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A Study on the Stratified and Mobile Class Model of English Teaching in Junior High School under the "Double Reduction" Policy

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Abstract

Under the "Double Reduction" policy, which aims to alleviate student burden and enhance educational quality, this study explores the effectiveness of the Stratified and Mobile Class Model in junior high school English teaching. Focusing on both academic performance and learning engagement, the research employed a mixed-methods approach, including pre- and post-tests, questionnaires, and interviews with 164 eighth-grade students and 3 English teachers implementing this model. Results indicate that the model significantly improved students' overall English scores. A key finding is that students in the Basic Administrative Classes demonstrated nearly twice the average score gain of their peers in the Advanced Class (mean improvements of 11.812 vs. 6.170 points), highlighting the model's pronounced efficacy for lower-proficiency learners. In terms of learning engagement, the model positively influenced behavioral and cognitive engagement across both groups. Students in the basic classes showed marked increases in participation and strategic learning, while advanced students exhibited enhanced higher-order thinking. However, the impact on emotional engagement was nuanced: basic class students experienced reduced anxiety and growing confidence, yet their intrinsic interest saw minimal growth; advanced class students, despite cognitive benefits, reported a slight decline in emotional engagement due to an intensified competitive climate. These findings suggest that while the Stratified and Mobile Class Model is a promising pedagogical strategy for implementing "Double Reduction" and promoting educational equity, its success depends on complementary efforts to foster emotional motivation and a supportive learning environment for all students.

Keywords

"Double Reduction" Policy, Stratified and Mobile Class Model, Learning Engagement

1. Introduction

In May 2021, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on Further Reducing the Homework Burden and Off-campus Training Burden of Students in Compulsory Education (hereinafter referred to as the Double Reduction Policy), which intended to reduce the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students. Meanwhile, the Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2022 edition) formulated by the Ministry of Education of the People's Re-public of China (2022) emphasize catering to individual differences and enhancing classroom efficiency.

However, a significant challenge persists in traditional junior high school English classrooms, that is, the wide variation in students' proficiency levels within a single large class, a situation exacerbated by computerized class assignment systems. In this "one-size-fits-all" teaching context, teachers struggle to meet the diverse needs of all learners, thus tend to focus on the average student while neglecting those at both the higher and lower ends of the language proficiency spectrum.

The Stratified and Mobile Class Model emerges as a pedagogical response to these challenges. This model involves grouping students by their current English ability into different levels for instruction, allowing for tailored teaching and assessment. By focusing on students' individual learning readiness, this model holds significant promise for effectively implementing the "Double Reduction" policy, optimizing classroom teaching, and fostering development for all students.

2. Literature Review

This chapter focuses on related studies on Stratified and Mobile Class Model, as well as the theoretical foundation of this study.

2.1. The Connotation and Theoretical Basis of the Stratified and Mobile Class Model

The Stratified and Mobile Class Model is a modern teaching organization model based on individual student differences, aiming to achieve teaching students in accordance with their aptitude. Its core connotation lies in dividing students into different teaching classes according to their learning ability, interest, and achievement level in specific subjects (e.g., English), while retaining the administrative class structure. On this basis, it involves a systematic stratification of teaching objectives, content, homework, tests, and evaluation, forming a differentiated teach-

ing system (Yang, 2018). The fundamental difference from traditional education is its emphasis on dynamic mobility, allowing students to move between different levels based on their development, thereby avoiding labelling and ability solidification (Li, 2021). This model is not only a change in teaching organization but also reflects a shift towards a "student-centered" educational philosophy (Huang, 2024). Meanwhile, the Stratified and Mobile Class Model is supported by a solid theoretical foundation: Constructivism posits that learning is a process where students actively construct knowledge, and stratified teaching stimulates students' desire to explore by setting tasks at different levels (Chi, 2019); the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory emphasizes that teaching should be slightly above students' current level, facilitating cognitive leaps through teacher or peer assistance—stratified teaching promotes development for each student within their ZPD by setting tiered goals (Yu, 2019); the principle of Teaching Students in Accordance with Their Aptitude, an ancient educational wisdom, is the core concept of modern stratified mobile class teaching (Gao, 2019).

