

Promoting Quality Language Learning Through Efficient Classroom Management: The Case of English Language Teaching in Bukavu Secondary Schools

Heritier Ombeni Kalalizi¹, Moïse Cirume Mwozi², Esther Kahambu Kyuma³, Sammuel Cimanuka Karongo⁴, Destin Lolango Mubali⁵

^{1,2}Higher Institute of Agronomic and Veterinary Studies (ISEAV/ WALUNGU)

³Department of School Coordination-Baptist Community in Central Africa (CBCA)

⁴Free University of the Great Lakes Countries

⁵Higher Pedagogical Institute (ISP-Kaziba)

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90700052>

Received: 23 June 2025; Accepted: 27 June 2025; Published: 29 July 2025

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of effective classroom management on the quality of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning in secondary schools in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The research addresses persistent challenges in EFL instruction in the DRC, such as outdated teaching approaches, poor learning environments, and a lack of teacher training in classroom control strategies. Using a qualitative approach, data were gathered through literature review and classroom observation, guided by structured indicators including the presence of clear rules and effective time management. Findings reveal that efficient classroom management especially through well-defined expectations, time control, and student engagement leads to better language acquisition outcomes. The study highlights a significant gap in pedagogical training and curriculum implementation in the DRC and recommends integrating classroom management principles into national education policy. The novelty of this study lies in its localized focus on Bukavu's multilingual context, where language learning is shaped by the intersection of educational policy, teacher preparedness, and classroom realities.

Keywords: Classroom Management, Language Learning, Pedagogical Innovation

INTRODUCTION

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), English is introduced at both lower and upper secondary education levels and is intended to develop learners' abilities in the four essential language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Despite these curricular intentions, English remains a marginal language in public life, often overshadowed by French, which is the official language of instruction and administration. In a country with over 200 local languages and four recognized national languages (Swahili, Lingala, Tshiluba, and Kikongo), English is often the third or fourth language learned by students, typically within an educational system that is under-resourced and underdeveloped in terms of communicative language teaching.

Bukavu, a multilingual urban center in the eastern DRC, presents a unique context for English language learning. Most students arrive at school already fluent in at least one or two indigenous or national languages. While this linguistic diversity can be a resource, it also complicates the acquisition of a foreign language that is not widely spoken outside the classroom. Additionally, many EFL teachers in Bukavu lack formal training in classroom management strategies that are essential for creating structured and engaging learning environments.

Research has increasingly recognized the central role of classroom management in achieving educational quality. According to Malik et al. (2011), effective classroom management involves the strategic use of space, time, and resources to support learning outcomes. Poorly managed classrooms often lead to student disengagement, behavioural issues, and reduced language retention. On the other hand, classrooms with clear behavioural expectations, positive teacher-student relationships, and consistent routines are more likely to foster student motivation and academic success (Simonsen et al., 2008; Henley, 2010).

Although educational policy in the DRC mandates the teaching of English at the secondary level, effective EFL instruction is often undermined by inadequate classroom management practices. Many teachers lack the pedagogical training required to manage large, linguistically diverse classrooms. This results in a gap between curriculum goals and actual classroom experiences, particularly in urban areas like Bukavu.

This study seeks to explore the relationship between classroom management and language learning quality in Bukavu secondary schools. It aims to identify effective classroom strategies that enhance EFL instruction and to examine how classroom conditions influence language acquisition.

1. What is the relationship between classroom management and educational quality in EFL settings?
2. How does quality language learning contribute to improved classroom management?

To answer these questions, the paper is organized as follows: first, a literature review on EFL teaching and classroom management provides the theoretical framework; second, specific indicators of classroom management are identified and discussed in relation to quality education outcomes in Bukavu.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents a synthesis of current literature on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and classroom management, with a focus on their application in multilingual and under-resourced contexts such as Bukavu. It draws on both international frameworks and African-based research to contextualize the challenges and opportunities for promoting quality language learning through effective classroom management.

English Language Teaching in the Democratic Republic of Congo

In the DRC, English is taught as a compulsory subject at the secondary level. The national curriculum emphasizes the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, with a particular focus on oral communication in the early years (EDPS, 2017). However, English remains largely an academic subject and is not commonly used in daily interactions, making it difficult for students to develop communicative competence.

