



Effective Classroom Management in TEYL: Strategies, Challenges, and Practical Implications

Hardianti Hardianti

English Language Education Study Program, Esa Unggul University, Jakarta, Indonesia

Author Correspondence : hardianti@esaunggul.ac.id*

Abstract. *Effective classroom management is essential for successful teaching, particularly in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), where structured, engaging environments foster academic achievement and social development. This study explores classroom management strategies, challenges, and adaptive practices employed by TEYL teachers. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with experienced teachers and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings identified rules, routines, and positive reinforcement as key strategies for maintaining order and motivation in classrooms. Teachers also emphasized movement breaks and interactive activities as effective tools to manage diverse energy levels and sustain student engagement. Challenges, such as disruptive behaviors and resource constraints, were addressed through redirection techniques and tailored lesson plans, highlighting the importance of flexibility alongside consistency. Additionally, contextual and cultural factors influenced teachers' approaches, underscoring the significance of culturally responsive practices. While the study provides valuable insights, limitations include reliance on self-reported data and the lack of classroom observations, which could offer further validation. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on TEYL, offering practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to enhance classroom dynamics and learning outcomes.*

Keywords Classroom Management, Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), Strategies, Challenges

1. INTRODUCTION

Classroom management plays a crucial role in effective teaching, especially in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), where it creates a structured yet engaging environment that supports both academic achievement and social development. Research highlights that well-managed classrooms enhance student engagement and reduce behavioral issues, providing a strong foundation for effective learning. Marzano et al. (2005) emphasize the importance of establishing clear rules, routines, and positive teacher-student relationships to promote a productive learning atmosphere (Marzano et al., 2005). In the context of TEYL, classroom management must also address the developmental needs of young learners by incorporating strategies like flexible seating arrangements, timely feedback, and engaging, age-appropriate activities that motivate students to participate actively (Soraya et al., 2022). Sukarno (2012) further highlights the importance of aligning teaching methods and materials with children's cognitive and linguistic abilities, ensuring that the classroom environment supports both language acquisition and broader developmental goals (Sukarno, 2012). Collectively, these findings underscore the need for strategic, child-centered classroom management techniques that foster meaningful learning experiences and holistic growth.

Despite its importance, there is limited understanding of the specific strategies teachers employ in TEYL settings. Research highlights the importance of classroom management for creating environments conducive to learning and addressing behavioral challenges. Evertson et al. (2020) emphasize that effective classroom management not only improves student engagement but also fosters a positive learning atmosphere, though challenges such as cultural differences and institutional constraints complicate its universal application (Evertson et al., 2020). Furthermore, Clement (2010) stresses that teacher preparation programs should equip educators with strategies for managing classrooms effectively, as well-managed environments enhance both teaching quality and student outcomes (Clement, 2010).

This study aims to explore the classroom management strategies used by TEYL teachers, bridging the gap between theory and practice. It seeks to identify effective techniques that address the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral needs of young learners while considering contextual factors like class size and institutional support. By integrating insights from these approaches, the research aims to enhance teacher preparedness and improve classroom outcomes.

The guiding question of this research is: What strategies do teachers use to manage classrooms in TEYL? Addressing this question will uncover methods to manage behavior, foster engagement, and optimize learning, offering practical recommendations for diverse teaching contexts. Effective classroom management has been identified as a significant factor influencing student achievement, with strategies such as creating structured environments and promoting positive teacher-student relationships showing notable benefits (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Evertson et al. (2006) also emphasize the importance of culturally responsive management techniques to address the diverse needs of students (Evertson et al., 2020).

Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to teacher training programs and professional development by equipping educators with effective management tools. It seeks to enhance classroom dynamics, improve student learning experiences, and inform educational policy, driving advancements in TEYL practice. Evidence suggests that well-managed classrooms lead to improved behavioral and academic outcomes, which can significantly impact both teacher and student success (Marzano et al., 2005)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for understanding classroom management strategies in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). Behaviorist theories emphasize the role of reinforcement techniques, such as rewards and consequences, in shaping

and maintaining desired behavior in young learners. Research highlights that positive reinforcement, such as praise or tangible rewards, can effectively promote engagement and compliance with classroom expectations, creating a productive and supportive learning environment (Gunaretnam, 2021). On the other hand, constructivist approaches advocate for strategies that promote active learning and collaboration, encouraging students to take ownership of their learning through meaningful and interactive activities. These approaches emphasize creating student-centered environments where learners develop critical social and cognitive skills through exploration and dialogue (Fuson, 2009; Simatwa, 2010).

Classroom management in TEYL also involves practical strategies tailored to the developmental needs of young learners. Establishing clear routines and rules helps provide structure, reducing uncertainty and promoting a sense of security in students. Positive reinforcement, such as praise and tangible rewards, is commonly used to encourage appropriate behavior and engagement. Studies show that reinforcement techniques, including structured incentives, are effective in creating supportive and engaging classroom environments (Gunaretnam, 2021). Additionally, incorporating interactive activities that promote collaboration aligns with young learners' natural inclination to explore and play, making learning more effective (Lakshmi, 2010). These strategies enhance student participation and contribute to the creation of a vibrant and effective classroom environment.

However, the choice of classroom management strategies is often influenced by various contextual factors. The age, behavior, and English proficiency levels of students significantly impact the methods teachers employ. For instance, younger learners may require simpler routines and more frequent reinforcement compared to older or more advanced students. Additionally, cultural norms and institutional policies shape the management practices teachers adopt. In some contexts, interactive and play-based approaches are encouraged, while in others, more structured methods may be prioritized due to cultural expectations or resource limitations. Research highlights that effective classroom management strategies must consider these contextual variables to create an inclusive and supportive environment for diverse learners (Pyle & Danniels, 2017; Zein, 2018).

Despite the progress in understanding TEYL classroom management, significant gaps remain in the existing research. Many studies focus on theoretical models or quantitative assessments, offering a limited qualitative exploration of how strategies are implemented in real classroom settings. This gap is particularly pronounced in examining how teachers adapt their methods to specific challenges, such as managing diverse learner needs or working in resource-constrained environments. Addressing this gap is crucial to providing a more

comprehensive understanding of effective classroom management in TEYL (Dalagan Jr. & Atugan, 2021; Milner IV & Tenore, 2010).

3. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research design, utilizing an exploratory approach to gain in-depth insights into the classroom management strategies employed by teachers in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). A qualitative methodology is particularly well-suited for understanding the nuanced, context-dependent practices of educators, allowing for rich, detailed exploration of their experiences and strategies. Such an approach has been recognized for its value in uncovering the complexities of educational environments and informing effective practices (Ishtiaq, 2019). By using this design, the research aims to uncover specific methods teachers use and how they adapt these approaches to the unique challenges within TEYL classrooms.

The participants in this study consist of TEYL teachers with a minimum of two years of teaching experience. This criterion ensures that the participants have sufficient practical experience and familiarity with managing young learners in classroom settings. A purposive sampling method is employed to select participants who meet these criteria and can provide relevant insights into the research questions. This approach allows the study to focus on educators who are most likely to have valuable expertise and varied experiences in the field (Tongco, 2007).

Data collection involves semi-structured interviews with participants to explore their classroom management strategies in depth. Semi-structured interviews provide a balance between structured questions and open-ended responses, enabling the researcher to probe for detailed explanations and adapt the conversation based on emerging themes. This method allows for the collection of rich qualitative data while maintaining a consistent focus on the research objectives (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, a method well-suited for identifying recurring patterns and themes within qualitative data. Thematic analysis involves systematically coding the data and organizing it into meaningful categories that capture the essence of participants' strategies and experiences. This approach ensures a structured yet flexible analysis, revealing both commonalities and unique insights among the participants. Trustworthiness in qualitative research is achieved by ensuring credibility, dependability, and confirmability throughout the data collection and analysis processes (Nowell et al., 2017).