2.2. Practical Research on the Stratified and Mobile Class System

At the practical level, the Stratified and Mobile Class System has developed relatively mature models and strategies. Regarding student stratification, the "comprehensive stratification method" is commonly used, which synthesizes multi-dimensional information such as exam scores, learning attitudes, and interests to dynamically divide students into levels like A (Excellent), B (Intermediate), and C (Basic), allowing for periodic mobility (Du, 2016; Chang, 2015). Regarding teaching objectives, basic, developmental, and innovative three-level goals are set for different tiers, making the content more aligned with students' actual levels and effectively increasing classroom participation. Research has shown that for A-level students, the focus should be on cultivating critical thinking and literary appreciation skills; for B-level students, attention should be paid to training reading strategies and information integration skills; and for C-level students, the primary goals are stimulating reading interest and consolidating foundational language elements like vocabulary and grammar (Ding, 2020). Regarding teaching content, practical research confirms that providing students of different ability levels with progressively challenging reading materials and targeted tasks can effectively enhance the reading comprehension skills and confidence of students at all levels (Zhang & Zhang, 2024). Regarding homework and evaluation stratification, there is advocacy for "school-based layered homework design" and diversified evaluation methods, aiming to motivate students by offering choices and focusing on their progress (Gao, 2019). In addition, with regard to teaching management, a dual-track management model of administrative class and teaching class needs to be established, requiring enhanced collaboration between head teachers and subject teachers (Liu, 2021). Extensive empirical studies show that the implementation of the Stratified and Mobile Class System has achieved remarkable results: it can not only improve students' academic performance but also effectively stimu-

late their interest in learning English (Chi, 2019). Notably, this model plays a positive role in transforming underachieving students. Studies have found that setting basic goals aligned with their ZPD, providing a more supportive teaching pace, and employing evaluation methods focused on positive incentives can effectively reduce learning anxiety among underachievers, help them rebuild learning confidence, and gradually improve their learning performance (Chen, 2020). However, problems have also been exposed during practice, mainly including a significant increase in teacher workload (requiring preparation of multiple teaching plans) (Liu, 2019) and the management complexity arising from dynamic adjustments and cross-class teaching (Chang, 2015). In response to these issues, researchers propose systematic optimization suggestions: improving the stratification mechanism by establishing more scientific and dynamic standards, avoiding reliance solely on test scores (Huang, 2024); strengthening teacher training to enhance their capacity for differentiated instruction and classroom management (Li, 2019); building a support system including psychological counseling, home-school communication, and teaching resource platforms (Chen, 2020). While existing literature predominantly focuses on the academic outcomes of the Stratified and Mobile Class Model, a significant research gap remains in its differential impact on the learning engagement. Therefore, this study focuses not only on the academic performance but also the learning engagement among students of different proficiency levels under the "Double Reduction" policy.

Furthermore, while this study draws on localized empirical theses, it aligns with international discourse on differentiated instruction. Research in broader contexts confirms that ability grouping, when implemented with flexibility and support, can enhance academic outcomes (Steenbergen-Hu, Makel, & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2016) and that learning engagement is a multi-dimensional construct sensitive to instructional design (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). This study extends such insights into the specific context of China's "Double Reduction" policy.

3. Research Design

This chapter mainly presents research questions, research subjects, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis.

3.1. Research Questions

1) Can Stratified and Mobile Class Teaching Model improve students' English academic performance?

2) Can Stratified and Mobile Class Teaching Model improve students' English learning engagement?

3.2. Research Subjects

The participants of this study were 164 students in Grade eight and 3 English teachers from a junior high school in Baoding city. This junior high school is a public school with high recognition from the public. Notably, the school possesses a pro-

found historical foundation in implementing the Stratified and Mobile Class Model, tracing its practice back to as early as 1997, according to the interview of school leader. Initially, the school adopted a "small class teaching" approach within administrative classes, effectively creating A and B levels tailored to students' learning capacities. This early form of stratification was designed to provide personalized teaching experiences. Over the decades, the model has evolved significantly. A pivotal development occurred around 2009 with the introduction of the Cambridge Main Suite Examinations (MSE), which provided a standardized framework for further refining the stratification system. In response to growing student enrollment and evolving educational needs, the model progressively expanded from within-class stratification to a more comprehensive grade-wide mobile class system. This extensive experience, spanning nearly three decades, signifies that the school's implementation of the model is not an experimental pilot but a mature and integral part of its instructional framework, providing a highly valid context for this study.

However, since the conduction of admission dicing as well as sunlight class allocation, there is a big gap between students with the deepening of study, especially in English. The school's long-standing commitment to this model is driven by its core philosophy of "teaching students in accordance with their aptitude," aiming to offer each student a tailored and supportive learning environment that fosters confidence and academic growth.

3.3. Research Instruments

1) Tests

Before the Stratified and Mobile Class is conducted, a mid-term exam is issued. After that the final exam is also delivered at the end of the term. Both of the exams employed standardized test papers with comparable levels of difficulty.

