	5	20

The data from the recordings of the classroom showed that all of the five teachers started the lesson by using a variety of activities. As seen in Table 2, it was found that each teacher used from two to five activities in the first fifteen minutes of the lesson. The most common way to start the lesson seemed to be greeting as all of the five teachers started the lesson by greeting. The second most common ways noticed were checking attendance, reviewing the lesson and previewing the lesson. Three teachers in the observation used activities such as checking attendance, reviewing the lesson, and previewing the lesson before starting the main lesson. Reviewing means dealing with the previous lessons and it helps to raise the students’ confidence as the lesson is already learnt. Also, it provides the students additional opportunities to learn previously taught material and the teachers can find out and re-teach the problematic areas. In contrast, previewing aims at preparing the students for the new lesson by raising their expectation of what will happen (Richards, 1997). Informal talk (chatting) and giving announcement were used by two teachers. Surprisingly, the least common ways seemed to be lead-in to the lesson and reading activity and they were used only by Teacher1. Lead-in, the activity that directly leads into the lesson and starts that part of it, is a technique to prepare students to learn and establish a communicative link between

the learners and the information about to be presented (Arendas, 1998 as cited in Xiangio, 2004). Though lead-in is regarded as the most basic teaching step in English classrooms and important for efficient teaching (Jingxia & Jing, 2015), it occurred only once in this study. The purpose of using these kinds of activities can be seen later in the discussion of teachers' purposes of using such lesson opening activities.

Noticeably, it was observed that every teacher started the lesson by greeting first but after that they varied the type and the order of those lesson opening activities differently. For example, in the first fifteen minutes, Teacher 1 conducted five activities starting from greeting (0:05 minute), giving announcement (1 minute), checking attendance (2 minutes), reading activity (7:05 minutes) and lead-in to the lesson (5:13 minutes). Teacher 2 used only two activities: greeting (0:11 minute) and reviewing the lesson (14:50 minutes). The review was done by means of asking questions orally and written practice exercises simultaneously. The review took about fifteen minutes. Teacher 3 conducted greeting (0:10 minute), giving announcement (0:48 minute) and previewing the lesson in the first fifteen minutes (14:00 minutes). Teacher 4 started the class by greeting (0:08 minute), having an informal talk or chatting with students (1:14 minutes), checking students' attendance (1:52 minutes), reviewing the previous lessons (1:34 minutes) and previewing the lesson (3:45 minutes). Teacher 5 also started the class by greeting (0:05 minute), having an informal talk or chatting with students (0:13 minute), checking students' attendance (1:24 minutes), reviewing the previous lessons (1:34 minutes) and previewing the lesson (1:58 minutes).

5.2. *Discussion*

Within the first fifteen minutes of the lesson conducted by the five subjects, none of the teachers went straight to the main lesson. Wright (2005) states that playful engagement can be promoted by teachers both formally, through social talk, and more formally, through activities designed to enable learners to play with the target language, rather than going straight to the lesson, in order to set the classroom atmosphere. The opening techniques seemed to vary. It should be noted that the classes observed all lasted 170 minutes and so the real openings of some teachers might last longer than the ones observed in this study. It might not be adequate to justify the structure of the lesson based on the time. Greeting was the first activity for lesson opening. Reviewing seemed to come after other activities like checking attendance and giving announcement. Previewing followed the reviewing to start the main lesson. Though it is suggested that announcements could be given at the end of a lesson to make sure that students bring the information with them, in the class observed, it came after the greeting. From the study, it was observed that the main lessons were not started in the first fifteen minutes by most teachers.

5.3. *Teachers' Purposes of Using Lesson Opening Activities*

The lesson opening activities were analysed based on the purposes stated in the framework of McGrath, Davies and Mulphin (1992). It was found that these activities matched four main purposes in the framework — to establish the appropriate affective framework, cognitive framework, to fulfill the required institutional roles and to overcome pragmatic difficulty. The first three main purposes could be the main functions that the teachers focused on in the beginning of the lessons. The data obtained from the interview of the teachers were used to support the purposes of using those lesson openings.

