

ASSESSING THE ACCURACY OF LEARNING OBJECTIVE FORMULATION IN LESSON PLANS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INDONESIAN EFL SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The formulation of specific and achievable learning outcomes remains critical in the approach to teaching, especially in the EFL context. At the same time, some of the challenges mentioned by educators indicate the problem of defining the objectives, goals and outcomes of a curriculum. This research aims to critically analyze how Indonesian EFL secondary school teachers construct learning objectives in the context of Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Merdeka. This study was an exploratory study using qualitative descriptive research methods. The inclusion of two teachers from the same school was intentional to reduce external bias. Triangulated qualitative data sources included participants' written consent forms and principal interviews, and quantitative lesson plan documents were evaluated using the ABCD and SMART model checklists. Strengths identified centered on high-level thinking skills and child-centered processes, while weaknesses included many frameworks and a lack of objective criteria. Based on the study's findings, a combination of detailed instructional contexts and performance bench marking can positively enhance the formulation of learning goals. They advance knowledge about approaches to implementing and refining instructional practices and goals in conjunction with curricular expectations in different contexts.

Keywords: *EFL Teachers, Learning Objectives, Lesson Plan.*

INTRODUCTION

Through education, students attain social knowledge structures that guide them in their environment. Education planning requires the creation of requirements that are both concrete, measurable, and realistic. According to Abdelaziz (2023) Effective lesson planning is a fundamental component in shaping the quality of education and learning outcomes, especially in the context of teaching English EFL teaching requires precise objectives for students who need incremental development of their listening and speaking abilities as well as reading and writing abilities. The recent introduction of Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesia has increased the necessity for appropriately set learning objectives. The educational programs prioritize problem-solving abilities and interpersonal

competencies because they move students from memorization to meaningful participation (Nation & Macalister, 2010; Richards 2013). Teaching and learning outcomes will improve through the implementation of practical learning objectives in these curricula.

Teachers must develop proper methods for objective creation despite understanding the importance of clear learning targets. Relevant research tools to help with goal development include ABCD model and the SMART criteria established (Latifa, 2017; Adawiyah, 2024). The ABCD model allows educators to create measurable targets through its audience, behavior, conditions, degree components, and SMART criteria, which require specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound objectives. Multiple investigations have revealed that EFL teachers encounter problems using these frameworks because they lack clarity (Fitriani & Budiarta, 2021; Phothongsunan, 2024). The pressures on new teachers create extra barriers to their learning challenges. Professional development with effective mentoring plays a key role in teaching professionals to establish and implement suitable learning objectives, according to Emiliasari (2019) and Trisnawati and Ekawati (2020).

While many studies reveal the common difficulties EFL teachers face, few studies investigate how frameworks such as ABCD and SMART are used within the context of Indonesian. In addition to this shift from Kurikulum 2013 to Kurikulum Merdeka, new dynamics influence how objectives are formulated. For example, flexibility is notable now that the Kurikulum Merdeka has more freedom in lesson planning than the 2013 Curriculum and SMART are applied in the Indonesian context. Furthermore, transitioning from Kurikulum 2013 to Kurikulum Merdeka introduces new dynamics that may affect how objectives are developed. For instance, Kurikulum Merdeka allows greater flexibility in lesson planning, while Kurikulum 2013 provides more structured guidelines. Therefore, This research aims to fill this gap by investigating how Indonesian EFL teachers employ these frameworks within various curriculum settings. By thoroughly examining real classroom practices and assessing how well they align with curriculum goals and expected learning outcomes an area that has not received enough attention in prior research, this study fills a significant gap in EFL research. Its uniqueness is in using

a comprehensive evaluation method that provides empirical insights into the present advantages and disadvantages of teaching strategies while also examining the alignment of objectives, pedagogy, and learning outcomes. This study is important because it provides evidence-based guidelines that policymakers, curriculum designers, and teacher trainers can use to improve the quality of EFL instruction, lessen the gap between policy and practice, and eventually raise students' English proficiency in a way that is more efficient and long-lasting.

METHOD

Research Design

The research methodology used in this study was descriptive qualitative research, which is commonly used to establish more information on educational phenomena. This study addresses a critical gap in EFL research by providing a comprehensive examination of actual classroom practices and evaluating their alignment with curriculum goals and expected learning outcomes—an area that has been insufficiently explored in previous studies. Its novelty lies in employing a holistic evaluative approach that simultaneously analyzes the congruence between goals, pedagogy, and learning outcomes, while offering empirical insights into the current strengths and weaknesses of instructional practices. Consequently, this study is significant as it delivers evidence-based foundations for policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher trainers to enhance the quality of EFL instruction, reduce the mismatch between policy and implementation, and ultimately improve students' English proficiency in a more effective and sustainable manner.

