THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH TEACHERS' CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT BEHAVIORS ON STUDENTS' CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT AT BOSHAN MIDDLE SCHOOL FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PCK THEORY

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ABSTRACT
Against the backdrop of China's ongoing compulsory-education English curriculum reform, student-centered teaching requires teachers to translate subject knowledge into practical classroom strategies guided by pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). This quantitative study explores how junior high English teachers' classroom-management behaviors predict students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional classroom engagement. Using stratified cluster sampling, 360 Grade 6-9 students from Boshan Middle School in Zibo, Shandong Province completed a 28-item five-point Likert questionnaire covering four classroom management dimensions and three engagement dimensions. Jamovi 27 was adopted for reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and separate multiple linear regression for each engagement dimension. The questionnaire achieved acceptable reliability and construct validity. All management dimensions were positively correlated with student engagement ($p<0.01$). Regression results revealed differentiated predictive patterns across the three engagement dimensions. Classroom-interaction-and-activity management exerted relatively strong predictive effects, while classroom-order-and-activity management had limited independent predictive power. The findings suggest that pure discipline control cannot foster deep student engagement. PCK-oriented interactive classroom management is essential to promote multi-dimensional student engagement, offering implications for junior high English instruction and teacher development.
Keywords: PCK Theory, English Teachers' Classroom-Management Behaviors, Classroom Engagement, Junior High-School English, Teaching Practice

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization and educational modernization have elevated the status of basic English education in China. The 2022 "Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards" emphasizes the cultivation of core competencies and requires a shift from teacher-centered knowledge transmission to student-centered teaching practices (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022). Under the background of curriculum reform, students' classroom engagement - including behavioral engagement, cognitive investment, and emotional experience - is regarded as an important indicator for measuring classroom teaching effectiveness and achieving curriculum goals (Xie, 2022).

However, there are still many practical problems in Chinese junior high school English classrooms. Many teachers simply equate classroom management with behavioral control and order management, severing the intrinsic connection between classroom management behaviors and the characteristics of the English subject, the cognitive development level of students, and language practice needs (Guo, 2020). The traditional classroom management model that solely relies on rules and discipline constraints is difficult to stimulate students' deep cognitive participation and emotional participation. The PCK theory proposed by Shulman (1986), which refers to the unique professional ability formed by teachers through integrating subject knowledge, teaching knowledge, curriculum knowledge, and learner knowledge, provides an important theoretical perspective for this study to address such practical problems. PCK requires teachers to organize classroom environments and design teaching activities by combining the characteristics of the English subject and the actual learning situation of students, rather than using general disciplinary control methods. Currently, most domestic and foreign studies discuss classroom management and student participation separately, and there is still a lack of empirical research using the PCK perspective to investigate how teachers' multi-dimensional classroom management behaviors jointly shape the three-dimensional participation of junior high school students in English classrooms. Based on this, this study collects empirical data from a local public junior high school through a questionnaire survey to fill this research gap.

Research Questions

1) How do English teachers' classroom management behaviors affect students' classroom engagement at Boshan Middle School from the perspective of PCK theory?

2) Which components of English teachers' classroom management behaviors affect students' classroom engagement at Boshan Middle School from the perspective of PCK theory?

Research Objectives

1) To examine the effect of English teachers' classroom management behaviors on students' classroom engagement at Boshan Middle School from the perspective of PCK theory.