The country's complex linguistic landscape marked by four national languages and over 200 indigenous ones poses additional challenges for English instruction. French remains the dominant language of instruction, while English is typically introduced as the third or fourth language. As Bokamba (2008) notes, this multilingual context often results in language interference and affects learners' motivation and proficiency in English.

Further, textbooks used in Congolese schools often lack the cognitive depth needed to foster active language use. Cunningsworth (1995, cited in Ghufuron & Saleh, 2016) emphasizes that language learning materials must be intellectually engaging and contextually relevant to promote authentic language development. In Bukavu, most EFL textbooks overemphasize listening and speaking in the early years while neglecting reading and writing, leading to an imbalanced language skill set among students.

Importance of English in a Globalized Context

English has emerged as a global lingua franca, vital for communication in international business, science, diplomacy, and education (Crystal, 1997). With approximately 400 million native speakers and widespread institutional presence in over 50 countries, English plays a pivotal role in professional and academic

advancement. Mastery of English is associated with increased employment opportunities and global access to knowledge.

However, Hult & King (2011) argue that simply promoting early English instruction is insufficient without addressing local contextual challenges, such as limited teacher training, lack of teaching aids, and overcrowded classrooms. Seidlhofer (2011) further suggests that English education policies must be reinterpreted to reflect local realities, especially in multilingual societies where learners' first languages are undervalued.

Classroom Management and Its Role in Language Learning

Classroom management refers to the strategies used by teachers to create and maintain an environment that supports both academic learning and socio-emotional development. Malik et al. (2011) define it as the effective use of time, space, and resources to achieve educational goals. In the EFL context, effective classroom management is particularly important given the need for structured practice, consistent routines, and active learner participation.

Research shows that clear classroom structures, positive behaviour reinforcement, and interactive teaching approaches are strongly associated with improved learner outcomes (Simonsen et al., 2008; Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Henley (2010) advocates for restorative and preventive management strategies that foster self-discipline and minimize instructional disruptions. Similarly, Aliakbari & Bozorgmanesh (2015) highlight that assertive classroom management directly correlates with student performance in EFL classrooms.

In multilingual classrooms, the role of the teacher becomes even more complex. Teachers must not only manage classroom behaviour but also navigate cultural and linguistic diversity. Wubbels et al. (2016) argue that effective teacher-student relationships in such settings are critical to building trust and promoting engagement.

Characteristics of Effective Classroom Management

Effective classroom management encompasses more than disciplinary control. It involves creating a positive learning environment, setting clear expectations, and fostering meaningful interaction. According to Simonsen et al. (2008), five core evidence-based strategies define effective classroom management:

1. Well-defined classroom routines and visual supports;
2. Active student engagement through varied teaching techniques;
3. Positive reinforcement of expected behaviours;
4. Consistent behavioural correction using non-punitive methods;
5. Physical and emotional classroom climate that is welcoming and conducive to learning.

The importance of emotional climate is emphasized by Chaptain (2006), who argues that students are more likely to participate and take risks in environments where they feel safe and respected. Moreover, physical aspects such as lighting, seating arrangements, and classroom cleanliness (Evaggelou, 2014) have been linked to student motivation and concentration.

Classroom Management in the Congolese EFL Context

Despite the global consensus on the importance of classroom management, many secondary schools in the DRC continue to rely on outdated, teacher-centered methods with little room for student interaction or classroom autonomy. As observed by De Jong (2005), many “best practices” in classroom management remain under-implemented in low-resource contexts due to lack of training, institutional support, and context-specific adaptation.

In Bukavu, challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials, and insufficient teacher development hinder the implementation of effective classroom management strategies. Teachers are often left to rely on instinct or punitive measures to maintain order, which undermines language learning outcomes and contributes to student disengagement.

Research Gap

Although several studies have examined classroom management in EFL contexts (e.g., Debreli & Ishanova, 2019; Al-Khazaali, 2021), very few have focused on African multilingual settings, and even fewer on the Congolese context. Most existing research is situated in Western or Middle Eastern contexts where infrastructure and institutional support differ significantly. This study addresses this gap by investigating how classroom management practices affect language learning outcomes in Bukavu a setting where teachers must balance multilingualism, limited resources, and curriculum demands.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design, specifically an exploratory case study approach, to investigate the relationship between classroom management and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning quality in Bukavu's secondary schools. The qualitative approach was selected to capture in-depth insights into teachers' classroom practices, their perceptions of management strategies, and the contextual challenges they face in a multilingual and resource-constrained educational setting.

