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Analyzing Bloom's Taxonomy Levels in Students' Speaking Activities in Teaching Modules of *Kurikulum Merdeka*

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ABSTRACT

Many senior high school students in Indonesia struggle with spoken English because their classroom curriculum lacks relevant and engaging speaking opportunities. This study aims to identify the cognitive levels represented in speaking activities and examine the extent to which they promote higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in teaching modules based on the recent *Kurikulum Merdeka*. A qualitative directed content analysis by Hsieh & Shannon (2005) was employed, examining five teaching modules and *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran* (ATP) from different senior high schools, obtained from the official Ministry of Education website. The findings showed that Applying (C3) occurred most frequently (63 occurrences; 44.68%), followed by Remembering (C1) with 24 occurrences (17.02%), and Understanding (C2) with 21 occurrences (14.89%). HOTS levels were less dominant, with Analyzing (C4) and Creating (C6) both appearing 15 times (10.64%), and Evaluating (C5) only 3 times (2.13%). This indicates a predominance of LOTS over HOTS in the modules. Analysis of speaking outputs revealed that high-output activities such as discussions and presentations (A4 and A5) occurred 49 times, while medium-output activities (A2 and A3) appeared 12 times, and low-output activities (A1) only once. These results suggest that although opportunities for communicative competence exist, speaking activities still lean toward tasks requiring lower cognitive engagement. It is concluded that while the *Kurikulum Merdeka* teaching modules integrate various Bloom's Taxonomy levels, more emphasis is needed on HOTS to enhance critical thinking and creativity.

Keywords: Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, *Kurikulum Merdeka*, Speaking Activities, Teaching Modules.

INTRODUCTION

General problems that Indonesian students face are not too far from a lack of confidence, pronunciation, and vocabulary limitations (Fachrunnisa & Nuraeni, 2022). (Irmayani, 2021) states, "*It is caused by there is lack of speaking practice.*

Meanwhile, the lack of an attractive method or material can be included as another factor." Many senior high school students in Indonesia struggle with spoken English because their classroom curriculum lacks relevant and engaging speaking opportunities (Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020).

According to (Oktavianti et al., 2020), speaking exercises in widely used English textbooks were frequently restricted to scripted monologues or controlled exchanges, while grammar and reading were given more weight. In the context of Indonesian senior high schools, students' oral communication skills continue to present a persistent challenge. Despite the considerable time spent on English instruction, many learners with low proficiency still encounter difficulties with interactive speaking tasks such as discussions, role plays, and spontaneous conversations (Ramdani & Rahmat, 2018). This issue is arguably rooted in past instructional practices, which often prioritised monologic output, such as speech, over meaningful dialogue or simply theoretical lessons (Salsabila & Megawati, 2024).

Kurikulum Merdeka offers a variety of extracurricular learning opportunities as a solution to these, with better materials to provide students with plenty of chances to investigate concepts and the development of students' competencies (Zainuri, 2023). This curriculum focuses on a student-centered approach, encouraging students to explore and develop their abilities in a variety of relevant ways. Rizaldi (Martati, 2022;p 13) argued that this flexibility allows teachers to use innovative and adaptive methods that suit the various learning styles and problems that students confront. Supported by a study conducted by (Irmayani & Masruroh, 2023) observing 32 students in EFL classrooms confirms this statement, revealing that supportive teacher talk could become an essential factor in teaching to boost students' comprehension. Align with *Kurikulum Merdeka* employs Bloom's Revised Taxonomy as its main framework, a widely recognized educational framework that promotes higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), which range from analyzing and evaluating to creating.

Prior research has highlighted several limitations in the pedagogical design of teaching modules used in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*. According to a study, the learning objectives incorporated in these materials do not consistently reflect the full range of cognitive processes indicated in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy as a theoretical framework for instructional planning (Hidayat & Qamariah, 2023). Furthermore, difficulties of teachers' comprehension of the new curriculum, and the complex assessment (Fatmawati, 2024;Azah et.al 2024;Tomasouw et.al., 2024) Their research found that this constraint lowers the usefulness of teaching materials in developing comprehensive student capabilities.

