

Realistic Misunderstandings and Classroom Implementation Paths of the Integration of "Teaching-Learning-Assessment" in Junior High School English

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Abstract

The Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition) positions the integration of teaching, learning, and assessment as a key concept for fostering core competencies in English. However, in frontline junior high school English classrooms, this concept is often reduced to “adding in-class quizzes” or a superficial accumulation of activities. After clarifying the essence of teaching-learning-assessment integration, this paper draws on classroom observation and teaching reflection to identify four typical misunderstandings: narrowing of learning objectives, disconnection between assessment and teaching, ineffective feedback, and over-reliance on teacher-led assessment. It then proposes classroom implementation pathways from four perspectives: backward design, embedded assessment tasks, effective feedback mechanisms, and multi-agent participation in assessment. Taking unit teaching from the PEP junior high school English textbook as an example, the paper illustrates an operational approach to organically integrating assessment into the teaching process, aiming to provide frontline teachers with theoretically grounded and easily adaptable practical strategies.

Keywords

Teaching-Learning-Assessment Integration; Junior High School English; Common Misunderstandings; Implementation Pathways; Formative Assessment

1. Introduction

With the promulgation of the "Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)" (hereinafter referred to as the "New Curriculum Standards"), the integration of "teaching-learning-assessment" has become one of the core discourses in English teaching reform. The New Curriculum Standards clearly state that teachers should "accurately grasp the different functions of teaching, learning,

and assessment in the process of educating people, and establish a holistic educational concept of 'teaching-learning-assessment'" and emphasize that "teaching evaluation should run through the entire process of English curriculum teaching and learning" (Ministry of Education, 2022). This requirement breaks the long-standing inertia of the dual separation of teaching and evaluation, calling for a new classroom paradigm that deeply integrates goals, learning activities, and evaluation.

However, upon entering a real junior high school English classroom, it is not difficult to notice the gap between theory and practice. Many teachers simply equate the integration of "teaching-learning-assessment" with "practicing and testing in every class", and the assessment has been alienated into a new form that increases the burden on both teachers and students. Some public classes feature dazzling activity designs, but the assessment tasks are disconnected from the teaching objectives. Others remain stuck in vague slogans like "Good job!" and "Try harder!" for assessment feedback, failing to provide effective information that promotes learning. These phenomena reflect a misinterpretation of the connotation of the integration of "teaching-learning-assessment" and a lack of practical implementation.

This article attempts to diagnose typical misconceptions in current classrooms based on the interpretation of the integrated value logic of "teaching-learning-assessment", and explore an operable classroom implementation path by combining theories such as inverse instructional design and formative assessment. Instead of accumulating empirical data, the article pursues in-depth speculation based on theory and lesson examples, with the aim of prompting frontline teachers to rethink evaluation-based education and providing a clear thread from "conceptual cognition" to "classroom implementation".

2. The connotation and value of the integration of "teaching-learning-assessment"

An accurate understanding of the connotation of the integration of "teaching-learning-assessment" is the prerequisite for avoiding practical deviations. Although there are different emphases in the academic definition at present, a consensus is gradually emerging: it is not a simple combination of teaching, learning, and assessment, but rather, it is guided by teaching objectives, with assessment continuously embedded in the teaching and learning process, achieving consistency of "objectives-teaching-assessment" (Cui Yunhuo, Xia Xuemei, 2013). Specifically, teaching objectives define where students "are going", teaching activities address "how to get there", and assessment answers "where are we now" and "how to get there better". The three constitute a dynamic, circular, and mutually corroborative closed loop.

This concept has a solid theoretical foundation. The "backward design" theory proposed by Wiggins and McTighe (2017) advocates that teachers should first

clarify the expected learning outcomes and determine what evidence can prove that students have achieved these outcomes before considering "how to teach" and then designing learning activities. This "end-to-end" design logic ensures precise alignment between evaluation tasks and teaching objectives. At the same time, the theory of formative evaluation also provides operational support for the integration of "teaching-learning-evaluation". In their classic research, Black and Wiliam (1998) pointed out that when teachers continuously obtain evidence of student learning through classroom interaction, questioning, tasks, and other methods, and adjust their teaching accordingly, it can significantly enhance academic achievement. It can be seen that the integration of "teaching-learning-evaluation" is essentially embedding formative evaluation into the fabric of teaching, making evaluation a scaffold for improving teaching and learning, rather than a "judgment" after learning is over.