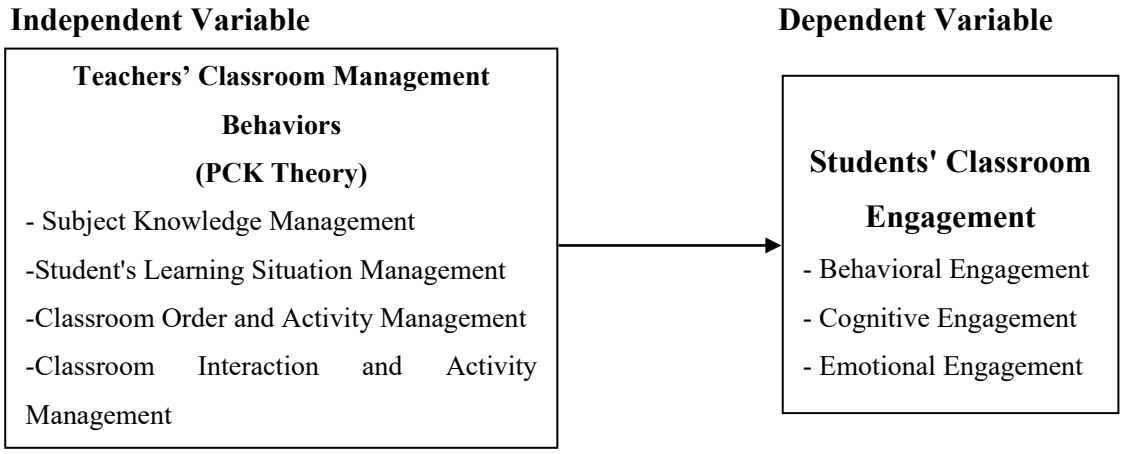
2) To determine which components of English teachers' classroom management behaviors affect students' classroom engagement at Boshan Middle School from the perspective of PCK theory.

Research Hypotheses

1) English teachers' classroom management behaviors affect students' classroom engagement at Boshan Middle School from the perspective of PCK theory.

2) The components of English teachers' classroom management behaviors, including subject knowledge management, students' learning situation management, classroom order and activity management, and classroom interaction and activity management, affect students' classroom engagement at Boshan Middle School from the perspective of PCK theory.

Conceptual Framework



Note: This conceptual framework was self-constructed by the author based on PCK theory (Shulman, 1986) and relevant EFL classroom-management and classroom-engagement literature.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

PCK (Pedagogical Content Knowledge) Theory

Shulman (1986) first proposed PCK to distinguish subject-matter experts from professional teachers, criticizing over-emphasis on pure disciplinary knowledge while ignoring learner characteristics. PCK refers to the knowledge of transforming subject content into teachable, learner-adapted instructional forms. Magnusson et al. (1999) further refined the framework into subject-matter knowledge, knowledge of student understanding, curriculum knowledge, instructional-strategy knowledge and assessment knowledge.

In EFL research, Hirpa et al. (2024) pointed out that EFL teachers' PCK is reflected in translating linguistic knowledge into understandable classroom input and diagnosing learner obstacles. Most existing studies apply PCK to lesson-planning and instructional-design; fewer extend PCK analysis to real-time in-classroom-management behaviors. The present study treats PCK as a theoretical perspective rather than a measured variable, interpreting four dimensions of observable classroom-management behaviors as practical manifestations of PCK in daily junior-high-school English classrooms.

English Teachers' Classroom-Management Behaviors

Traditional classroom-management research mainly focuses on discipline maintenance, rule-setting and disruptive-behavior intervention (Xu, 2020). Modern perspectives expand the construct beyond mere behavioral control to include learning-activity organization, teacher-student-relationship construction and creation of supportive learning environments (Gou, 2020).

English-subject classroom management possesses unique traits because English functions both as knowledge content and communication tool. Effective EFL-classroom management cannot stop at keeping quiet classroom order; it must create opportunities for listening-speaking-reading-writing practice and interpersonal interaction (Thongsongsee, 2022). Teachers need to balance order maintenance and interactive-activity facilitation. This study measures classroom-management behaviors from the student-perception standpoint: student experience matters because teacher intentions and learner perceived reality may diverge. Based on PCK logic and previous literature, four dimensions of English-teacher-classroom-management behaviors are constructed: Subject Knowledge Management, Student Learning Situation Management, Classroom Order and Activity Management, and Classroom Interaction and Activity Management.

Students' Classroom Engagement

Student-engagement research has evolved from single-dimensional behavioral compliance toward a widely-accepted three-dimensional structure: behavioral, cognitive and emotional engagement (Ye, 2024). Behavioral engagement concerns visible classroom participation rather than blind obedience. Cognitive engagement represents depth of mental effort and learning-strategy employment.

Recent Chinese EFL empirical studies confirm teacher-related classroom context factors significantly influence junior-high-school students' multi-dimensional engagement (Liu, 2025; Zhang et al., 2024). Observable behavioral participation does not guarantee deep cognitive investment or positive emotional experience. Therefore, engagement measurement should adopt the multi-dimensional framework instead of only counting classroom obedience. In this study, student classroom engagement is the dependent variable decomposed into behavioral, cognitive and emotional engagement.