Ethical considerations are integral to this study, ensuring the confidentiality and voluntary participation of all participants. Participants' identities will be anonymized, and informed consent will be obtained before data collection. Additionally, participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions. These measures uphold the ethical standards of qualitative research and ensure the integrity of the study (Mohd Arifin, 2018).

4. RESULTS

This study analyzed qualitative responses from teachers regarding their classroom management strategies, challenges, and techniques. Using a thematic framework, the responses were categorized into overarching themes and subthemes, such as classroom management strategies, student engagement, challenges, and effective practices. The analysis highlighted recurring patterns and unique approaches while providing rich examples of how teachers address both routine and complex classroom situations. The identified subthemes and their frequency are visually represented in Figure 1, providing an overview of the areas most frequently discussed by respondents. The analysis revealed critical strategies and challenges in classroom management, with teachers providing vivid examples of their practices.

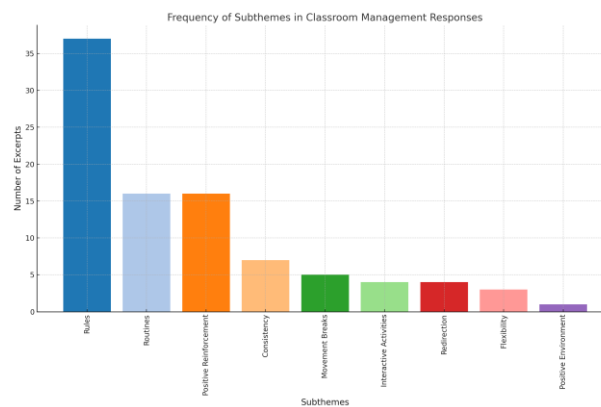


Figure 1 Frequency of Subthemes in Classroom Management Responses

Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of subthemes identified in the teachers' responses, offering a clear overview of the key strategies and challenges in classroom management. The figure highlights the prominence of specific practices, such as rules, routines, and positive reinforcement, which are further analyzed and referenced throughout the discussion to provide context and support for the findings. The thematic analysis of the responses revealed several key insights into teachers' practices for managing classrooms. The discussion below is organized by the primary themes and subthemes, with examples and evidence drawn from the data.

Classroom Management Strategies

A significant proportion of teachers emphasized the importance of establishing **rules** and **routines** to maintain classroom order. As shown in Figure 1, these were among the most frequently mentioned strategies. Teachers frequently highlighted the collaborative creation of rules to foster a sense of shared ownership. One teacher explained, *"I involve students in setting up rules, which makes them feel responsible and ensures better adherence."* Similarly, routines such as starting the day with a song or establishing consistent daily schedules provided structure and predictability.

Positive reinforcement also emerged as a commonly used technique, with teachers employing strategies like stickers, praise, and reward charts. For instance, one respondent shared, *"I use a star chart to acknowledge good behavior, and the students love seeing their progress."* This approach was noted to significantly enhance student motivation and compliance.

Challenges in Classroom Management

Teachers frequently discussed the challenges they face in managing classrooms. Among these, **managing diverse energy levels** stood out as a recurrent issue. To address this, teachers incorporated **movement breaks**, a strategy evident in its prominence in Figure 1. One teacher remarked, *"When students become restless, I introduce a quick dance or stretching activity, which helps them refocus."*

Another common challenge was **disruptive behaviors**, such as inattentiveness or interruptions. Teachers tackled this by using **redirection** strategies, including subtle non-verbal cues or assigning classroom responsibilities to disruptive students. For example, a teacher shared, *"A frequently disruptive student improved significantly when I gave them a task, like distributing materials. It redirected their energy positively."*

Student Engagement Techniques

Teachers employed various methods to maintain student engagement, including **interactive activities** and **tailored content**. These methods were highlighted as effective for fostering interest and focus in the classroom. One teacher noted, *"Role-playing activities kept my students highly engaged, especially when we used themes they were interested in."*

Tailoring lesson plans to student interests was also emphasized. For example, a teacher explained, *"I planned a lesson around animals because my students love them, and their*

excitement was incredible." Additionally, **movement breaks** were cited as an essential tool for re-energizing students during longer lessons.

