

# Research on Problems and Countermeasures in Designing Junior High School English Classroom Teaching Objectives

-- From the perspective of core competencies in the new curriculum standards

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**Abstract:** Based on the concept of core competencies under the new curriculum standards, this study deeply explores the problems and solutions in designing junior high school English classroom teaching objectives, aiming to enhance the effectiveness of teaching activities by optimizing teaching objective design. The study finds that current teaching objective design has several problems, including vague and broad goal descriptions, unclear behavioral action orientations, and misplacement of behavioral subjects. In response to these problems, this paper proposes a series of countermeasures, involving the precision of behavioral verbs, student-centered teaching concepts, comprehensive coverage of core competencies, and in-depth excavation of textbook connotations to stimulate students' higher-order thinking abilities. Finally, this study emphasizes that teaching objective design must reflect correct teaching concepts, student concepts, and teacher-student concepts to promote the comprehensive improvement of students' English comprehensive literacy.

**Keywords:** Teaching Objective Design, ABCD Principle, Core Competencies.

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## 1. Introduction

Teaching objectives refer to the direction of teaching activities and the expected results to be achieved [2]. They are specific standards set by educators for what students should achieve in terms of knowledge and skills, processes and methods, and emotional attitudes and values during the teaching process, based on curriculum standards, teaching material content, and students' actual conditions. Curriculum objectives are macro-directional guidelines, while teaching objectives are the refinement and specific implementation of curriculum objectives. The Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) (hereinafter referred to as the New Curriculum Standards) clearly states: "The core competencies that English courses aim to cultivate in students include language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability. Language ability is the basic element of core competencies, cultural awareness reflects the value orientation of core competencies, thinking quality reflects the mental characteristics of core competencies, and learning ability is the key element for the development of core competencies. The four aspects of core competencies are interpenetrating, interacting, and developing synergistically" [6]. The proposal of the core competency concept in the curriculum standards provides direction for teachers to formulate class teaching objectives (also known as classroom teaching objectives), unit teaching objectives, and semester teaching objectives. Among the theories of various educational schools, China's curriculum standard formulation is most influenced by Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives--Cognitive Domain, which divides the cognitive process into remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating [1]. This provides a theoretical framework for the student cultivation objectives in the New Curriculum Standards, which further classifies students' learning activities into learning and understanding,

application and practice, and transfer and innovation. These are also the ideas and principles that scientific teaching objective design should follow. However, through in-depth research on numerous teaching design cases, the author found that in actual teaching cases and scenarios, many teachers do not thoroughly understand the concepts of the New Curriculum Standards when designing teaching objectives, leading to a series of problems.

## 2. Analysis of Problems in Teaching Objective Design

### 2.1. Teaching Objectives are Vague and Broad, with Unclear Behavioral Action Orientations.

Examples:

- (1) The students will be able to know how to use the computer properly and responsibly.
- (2) The students will be able to grasp the structure, outline and details of the article.
- (3) The students will be able to feel the importance of the right uses of the Internet.

In Teaching Objective (1), "know" is too general and does not specify the degree of mastery and understanding by students--does this mastery refer to comprehension or application? Teaching Objective (2) does not explain the specific methods for guiding students to master the article's structure and details, and such teaching objectives can almost be applied to any English class, making them of no reference value. "Feel" in Teaching Objective (3) is too abstract, making it difficult to measure and evaluate students' perception levels through visual methods. If teaching objectives are not clear and specific, teachers' teaching activities will inevitably lack pertinence, and students' learning effects will be difficult to guarantee.

## 2.2. Misplacement of Behavioral Subjects.

Examples:

(1) To help the students to use the new words and phrases to describe their friends.

(2) To guide the students list the elements of a novel.

(3) To encourage the students to discuss the features of a real friend.

It is not difficult to see that the behavioral subjects of “help”, “guide”, and “encourage” in these three teaching objectives are all teachers. The New Curriculum Standards emphasize student-centered approaches, but in actual junior high school English teaching, many teachers overlook students’ main position and have unclear understandings of students’ principal role in the teaching process, leading to misplacement phenomena when formulating teaching objectives. Teaching objectives follow the principle of backward design, specifying what students should master in knowledge and skills, emotional attitudes, and values by the end of a class-not what teachers should complete.

