

The Application and Strategies of Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives in the Design of Teaching Objectives for English Listening and Speaking Lessons

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Abstract

For English listening and speaking lessons, by rationalizing and refining the design of teaching objectives can learners better master skills, thereby improving their English proficiency at the communicative and practical competences. This paper, from the perspective of Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives, analyzes its application in the design of teaching objectives for English listening and speaking lessons and proposes strategies to align teaching objectives with Bloom's Taxonomy.

Keywords

Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives; English listening and speaking lesson; teaching objectives design

1. Introduction

English listening and speaking abilities have attracted much attention as a core competences for intercultural communication. However, the current teaching objectives design of English listening and speaking lesson still faces some problems such as fragmentation and blurred ability levels, which makes it difficult for students to improve their language application ability systematically.

Based on Bloom's Taxonomy of cognitive objectives, this paper discusses its practical value in the teaching objectives design of English listening and speaking lessons. Bloom's taxonomy divides cognitive abilities into six levels: remember, understand, apply, analysis, evaluate, and create, which provides a ladder framework for teaching objectives. By dividing the objectives into basic, application and creation layers.

This paper constructs a progressive path from language knowledge accumulation to high-

er-order thinking cultivation, and explains the design strategy of each layer of objectives with specific teaching cases, providing systematic theoretical support for English listening and speaking teaching.

2. Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives

Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives is one of the most influential educational theoretical frameworks of the 20th century, which was first proposed in 1956 by a team led by American educational psychologist Benjamin S. Bloom. He categorized the development of critical thinking skills into six levels from low to high, namely remember, understand, apply, analysis, evaluate and create. Since then, related experts have revised Bloom's cognitive goal classification, the most important revision of which was completed by Anderson, L.W., a renowned expert in curriculum theory and educational research, and nearly 10 experts.

These six goal levels can be subdivided into higher-order thinking and lower-order thinking, with the latter three levels generally referred to collectively as higher-order thinking (analyzing, evaluating, and creating), and the first three levels collectively as lower-order thinking (memorizing, understanding, and applying).

Cognitive Levels	Cognitive Characteristics	Typical Verbs
Remember	Recognize or recall specific information; mechanically reproduce information	Recite, retell, enumerate, define, identify
Understand	Explain concepts in one's own words; summarize or generalize information; establish connections through analogy, classification, or exemplification	Explain, summarize, compare, exemplify, translate, classify
Apply	Select appropriate methods to perform tasks; transform abstract knowledge into specific operations	Apply, execute, solve, demonstrate, operate
Analyze	Distinguish facts from opinions; identify causal relationships or implicit assumptions; organize information to reveal patterns or contradictions	Analyze, distinguish, deconstruct, correlate, organize, verify
Evaluate	Assess the rigor of logic; weigh the advantages and disadvantages of different solutions; verify the reliability of conclusions	Assess, criticize, defend, judge, verify, suggest
Create	Break through conventions to put forward new viewpoints; design systematic solutions; integrate knowledge across fields to generate new structures	

Figure 1. Cognitive Characteristics and Typical Action Verbs Table Based on Cognitive Levels

3. Design of Teaching Objectives for English Listening and Speaking Courses

The design of teaching objectives is an important foundation for a good lesson planning and an important part of the English teaching process. As the core link of language ability cultivation, the design of teaching objectives of English listening and speaking lesson should take into account the accumulation of language knowledge and the development

of cross-cultural communication literacy, and should help students improve their communicative ability and practical English language skills under certain scenarios and activities or tasks.

The teaching objectives of the English classroom have changed from the “double-basic” objectives, including basic knowledge and basic skills, emphasizing the learning of phonetics, vocabulary, grammar and other knowledge, and the training of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills to the model of three-dimensional teaching objectives. And then from the three dimensions of knowledge and skills, process and method, and affective attitudes and values, to the present model of the key competences. Under this background, according to the requirements of English key competences, the current status of teaching objectives design of English listening and speaking class is mostly in the following aspects.

3.1 Misinterpretation of Language Competence

The connotation of language competence under the key competences includes the following:

3.1.1 Language proficiency refers to the ability to participate in activities related to the subject matter in a particular situation.

It is not something that can be demonstrated at anytime and anywhere, but is required to be gradually stimulated by students in the process of participating in certain language activities. For example, students cannot exercise their linguistic competence when they complete some simple grammar exercises or recite simple texts.

3.1.2 Language proficiency includes the ability to use language and the ability to communicate with non-verbal knowledge and various strategies.

It requires students not only to be able to use written language knowledge such as vocabulary, sentence patterns and grammar, but also to be able to use the language they have learned to communicate, and to use and practice the language in a real communicative contexts.