Descriptive qualitative research focuses on explicating certain practices and determining the factors that characterize them; hence, it is well suited to exploring how EFL teachers design learning objectives into lesson plans. On the use of the qualitative approach: The approach enables the consideration of contextual and instructional aspects, thereby creating the needed general understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). In the learners' evaluation technique, the study has used ABCD tactics (Audience, Behavior, Condition, Degree) alongside the SMART indicators (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound).

These frameworks by Mager and Doran have already been widely used in many educational studies to identify the clarity, specificity, and correspondence to the learning objectives (Adawiyah, 2024). Brown (2001) expresses that incorporating the specified frameworks, particularly in the lesson planning process, enhances the development of measurable and achievable objectives, enhancing instruction. That is why applying these theoretical models grounded the analysis in a solid and systematic approach to evaluating learning objectives.

Research Participants or Population and Sample

Two English teachers collaborating at an Indonesian secondary school received qualitative evaluation through the analysis of lesson planning procedures between Kurikulum Merdeka focus on student autonomy and Kurikulum 2013 prioritization of character development. The choice of teachers from one institution allowed the research to control for school-specific cultural components and resources based on qualitative analysis recommendations by (Farrell, 2007). Through their focused comparison of two educators the researchers studied their lesson planning approaches to directly examine effectiveness in constructing learning objectives between different curricula. The research objectives focused on deriving valuable information for enhancing learning objective quality within EFL education.

Instruments

Qualitative research methods investigated EFL teachers' learning targets through interview analysis and lesson plan evaluation. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), methodological triangulation served as the reliability assurance method to combine several data sources. The research applied thematic analysis to identify patterns in objective development through structured coding methods from Richards (2006). The statement regarding decision-making came from interview transcripts, whereas curricular alignment stemmed directly from lesson plans. The SMART and ABCD frameworks were utilized to evaluate the study objectives. According to Sharma (2022) the study strengthened its validity measure when applying triangulation. An analytical procedure exposed difficulties with creating definite educational objectives but provided guidance for designing improved EFL teaching procedures that match educational requirements. Scientific and ethical

practices such as participant confidentiality and voluntary participation were maintained to ensure research credibility. The study reveals essential information to enhance EFL teaching practices in classroom settings.

Data Analysis

Systematic coding and thematic analysis methods were employed to detect learning objective formulation patterns along with their strengths and weaknesses. Thematic analysis offers value as a qualitative technique through data spirit generalization, according to Nowell et al. (2017). The analysis of lesson plans allowed researchers to check if instructors communicated the intended aims to curriculum requirements. The ABCD and SMART frameworks served as a structured tool to evaluate the purposeful development of objectives. Interviews combined with document analysis strengthened the study's validity and reliability levels, according to Sharma (2022). The research study identified essential factors for better lesson planning and provided specific guidelines to match instructional objectives to curriculum standards in EFL teaching classrooms. The research outcomes support practical changes to lesson development methods and the deployment of successful learning targets.

Findings

Learning objectives are very important when developing lessons because they are not only a reference point for a teacher but also an important goal point for a learner. Learning objectives determine what should be achieved at the end of the learning process, not the process of delivering learning (Sharma, 2022). The researcher describes learning objectives as statements of the behavior expected of students after learning, while on the other hand, Khrisna (2020) underlines the importance of learning objectives in a measurable and observable way of student performance focusing on learning outcomes. These principles are in accordance with the ABCD model advocated by Mager, which states that objectives should define the audience (students), use operational verbs to describe the specified behavior, specify the context in which the behavior should occur, and describe the measures or standards used to measure achievement. Purnama Sari et al., (2022) also stated that increased specificity in the promotion of learning objectives should use operational verbs that set clear learning objectives and avoid vague language.

The findings and discussion of this study are presented in this section based on the learning objectives in the lesson plans created by Teacher 1, who implemented the Kurikulum Merdeka, and Teacher 2, who implemented the Kurikulum 2013.