2) Questionnaires

Similarly, two questionnaires are delivered to investigate the learning engagement of students from three aspects abased on the theoretical framework of Fredricks et al. (2004): behavior engagement, cognitive engagement and emotional engagement. The structure is as follows:

Learning engagement	Questionnaire (pre)	Questionnaire 2 (post)
Emotional Engagement	Q1, Q4	Q3, Q4, Q14, Q15
Behavioral Engagement	Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q10	Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q10, Q11
Cognitive Engagement	Q2, Q3, Q9	Q2, Q9, Q12, Q13

3) Interview

The interviews provide a great insight into the current state of Stratified and Mobile Class Teaching model and the attitudes towards it from the perspectives of students, teachers, and school leader.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The two questionnaires are issued and collected respectively after the mid and final exams to Class 2317, 2318, 2319 and 2320 four classes with 164 students, and 151 pieces are collected. At the end of final exam, the interviews are conducted to 8 students randomly chosen from foundational classes and advanced classes as well as two teachers. In addition, the school leader of English teaching and research was also interviewed. After that, the results of the tests and questionnaires were analyzed by SPSS24.0.

4. Research Procedures

This chapter focuses on the procedures of implementing junior middle school English Stratified and Mobile Class Teaching model. The experimental study lasts for one semester, from September 1st, 2024 to January 9th, 2025. The pre-test is the mid-term examination of the semester took place on November 6th, 2024. The Mobile Class Teaching model was conducted in four classes in the east campus after the pre-test and the first survey of the questionnaire. The post-test is the final exam of the semester in took place on January 9th, 2025 followed by the second survey of questionnaire and interviews. The Mobile Class Teaching model mainly involves how to conduct student stratification, teaching objectives stratification, teaching content stratification as well as homework stratification.

4.1. Student Stratification

The students were divided into two levels primarily based on their academic achievement in the midterm examination. Students who scored 100 or higher (out of 120) belonged to the Stratified Mobile Class Group (Group A), while others remained in their original administrative classes, termed the Administrative Class Group (Group B). The stratification process also considered student volition, as parental and student consent was sought to ensure a collaborative approach. Teachers explained that the purpose of this model was to enable students to receive instruction suited to their current level, thereby enhancing their learning experience and outcomes. The grouping was designed to be dynamic, allowing for adjustments based on student progress and performance over time. The mobility mechanism was implemented through a formal, bidirectional transfer mechanism based solely on major examination results on a semi-semester basis. Those in the Basic Group who scored above 100 on mid or final tests and demonstrated sustained engagement could apply to join the Advanced Group, subject to teacher recommendation. Conversely, a key criterion for downward mobility was a score falling below 100 points. Students in the Advanced Class whose exam results did not meet this benchmark were required, in consultation with teachers and parents, to return to the Basic Administrative Class to consolidate foundational knowledge. This structured, rules-based approach ensured that mobility decisions were transparent, equitable, and driven by clear academic indicators, thereby maintaining the instructional integrity and appropriate challenge level of each group.

4.2. Teaching Objectives Stratification

Teaching objectives were differentiated to align with the distinct needs of the two groups. For the Stratified Mobile Class Group, the focus was on cultivating higher-order core competencies, emphasizing language application, transfer, and critical thinking. In contrast, the Administrative Class Group concentrated on mastering fundamental knowledge and skills, with an emphasis on comprehension, practice, and building confidence in daily use. This tiered approach ensured that all students were working toward clear and attainable goals appropriate to their proficiency levels.

4.3. Teaching Content Stratification

Instructional content was tailored to reflect the differentiated objectives. Students in the Stratified Mobile Class Group engaged with more challenging and expansive materials, including extended readings, in-depth grammar analysis, and project-based tasks that required synthesis and creativity. Their lessons often incorporated supplementary resources and accelerated pacing. Meanwhile, the Administrative Class Group focused primarily on textbook-based content, with an emphasis on foundational vocabulary, key sentence structures, and practical exercises to reinforce core knowledge. Teachers designed relatable, life-oriented scenarios to help these students grasp and apply essential concepts.

4.4. Homework Stratification

Homework assignments were designed to extend classroom learning and reflect the differing goals of each group. For the Stratified Mobile Class Group, homework often involved open-ended tasks such as research reports, creative projects, and theme-based reading and writing. For example, students were asked to design future transportation or investigate historical topics using English resources. In the Administrative Class Group, homework emphasized consolidation through foundational exercises such as vocabulary memorization, sentence making, and structured practice aligned with lesson content. Assignments were calibrated in volume and difficulty to avoid undue pressure while ensuring steady progress.

5. Results and Discussion

With response to the research questions, this chapter discusses the results of examination results, questionnaires, and interviews from two aspects, namely the influence Stratified and Mobile Class Teaching on academic performance and learning engagement.

5.1. Influence of Stratified and Mobile Class Teaching on Academic Performance

The pre-test is the mid-term examination of the semester took place on November 6th, 2024 before conducting the Mobile Class Teaching model was conducted in four classes in the east campus after the pre-test. The post-test is the final exam of the semester in took place on January 9th, 2025.