Effective Strategies for Success

The findings underscore that successful classroom management relies on certain key traits. **Consistency** in applying rules and routines was frequently mentioned as critical for creating a stable and predictable environment. One teacher commented, "*Consistency is key. Students know exactly what to expect, which builds trust.*"

At the same time, **flexibility** was highlighted as an important trait for adapting to dynamic classroom conditions. A teacher shared, "*Sometimes the energy in the room is higher than usual, so I switch to a hands-on activity to channel that energy constructively.*"

Influence of Cultural and Contextual Factors

Teachers highlighted the importance of aligning their strategies with **institutional guidelines** while maintaining autonomy. For instance, one noted, "*My school encourages collaborative group work, which aligns with my preference for interactive activities.*"

Cultural sensitivity was also seen as vital. A respondent shared, "*In my class, I include local traditions in my lessons. For example, during a cultural festival, we did an art project based on traditional designs. It really resonated with the students and their families.*"

The findings demonstrate a diverse array of strategies that teachers use to effectively manage their classrooms while navigating challenges. Structured routines, positive reinforcement, and engaging techniques such as interactive activities and movement breaks stand out as essential tools. However, challenges such as managing diverse energy levels, disruptive behaviors, and resource constraints require adaptive and creative approaches. Successful practices are characterized by consistency, flexibility, and the creation of a positive learning environment, underpinned by cultural and institutional alignment. The inclusion of real-life examples enriches these insights, providing practical guidance for educators and policymakers to enhance classroom management practices.

5. DISCUSSION

Effective classroom management is a vital component of teaching, especially in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), where structure, engagement, and flexibility are essential for success. This study aimed to explore teachers' strategies, challenges, and adaptive techniques for managing classrooms in TEYL contexts. By analyzing the qualitative responses

using thematic analysis, the results highlighted key subthemes such as rules, routines, positive reinforcement, movement breaks, interactive activities, and others. These findings provide valuable insights into the practical methods teachers employ, as well as the contextual factors influencing their approaches.

Classroom Management Strategies

The analysis revealed that **rules** and **routines** were the most frequently mentioned strategies, as shown in **Figure 1**. Rules, which account for the highest number of excerpts (37), were emphasized as foundational for creating structured and predictable environments. Teachers reported that collaboratively developing classroom rules with students fostered ownership and responsibility. One participant noted, “I involve students in setting up rules, which makes them feel responsible and ensures better adherence.” This aligns with the **behaviorist theory** discussed in Chapter 2, which highlights reinforcement techniques for maintaining desired behaviors (Gunaretnam, 2021).

Similarly, **routines** were highlighted as critical for reducing uncertainty and promoting consistency. As seen in **Figure 1**, routines were mentioned 16 times, reflecting their importance in maintaining order and predictability. Teachers reported starting lessons with familiar activities, such as songs or storytelling, to set a positive tone for the day. These findings support Lakshmi's (2010) assertion that routines enhance young learners' sense of security, improving both behavior and engagement.

Positive reinforcement was another frequently mentioned subtheme (16 mentions), further validating the behaviorist perspective. Teachers employed techniques like praise, stickers, and reward charts to acknowledge good behavior. One participant shared, “The star chart system motivates my students to behave well because they enjoy seeing their progress.” Positive reinforcement fosters an encouraging classroom climate that motivates learners to comply with expectations (Gunaretnam, 2021).