In the context of junior high school English, the integration of "teaching-learning-assessment" holds special educational value. The goal of the English curriculum is to develop core competencies such as language proficiency, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability. The development of these competencies requires continuous interaction through observation, experience, reflection, and expression in real-life situations. The traditional linear process of "teacher lecture-student note-after-class practice-exam assessment" can easily lead to fragmented learning and the suspension of competency development. Only when assessment tasks become an integral part of classroom activities can students continuously use language, adjust thinking, and reflect on strategies during task completion. Teachers can also promptly capture clues of competency development in students' performance and provide support. Wang Qiang and Li Liang (2021) point out that the integration of "teaching-learning-assessment" is a key mechanism for promoting the implementation of core competencies in English. It guides teachers to shift from "teaching textbooks" to "teaching with textbooks" and from "focusing only on results" to "paying attention to the process". Therefore, this concept is not a technical repair of teaching methods, but rather a reconstruction of teaching culture centered on learner development.

3. Realistic misunderstandings of the integration of "teaching-learning-assessment" in junior high school English classrooms

The process of transforming ideas into practice often involves misinterpretation and deviation. In junior high school English teaching, the following types of misunderstandings occur frequently and deserve in-depth analysis.

3.1. Narrowed goals: Equating evaluation with exams, and replacing whole-process evaluation with summative evaluation

The most prevalent misconception is the narrowing of evaluation to various forms of paper-and-pencil tests or score recording under the guise of "teaching-learning-evaluation" integration. Teachers conduct classroom quizzes at the end of new lessons, arrange unit exams after the completion of each unit, and regard these exam results as the entirety of "evaluation". This approach is essentially the frequent use of summative evaluation, rather than the genuine integration of teaching and evaluation.

Logically speaking, exams can only provide static results after learning is completed, and cannot reveal students' thinking trajectories, difficult nodes, and strategy application during the learning process. For example, if a student scores low on a reading comprehension multiple-choice question, it is difficult for teachers to determine whether the obstacle stems from insufficient vocabulary, weak syntactic analysis ability, lack of background knowledge, or improper reasoning strategies based solely on the score. Teaching adjustments without procedural evidence are akin to the blind feeling an elephant. More importantly, when "evaluation" is equated with "examination", classroom atmosphere often tends to become tense, and students are prone to developing defensive mentality, avoiding challenging tasks to protect their self-image, which runs counter to the original intention of evaluation to promote learning. The new curriculum standard clearly requires "adopting various evaluation methods and means, reflecting the characteristics of multi-channel, multi-perspective, multi-level, and multi-mode", and narrowing evaluation to examinations precisely deviates from this concept of diversified evaluation.

3.2. Separation of teaching and evaluation: Despite rich activity designs, evaluation tasks are disconnected from the objectives

Some teachers design public or seminar classes with innovative and diverse activities, but when asked whether the evaluation tasks are aligned with the core objectives of the class, they often remain vague. This represents the second typical misconception in the integration of "teaching-learning-evaluation" - the disconnection between activities and evaluation. Specifically, although there are student presentations, group discussions, role-playing, etc. in the classroom, teachers fail to use these activities as opportunities to collect learning evidence, and evaluation still relies on homework or tests; or although evaluation tasks are embedded in activities, they have little correlation with the language and literacy goals of the class.

For example, in a listening and speaking class of Unit 4 "Why don't you talk to your parents?" in the lower grade of the eighth grade textbook published by People's Education Press, a teacher designed a debate activity titled "Should students tell parents about their problems?" Students showed high enthusiasm for participation, and the classroom atmosphere was lively. However, after class, it was found that the

teacher's design did not specify the evaluation points of this activity: should it be to evaluate students' debating skills, the depth of their viewpoints, or the accuracy of using suggestion sentence patterns such as "Why don't you...?" Due to the ambiguity of the evaluation dimensions, the teacher could only provide general verbal comments on students' performance, unable to give targeted feedback. Students were also unclear about what specific learning goals they should achieve through this activity. This separation made teaching lively but inefficient, and evaluation became a mere formality.

The root of the problem lies in teachers' lack of awareness of "pre-designing evaluation tasks". Wiggins and McTaggart (2017) emphasize that after determining teaching objectives, the next step should be to design "evaluation evidence", that is, through what kind of performance tasks can it be proven that students have achieved the objectives, and then design learning activities. Skipping this step, activities are prone to lose their goal orientation and become haphazard.

3.3. Ineffective feedback: General praise or simple error correction, lacking depth to promote learning

Feedback is the core engine that enables formative evaluation to be effective, yet the inefficiency of classroom feedback is another prominent misconception at present. The common manifestations are polarized: one is generalized positive feedback, such as "Very good!" and "You did a great job!", which, although sustains students' emotions, contains minimal information, preventing students from gaining a clear direction for improving their learning; the other extreme is singular error correction feedback, particularly focusing on grammatical and lexical errors. Teachers are eager to correct language forms, yet they overlook students' expressive intentions and sparkling thinking points, even disrupting students' fluency of expression.