Given that the implementation of instruction is not separable from the learning modules that guide it, neglecting these documents results in a lack of specificity in understanding how speaking activities are actually designed. As argued by (Creswell, 2017), the prevention of findings becoming overly general is ensured by

a narrow and well-defined scope, as well as the assurance of theoretical and practical significance. Similarly, Fraenkel and Wallen (2019) emphasise that clearly defined variables and contexts enhance the relevance of research findings. Thus, specificity is necessary to address this gap. This study examines the TP and ATP presented in officially published Grade 10 English modules to determine which Bloom's Taxonomy levels are most prevalent in speaking-related learning objectives. Additionally, as intended by the *Kurikulum Merdeka* principles, the study seeks to assess whether these goals foster higher-order thinking skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Related Study

According to several studies, the learning objectives incorporated in these materials do not consistently reflect the full range of cognitive processes indicated in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy as a theoretical framework for instructional planning (Hidayat & Qamariah, 2023). The following section summarizes major studies that address these educational issues:

First, there is a study conducted by (Edi et.al., 2024) at Panca Sakti University, Bekasi, entitled "Implementing Bloom's Taxonomy In The English Curriculum Under Merdeka Belajar Program.", which analyzed the impact of Bloom's Taxonomy on cognitive, psychomotor, and emotional domains within the MBKM English Education Curriculum. The learning strategies in *Kurikulum Merdeka* have not been optimally implemented, especially for teachers, which will hinder the objective of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in improving human quality. The finding revealed that the use of Bloom's Taxonomy can positively enhance students' growth in terms of their language, thinking, and emotional engagement. However, the study's main focus was on university-level curriculum reform and the general design of the curriculum framework. In contrast, the current study focuses specifically on how the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy are reflected in the speaking actions of students using teaching modules of Kurikulum Merdeka, which are utilized at the high school level.

The second study was conducted by (Anggriani & Gultom, 2021) classifies teachers' questions during English classes using Wilen's (1991) suggested inquiry strategies and Bloom's Revised Taxonomy. The study found that the majority of the teachers' questions focused on lower-order thinking skills, specifically remembering (C1) and understanding (C2). Only two out of three teachers' speeches included higher-order inquiries like analyzing (C4) and creating (C6), which were used less frequently. In conclusion, the dominance of C1-level questions up to 70% in a single lesson suggested that deeper cognitive participation in class discussions was not being sufficiently promoted. The third study is by Salsabila (2020), who employed Bloom's Taxonomy framework to compare English syllabi in Indonesia and the Philippines. The study revealed that Indonesian syllabi emphasize information recall and comprehension, whereas Philippine syllabi have more

balanced cognitive and psychomotor aims. Although helpful, the study focused on the intended curriculum through syllabus documents. However, the current study focuses on instructional-level materials, notably teaching modules, to see how Bloom's Taxonomy levels are incorporated in actual speaking exercises

Although the study offers important insights into how teacher questioning reflects cognitive demands, its primary focus is on vocal classroom engagement. In contrast, the current study focuses on the speaking activities integrated in official teaching modules from the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. By examining how Bloom's cognitive levels are represented in these structured instructional materials, the current study provides a more comprehensive view of curriculum implementation, particularly in terms of communicative and higher-order speaking skill development analysis.

Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

The final draft of the original framework was published in 1956 by Bloom, an American educational psychologist. However, in 2001, the taxonomy's vocabulary and order of cognitive processes were updated to reflect domain findings, 45 years later, by one of his students, Lorin Anderson (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), entitled "A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives". The rearrangement prioritized synthesis above evaluation. This change provides a new viewpoint on all six cognitive capacities (Momen et.al., 2022). In this revised version, the categories were changed from static nouns to active verbs, emphasizing the importance of observable and measurable student performance (Newton et.al., 2020). The six categories in the revised taxonomy include: (1) Remembering, which involves recalling relevant information from memory; (2) Understanding, which refers to grasping the meaning of information through interpreting or summarizing; (3) Applying, which means using knowledge in new situations; (4) Analyzing, which requires breaking information into parts and understanding their relationships; (5) Evaluating, which involves making judgments based on standards; and (6) Creating, which focuses on generating new ideas or products (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001;p 67-68)