3.1.3 The key point of language proficiency is comprehension and expression.

Based on this, most of the English teachers nowadays only set the teaching objectives as the mastery of some certain words, key sentence patterns or key grammar. The teaching objectives of language proficiency still remain at the textual level, and there is still a lack of attention to the students' pragmatic ability and their ability to use the language for input and output. If students' learning in the listening and speaking class only stays at the level of cultivating low-order competence and does not go deeper to the elevation of higher-order competence, it will not be helpful to the improvement of students' English linguistic competence.

3.2 Fragmented Objective Design

In the current design of teaching objectives in English listening and speaking lessons, fragmentation is still a common problem that is difficult to overcome. The design of

fragmented teaching objectives is specifically manifested as follows.

The setting of teaching objectives shows excessive focus on isolated language knowledge and skill training. For example, in listening and speaking classes, the teaching objective of the listening section is simply the ability to recognize specific grammatical structures, or the teaching objective of the speaking section only centers on the expression training of a single topic. This kind of fragmented objective design seriously ignores the intrinsic correlation between language knowledge and skills, which makes it difficult for students to build up a complete and systematic language use system. This is also an obstacle to the development of pragmatic competence.

Some teachers may put the teaching objectives of emotional attitude and cultural awareness in a marginalized position in the teaching objective system, and these teaching objectives are often presented in a programmed, slogan-like expression, failing to form a deep and organic integration with the cultivation of language proficiency, which leads to an imbalance in the three-dimensional structure of the teaching objectives, and fails to comprehensively implement the cultivation of the core qualities of the English language subject.

This other form of fragmentation of teaching objectives also has a negative impact on English listening and speaking teaching. From the learners' point of view, due to the lack of a macro goal framework, students are difficult to form a holistic knowledge system and are unable to effectively integrate fragmented language knowledge and skill modules, which greatly restricts the development of their comprehensive language use ability.

3.3 Ambiguous Ability-Level Definitions

In the field of designing teaching objectives for English listening and speaking classes, the ambiguous representation of competency levels has become another form of problem that restricts the improvement of teaching quality. The problem of defining the dimensions of competence vaguely is common in the design and presentation of teaching objectives. For example, teachers are more likely to use semantically ambiguous terms such as “comprehension” “mastery” when setting teaching objectives, and lack quantitative and qualitative descriptions of the degree of achievement of competence at different teaching stages. For example, if a teacher focuses on comprehension of listening materials in a listening and speaking class, but fails to differentiate and clearly state whether the teaching objective is to require students to be able to grasp the key information or to organize the logical structure of the content when setting the teaching objective, the objective will be ambiguous, which will lead to a low learning effect on the actual learning of the learners, and even more so, fail to effectively improve the English proficiency of the students.

Similarly, if a teacher focuses a listening and speaking lesson on the improvement of students' speaking ability without defining whether the students are required to be clear about whether they are able to carry on a simple conversation or complete the elaboration of complex ideas. This kind of ambiguity makes it difficult to accurately position students' learning needs, and it is difficult for teachers to grasp the depth and rhythm of

teaching in the teaching process, making it difficult to measure the effectiveness of teaching; students are also unable to clearly understand the learning requirements, and they are prone to fall into a state of blind learning, making it difficult to realize the gradual improvement of their abilities, and hampering the motivation and initiative of learning.

4. Bloom's Taxonomy-Based Design of Teaching Objectives

Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives divides competence into six levels. For English listening and speaking lessons, the teaching objectives can be based on Bloom's cognitive objective classification, following the stepwise objective chain from the mastery of lower-order abilities to the expansion of higher-order abilities. Teaching objectives designed on this basis can cope with the problems of fragmentation of teaching objective design and blurring of the expression of ability levels.

According to Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives, the teaching objectives of English listening and speaking lessons can be divided into the basic level, the application level and the creative level.

Teaching Objective Hierarchy	Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives	Listening Skills Application	Oral Skills Application
Basic Level	Remembering	Recognize phonetic elements; Recall key information	Retell dialogue content; Recite fixed expressions
	Understanding	Summarize the main idea; Infer contextual information	Explain viewpoints and intentions; Relay complex information
Application Level	Applying	Execute oral instructions; Match responses to situations	Participate in situational dialogue activities; Output through role - playing
	Analyzing	Discern logical relationships; Deconstruct the speaker's language	Compare differences in viewpoints; Deconstruct language structures
Creative Level	Evaluating	Judge the credibility of information; Assess the rationality of language	Propose improvement suggestions; Reflect on the effectiveness of expression
	Creating	Predict the development direction of discourse	Create impromptu speeches

Figure 2. A Hierarchical Scale for the Application of Listening and Speaking Skills Based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives

The above table illustrates that under Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives categorization, the teaching objectives of English listening and speaking lesson are designed as a ladder goal chain from the basic level, application level and creation level. Starting from simple recognition and recall, retelling and reciting, students gradually cultivate their ability of discernment and deconstruction, output and comparison, and finally reach the mastery of higher-order ability of judgment and evaluation, prediction and creation.