Review of Domestic and International Empirical Research

Domestic research: Gou (2020) analyzed practical problems of junior-high-school-English-classroom-management including rigid strategies and insufficient teacher-student communication. Xie (2022) verified that teacher-student relations and instructional organization correlate with student-participation status. Liu (2025) found classroom-environment factors closely linked with Chinese middle-school-students' willingness to communicate in EFL lessons. Teng (2025) proved that teacher-classroom-management behaviors relate to multi-dimensional student engagement. However, most local studies rarely employ PCK as the analytical lens and seldom separate different management dimensions to test their respective predictive power through regression.

International research: Shulman (1986) and Magnusson et al. (1999) laid PCK theoretical foundations. Hirpa et al. (2024) explored connections between EFL teachers' professional-knowledge base and classroom practice. Thongsongsee (2022) emphasized teachers' facilitator role for stimulating learner engagement. Recent foreign-language-engagement studies widely accept the three-dimensional engagement construct (Krongyut & Srijongjai, 2024; Peungcharoenkun & Waluyo, 2024).

Research Gap

(1) Most studies apply PCK to pre-class teaching design, and there are relatively few empirical studies that use this theory to analyze the classroom management behaviors of real classroom teachers;

(2) Based on the domestic junior high school teaching context, distinguishing the sub-dimensions of classroom management and conducting quantitative research to test the independent predictive effects of each dimension on students' multi-dimensional classroom participation is still scarce.This study made up for this gap through quantitative questionnaire surveys.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The overall research population of this study consisted of all regular students in Grades 6-9 at Boshan Middle School, with a total population size of N = 3600. The target sample size of 360 was calculated using Yamane's (1973) formula with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error for reference only. Yamane's formula assumes simple random sampling and does not incorporate the design effect caused by cluster sampling. This study adopted stratified cluster sampling: Grades 6-9 served as strata, intact classes were randomly selected within each grade stratum, and all students in the selected classes were recruited as survey participants. Eventually, 360 valid questionnaires were obtained. It should be noted that recruiting intact classes creates clustering effects: students within the same class share the

same English teacher and classroom environment, which may violate the independence-of-observations assumption required by both the Yamane sample-size calculation and ordinary-least-squares regression. This nested data structure is acknowledged as a limitation of the present study, as multilevel correction was not implemented in the regression models. Future research may adopt multilevel modelling to account for variance at the class level.

The research tool of this study was the "Junior High School English Teacher Classroom Management Behavior and Students' Classroom Participation Survey Questionnaire (Student Version)" developed by the researchers based on the PCK theory, relevant domestic and foreign literature, and local teaching context. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: 5 closed-ended questions for collecting respondents' basic information such as gender, grade, age, duration of school attendance, and self-assessed English proficiency; an English teacher classroom management behavior scale consisting of 16 five-point Likert items, divided into 4 dimensions each with 4 questions, totaling 16 questions; and a student classroom participation scale consisting of 12 five-point Likert items, divided into 3 dimensions: behavior participation, cognitive participation, and emotional participation. The scale was scored using the 5-point Likert format, with 1 representing completely disagree, 2 representing disagree, 3 representing average, 4 representing agree, and 5 representing completely agree. The higher the score, the higher the students' perception of the teacher's classroom management level and their own classroom participation. The questionnaire was reviewed by 3 experts in English education, education management, and education measurement, and the item-target consistency index (IOC) was calculated. Items with IOC $\geq$ 0.67 were retained. Then, 30 students with the same background completed a pilot test to verify the Cronbach's α reliability. The pre-test results showed that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each dimension and the total scale were all greater than 0.70, indicating good internal consistency of the questionnaire. Note that although reliability was satisfactory in the pilot test, the Cronbach’s α value for the Student Learning Situation Management dimension dropped slightly below 0.70 in the formal survey dataset.