Speaking Activities

Speaking activities in *Kurikulum Merdeka* are not restricted to controlled drills or scripted dialogues, but rather aim to develop actual communication and interaction among students (Kusmaryani et.al., 2025). These activities, which are guided by the ideas of student-centered learning and meaningful learning experiences, encourage students to use English in real-world circumstances, thereby improving both linguistic accuracy and communicative competence. The program highlights the integration of speaking with other language abilities, such as listening, reading, and writing, via themed and contextualized exercises. Activities are frequently designed around project-based learning (PJBL) or problem-based learning (PBL)

models, in which students work together to discuss concerns, solve difficulties, and present their findings verbally. Speaking activities such as roleplay, peer discussion, and presentation were considered as promoting communicative tasks, as highlighted in Ellis's "Task-Based Language Teaching framework" (Ellis et.al., 2020). In this, the creation of authentic communicative opportunities that consolidate students' understanding and enable functional language use is possible through activities such as: roleplays, peer discussions, and guided presentations (Jihan & Irmayani, 2025). Supported by (Brown, 2001) assertion that speaking, as a productive skill, requires constant practice and appropriate feedback, since such activities naturally involve peer interaction and teacher evaluation. Added with (Zahro et.al., 2023)state that appropriate feedback, whether in speaking or writing contexts, plays a critical role in improving students' performance. This perspective is reinforced as (Ding & Zhu, 2025) discovered that mobile-based peer feedback for speaking assignments increased learners' engagement, motivation, and performance.

Furthermore, *Kurikulum Merdeka* gives teachers more freedom to customize speaking exercises to their students' various needs, competence levels, and learning styles (Rosyida, 2025). Differentiated instruction is critical in permitting the adjustment of themes, tasks, and assessment systems so that all learners may engage meaningfully (Supiyono & Sudira, 2023). Technology integration, such as video conferencing, digital storytelling, or artificial intelligence-based conversational tools, enhances these activities by exposing students to a variety of communicative scenarios outside of the classroom. Proven by a study conducted by (Rahmawati & Irmayani, 2022) discovered that Speakia, an AI-powered learning app, promoted speaking practice, which improved students' comprehension and prepared them for more complicated communication tasks

Kurikulum Merdeka

Kurikulum Merdeka is one of the education reforms in Indonesia launched to respond to the challenges of the times and the need for more flexible and student-centred learning. This curriculum was born as a follow-up to the evaluation of the 2013 Curriculum, which was considered too dense and did not provide enough space for teacher and student creativity (Djaelani et al., 2019). According to (Wahyudin et al., 2024) *Kurikulum Merdeka* emphasises differentiated learning, strengthening character, and improving literacy and numeracy competencies, intended to develop learners in the principles of the profile of Pancasila students. The distinctive features of this curriculum include the preparation of Learning Outcomes (CP), project-based learning, and flexibility in learning planning. In the context of English language teaching, this approach opens up opportunities for teachers to adapt methods and materials to students' needs and interests, including in developing speaking skills.

METHOD

Design and Samples

In this study, content analysis is utilized to identify and classify how *Kurikulum Merdeka* is represented in the teaching of speaking skills through examining ATP and teaching modules based on Bloom's Revised Taxonomy cognitive domain levels. Furthermore, the study investigates how operational words as a key instructional vocabulary inherent in the curriculum. This qualitative content analysis approach is interpretive and descriptive, consistent with Creswell's perspective of qualitative research as a tool for investigating complex educational processes in natural contexts. The data sources consisted of five teaching modules and their corresponding ATPs. Four modules were obtained from the official Kemendikbud platform: https://guru.kemdikbud.go.id/, which provides partially curated learning resources aligned with *Kurikulum Merdeka*. One additional module and ATP were developed by a teacher at SMK NU 1 Karanggeneng, which was implemented in actual classroom instruction. This inclusion allows the study to analyze both officially curated materials and a teacher-designed module created in an authentic teaching context, thus capturing a more comprehensive view of speaking activities in *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Krippendorff, 2018).