Hattie (2009) found in a comprehensive study of hundreds of meta-analyses that the effect size of feedback ranks among the top factors affecting education. However, this is only the case when feedback can answer three core questions: "Where am I going?", "How am I progressing?", and "Where to go next?" In other words, effective feedback must be closely related to learning objectives, clearly indicating the distance between current performance and the goals, and providing specific improvement strategies. Looking back at current English classrooms, many teachers' feedback neither establishes a clear connection with objectives nor provides actionable suggestions for "the next step". For example, after a student completes a short essay on "My Favorite Festival", the teacher's comment simply reads "Some grammar mistakes. Pay attention.", leaving the student unsure of where to start making changes. Another example is in a reading class, when a student summarizes the main idea of the article inaccurately, the teacher directly gives the correct answer without guiding the student to reflect on the reasoning process, missing a golden opportunity to develop thinking skills. The underlying

reason for ineffective feedback lies in teachers not viewing feedback as an "educational action" itself, but rather as the end of evaluation.

3.4. Single subject: Teachers dominate the evaluation, while students become passive recipients

Despite the new curriculum standards advocating that "students are the main body of learning," in the evaluation process, the principal role of students is often obscured. Most classroom evaluations are initiated and adjudicated by teachers, and student self-assessment and peer assessment often become mere formalities. For example, when teachers ask students to evaluate each other's essays based on a certain checklist, students usually just tick and grade, lacking substantive discussion and explanation; self-assessment often turns into students mechanically filling out reflection forms under the teacher's instructions, without genuine metacognitive engagement.

The consequences of the homogenization of evaluation subjects are multifaceted. Firstly, it deprives students of opportunities to exercise their self-monitoring abilities. Learning ability, as one of the core competencies in English, requires "the ability to reflect on and evaluate one's own learning process and outcomes based on learning goals and progress" (Ministry of Education, 2022). When all evaluation judgments rely on teachers, students' self-regulation abilities naturally struggle to develop. Secondly, the superficial nature of peer evaluation also fails to produce the effect of "social construction within the zone of proximal development" described by Vygotsky, as language interaction and thinking collisions among students are not effectively activated. Furthermore, teachers bear a heavy burden due to solely undertaking all evaluation tasks, making it difficult to provide timely and detailed feedback, thus forming a vicious cycle.

4. The implementation path of the "Teaching-Learning-Assessment" Integrated Classroom

To overcome the aforementioned misconceptions, systematic improvements are needed in terms of design logic, task integration, feedback mechanisms, and subject expansion. Below, four classroom implementation paths are proposed, incorporating the concept of inverse teaching design and a junior high school English lesson example.

4.1. Begin with the end in mind, and establish a consistent chain of goals-evaluation-activities

The primary path to achieving the integration of "teaching-learning-assessment" is to reconstruct the teaching process using reverse design thinking. When preparing for a unit or lesson, teachers should first clearly define the language, cultural, and thinking objectives of the lesson based on a thorough study of the text and analysis

of student learning situations. Then, they should design assessment tasks that can demonstrate the achievement of these objectives. Finally, they can arrange learning experiences and activities. This change in sequence is crucial to ensure that assessments do not deviate from the objectives.

Taking the reading instruction of Unit 7 "What's the highest mountain in the world?" from the lower grade of the eighth grade textbook published by People's Education Press as an example, this lesson involves geographical facts about Mount Everest and the spirit of climbers. If the teacher sets the goals as: (1) being able to use the comparative and superlative forms to describe geographical facts; (2) being able to extract the difficulties and attitudes faced by climbers from the text and make brief comments, then the evaluation task should not be a simple answer to the post-reading comprehension questions. Instead, it can be designed as "If you were a young reporter for National Geographic, please introduce the basic situation of Mount Everest orally based on the information in the text, and express your understanding of the climber's spirit." This task directly points to the comprehensive application of the two goals. During the task process, the teacher can collect evidence such as the use of comparative forms, the accuracy of information extraction, and the depth of viewpoint expression in students' language output, achieving a seamless connection between teaching and evaluation. Subsequent learning activities, such as reading, discussion, and group sharing, are all centered around helping students complete this core evaluation task, forming a clear "goal-evaluation-learning" consistency structure. Cui Yunhuo (2013) pointed out that this consistency is the core technology for achieving the integration of "teaching-learning-evaluation".