## 2.3. Failure in Covering All the Core Competencies of the English Subject.

Examples:

(1) Students can accurately memorize the basic structure of the simple present tense (subject + base form of the verb / third person singular form + others)[10].

(2) Students can correctly write at least ten simple sentences using the simple present tense, with the grammar error rate of the sentences being lower than 20%[10].

In this case, the teacher only focuses on students’ objectives in language knowledge and skills, without mentioning thinking quality and values. In many other daily teaching cases, when designing teaching objectives, teachers do not describe the key content of the lesson but simply list the knowledge content and ability objectives to be learned in the lesson [3]. Due to the pressure of entrance exams or school and social expectations, most teachers’ teaching concepts may be influenced by exams, regarding basic language knowledge and skills as the most important objectives for learning English. Therefore, some teachers, although describing teaching objectives for the lesson, only involve language knowledge and skill levels, lacking content on cultivating students’ emotional attitudes and values, and there is no specific index system for emotional attitudes and values, making it impossible to effectively evaluate students.

## 2.4. Emphasis on Low-order Thinking Training , Lacking Cultivation of Higher-order Thinking.

Examples:

(1) Students can master the new words and phrases in the article about the names, characteristics, and endangered situations of various animals, such as “endangered” and “habitat”, etc.

(2) Students can explain the main idea of the article and accurately answer more than five questions based on the details of the article, such as the reasons why a certain animal is endangered and what the protection measures are.

(3) Students can imitate the sentence structures in the article and write 3 to 5 simple sentences describing animals without obvious grammatical errors.

In this case, all three teaching objectives mainly focus on basic knowledge memorization (vocabulary and phrases),

basic comprehension (article detail understanding), and basic language output (sentence imitation), without involving higher-order thinking cultivation content such as analyzing the deeper reasons for animal protection, critically thinking about the advantages and disadvantages of different protection strategies, or innovatively proposing new animal protection plans. They remain more at the low-order cognitive level, only helping students preliminarily understand English expressions and basic information related to animal protection, while lacking planning for expanding the depth and breadth of students’ thinking.

## 3. Countermeasures and Suggestions

### 3.1. Clarify Behavioral Verbs and Clarify Teaching Objectives

According to Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Figure 1), students’ thinking abilities are divided into six levels, each corresponding to different behavioral verbs[4]. The first level of memory includes verbs such as retell, memorize, identify, and list; the second level of understanding includes explain, describe, summarize, and report; the third level of application includes practice, implement, use, and elaborate; the fourth level of analysis includes compare, contrast, categorize, organize, and distinguish; the fifth level of evaluation includes assess, judge, evaluate, and critique; the sixth level of creation includes design, generate, and construct. Teachers can directly refer to the behavioral verbs in this chart to accurately position the expected effects of each teaching link and activity.



Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of Behavioral Verbs in Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives

The description of teaching objectives should use observable and measurable behavioral verbs, avoiding vague and abstract vocabulary[8]. Clear behavioral verbs help teachers accurately grasp the achievement level of teaching requirements and enable students to clearly understand their learning tasks and expected outcomes. For example, the verb “know” is vague, while verbs like “recite”, “retell”, and “imitate” have stronger orientation.

### 3.2. Anchor Behavioral Subjects and Focus on Students

The description of teaching objectives can reflect teachers’ educational concepts to a certain extent, including concepts of students and teacher-student relationships [7]. The New Curriculum Standards clearly require that the subject of teaching objectives should be students, and the evaluation object should also be students’ learning outcomes, not teachers as the main body. Teachers should consider students’ starting points and needs from the students’ perspective,

ensuring that teaching objectives are achievable by students through learning rather than describing teachers' teaching behaviors.

### 3.3. Closely Link to Core Competencies and Comprehensively Cultivate Talents

The core competencies of the English subject include language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability[9]. The setting of teaching objectives should fully cover these four dimensions, enabling students to cultivate comprehensive qualities such as cross-cultural communication skills, critical thinking, and autonomous learning ability while learning English knowledge and skills. Teachers need to understand that the core competencies of the English subject are an integrated and interconnected whole, not independent entities. Therefore, when designing teaching objectives, teachers should not favor one or several aspects while neglecting others, nor should they merely design superficial teaching objectives for the sake of form.

### 3.4. Dig Deep into Textbook Connotations and Inspire Higher-order Thinking

Textbooks are important teaching resources. Teachers should deeply excavate the profound connotations in textbooks, not just limit themselves to superficial knowledge teaching. By setting challenging questions and tasks, they can stimulate students' higher-order thinking, such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and innovation.