Addressing Challenges in Classroom Management

Despite the success of rules, routines, and reinforcement, teachers also reported significant challenges. Managing **diverse energy levels** among students was a recurring issue, prompting the use of **movement breaks** (5 mentions in Figure 1). These breaks, such as stretching or dancing, were seen as effective strategies to re-energize students and refocus their attention. One teacher stated, “Movement breaks are a lifesaver when my students become

restless. A short dance activity helps them regain focus.” This finding aligns with constructivist approaches, which emphasize active learning and physical engagement (Fuson, 2009).

Disruptive behaviors, such as inattentiveness and interruptions, were addressed through **redirection** strategies (4 mentions). Teachers noted that subtle cues, such as assigning small responsibilities to disruptive students, helped redirect their energy positively. For example, one participant shared, “I assigned a frequently disruptive student to distribute worksheets, which improved their focus and behavior.” These adaptive strategies highlight teachers’ ability to balance structure and flexibility to address real-time challenges.

Promoting Student Engagement

The results indicate that **interactive activities** (5 mentions) and tailored content were key strategies for maintaining student engagement. Teachers emphasized the importance of incorporating play-based learning, games and role-playing to foster collaboration and excitement. One teacher explained, “Role-playing activities kept my students highly engaged, especially when they acted out their favorite stories.” These practices align with the **constructivist perspective**, which encourages student-centered learning through exploration and interaction (Simatwa, 2010).

Additionally, teachers reported tailoring lesson plans to student interests as a successful technique for promoting engagement. For instance, a teacher shared, “I planned a lesson around animals because my students love them, and they were excited throughout the activity.” This aligns with Lakshmi's (2010) findings that learning activities tied to students' interests improve focus and participation

Effective Strategies for Success

Teachers highlighted **consistency** (6 mentions) and **flexibility** (3 mentions) as critical components of effective classroom management. Consistency in implementing rules and routines was seen as essential for establishing trust and predictability. One teacher commented, “Consistency is key. When students know what to expect, they feel secure and behave better.” This supports research that emphasizes structured environments as essential for behavior management (Gunaretnam, 2021).

At the same time, teachers emphasized the need for flexibility to adapt to dynamic classroom conditions. As one respondent shared, “Sometimes I switch to hands-on activities when I notice the energy in the room is too high.” Flexibility allows teachers to balance structure with spontaneity, ensuring lessons remain engaging and responsive to student needs.

Contextual and Cultural Influences

The findings also underscore the role of **contextual and cultural factors** in shaping teachers' strategies. For instance, teachers noted aligning their methods with institutional policies while integrating cultural traditions into lessons. One participant explained, "We incorporated a cultural festival into our lesson, and the students were highly engaged because it was meaningful to their lives." This aligns with Zein's (2018) assertion that effective classroom management must consider cultural norms and students' backgrounds to create inclusive learning environments.

The results of this study provide a detailed understanding of classroom management strategies in TEYL contexts, highlighting both successes and challenges. **Rules, routines, and positive reinforcement** emerged as the most frequently cited strategies for creating structured and engaging learning environments, consistent with behaviorist and constructivist theories. Challenges such as diverse energy levels and disruptive behaviors required creative solutions, including **movement breaks** and **redirection strategies**.

Furthermore, teachers emphasized the importance of balancing **consistency** and **flexibility** to adapt to the dynamic needs of young learners. The influence of cultural and contextual factors also played a critical role, underscoring the need for culturally responsive strategies.

The study's findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on TEYL classroom management and provide practical guidance for teachers and policymakers to enhance classroom dynamics and learning outcomes.

6. CONCLUSION

This study explored classroom management strategies employed by teachers in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), highlighting effective strategies, challenges, and contextual influences. The findings identified rules, routines, and positive reinforcement as the most commonly used strategies, creating structured and supportive learning environments that promote student compliance and engagement. Teachers addressed challenges such as diverse energy levels and disruptive behaviors through movement breaks and redirection strategies, emphasizing the need for flexibility alongside consistency in classroom management. Interactive activities and tailored lesson plans emerged as essential tools for maintaining student interest and fostering participation, aligning with constructivist principles of active, student-centered learning. Furthermore, cultural and contextual factors significantly shaped management practices, with teachers incorporating institutional guidelines and cultural

traditions to create inclusive environments. These findings bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering practical insights for teachers, policymakers, and training programs to enhance classroom dynamics, address real-world challenges, and improve learning outcomes in TEYL settings.