Table 3. Teachers' Purposes of Using Lesson Opening Activities

Purposes	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
I. To establish appropriate Affective Framework					
a) create friendly, relaxed atmosphere	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b) get everyone involved				✓	
c) raise confidence		✓		✓	✓
II. To establish appropriate Cognitive Framework					
a) provide organizing framework			✓	✓	✓
b) elicit relevant linguistic knowledge	✓		✓	✓	
c) elicit relevant experience			✓		
III. To fulfill Required Institutional Role					
a) check on previous learning		✓		✓	✓
b) check attendance	✓			✓	✓
c) give information/announcement	✓		✓		
IV. To overcome Pragmatic Difficulty					
a) minimize problems of (and for) students arriving late	✓				

5.3.1. Establishment of the Affective Framework

The teachers seemed to view that establishing the appropriate affective framework was one of the major functions of lesson openings. Affective framework could be established by means of greetings, chatting or informal talk, pair-work activity, game, etc. As lessons almost invariably start with greetings (Watson Todd, 1997), it was found that in the study, all of the teachers did start the lesson with greetings. The informal talk or chatting strategy is a common way to begin lessons and helps to get students' participation (Watson Todd, 1997; Siang Lee, 2016). The teachers in the study appeared to create the atmosphere, to get everyone involved in the class and also to raise the students' confidence of using the target language through greetings and an informal talk. Teacher 2 explained that:

"We just have a small talk to them, greet them and just talk informally, and then move bit by bit. I think they should be relaxed but encouraged to learn." (T2)

In addition, Teacher 4 also explained that:

"One thing that we should do at the beginning is to create a learning atmosphere, try to encourage students to talk, to join our classroom and to get involved in the class." (T4)

Therefore, all of the five teachers in the study seemed to perceive that affective factors should be considered in the beginning of the lesson.

5.3.2. *Establishment of the Cognitive Framework*

In the beginning of the lesson, the teachers seemed to consider establishing the appropriate cognitive framework. It includes providing organizing framework, stimulating awareness of needs, and eliciting relevant linguistic knowledge and relevant experience. Four teachers tried to establish the cognitive factors with the students by means of previewing the lesson, which is a way to prepare the students for the lesson by raising their expectations. Preview can be done by explaining the objectives or rationales, and stating the content of the lesson and the stages or activities explicitly. Indirectly, it can be done by asking questions to elicit students' relevant background knowledge and experience to be able to expect what they are going to learn. In the study, Teacher 3, Teacher 4 and Teacher 5 did previewing the lesson through asking questions and stating the content and/or the topic of the lesson. Teacher 3 prepared the students' cognition for the lesson by asking questions to get students' relevant linguistic knowledge and their experiences. Teacher 3 explained:

“Actually, I asked the questions to elicit my students first. Because I want to link the lesson with their experiences... Their experience is important in learning. If we don't know their experience and background knowledge for the lesson, it's quite difficult to continue learning. So, we would like to expand from what they know and what they have to know more.” (T3)

Teacher 4 explained why she previewed:

“To prepare, to contextualize the students. We need to get the students ready for the new knowledge.” (T4)

Thus, it could be seen that most of the teachers focused on establishing the appropriate cognitive framework in the opening stage.

5.3.3. *Fulfilling the Required Institutional Role*

The teachers were also concerned about the institutional role. All of the teachers seemed to focus on fulfilling the required institutional role in this study. They did the administrative tasks or housekeeping tasks in the opening stage. Institutional role includes giving feedback, checking previous learning or homework, dealing with students' attendance, giving information, etc. Three teachers, Teacher 2, Teacher 4 and Teacher 5, reviewed the lessons by means of asking questions orally to check on previous learning. Teacher 2 did review the previous lesson by means of both asking questions orally and doing practice exercise. They explained why they did reviewing:

“When we start, we don't just continue or start the next lesson at all. We just review what they have learnt and what they can do next because we have the connection between each lesson to the next lesson.” (T2)