This design is appropriate for understanding complex, real-life educational phenomena (Creswell, 2014), especially where variables such as teacher behaviours, student engagement, and institutional context interact in dynamic ways.

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted in six public and private secondary schools in Bukavu, South Kivu province, Democratic Republic of Congo. These schools were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring a representative mix of institutions in terms of ownership (public/private), resources, and student population size.

Participants included:

1. 12 English language teachers (2 from each school),
2. 6 school administrators (1 from each school), and
3. 30 secondary students (5 from each school, selected across grade levels 3–6).

All participants were involved in EFL teaching or learning and were selected based on their direct experience with classroom practices in Bukavu's educational context.

Data Collection Instruments

a. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interview protocols were developed for teachers and administrators. These protocols included open-ended questions on:

1. Classroom management strategies employed ;
2. Perceptions of students engagement and discipline;

3. Institutional support for classroom management.

The items were adapted from validated instruments used in previous classroom management research (e.g., Aliakbari & Bozorgmanesh, 2015; Simonsen et al., 2008).

Validity and reliability:

1. The interview guides were reviewed by three education experts for content validity.
2. A pilot interview with two teachers outside the sample was conducted to test clarity and appropriateness.
3. Cohen's Kappa was used for inter-rater agreement during coding, yielding a coefficient of 0.81, indicating strong reliability.

b. Observation Checklist

A classroom observation guide was designed using structured indicators based on Simonsen et al.'s (2008) framework. The guide included:

1. Indicators: Presence of clear rules, routine use of English, student engagement, time management, classroom layout, and teacher-student interactions.
2. Verifiers: Posted classroom rules, visual schedules, evidence of group work, disciplinary procedures, and teacher communication methods.

Each class was observed twice, for 45 minutes each session, to assess consistency and minimize observer bias.

Data Analysis

Data from interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-step framework:

1. Familiarization with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

NVivo software was used to assist in organizing codes and identifying patterns across the data.

Emerging themes were compared to findings in existing literature to highlight similarities, contrasts, and research gaps.

Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent, and participation was voluntary. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms. The study was approved by the academic ethics committee of the Higher Institute of Agronomic and Veterinary Studies (ISEAV/Walungu).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings derived from classroom observations and interviews with teachers and school administrators. The results are discussed in relation to existing literature, highlighting areas of convergence and divergence. Two main themes emerged from the data: (1) clarity of classroom rules and (2) effective time management both recognized as foundational to quality language learning.

Theme 1: Clarity of Rules and Classroom Structure

Findings

In most classrooms observed, clear regulations were either inconsistently applied or entirely absent. Only 2 out of 6 schools had visible classroom rules posted. Where rules were displayed and consistently enforced, students demonstrated higher levels of engagement and mutual respect. These environments were also characterized by:

1. Teachers giving explicit and simple instructions in English,
2. The presence of speech regulations (e.g., when to speak and listen),
3. Student groups assigned to classroom maintenance duties,
4. Greater evidence of student collaboration and reduced behavioural issues.

In contrast, in classrooms without established routines or visible rules, teachers struggled with student misbehavior, off-task behaviours, and frequent disruptions.

Discussion

These findings support Simonsen et al. (2008), who emphasize the importance of clearly structured classrooms and behavioural expectations. Henley (2010) further argues that predictable classroom routines reduce ambiguity, allowing more instructional time. Similar conclusions were drawn by Aliakbari & Bozorgmanesh (2015), who found that assertive classroom strategies in EFL settings contribute to both academic improvement and student self-regulation.

However, the DRC context reveals a unique gap many teachers are unfamiliar with classroom management frameworks and tend to rely on punitive discipline rather than proactive organization. This contrasts with studies in Western or Middle Eastern contexts where such frameworks are part of formal teacher training (Marzano & Marzano, 2003).

Theme 2: Time Management and Instructional Efficiency

Findings

Only 3 of the 6 schools had printed class timetables visibly posted, and just 2 schools were consistently adhering to the scheduled times for lessons. Teachers in well-managed classrooms began and ended lessons on time, used lesson starters (e.g., warm-up questions), and followed through on lesson objectives. This allowed sufficient time for both instruction and student practice.