The comparison between Teacher 1 and Teacher 2's lesson plan learning objectives illustrates strengths and weaknesses that reflect broader educational principles. The objectives for Teacher 1 highlighted student-centered outcomes and observable behaviors, such as being grateful and stating ideas. This approach also aligns with Bloom's taxonomy, demonstrating the potential for this to cultivate social-emotional skills and critical thinking (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). However, their design lacks specific instructional conditions and measurable criteria to imbue them with practical content or utility. For example, the goals are less meaningful to different learning contexts due to a lack of nuance for existing knowledge or techniques for instruction, such as role-play or group discussion. According to Celce-Murcia (2001), learning objectives should clearly describe the expected behavior, conditions, and criteria for success. Khrisna (2020) also highlights this focus on learning outcomes, pointing to the need for measurable and observable performance. Otherwise, the goals may be too broad and may not address the needs of students in the classroom.

Teacher 2, on the other hand, wrote specific objectives based on the higher-order cognitive skills of analyzing and creating texts. It is in alignment with Kurikulum 2013, which emphasizes analytical and creative competencies, designed to prepare students to solve problems and make decisions related to real life (Corppola et al., 2021). These goals offer a strong matrix for teaching and learning critical thinking and problem-solving skills. However, their utility is limited in informing practice without detailed descriptions of the kinds of instructional contexts that obtained these measures and without actionable benchmarks (e.g., accuracy levels or a list of specific tools). Since the exact scenarios in which to deploy such embraces are inevitably context dependent (i.e., no two classrooms are the same), offering some conditions under which such embraces are either necessary or not (e.g., physical dimensions and aspects of the facility, the ages of learners, graphic organizers, group conversations, brainstorming, etc.) may help to construct a clearer picture of embracing the non-

linear process of learning. Sharma (2022) suggests that practical objectives provide principle conditions and criteria to enable implementation and evaluation. Moreover, Purnama Sari et al. (2022) propose that adding operational verbs and measurable criteria will prevent confusion and ensure that the intent matches the purpose of the assessment. They say the results also underscored the crucial need to tailor learning objectives based on students' varied needs and backgrounds.

For example, Teacher 1's objective of "students can show appreciation to others" lacks context, assumes all students are equally ready to do this, and makes assumptions about the homogeneity of students in the classroom (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Likewise, Teacher 2's goal around differentiating texts assumes a uniform baseline of knowledge and does not address how knowledge might vary. This also supports Sudrajat (2015) findings on the need for objectives that reflect the students' previous health knowledge as a means of inclusivity and relevance. Moreover, Harmer (2007), an eminent name in English Language Teaching (ELT), also states that instruction planning must be linked to learners' levels and backgrounds to be contextualized for better engagement and accomplishment. In this regard, including context-specific elements and measurable criteria in the objectives can enhance the relevance of objectives and help address diverse learning environments (Mustikawati, 2019).

As endorsed by these findings, there is a substantial improvement in the development of learning objectives by applying the ABCD framework and SMART criteria. These objectives focus on the learner (Who is the audience?) and how the information will be conveyed (Under what conditions?), balancing the two in measurable terms. In addition, the use of operational verbs, such as Purnama Sari et al. (2022), verifies that assessments are precise and aligned with practices. This alignment ensures that learning objectives align with the curriculum standards and the real needs of educators and learners. As Richards and Rodgers (2014) argue, if teaching and learning objectives are well-written and organized, they can facilitate teaching and learning and will further improve classroom outcomes.

Overall, assessing Teaching by Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 learning objectives in their lesson plan demonstrates the significance of knowing and addressing learning objectives in a pedagogically appropriate and contextually dependent

manner. Teacher 1's objectives focus on student-centered goals and social-emotional skills, but they do not have enough specificity or measurability to inform where instruction should go. On the other hand, Teacher 2 had objectives that were closely aligned with higher-order cognitive skills and curriculum standards but did not include specific contextual elements or actionable benchmarks to know how to carry out those objectives. Using structures like ABCD and SMART provides the accountability, measurability, and flexibility needed across different contexts to ensure specific goals and assess different learning aspects. When educators integrate specific student goals with curriculum standards being addressed and specific student needs and backgrounds, the result is a specialized meaningful learning experience that fosters critical thinking about what is being learned, engagement of varied learner styles, and measurable success.