“To review and recall the previous lesson. I'll try to relate all things together.” (T4)

“Just like getting students to be ready for the new lesson and to remind them what they have learnt, language points or vocabulary of the previous lesson.” (T5)

Although reviewing can be done in a variety of ways such as questions, quizzes, summaries, games and practice exercises, just questions and practice exercises were employed by the

teachers in the study. The questions were asked to the students as the teachers wanted to quickly recall or review what they had learnt. The practice exercises were used to let students practice more and to know whether they would be able to use the language patterns or points learnt in the previous week. So, it is important for teachers to help students recall the concepts and vocabulary that will be relevant for a lesson. If they do not review previous learning, then they will have to make a special effort to recall old material while they are learning new material and it will be difficult for students to learn the new material (Rosenshine, 2010).

In the context of this study, the teachers appeared to give announcement and check students' attendance in the beginning of the class. It was suggested that checking attendance usually occurs at the start of a lesson whereas announcements should be made at the end when students can take the information away fresh in their minds (Gower and Walters, 1983 as cited in Watson Todd, 1997). Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 gave the announcement after greetings and they explained why they gave announcement in the beginning:

"I wrote it every day to emphasize them what they will have to do.... Because it was required to do for all students and if they miss it, they won't get the score for this." (T1)

"To inform them first and then to remind them that they have to take listening quiz on that day. Otherwise, some students don't know and they will miss the quiz.... I'm afraid that I haven't got enough time at the end as it is important for students to do." (T3)

Also, Teacher 1, Teacher 4 and Teacher 5 checked the attendance of the students during the first fifteen minutes of the lesson. Teacher 4 explained that it is aimed at fulfilling the course requirements:

"That's the course requirement that we have to check students' attendance. 5 % are their marks." (T4)

Based on the data, it was found that three teachers did checking attendance in the beginning of the class. But, it did not mean that the remaining teachers did not check the attendance. They might have checked the attendance at the end of the class or at some time during the period. Therefore, it can be assumed that these purposes seemed to aim at fulfilling the required institutional role. As a course requirement, giving announcement and checking students' attendance were required to be done in the class in this context of this study.

5.3.4. Overcoming Pragmatic Difficulty

Pragmatic Difficulty means reducing the disruption caused by late-arriving students. Teacher 1 seemed to touch on this purpose. She tried to prepare the students for the new lesson through lead-in to the lesson. She used the real situation to get students engaged in the lesson. She asked the students who came late to the class, "Why are you late?" So, it can be assumed that this technique was used to deal with discipline for late comers. Teacher 1 explained the purpose of doing lead-in:

"I used the situation that's real to motivate them, to engage them into the lesson and to elicit their background knowledge." (T1)

So, it can also be said that the purpose of lead-in was to establish cognition to the students as she explained she wanted to assess students' relevant knowledge for the lesson. In addition, only Teacher 1 used a reading activity within the first fifteen minutes. The purpose was to let students practice reading because most of the students in her class had difficulties of reading comprehension. Moreover, the students were required to do reading on their own. So, she tried to help them practice reading before starting the main lesson and she explained that:

“In fact, it’s a requirement for the students. They have to practice on their own. But, I found out that after I tried out one passage, and I found out that students cannot write the answer correctly. So, I tried to spend early morning before the class starts to train them on reading.”
(T1)

So, it seems that the reading activity was used as an extra activity to provide students practice on reading to meet the students’ needs. But, the activity was not concerned with any purpose of lesson opening activities and it usually came in the beginning of every class. Thus, this teacher seemed to be unconventional as she did not follow the framework stipulated and she tried to touch upon the students’ needs.