Instruments and Procedures

Data is primarily collected through document analysis of teaching modules documents. As the focus is on analyzing these documents, the researcher will examine relevant elements such as learning objectives, teaching activities, and assessments related to speaking skills. In this research, the 1st instrument used is coding sheets. And the 2nd instruments for data collection are humans or the researcher themselves, by observing, hearing, and retrieving valid research data.

Data Analysis

Employing (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) directed content analysis approach, the corpus included Grade-10 English ATP and teaching modules from the national repository. Segments that specifically addressed speaking were used as analytic units, including learning objectives, task/activity descriptions, and assessment prompts. Each segment was closely studied to determine the operative verb and then classified into Bloom's Revised Taxonomy cognitive domain levels (C1-C6), with C4-C6 classified as HOTS. Speaking tasks were also coded by activity type (repetition, dialogue practice, role-play, discussion/debate, presentation) and speaking-output level (low/medium/high) to distinguish between control and spontaneity of production. Voyant Tools assisted the process by offering word-frequency counts and keyword-in-context checks that validated verb identification and generated distribution summaries; a coding matrix recorded decisions and enabled cross-checking across documents. The frequency and percentage tables for Bloom levels, activity kinds, and output levels were then generated, and the patterns

were compared to *Kurikulum Merdeka's* emphasis on active learning and HOTS. Credibility was strengthened through sequential readings, a verification record of coding guidelines, peer debriefing with supervisors, and document triangulation across several schools; only manifest content was examined to minimize interpretive bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The examination of verb frequencies utilized throughout five modules demonstrates a broad dispersion of cognitive engagement based on Bloom's taxonomy. The entire verbal action was divided into six cognitive levels, ranging from remembering (C1) to producing (C6). Notably, the applying level (C3) accounts for 44.68% of all verb occurrences, stressing the practical application of language and active communication abilities in examinations. Understanding (C2) and remembering (C1) levels are also well represented, with around 17.2% and 14.89% each, indicating a strong basis for comprehension and recall tasks. Higher-order thinking levels, such as analyzing (C4) and producing (C6), account for approximately 10.64% and respectively, indicating a significant but limited emphasis on critical thinking and productive language use. Evaluating in C5 becomes the most less with around 2.13% and 3 frequencies.

Table 1. Bloom's Taxonomy Cognitive Levels

Code	Frequency
C1	24
C2	21
C3	63
C4	15
C5	3
C6	15
Total	144

The study of the speaking activities within the selected teaching module revealed that all detected activities fell into the cognitive domain, with no evidence of psychomotor or affective domain features. This suggests that the module's learning process is primarily concerned with improving students' intellectual engagement and language processing, rather than physical skill execution or emotional/attitudinal growth. While this cognitive emphasis is beneficial for developing analytical thinking and structured language production, the lack of psychomotor activities, such as physical performance tasks, gestures, or kinesthetic-based learning, restricts students' opportunities to practice speaking in more dynamic, movement-oriented settings.

Additionally, the module's absence of affective components means that it places little focus on developing values, attitudes, or emotional engagement through speaking exercises. This imbalance shows that, while the module is effective at fostering knowledge-based speaking abilities, it may need to be improved further to offer a more holistic learning experience that is consistent with the *Kurikulum Merdeka'*s emphasis on well-rounded student development.

Table 2. Total Speaking Activities

Code	Activities	Frequency	Output
A1	"Students repeat the expository song in groups and individually."	1	Low
A2	"Students practice dialogue about greetings with a friend." (guided)	11	Medium
A3	"Students practice introductory dialogues in groups."	1	Medium
A4	"Students discussed in groups and presented their opinions."	14	High
A5	"Students presented their work individually or in groups."	35	High
	Total	62	

The most common activities are group discussions (A4) and presentations (A5), with 14 and 35 occasions respectively. These are characterized as high output (HO) activities because they require extensive language production, critical thinking, and social engagement. Group conversations force students to communicate and negotiate ideas, opinions, and facts jointly, which frequently results in deeper and more complicated language use.