Data collection strictly adhered to academic ethics. The questionnaire was distributed through an online questionnaire platform with unified completion instruction provided. English teachers were asked to distribute the questionnaire link as an after-class task. The questionnaire was answered anonymously and confidentially. After removing invalid questionnaires, 360 valid samples were obtained. Data analysis was completed using jamovi 27 software. Frequency and percentage were used to handle demographic variables, and mean and standard deviation were used to handle descriptive statistics of core research variables. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's ω coefficient. Exploratory factor analysis was performed using KMO test, Bartlett's spherical test, and factor loadings to test the structural validity of the questionnaire. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the bivariate correlation between each dimension of classroom management and each dimension of students' classroom engagement. Three separate multiple linear regression models were constructed to examine the unique predictive effects of the four classroom management dimensions on behavioral engagement (BE), cognitive engagement (CE), and emotional engagement (EE), respectively. The four classroom management dimensions served as common predictors across all three models. For reference, an additional supplementary regression model using the composite overall engagement score as the outcome variable was also calculated. VIF was used to test multicollinearity and the Durbin-Watson statistic was computed to assess residual independence. Residual diagnostics for normality and homoscedasticity were also performed via visual inspection of residual plots alongside statistical tests.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 360)

The total number of valid samples in this study was 360. The gender distribution of the samples was balanced, with 51.9% being female and 48.1% being male; the proportion of samples from grades 6 to 9 was roughly equal. Nearly 80% of the students had been attending school for more than one year; approximately half of the students rated their English proficiency as medium. In summary, the samples have good representativeness.

Reliability Analysis of Formal-Survey Data

Table 1 Reliability coefficients for each dimension (N = 360)

Dimension	Cronbach's α	McDonald's ω
Subject Knowledge Management (SKM)	0.846	0.846
Student Learning Situation Management (SLSM)	0.698	0.700
Classroom Order and Activity Management (COAM)	0.721	0.742
Classroom Interaction and Activity Management (CIAM)	0.749	0.780
Behavioral Engagement (BE)	0.850	0.851
Cognitive Engagement (CE)	0.841	0.842
Emotional Engagement (EE)	0.746	0.770
Overall: Teachers' Classroom-Management Behavior	0.891	0.892
Overall: Students' Classroom Engagement	0.867	0.868

Most dimensions achieved Cronbach's Alpha above the conventional cutoff of 0.70. The Student Learning Situation Management dimension yielded a Cronbach's α of 0.698, marginally below this threshold. Item-total correlation and alpha-if-item-deleted diagnostics were conducted to examine item quality. However, the reliability coefficient would decrease if any single item was removed. Thus, all four items of this dimension were retained for subsequent analysis. Caution is needed when interpreting the results related to this construct.Even though Cronbach's α fell marginally below 0.70, McDonald's ω reached 0.700, offering supplementary evidence of acceptable internal consistency for this dimension.The overall-scale reliability coefficients exceed 0.80. The questionnaire demonstrates acceptable internal consistency for formal analysis.

Exploratory-Factor-Analysis (EFA)

Table 2 KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity

Indicator	Value
KMO measure of sampling adequacy	0.914
Bartlett's test chi-square	5219
Degrees of freedom df	378
p-value	$p < 0.001$

KMO = 0.914 (> 0.80); Bartlett's sphericity test is statistically significant. All item factor loadings are higher than 0.60 without serious cross-loading. The factor structure basically matches the theoretical multi-dimension framework, confirming good construct validity of the measuring instrument.

Descriptive Statistics for Core Research Variables

Table 3 Mean and standard deviation of main variables (N = 360)

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Subject Knowledge Management (SKM)	360	3.67	0.976
Student Learning Situation Management (SLSM)	360	3.66	0.826
Classroom Order and Activity Management (COAM)	360	3.66	0.848
Classroom Interaction and Activity Management (CIAM)	360	3.63	0.890
Behavioral Engagement (BE)	360	3.59	0.991
Cognitive Engagement (CE)	360	3.60	0.970
Emotional Engagement (EE)	360	3.64	0.898

All dimension means lie between 3.59-3.67, above the scale midpoint 3.0, showing respondents generally hold moderately-high evaluations for teachers' classroom-management behaviors and their own classroom engagement. Among management dimensions, SKM scores highest while CIAM scores lowest, implying classroom-interaction-activity design needs improvement. Among engagement dimensions, emotional-engagement mean is highest; behavioral-engagement mean is the lowest, indicating students' observable behavioral participation needs strengthening. Standard-deviation values suggest notable individual differences among participants.

