

Defining learning objectives for ELT

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This article attempts to introduce the teacher of EFL to developments in the area of specifying learning objectives. This topic has been largely ignored in recent years as new theories of language acquisition and the emphasis on communication have come to the fore. Many teachers, while welcoming the new approaches, nevertheless feel a need for a clearly defined framework for organizing their teaching, both in the long term and in the short term. When you have studied this article carefully, you should be able to (a) distinguish between statements of aims and statements of objectives, (b) discuss the merits of writing objectives from the point of view of the learner, and (c) write both complete and abbreviated statements of learning objectives for different language skills, functions, and notions. Given the choice, you may elect to use such statements in addition to the more conventional teacher's aims.

Statements of aims and statements of objectives'

Most modern language courses seem to recognize the need for teachers to give some kind of direction to their activities by stating the aims of each lesson or unit in the course. Generally speaking, these statements of aims describe either the activities of the teacher (as in examples (a), (b) and (c) below) or the object of the lesson (examples (d) and (e)):

- a** to teach greetings and introductions
- b** to teach the names of animals
- c** to practise the simple past
- d** indirect statements/questions in the present with *know*
- e** ways of making suggestions: *let's . . . , I suggest . . . , why don't we . . . ? , I think we should . . .*

Statements like the above, however, present a number of difficulties for teachers and learners alike. Firstly, they are written from the point of view of the *teacher* and not the learner. They tell us what the teacher will be doing during the lesson and not what the pupils will be able to do at the conclusion of the lesson. For example, one could ask: 'How long should the pupils practise for, and for what particular purpose and at what level of proficiency?' Secondly, they are open to different interpretations by dif-

Reading assignment:

This reading defines learning objectives in contrast to aims.

Task 1:

What are the differences between aims and objectives?

Can you infer enough from the reading to complete this table?

Very brief answers (1-2 words) are fine.

	Aim	Objective
Time		
Specificity		
Perspective		
Measurability		

Reading assignment:

Task 2:

The reading includes several examples of written statements of learning objectives.

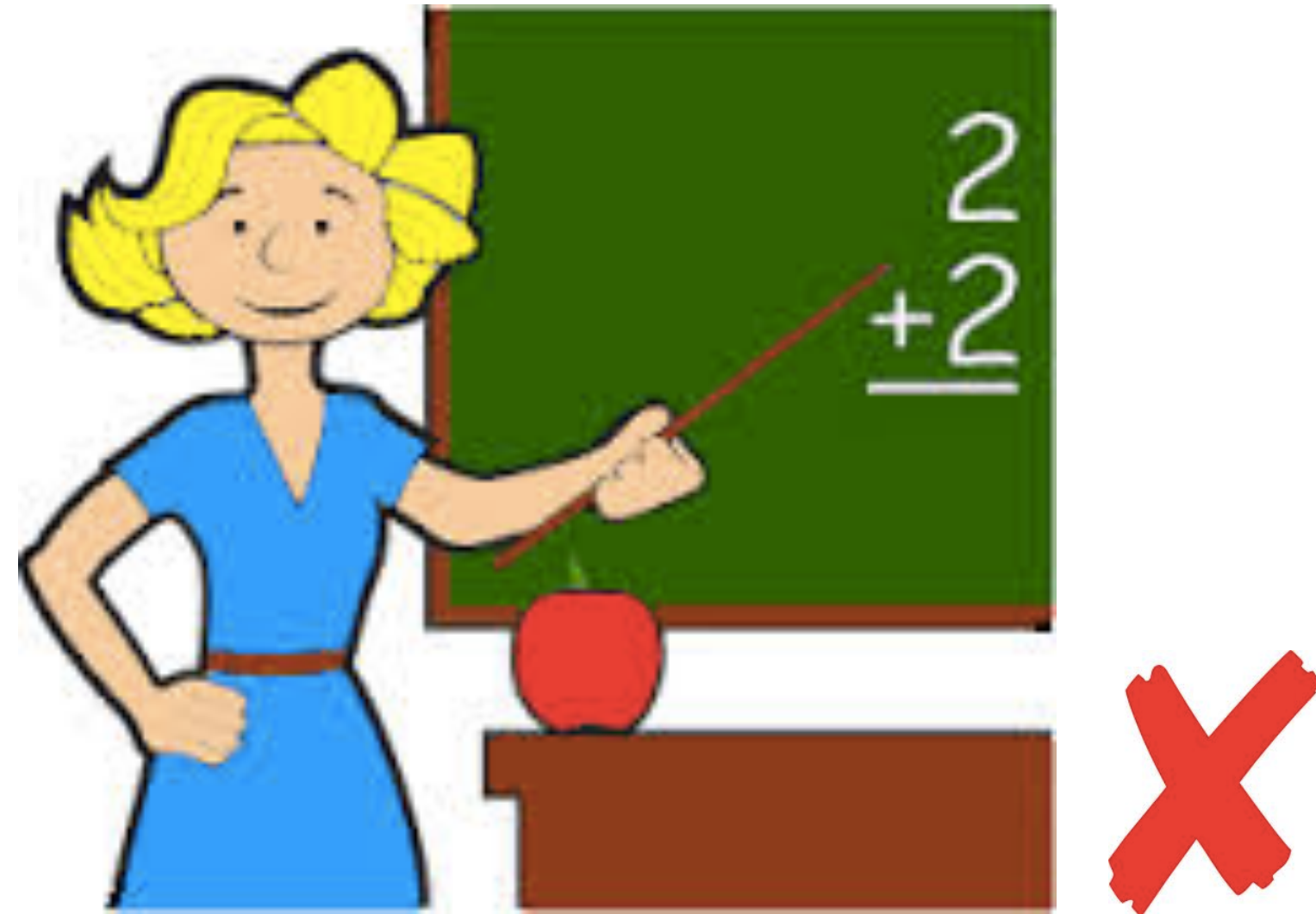
Using the formula below, write a learning objective statement for any age or level of student.