It was also found from the interviewed data that there were other activities some of the teachers usually do in the beginning of a lesson, but they did not do in the recorded lessons. Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 usually used the same activities as those in the recorded lessons. For Teacher 1, Teacher 4 and Teacher 5, there were also some other activities that did not occur in that lesson. Teacher 1 stated that she usually uses a video to lead-in to the lesson and checking homework. But, in that recorded lesson, she did not use either of them as there was no homework assigned to the students and because of the content of the lesson. On that day, she could use a real situation to lead-in to the lesson. For Teacher 4, she usually uses the report, for instance, telling what have been done and what are still left to do to the students if she does not use the reviewing to start the lesson. For Teacher 5, she normally uses some games or role-play. Thus, a variety of techniques or activities could be used to open a lesson apart from the techniques and activities found in the study. The techniques or activities can be considered by the teachers depending on the content of the lesson, practical factors and teachers’ preferences.

5.4 Discussion

Opening should be carefully considered from its main functions as a stage before the main lesson. It might last longer than fifteen minutes depending on the nature of activities, their purposes or the other factors involved. According to the data observed, some teachers, for example Teacher 2, just finished two lesson opening activities within the first fifteen minutes. From the limited resources in this study, it cannot be said that she just did two lesson opening activities for the lesson. She might have done some other activities in the class after the reviewing. The purposes of the activities used in the lesson opening stages matched mainly with the three main purposes in the framework. In the context of this study, the teachers seemed to focus on establishing affective framework, cognitive framework and fulfilling the required institutional role. The teachers seemed to pay more attention to affective factors than cognitive factors. Thus, it supports the study of Lesson Beginnings by McGrath, Davies and Mulphin (1992) as, in their study, the teachers appeared to attach greater importance to affective than cognitive consideration. Thus, this finding relates to the concept that attention to affective factors in language learning should be considered and it has been taking on greater importance in language teaching research and practice (Arnold, 2011). However, Stern (1983, as cited in Zhu & Zhou, 2012) indicates that the function of affective establishment has the equivalent position of that of cognition and it does not mean that they are less concerned with cognition when the teachers include attention to affective considerations. So, it can be said that the importance of establishing a cognitive framework is considered similar to the affective framework though the extent of teachers’ attention on the cognitive framework is less in comparison to the affective ones. In teaching, cognitive considerations should be paid attention to as well but thinking processes will develop more effectively if the emotional side of learners is also taken into consideration (Arnold, 2011). Noticeably, in the study, the importance of the institutional role was the same as the affective

purposes. All of the five teachers completed these institutional roles in the opening stage. So, it agrees with the findings of the study by Lee (2011) in which the housekeeping, the institutional roles, almost always occurred first and most frequently in the opening stage.

6. Conclusion and Implications

The present study investigated what and how teachers did in the lesson opening stage and explored the rationales or purposes why they did in the first fifteen minutes of the lesson. None of the teachers went straight to the main lesson. There were variations in types and orders of lesson opening activities used by these teachers. Apart from greetings, reviewing and previewing were the more common ways to start the lesson. To facilitate students' learning, reviewing is beneficial to know about the success or failure of the previous learning and previewing let students see the importance of the current lesson and expect what is going to happen in the lesson. Most teachers did not start the main lesson in the first fifteen minutes.

For the rationales, the teachers seemed to mainly consider establishing the affective framework, establishing the cognitive framework and fulfilling the required institutional role. In terms of affective factors, teachers tried to create the appropriate atmosphere, to get students involved and to raise their confidence. So, these seemed to be essential for the students to be engaged in their learning. In the context of this study, it was also necessary to fulfill the institutional role and the teachers conducted them in the beginning of the class. Therefore, it is necessary to take account of the affective and cognitive factors for students to be engaged in the learning and to complete the institutional role for the teachers as well.

In the opening stage or beginning of the lesson, teachers can spend a few minutes on opening activities without going straight to the main lesson. Greetings, informal talk or chatting, reviewing and previewing can be used in the opening stages to establish the affective and cognitive framework. As the beginning sets the tone for the whole lesson, the teachers can create a relaxed or appropriate atmosphere for the students to learn and prepare the students to be ready and to be engaged with the lesson from the beginning. Moreover, required housekeeping or administrative tasks can also be done in the opening stage.

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