Take the listening and speaking lesson Say Sorry to Family Members under Book1 Unit3

Family Matters of the Foreign Studies Edition of the High School English Teaching Materials as an example, the teaching objectives of the lesson are designed as follows based on Bloom's cognitive objective classification.

4.1 Basic level Objectives

The teaching objectives of the basic level focus on developing students' ability to memorize and initially understand the basics of the English language, laying the foundation for subsequent application and analysis. Through a variety of teaching methods, students are helped to memorize English vocabulary, grammar rules, phonological knowledge and to be able to carry out simple identification, interpretation and conversion of what they have learned, so as to form a basic linguistic perceptual and cognitive framework for listening and speaking in English.

4.1.1 Remembering

The memory level requires students to be able to recognize or recall specific information. For this lesson, the teaching objectives can be designed as follows: students can accurately recall and reproduce key vocabulary, phrases and apologetic sentence patterns in the text. In teaching listening and speaking, teachers can help students grasp the learning objectives more accurately by assigning clear tasks. The teaching activities corresponding to the teaching objectives can be designed as follows: after learning this lesson, students can memorize the core information about the International Day of Families, including the time, purpose, theme and so on.

4.1.2 Understanding

The competence level of comprehension requires explaining concepts in one's own words; summarizing or inducting information; and making connections by analogy, classification or example. Corresponding objectives based on this level could be: students can explain the content of the dialogue, understand the character's feelings and the specific reason for the apology. Corresponding activities could be: students answering detailed questions (Why did Alice's mother miss the event? How does Alice feel about her mother?); matching the speaker's emotions in the listening material (choosing emotion words from a-f).

4.2 Application Level Objectives

The teaching objectives of the application level need to focus on students' ability to practically apply English language knowledge, listening strategies and oral expression skills, as well as their ability to analyze listening discourse and oral communication scenarios. Through the creation of real or simulated language situations, students are encouraged to transfer what they have learned to new contexts to solve practical problems, to analyze language structures, logical relationships and communicative intentions, and to develop critical thinking and flexibility in language use.

4.2.1 Applying

The competence level of application requires students to choose appropriate methods to perform tasks; to transform abstract knowledge into concrete operational objectives. Therefore, the teaching objectives of this level can be designed as follows: students can correctly use the apology sentence pattern in a simulated situation and complete the role-play dialogues.

The corresponding teaching activity can be: ask students to work in pairs to perform the apology dialogues according to the contents of the textbook pages (Page 82 & 85). Students can use adverbs such as “I'm really sorry” to express their apologies.

4.2.2 Analyzing

The competence level of analysis requires students to be able to distinguish between fact and opinion; to identify causal relationships or implicit assumptions; and to organize information to reveal patterns or contradictions. The teaching objectives of this listening and speaking lesson could be: students can analyze the effects of different language strategies on the effectiveness of apologies and compare the differences. The corresponding teaching activities could be: Have students discuss the difference in tone between “I am sorry” and “I'm sorry”. Compare and contrast the ways of apologizing in different situations (work absence vs. family conflict).

4.3 Creative Level Objectives

The teaching goal focuses on cultivating students' higher-order thinking skills, and requires students to be able to objectively evaluate linguistic expressions and listening materials according to certain criteria on the basis of mastering basic English listening and speaking knowledge and skills, as well as to creatively use English to express and communicate with each other in the light of their existing knowledge and experience to form personalized linguistic outputs, and to realize the transfer of knowledge and innovative applications.

4.3.1 Evaluating

The competency level of evaluation requires students to assess the rigor of logic; weigh the advantages and disadvantages of different options; and verify the reliability of conclusions. The instructional objectives can be designed in such a way that students can evaluate the rationality of their own and other people's dialogues and make suggestions for improvement. The corresponding teaching activity could be: after the role-play, ask students to work in groups to evaluate each other's sincerity and linguistic accuracy in apologizing. At the same time, reflect on whether the stressing skills emphasized in the “Learning to Learn” section are being used appropriately.

4.3.2 Creating

The competency dimension of creativity requires students to think out of the box to come

up with new ideas; to design systematic scenarios; and to integrate cross-disciplinary knowledge to generate new structures. The instructional objectives could be designed in such a way that students can design and perform a new family apology scenario based on what they have learned.

The teaching activities can be designed as sample activities: create a new situation related to family conflict (forgetting an important agreement) and ask students to write and perform the dialogues. Design posters or skits calling for family communication in relation to the theme of the International Day of Families.

5. Conclusion

Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives brings a brand-new perspective to the design of teaching objectives in English listening and speaking lessons. It improves the teaching objective design system in theory and solves the existing key problems in practice. In the future, English education and teaching not limited to English listening and speaking classes and other types of classes can also use this theory to optimize teaching and help students improve their English ability and adapt to the needs of the times.

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