In less organized settings, teachers lost 10–15 minutes per period due to late starts, unprepared materials, and classroom discipline problems. Students in these classrooms reported confusion about lesson goals and showed limited progress in target language usage.

Discussion

Time management emerged as a strong predictor of instructional quality. Carroll (1978) was one of the first to associate academic performance with the amount of learning time actually used. More recent research (Campbell et al., 2003; Simonsen et al., 2008) affirms that instructional time must be maximized through efficient classroom transitions and structured pacing.

In the Bukavu context, lack of time management often stems from external constraints—overcrowded classrooms, shared classrooms, or teachers with overloaded schedules. While the international literature addresses time management from a behavioural and planning perspective, this study adds a context-specific insight: structural limitations in Congolese schools compound the challenge, making effective time use more difficult even for committed teachers.

Comparative Analysis and Research Gap

Although similar themes appear in global EFL research, this study provides unique contributions specific to the Congolese context:

1. In contrast to studies in more developed systems (e.g., Al-Khazaali, 2021 in Jordan), teachers in Bukavu often lack training on classroom routines or behaviours reinforcement strategies.
2. Unlike findings from Debreli & Ishanova (2019), where learners in Turkey responded well to autonomy-supportive environments, Bukavu students are more dependent on teacher direction, likely due to limited exposure to student-centered learning.
3. No study previously focused on the multilingual classroom management dimension within Congolese EFL settings. Language diversity, in this case, is both a barrier (due to code-switching confusion) and a potential asset (when tapped for collaborative learning).

Thus, this study identifies a research and policy gap: while the importance of classroom management in EFL instruction is well-documented, there is little empirical data or tailored intervention in post-colonial, multilingual African contexts like Bukavu.

Implications for Practice

The findings strongly suggest that:

1. Classroom management training should be systematically incorporated into teacher education programs in the DRC;
2. Schools need administrative support to enforce scheduling, provide resources, and monitor classroom organization;
3. Teachers should be encouraged and supported to adopt low-cost, practical classroom structures that promote order, equity, and interaction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study set out to explore how efficient classroom management contributes to quality English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning in secondary schools in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo. Through qualitative data from observations and interviews, the study revealed that well-structured classrooms characterized by clear behavioural expectations, consistent routines, and effective time management directly enhance student engagement, discipline, and language acquisition.

Despite the recognized importance of English as a global language, its teaching in Bukavu remains constrained by outdated pedagogical approaches, limited teacher training, and underdeveloped classroom management systems. Teachers often face overcrowded classrooms, insufficient resources, and a lack of institutional support. Moreover, while students bring rich multilingual backgrounds, these are rarely leveraged as assets in classroom instruction.

The study confirms that efficient classroom management is not a peripheral concern but a central driver of educational quality, especially in EFL contexts. However, current educational policies and teacher preparation programs in the DRC largely neglect this component. This oversight contributes to inconsistent instruction, low learner motivation, and underperformance in language skills.

Ultimately, improving English language outcomes in Bukavu requires a systemic shift one that recognizes classroom management as a key pedagogical competency and supports teachers through targeted training and policy reforms.

Recommendations

A. To the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (DRC)

Integrate Classroom Management into Teacher Training

Update teacher education curricula to include structured modules on classroom management, with emphasis on EFL contexts, learner-centered strategies, and multilingual environments.

Allocate Resources for School Infrastructure

Improve school infrastructure to support effective classroom layout, time management, and learner engagement (e.g., reliable schedules, instructional materials, and class size control).

Monitor Implementation of Pedagogical Reforms

Ensure that national curriculum reforms emphasizing language proficiency are properly monitored, evaluated, and supported at the school level.

B. To School Administrators and Educational Leaders

Support Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Organize regular in-service workshops focused on evidence-based classroom management and inclusive teaching strategies in multilingual settings.

Reinforce School-wide Management Policies

Develop and enforce clear school-wide rules and routines to standardize classroom expectations and minimize disciplinary disparities.

Encourage Collaboration Among Teachers

Promote peer mentoring and professional learning communities that allow teachers to share successful classroom practices and adapt strategies to local realities.