DISCUSSION

The evaluation of three English teachers' lesson plans revealed different levels of accuracy, coherence, and curriculum alignment, each with its own strengths and challenges. Teacher 1's lesson plan showed a clear understanding of basic structural components, including the school name, grade level, and topic, along with strong cohesion between learning goals, materials, and teaching strategies. However, it lacked specific details about students' prior knowledge and failed to include measurable learning objectives, making it difficult to tailor lessons to learners' needs or effectively assess their progress (Trisnawati & Ekawati, 2020). Teacher 2 demonstrated a solid grasp of curriculum goals and integrated project-based learning, but the plan was weakened by minimal student profiling and an unclear breakdown of procedures, which affected its adaptability and implementation. Teacher 3's lesson plan was more student-centered and featured clear, measurable goals. However, disorganized material sections, limited guidance on using instructional resources, and time management issues reduced the plan's effectiveness. All three teachers showed awareness of curriculum demands, but none fully integrated all essential elements into a cohesive, well-executed instructional plan.

In terms of alignment and overall instructional coherence, the three lesson plans showed varying success. Teacher 1's plan had a well-integrated structure where objectives, materials, and methods formed a unified sequence, supporting student engagement and consistent learning flow. Yet, its lack of measurable objectives and assessment strategies made it hard to evaluate student achievement. Teacher 2's plan aligned with the curriculum's core competencies, but due to insufficient contextual adaptation and the absence of student-specific data, its real-world applicability was limited. The project-based learning method introduced by Teacher 2 was promising but lacked clarity in execution. Teacher 3's plan aligned conceptually with curriculum goals and offered clear, learner-focused objectives. However, it struggled with fragmented material organization, inadequate resource integration, and poor time allocation, all of which hampered the effective delivery of the content (Richards, 2013). Across all three plans, while the curriculum alignment was generally understood, there was a consistent need for clearer objectives, robust assessment strategies, and better-integrated instructional components to support more effective and inclusive teaching practices.

The findings of this study on junior high school English teachers in Sragen support and deepen earlier research by offering a more detailed look at how teachers create lesson plans. Consistent with Harmer (2007), the study found that while teachers are aware of the value of well-structured lesson plans and their alignment with the curriculum, many still struggle to write specific, measurable learning objectives. They also face difficulties in designing clear and appropriate assessment methods, which makes it hard to track students' learning progress effectively (Harmer, 2007). Furthermore, the research showed that teachers often feel confident due to having structured plans, but these plans tend to overlook the diverse learning needs of students. This happens mostly because of a lack of student profiling and limited adaptation to classroom contexts. Therefore, the study emphasizes the ongoing need for professional training in differentiated instruction.

Building on previous research, the findings from this study conducted in Masaran Junior High School highlighted some of the challenges that junior high school English teachers still face in lesson planning. In line with Nor and Kadariyah (2022) and Nurhadi (2019), this study found that many teachers did not include

clear and measurable learning objectives and did not have effective assessment strategies-both of which are crucial for aligning lessons with the curriculum and tracking student learning outcomes (Nor & Kadariyah, 2022). Supporting to Zulianti et al. (2020), this study also shows that although teachers aim to follow curriculum guidelines, gaps in training lead to weak links between competencies, materials and assessment (Zulianti et al., 2020). Similarly, this study is in line with Cahyani et al.'s (2024) research, which shows that despite previous training, teachers still struggle to meet the requirements of the newer curriculum, especially in integrating resources and maintaining coherence (Cahyani et al., 2024). This study adds value by offering a focused and contextualized view of how lesson plans are formulated and where coherence often breaks down.

However, this research also modifies earlier findings by adding a more detailed and context-specific dimension, particularly regarding how lesson plan components interact at the junior high school level in Sragen. While Harmer (2007) and Nurhadi (2019) noted that vague or broad objectives hinder student progress assessment, the current study goes further by examining how the lack of contextual student information and resource planning exacerbates this issue. For example, Teacher 2's plan, despite reflecting core competencies, failed to provide adequate student profiling or localized content, which created a disconnect between curriculum expectations and classroom realities. This nuance was not extensively covered in previous studies and suggests that effective lesson planning must go beyond simply writing measurable objectives—it must also incorporate student diversity and learning context. Hence, the current study adds depth by demonstrating how these shortcomings impact the lesson's adaptability and inclusivity.