LIMITATION

The limitations of this study primarily stem from its qualitative design and the scope of participant selection. First, the study relied on data collected through semi-structured interviews, which, while providing rich insights, may be influenced by participants' subjective experiences and self-reporting biases. Second, the sample consisted of TEYL teachers with a minimum of two years of experience, which, although ensuring practical insights, limits the generalizability of the findings to novice teachers or those in different educational contexts. Third, the study focused on a specific context and cultural setting, which may not fully represent classroom management practices in other regions or educational systems. Finally, while the thematic analysis revealed recurring patterns, the study did not include classroom observations, which could have provided additional validation and a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' strategies in practice. Addressing these limitations in future research, such as incorporating observations and expanding the participant pool, could offer broader and more robust findings.

REFERENCES

- Clement, M. C. (2010). Preparing teachers for classroom management: The teacher educator's role. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*.
- Dalagan Jr., S., & Atugan, M. K. (2021). Capability level and development priority of learning environment and diversity of learners' domain. *Davao Research Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.59120/drj.v12i4.108>
- DeJonckheere, M., & Vaughn, L. M. (2019). Semistructured interviewing in primary care research: A balance of relationship and rigour. *Family Medicine and Community Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2018-000057>
- Evertson, C. M., Weinstein, C. S., Landrum, T. J., & Kauffman, J. M. (2020). *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781020371747>
- Fuson, K. C. (2009). Avoiding misinterpretations of Piaget and Vygotsky: Mathematical teaching without learning, learning without teaching, or helpful learning-path teaching? *Cognitive Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2009.09.009>

- Gunaretnam, V. (2021). A study on increasing positive behaviors using positive reinforcement techniques. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*. <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2021.5706>
- Ishtiaq, M. (2019). Book review: Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. *English Language Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v12n5p40>
- Lakshmi, H. V. (2010). Classroom management in integrated school setup. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09751122.2010.11889994>
- Marzano, R. J., & Marzano, J. S. (2003). *The key to classroom management*. Educational Leadership.
- Marzano, R. J., Gaddy, B. B., Foseid, M. C., Foseid, M. P., & Marzano, J. S. (2005). *A handbook for classroom management that works*.
- Milner IV, H. R., & Tenore, F. B. (2010). Classroom management in diverse classrooms. *Urban Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085910377290>
- Mohd Arifin, S. R. (2018). Ethical considerations in qualitative study. *International Journal of Care Scholars*. <https://doi.org/10.31436/ijcs.v1i2.82>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Pyle, A., & Danniels, E. (2017). A continuum of play-based learning: The role of the teacher in play-based pedagogy and the fear of hijacking play. *Early Education and Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2016.1220771>
- Simatwa, E. M. W. (2010). Piaget's theory of intellectual development and its implication for instructional management at presecondary school level. *Educational Research and Reviews*.
- Soraya, K., Eryani, F., Andiyan, A., & Astuti, P. (2022). Classroom management strategies on the teaching English to young learners at elementary school. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture*. <https://doi.org/10.21744/ijllc.v8n6.2195>
- Sukarno, -. (2012). Teaching English to young learners and factors to consider in designing the materials. *Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Pendidikan*. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jep.v5i1.603>
- Tongco, M. D. C. (2007). Purposive sampling as a tool for informant selection. *Ethnobotany Research and Applications*. <https://doi.org/10.17348/era.5.0.147-158>
- Zein, S. (2018). Classroom management for teaching English to young learners. In *The Routledge handbook of teaching English to young learners*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315623672-11>