4.2. Design embedded evaluation tasks to make evaluation the "core" of classroom activities

Evaluation should not be an additional component independent of teaching, but should be naturally integrated into the listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities in the classroom. Teachers need to design evaluation tasks as performance tasks that possess communicative authenticity and cognitive challenge, and continuously collect learning evidence through observation, questioning, checklists, and other methods during the task implementation process.

For example, in the reading teaching of Unit 5 "What are the shirts made of?" in the ninth-grade textbook published by People's Education Press, regarding the topic "Beauty in Common Things", teachers can set an embedded evaluation task of "Cultural Guide": student groups choose a traditional Chinese daily item (such as Paper Cuttings, pottery), and use the passive voice and vocabulary for describing materials and uses learned in this lesson to provide a cultural guide to "foreign friends". During the group preparation and presentation process, the teacher holds a concise evaluation record sheet, focusing on three dimensions: "Language Accuracy

(use of passive voice)", "Content Completeness (including materials, uses, and significance)", and "Depth of Cultural Interpretation". The observation record itself is an evaluation, and the teacher can adjust the teaching based on the evidence obtained in real time: if it is found that most students still have difficulty distinguishing between the passive voice "is made of/from", a mini language focus segment can be inserted immediately. Such evaluation does not add extra testing time; the evaluation task itself is a learning task, where students "learn by doing and evaluate while learning", achieving the integration and coexistence of learning and evaluation.

Cheng Xiaotang (2016) emphasized that the cultivation of core competencies in English requires relying on authentic language use contexts. Embedded assessment tasks, due to their contextual and performance-based nature, provide a window for observing the development of competencies, while avoiding the past disconnection of "lively activities during the process and cold post-activity assessments".

4.3. Activate multiple evaluation subjects and cultivate students' evaluation ability

To truly achieve the educational realm of "teaching for the sake of teaching", it is necessary to incorporate students into the ranks of evaluation subjects and develop their self-evaluation and peer-evaluation abilities. This incorporation is not simply about having students check boxes or give scores, but rather about enabling students to gradually internalize evaluation criteria through transparent evaluation standards and structured interactive procedures, and learn to examine the learning process like experts.

In practice, teachers can present the learning objectives and success criteria for the lesson at the beginning of the class, translating them into language that students can understand, such as "I can use at least three different adjective comparisons to compare two places." This kind of "I can..." statement. Before the end of the class, set aside a few minutes to guide students in self-reflection against the criteria, and briefly record their evidence of meeting the standards and areas where they still need to work. For peer evaluation, teachers need to provide "language scaffolds for peer evaluation", such as "I notice you used... That's great because.../ I suggest you could add... to make it clearer.", to avoid students only saying vague evaluations like "very good" or "a bit short".

Taking the writing lesson of Unit 3 "I'm more outgoing than my sister." from the People's Education Press's eighth-grade textbook as an example, the goal of this lesson is to enable students to use the comparative form to describe differences in physical appearance and personality. Teachers can set up a "peer editing" session after writing, distribute feedback guides focusing on the use of the comparative form and details of description, and require students to verbally communicate modification suggestions in English. This kind of peer evaluation activity, on the one

hand, increases students' opportunities to use the target language in real communication, and on the other hand, cultivates their abilities of listening, reflection, and criticism. When students gradually learn to examine their own and their peers' learning from an evaluative perspective, teachers achieve "letting go" in evaluation, and the classroom evaluation culture also shifts from "teacher monologue" to "teacher-student dialogue".

5. Conclusion

The integration of "teaching-learning-assessment" serves as a crucial lever for the transformation of junior high school English classrooms in the context of the new curriculum standards. However, it is neither a mere slogan plastered on the wall nor a mechanical application of technical processes. It demands that teachers fundamentally reconstruct their teaching mindset: shifting assessment from the end to the center of learning, thereby making it a driving force that propels learning to occur. The misconceptions revealed in this article, such as narrowed objectives, disconnected teaching and assessment, ineffective feedback, and a singular evaluation subject, appear to be due to improper operations, but in essence, they reflect the lagging evaluation and teaching perspectives.

Overcoming misconceptions does not lie in increasing the tools or frequency of evaluation, but rather in being guided by clear objectives, using embedded performance tasks as the medium, fostering learning through feedback as the catalyst, and cultivating a learning community where both teachers and students are the main evaluators. When evaluation is no longer the sword of Damocles hanging over teachers and students, but rather a constant spark that ignites thinking and growth in daily teaching, the English classroom can truly become a fertile ground for nurturing core competencies. The realization of this vision requires not only reflective practice from individual teachers but also the overall support of school teaching and research culture. Further action research rooted in the classroom is needed to deepen this understanding.

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