Another point of divergence from earlier research lies in how this study evaluates the internal coherence between lesson plan elements, such as objectives, methods, time allocation, and material integration. While previous studies, including those by Zulianti et al. (2020) and Nor & Kadariyah (2022) discussed alignment with curriculum standards in a general sense, they did not deeply explore how well the elements of a plan worked together. This study identified that although most plans generally aligned with the curriculum, inconsistencies in integration—

such as fragmented resource use or vague implementation instructions—limited lesson effectiveness. For instance, Teacher 3 had well-defined goals but struggled with material placement and time management, leading to disjointed instruction. This emphasizes that curriculum alignment alone is insufficient; the internal structure of lesson plans must also support logical, coherent delivery. This modification provides practical insights for improving lesson plan quality beyond mere curriculum compliance.

The findings of this study also support and slightly expand upon the work of Cahyani et al. (2024), particularly regarding the ongoing need for teacher training within the context of new curriculum frameworks like the Merdeka Curriculum. Although the teachers involved in this study had previously received training, many continued to experience difficulties in areas such as resource integration, effective use of technology, and ensuring consistency across lesson components. These findings align with Cahyani et al.'s conclusion that teacher professional development must go beyond basic curriculum introductions it needs to focus more on real-world application and classroom execution (Cahyani et al., 2024). The current study further emphasizes that teachers often grasp the goals of the curriculum, yet struggle with essential practical skills like time management, adapting to diverse learning contexts, and organizing lesson sequences effectively. As such, this research not only reaffirms earlier findings but also calls for a more hands-on, practice-oriented approach to teacher training that directly addresses day-to-day classroom challenges.

Beyond the interpretation of the findings, this study presents critical implications for educational policy and teacher professional development. The consistent misalignment observed between lesson plan components—particularly in the formulation of learning objectives and assessment methods—suggests a need for systemic policy interventions. National and local education authorities should consider reinforcing curriculum implementation by developing clearer guidelines on lesson planning, especially emphasizing the use of ABCD and SMART frameworks in setting learning objectives. These tools not only provide structure but also promote measurable and student-centered instructional planning, which aligns with the competency-based approach of the national curriculum (Latifa,

2017; Noto, 2014). At the institutional level, policy implications extend to the regular auditing of lesson plans and structured feedback mechanisms. School administrations should mandate periodic review sessions where lesson plans are collaboratively discussed among teaching staff, supported by academic supervisors or instructional coaches. Such policies would encourage reflective practice and foster a culture of continuous improvement, aligning with constructivist principles that view planning as an evolving, learner-responsive process (Vygotsky, 1978; White, 2021).

Furthermore, this study underscores the urgency of improving teacher training programs, particularly in both pre-service and in-service contexts. The observed limitations in integrating authentic materials, formulating measurable objectives, and developing comprehensive assessment rubrics indicate that many teachers lack the practical knowledge needed to operationalize curriculum mandates. Training modules should therefore incorporate hands-on workshops focused on constructing complete lesson plans using ABCD-SMART criteria, scenario-based planning, and peer evaluation. These sessions can also introduce teachers to digital planning tools and multimedia resources to enrich methodological flexibility and inclusivity (Chotimah et al., 2022). Finally, the study's findings suggest that professional development should be ongoing, collaborative, and contextually responsive. One-size-fits-all training fails to address the unique challenges faced by teachers in different schools, such as varying class sizes, student readiness levels, and access to instructional resources. Teacher training should thus be embedded within a supportive supervision framework, which combines coaching, mentoring, and collegial dialogue. By doing so, teachers can engage in meaningful reflection on their lesson plans, align their practice with curricular goals, and adapt to the evolving demands of 21st-century classroom

CONCLUSION

The research evaluates the core aspects together with areas for improvement within the learning objectives established by Teacher 1 and Teacher 2. The learning objectives established by both teachers subscribe to standard instructional systems that provide structured clarity and precise specifications and meet student-centered

learning criteria. The weak points of these learning objectives stem from inadequate information on instructional environments and measurable performance benchmarks thus resulting in reduced effectiveness during implementation and classroom diversity needs. Teacher 1 sets social-emotional and critical thinking ability objectives while Teacher 2 focuses on higher-order cognitive skills for analysis and creation. The goals maintain strength but could become more effective through additional success conditions and performance standards for clear implementation. All learning objectives should connect to established frameworks and measurable evaluation standards to produce successful educational results. Educational objectives achieve better effectiveness when educators establish detail-based requirements and measurable assessment indicators that summarize curriculum standards for students to follow. The study demonstrates how instructional design needs learning objectives as essential components which make them usable and adaptable for different educational settings.

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