Pearson Correlation-Analysis

Table 4 Pearson correlation-matrix among study variables (N = 360)

	SKM	SLSM	COAM	CIAM	BE	CE	EE
SKM	1						
SLSM	0.668	1					
COAM	0.446	0.669	1				
CIAM	0.422	0.500	0.557	1			
BE	0.508	0.490	0.384	0.570	1		
CE	0.444	0.449	0.335	0.362	0.380	1	
EE	0.438	0.455	0.415	0.422	0.416	0.545	1

Note: All correlation coefficients significant at $p < 0.01$ two-tailed test.

Every dimension of teachers' classroom-management behaviors shows significant positive correlation with three student-engagement dimensions. Inter-dimension correlations among predictors are all below 0.70, so severe multicollinearity does not exist, satisfying prerequisites for multiple-regression analysis. It is worth noticing that CIAM has the strongest correlation with behavioral engagement ($r = 0.570$). Correlation results only reflect covariation and cannot demonstrate causal relationships; multiple-regression analysis further tests independent predictive effects.

Multiple-Linear-Regression-Analysis

Four classroom-management dimensions were taken as independent variables. Three separate regression models were run, with behavioral engagement (BE-MID), cognitive engagement (CE-MID), and emotional engagement (EE-MID) as respective dependent variables. An extra model with overall student classroom engagement was also calculated for comparison.

Regression assumptions were inspected: VIF values range 1.55-2.65 (<5); Durbin-Watson statistics ranged from 1.78 to 2.05 (near 2). Although the Shapiro-Wilk test for residual normality reached statistical significance, visual inspection of residual scatterplots indicated that normality and homoscedasticity assumptions were reasonably satisfied.

Table 5 Regression-model summary for behavioral,cognitive and emotional engagement

Outcome	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Df1	Df2	p	Durbin-Watson
BE	0.648	0.420	0.413	64.30	4	355	<0.001	2.05
CE	0.507	0.257	0.249	30.7	4	355	<0.001	1.81
EE	0.536	0.288	0.280	35.8	4	355	<0.001	1.78

Note. df_1 = model degrees of freedom (numerator); df_2 = residual degrees of freedom (denominator). Models estimated using sample size of N = 360.

The behavioral engagement regression model is statistically significant, F(4,355)=64.30, p<0.001) Adjusted R^2=0.413 indicates four management dimensions together explain 41.3% of the variance in students' behavioral engagement.
The cognitive engagement regression model is statistically significant, F(4,355)=30.70, p<0.001) Adjusted R^2=0.249 indicates four management dimensions together explain 24.9% of the variance in students' cognitive engagement.
The emotional engagement regression model is statistically significant, F(4,355)=35.80, p<0.001) Adjusted R^2=0.280 indicates the four management dimensions together explain 28.0% of the variance in students' emotional engagement.
Table 6 presents the standardized regression coefficients and significance values for each predictor across the three models.

Table 6 Standardized Regression Coefficients Predicting Behavioral, Cognitive and Emotional Engagement

Predictor	BE *β(p)*	CE *β(p)*	EE *β(p)*
SKM	0.259(<0.001)	0.236(<0.001)	0.211(<0.001)
SLSM	0.151(0.022)	0.214(0.004)	0.135(0.065)
COAM	-0.068(0.244)	0.000(0.996)	0.120(0.063)
CIAM	0.422(<0.001)	0.156(0.007)	0.199(<0.001)

*Note. β = standardized regression coefficient. † p < 0.10 (approached significance); * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001.*

As shown in Table 6, SKM and CIAM significantly positively predicted all three dimensions of student engagement. SLSM significantly predicted behavioral and cognitive engagement, but only approached significance for emotional engagement (p=0.065). COAM showed no significant unique predictive effect at the 0.05 significance level across the three models, and only approached significance for emotional engagement (p=0.063). Among all predictors, CIAM had the largest standardized coefficient for behavioral engagement (\beta=0.422, p<0.001).