This is not only improves their speaking ability but also helps them develop abilities like debate and persuasion. Presentations make up the majority of speaking activities, indicating a strong emphasis on individual and group oral reporting. Presentations allow students to practice structuring their thoughts, utilizing suitable vocabulary, and communicating clearly and confidently to an audience. The results show that speaking exercises in the examined teaching modules exhibit a wide spectrum of cognitive demands, from basic comprehension and memory exercises to more intricate, imaginative ones.

Table 3. HOTS Promotion

Code	**Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS)**			**Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)**		
	C1	**C2**	**C3**	**C4**	**C5**	**C6**
M1	√	√	√	√		√
M2	√	√	√	√	√	√
M3	√	√	√	√	√	√
M4	√		√	√		

M5	√	√	√	√	√	√

Based on the six areas of Bloom's Taxonomy (C1–C6), the data on HOTS Promotion shown in above shows how Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) and Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are distributed across five training modules. All five modules consistently incorporate LOTS, which consists of C1 (Remember), C2 (Understand), and C3 (Apply). This ensures that students are given a solid cognitive foundation through tasks like remembering facts, understanding ideas, and applying what they have learned in situations they are familiar with.

Although the precise scope of coverage varies marginally, as evidenced by the exclusion of C2 content in Module 4, all modules maintain at least two LOTS levels, thereby underscoring a dedication to fundamental comprehension and mastery skills. With regard to HOTS, which includes C4 (Analyze), C5 (Evaluate), and C6 (Create), it is evident that all modules incorporate at least one higher-order category, albeit with variations in depth and scope. Modules 1 and 3 exemplify the most balanced integration of HOTS, encompassing all three higher-order levels. Thus, learners are presented with opportunities to analyze, formulate judgments, and produce original work.

In the present study, the cognitive level of applying (C3) dominated with a frequency of 63 and a percentage of 44.68%, indicating a strong focus on analytical skills in the learning process. However, when compared to the results of several previous studies, it was found that analyzing usually ranked third or even lower in terms of frequency of application. A study by (Ekalia et.al., 2022) showed that analyzing ranked third with a frequency of only 9 out of 114 learning activities, while applying ranked fourth with 7 occurrences in reading comprehension analysis, with the first rank is Remembering (C1) with over 69% percentage and 79 frequencies. This indicates that while applying is frequently used in learning activities, the dominant is remembering. While this study suggests a greater tendency to develop critical and analytical thinking skills rather than repetition.

Furthermore, (Fakhrillah & Suharyadi, 2025) also reported in their analysis of the textbook "English for Nusantara" that the applying feature appeared quite frequently, with a total of 18 and 62% in speaking instructions. The emphasis on applying shows that learners are actively employing structures in spoken interactions, which is critical for developing communicative competence (Ellis et al., 2020). In study conducted by (Rustiyani et.al, 2021) also shows that applying is the third most common level, used about 17.7% of the time. This shows that applying is used a lot in learning materials, but it is not as common as analysing. This finding is consistent with (Ayub & Mohammed, 2025) identified applying as a cognitively important level in teaching speaking skills, affirming its continued role in learning, albeit less significant than analysing in the current research context.

CONCLUSION

A strong emphasis on the applying (C3) stage was revealed by the analysis, followed by understanding (C2) and remembering (C1). It was suggested by the analysis that practical language application supported by solid foundational skills is prioritized by the modules. Although all six tiers of Bloom's cognitive processes were present, the frequency of analyzing (C4), evaluating (C5), and creating (C6) was comparatively minimal, suggesting that higher-order thinking exists but is not yet pivotal to the design of speaking tasks. The presence of HOTS-oriented activities shows promising movement toward more critical and creative engagement. Examples of these activities include problem-solving discussions and creative speaking projects.

However, their proportion suggests a need for more intentional integration. A greater focus on these abilities would better equip students for challenging communicative scenarios and align with the overarching goals of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in enhancing autonomous, adaptable learners. In conclusion, it has been demonstrated by this study that a balance is achieved between foundational language skills and opportunities for practical application in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* speaking modules, yet the development of higher-order cognitive engagement remains an area for growth. Curriculum designers, teachers, and policymakers can move closer to realizing the vision of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* by intentionally increasing the proportion of HOTS-oriented speaking activities. This will help produce students who are communicatively competent, critical, and creative

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