Age/Level: ...

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to... (do something)

Using language such as... (example of target language)

By... (main language task)



Aim:

“I will teach my students Math.”

“My students will know the answer to this.”

KindergartenWorksheets.com
Practice Adding Math Worksheet

Name: _____

1. $2 + 7 =$ 9. $3 + 7 =$
2. $2 + 8 =$ 10. $4 + 1 =$
3. $3 + 1 =$ 11. $4 + 2 =$
4. $3 + 2 =$ 12. $4 + 3 =$
5. $3 + 3 =$ 13. $4 + 4 =$
6. $3 + 4 =$ 14. $4 + 5 =$
7. $3 + 5 =$ 15. $4 + 6 =$
8. $3 + 6 =$

www.kindergartenworksheets.com

Objective:

“By the end of the lesson, students will complete this worksheet about addition.”



Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)



student



teacher

1. A written statement of a goal.
2. From the student's perspective.

A good SLO statement is...



A good SLO statement is observable.

What is “observable behavior”?

Example:



“Do you understand?”

“Yes”



Why is this **not** a good question?



- Are you sure that the student understands?
- How do you know there are no misunderstandings?
- Did the student demonstrate their understanding?

Their understanding is not demonstrated. **It is not observable.**

For this reason, we use **action verbs**...

- Tell
- Show
- Explain
- Order
- Ask and answer
- Compare
- Suggest
- Recommend
- And so on...

TESOL SLOs should include...

1. Examples of target language (for a speaking lesson).
2. A reading or listening text for a reading or listening lesson.
3. Grammar meaning, use and form (structure) for a grammar lesson.
4. Format, audience, topic, purpose for a writing lesson.

TESOL SLOs should include...

1. Examples of target language (for a speaking lesson).

Target language is the exact sentences, expressions, questions, answers, etc. that students will practice and use during the lesson.

“Dream jobs” - this is not target language.
This is a topic.

“I want to be a pilot” - this is an example of target language.

Target language can be...

- Situational
- Q+A
- Grammar
- Functional

Here is the formula for writing a speaking lesson SLO:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to...

...*(do something)*

using *(target language)*

by

...*(doing this task).*

Reading assignment:

Task 2:

The reading includes several examples of written statements of learning objectives.

Using the formula below, write a learning objective statement for any age or level of student.

Age/Level: ...

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to... (do something)

Using language such as... (example of target language)

By... (main language task)

Here is a grammar SLO:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to compare things using language such as “the yellow bag is prettier than the blue bag”, “the leather shoes are more expensive than the running shoes” by doing an information gap activity with a shopping catalogue and price list.

Note: for grammar target language, try to think of a situation, topic or context that matches the grammar.

Here is a **Q+A (beginner)** SLO:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to ask and answer about sports using language such as “do you like tennis/baseball/figure skating?” “Yes I do/No I don’t” by doing a class survey.

Note: for beginners, keep the expressions simple with about 8-10 optional vocabulary (here it is sports). Question and answer patterns are also common here.

Here is a **situational** SLO:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to transfer money in a bank using language such as “here is my bank card”, “I would like to send \$500”, “I will pay the fees” by doing a bank role play.

Note: situational target language means expressions we use in a specific situation. Dialogues and role plays are good for this.

Here is an SLO with a language **function**:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to suggest a restaurant using language such as “how about Italian food” “we should try this new Indian restaurant” “would you like sushi?” “yes, that sounds great” by debating restaurants in groups with menu worksheets and deciding a place to eat.

Note: language functions are the purpose for using language, such as expressing likes, asking clarification, apologizing and so on.

Good speaking tasks include...

- Guessing game
- Role play
- Survey
- Interview
- Debate
- Presentation
- Information gap

Tip 1

Beginner target language should be 1-3 sentences with about 8 new words/expressions as options.

Example:

“Where is the bank / hotel / restaurant?”

“It’s next to / in front of / behind the cafe / school / museum.”

Tip 2

Higher level learners can modify and adapt the target language.

Example:

“Why don’t we...”

“How about...”

“I suggest...”

“That sounds great / good / fine.”

“

Tip 3



Plan lessons backwards.

Start with the final activity.

Then, plan the scaffolding activities.

Finally, think about the start of the lesson.

Tip 4

Match the target language with the task.

Examples:

- Personal Q+A - interview
- Q+A about objects - guessing
- Situational - role play
- Grammar tag questions - role play
- ...and so on.

Quiz

Example SLO:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to **ask and answer about their dream jobs** using “What do you want to be?” “I want to be a designer / marine biologist / dentist /...” by **completing a class survey**.

What color are the...

- examples of the target language?
- fluency activity?
- action verbs and topic?

Quiz

Example SLO:

By the end of the lesson, SWBAT order food and drinks in a restaurant for themselves and friends using language such as, “What do you want to eat?” “My friend will have soup” “Can you bring water, please”... by doing a restaurant role-play with a waiter.

What color are the...

- examples of the target language?
- fluency activity?
- action verbs and topic?

Quiz

What's wrong with these SLOs?

1. By the end of the lesson, SWBAT describe the people in photographs by doing an information gap activity.
2. By the end of the lesson, SWBAT describe an amazing life experience in the past using language such as “I’ve been to the Pyramids” “I’ve seen the Amazon” “I’ve visited the Colosseum” by completing a fill in the blanks worksheet.

Here is the formula for writing a speaking lesson SLO:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to...

...*(do something)*

using *(target language)*

by

...*(doing this task).*