C. To Secondary School Teachers

Adopt Low-Cost, High-Impact Strategies

Use visual aids, posted rules, group roles, and clear routines to improve classroom order and student autonomy, even in resource-limited settings.

Leverage Students' Linguistic Repertoires

Draw on learners' multilingual backgrounds as a bridge to English learning, using code-switching strategically and fostering intercultural dialogue.

Focus on Time-Efficient Instruction

Plan lessons with precise timing, include warm-up and wrap-up activities, and reduce non-instructional time through better transitions and pacing.

Final Reflection

In an increasingly interconnected world, equipping students with strong English communication skills is no longer optional it is a developmental imperative. However, language competence does not emerge in isolation. It must be nurtured through well-managed, engaging, and inclusive classroom environments. By prioritizing classroom management, Congolese schools can take a crucial step toward empowering their students with the tools needed to succeed in both local and global contexts.

REFERENCES

1. Aliakbari, M., & Bozorgmanesh, B. (2015). Assertive classroom management strategies and students' performance: The case of EFL classroom. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 5(1), 146–152. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0501.20>
2. Alsayed, M. (2003). Factors that contribute to success in learning English as a foreign language. *Damascus University Journal*, 19(1), 23–30.
3. Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2011). National professional standards for teachers. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards>
4. Bokamba, E. G. (2008). DR Congo: Language and 'authentic nationalism'. In A. Simpson (Ed.), *Language and national identity in Africa* (pp. 214–234). Oxford University Press.
5. Campbell, R. J., Kyriakides, L., Muijs, R. D., & Robinson, W. (2003). Differential teacher effectiveness: Towards a model for research and teacher appraisal. *Oxford Review of Education*, 29(3), 347–362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980307440>
6. Carroll, J. B. (1978). *The teaching of French as a foreign language in eight countries*. Wiley.
7. Chvala, L. (2018). What are the core aims of English as a school subject? A study of teacher understanding in lower secondary school [Master's thesis, University of Oslo].
8. Corps, P. (2008). *Classroom management*. Information Collection and Exchange Publication.
9. Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global language*. Cambridge University Press.
10. De Jong, T. (2005). A framework of principles and best practice for managing student behaviour in the Australian education context. *School Psychology International*, 26(3), 353–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034305055979>
11. Evaggelou, Z. (2014). *Management of learning environment and learning motivation*. Athens: Grigoris Publications.
12. Ghufuron, M. A., & Saleh, M. (2016). An evaluation of English textbooks used in Indonesian secondary schools. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 4(2), 1–7.
13. Henley, M. (2010). *Classroom management: A proactive approach* (2nd ed.). Pearson.
14. Henrich, J. (2016). Education policy review in Sub-Saharan Africa: Relevance, implementation, and challenges. *World Bank Policy Brief*, 4(1), 1–8.
15. Kayikci, K. (2009). The effect of classroom management skills of teachers on the motivation of students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 1(1), 1443–1447. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2009.01.254>
16. Malik, S., Ali, R., & Rehman, S. (2011). Classroom management skills of teachers at secondary level in Pakistan. *International Journal of Academic Research*, 3(1), 554–558.
17. Marzano, R. J., & Marzano, J. S. (2003). The key to classroom management. *Educational Leadership*, 61(1), 6–13.

-
18. Martin, P. W. (2007). Bilingualism and education. In M. Heller (Ed.), *Bilingualism: A social approach* (pp. 165–181). Palgrave Macmillan.
 19. Matsaggouras, G. (1999). *Theory and practice of teaching strategies*. Gutenberg Publications.
 20. Ming-Tak, H., & Wai-Shing, L. (2008). *Classroom management: Creating a positive learning environment*. Hong Kong University Press.
 21. Simonsen, B., Fairbanks, S., Briesch, A., Myers, D., & Sugai, G. (2008). Evidence-based practices in classroom management: Considerations for research to practice. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 31(3), 351–380. <https://doi.org/10.1353/etc.0.0007>
 22. Wright, T. (2005). *Classroom management in language education*. Palgrave Macmillan.
 23. Xochellis, P. (2015). *The pedagogical dimension of school*. Thessaloniki: University of Macedonia Press.
 24. Zotos, G. (1993). *The educational process and the teacher's role*. Athens: Greek Letters Press.