## 4. Paradigms for Describing Teaching Objectives

In the description of teaching objectives, many teachers also lack awareness of standardized expression. American psychologist Robert F. Mager proposed an instructional design model that emphasizes specifying what students can do after completing learning tasks in a specific and clear manner. Based on behavioral psychology, this model advocates stating teaching objectives using observable and measurable behaviors, namely behavioral objectives. After Mager, Armstrong et al. further developed the Mager model and proposed the ABCD objective statement method, which includes four elements:

- (1) A-Audience: Specifies the teaching object;
- (2) B-Behavior: Indicates what students can do after learning;
- (3) C-Conditions: Refers to the conditions under which the above behavior occurs;
- (4) D-Degree: Describes the criteria for the qualified level of the above behavior.

Compared with the Mager's model, the ABCD Principle adds and emphasizes the element of the behavior (i.e., the audience), making the description of teaching objectives more comprehensive and complete [1]. It is a widely accepted and applied statement model in teaching. Taking the teaching content of "Unit 9 What does he look like?" from the PEP Textbook (Go for it) for Grade 7, volume 2 as an example, the author formulates a teaching objective paradigm for reference. The theme of this unit is describing people's appearances. The following are teaching objectives using the ABCD Principle paradigm:

- (1) By the end of the class (Conditions), the students (Audience) will be able to recognize the words and phrases used to describe people's appearances (Behavior), such as tall,

short, fat, etc., with a vocabulary recognition accuracy rate reaching 90% (Degree).

- (2) The students (Audience) will be able to successfully categorize (Behavior) at least 5 types of appearance features, like hairstyle, height, build, etc., in various texts about characters (Degree), with the help of some pictures and sample texts provided by the teacher (Conditions), and then create their own unique descriptions of new characters in English (Behavior).

- (3) After studying the content about describing appearances and referring to additional English videos introducing various cultural features (Conditions) the students (Audience) will be able to compare and contrast the ways of describing people's appearances in different cultures (Behavior) through English materials and share the interesting cultural differences with classmates in English without major grammar errors (Degree).

- (4) With the guidance of the teacher on how to make vocabulary notebooks and mind maps and by referring to the examples in the textbook (Conditions), the students (Audience) will be able to make personal vocabulary notebooks and mind maps independently (Behavior), summarize effective learning methods for remembering appearance-related expressions (Behavior) and be able to share at least 2 practical learning methods (Degree) that can help improve the memorization of such expressions.

In addition to conforming to the ABCD teaching objective description paradigm, the 4 objectives above not only require basic mastery of words and sentences describing people's appearances (language skills) but also ask students to create mind maps and form their own vocabulary notes based on teacher-provided examples (learning ability), share differences in describing people's appearances across cultures with classmates (cultural awareness), and finally create and describe imaginary new characters (thinking quality). From the design of teaching objectives, the key content of this lesson can be clarified, and even the general teaching links and activities can be inferred.

In summary, under the new curriculum, the design of English teaching objectives should be based on new curriculum concepts, reflect correct teaching concepts, student concepts, and learning concepts, and highlight students' principal position [5]. Teachers should formulate clear, specific, appropriate, and highly operable teaching objectives according to students' actual conditions and textbook content to effectively improve the effectiveness of English classroom teaching. In short, teachers should strengthen goal awareness, carefully design objectives for each lesson and teaching link, promote the achievement of unit objectives by achieving each class's objectives, and ultimately facilitate the realization of curriculum objectives. By constructing a scientific and reasonable teaching objective system, we can effectively guide students' learning in the teaching process, comprehensively improve students' English comprehensive literacy, lay a solid English foundation for students' future development, and provide a strong guarantee for improving the quality of junior high school English teaching.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the concepts of the New Curriculum Standards, this paper studies the existing problems in designing junior high school English classroom teaching objectives from theory to practice, aiming to arouse the problem awareness of English teachers, propose scientific improvement

countermeasures and suggestions, and design a teaching objective case for reference based on the ABCD principle, hoping to benefit teachers' teaching work. However, this study only stays at the level of design ideas and principles. During the writing and literature review process, the author found that current research on the evaluation system of teaching objective design is scarce, and a complete and operable evaluation system has not yet been formed, which can be a direction for further in-depth research in the future.

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