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 7 Hypothesis-testing summary

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
2	English teachers' classroom management behaviors affect students' classroom engagement at Boshan Middle School from the perspective of PCK theory.	Supported
H_2	The components of English teachers' classroom management behaviors, including subject knowledge management, students' learning situation management, classroom order and activity management, and classroom interaction and activity management, affect students' classroom engagement at Boshan Middle School from the perspective of PCK theory.	Partially supported

H_1 is fully supported by the significant overall regression model. H_2 obtains partial support across behavioral, cognitive and emotional engagement dimensions. SKM and CIAM significantly predict all three engagement outcomes. SLSM shows significant predictive effects for behavioral and cognitive engagement, and only approaches significance for emotional engagement. COAM fails to reach statistical significance at $\alpha=0.05$ for behavioral and cognitive engagement and only approaches significance for emotional engagement.

DISCUSSION

Main Findings Interpretation

First, on the whole, PCK-perspective-interpreted English-teachers' classroom-management behaviors significantly predict junior-high-school-students' classroom engagement. This result is consistent with prior EFL-classroom-management-and-engagement research conclusions (Teng, 2025; Ye, 2024). Teachers' subject-related instructional-management practice is a key contextual factor shaping learners' behavioral, cognitive and emotional involvement in English lessons.

Second, predictive-power differs among different management dimensions. Classroom Interaction and Activity Management displays the strongest predictive effect. This result echoes Thongsongsee (2022): for foreign-language classrooms, creating interactive-practice opportunities is extremely vital for mobilizing multi-dimensional engagement. Subject Knowledge Management and Student Learning Situation Management also significantly positively predict engagement.

The most thought-provoking finding involves Classroom Order and Activity Management. It shows significant positive bivariate correlation with student-engagement in Pearson correlation; however, its independent predictive effect turns non-significant after controlling other three predictors in regression model. This result suggests that classroom order serves as a basic prerequisite for learning, yet it cannot independently promote multi-dimensional student engagement.

Practical Implications for English-Teaching

Based on the research findings, practical suggestions for junior high school English teaching and teacher development are put forward:

Prioritize teachers' classroom interaction and activity-management capacity. Under the guidance of PCK theory, teachers should adopt student-centered interactive teaching to create more language-output chances and encourage reserved students to participate in class.

Improve Subject Knowledge Management and Student-Learning-Situation Management abilities: Teachers shall adapt English knowledge to junior high students'

cognition, link new and prior knowledge, and choose proper teaching examples. They should also observe classrooms in real time to detect students' learning difficulties and provide differentiated support.

Re-understand the function of classroom-order management: Teachers should realize discipline maintenance is merely a basic condition instead of the core teaching goal. They shall reduce rigid behavioral restrictions, combine order management with subject-teaching goals, and shift from simple discipline control to PCK-oriented classroom management.

Research Limitations

This study contains several limitations. First, samples are only selected from one single public junior high school in Boshan District; conclusions cannot be directly generalized to all types of junior-high-schools across different regions. Second, this is cross-sectional questionnaire research relying exclusively on student self-reported perception data; objective classroom observation and teacher interview qualitative materials are absent. Third, this paper only tests direct-predictive relationships; potential mediating or moderating variables between teacher-management behaviors and student engagement were not explored.Fourth, the Cronbach's α coefficient for the Student Learning Situation Management dimension was marginally below the widely accepted 0.70 benchmark. Diagnostic tests showed that deleting any item from this dimension would further reduce reliability, which constitutes a minor psychometric limitation of the questionnaire.In addition, the stratified-cluster sampling design creates clustering effects among students within the same class, which cannot be statistically controlled in the current ordinary least-squares regression. Multilevel analysis is recommended for follow-up studies.

Recommendations for Future Research

Expand sampling scope covering urban-rural different-type junior-high-schools to improve external validity of research outcomes.Adopt mixed-methods research combining questionnaires, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews, integrating quantitative-data and qualitative-text information to understand underlying mechanisms more comprehensively.Further explore possible mediating or moderating variables such as student self-efficacy, teacher-student-relationship quality between classroom-management behaviors and multi-dimensional student-classroom engagement.Future research may revise the wording of items in the Student Learning Situation Management dimension to improve its internal consistency for similar English classroom studies in junior high schools.

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