1) Overall Performance Improvement and Structural Stability

To assess the macro-level impact of the Stratified Mobile Class Model on student achievement, the pre- and post-test scores across all four classes were analyzed. As presented in Table 1, following the implementation of the model, all classes demonstrated marked improvements in their mean scores, and maximum scores. This pattern indicates a broad-based, beneficial effect of the teaching model, effectively fostering academic progress across the entire student cohort. This suggests the reform is beneficial for the entire student population, aligning closely with the "Double Reduction" policy's core objective of enhancing educational quality and equity.

Table 1. Overall performance.

	Class	Numbers of students	Highest Score	Lowest Score	Average score
Before Mobile Class Teaching	2317	40	114	39	84.60 ± 21.87^{ab}
	2318	40	117	28	93.93 ± 18.14^{a}
	2319	42	112	26	75.36 ± 22.42^{b}
	2320	42	110	32	80.67 ± 21.88^{b}
After Mobile Class Teaching	2317	40	118	46	94.90 ± 20.83^{ab}
	2318	40	119	34	102.40 ± 18.21^{a}
	2319	42	120	17	86.62 ± 24.22^{b}
	2320	42	118	43	91.33 ± 20.89^{b}

However, despite this universal rise in absolute scores, the relative performance ranking and statistical significance grouping (denoted by superscript letters a, ab, b) among the four classes remained consistent before and after the intervention. This finding suggests that while the Stratified Mobile Class Model successfully elevates overall performance levels, it does not, in the short term, substantially alter the pre-existing academic hierarchy among classes, which is likely influenced by more entrenched factors such as initial student cohort quality and established class culture.

2) Differential Impact on Students of Two Proficiency Levels

To investigate the driving forces behind the overall improvement and to evaluate the model's efficacy in providing tailored instruction, paired-samples t-tests were conducted on the pre- and post-test scores of students in the Basic Administrative Class Group and the Advanced Stratified Mobile Class Group as shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

As shown in Table 2, the Paired Samples Test of students from Basic Administrative Classes exhibited a substantial gain, with a highly significant increase in scores, $t(116) = -16.213$, $p < 0.001$. The mean improvement was 11.812 points.

As shown in Table 3, the Paired Samples Test of students form Advanced Stratified Mobile Class also showed a significant improvement, $t(46) = -9.364$, $p < 0.001$, with a mean score increase of 6.170 points.

Table 2. Differential impact on students of basic administrative classes.

Basic Administrative Classes	Paired Difference					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair	−11.812	7.881	0.729	−13.255	−10.369	−16.213	116	0.000

Table 3. Differential impact on students of advanced stratified mobile classes.

Advanced Stratified Mobile Class	Paired Difference					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair	−6.170	4.517	0.659	−7.497	−4.844	−9.364	46	0.000

Therefore, the results confirmed that students in both groups made statistically significant progress which was primarily driven by targeted instructional interventions tailored to each proficiency level. A key finding is that the score improvement for Basic Administrative Classes was nearly double that of the Advanced Level Group, providing strong evidence that the Stratified Mobile Class Model is particularly effective in enhancing the academic outcomes of students with lower initial proficiency rather than only beneficial for the students at advanced level. By delivering instruction and content closely aligned with their cognitive starting points, the model successfully engages these learners and mitigates the phenomenon of passive attendance in a one-size-fits-all classroom. This is a crucial step toward achieving equity in the educational process.

These improvements align closely with the dual objectives of the "Double Reduction" policy. By significantly enhancing academic performance and learning engagement within the classroom, the Stratified and Mobile Class Model strengthens the school's role as the primary arena for learning. This increased internal efficacy addresses the policy's core aim of reducing students' reliance on off-campus tutoring by ensuring they can learn adequately and well within the school system, thereby alleviating the burden of excessive external academic training.

In summary, the Stratified Mobile Class Model demonstrates that through differentiated instructional pathways, a universally beneficial outcome can be achieved. Its pronounced success in bolstering the academic performance of students with weaker foundations confirms its significant value as a pedagogical strategy under the "Double Reduction" policy, effectively promoting greater equity in the learning process.

5.2. Influence of Stratified and Mobile Class Teaching on Learning Engagement

This section presents the findings on the impact of the Stratified and Mobile Class

Model on students' learning engagement including emotional engagement, behavioral engagement and cognitive engagement, which integrates quantitative data with qualitative insights from interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding.

1) Basic Administrative Classes: from alienation to integration

As shown in Table 4, quantitative data indicates a positive developmental trajectory for students from Basic Administrative Classes across all three dimensions of engagement.

Table 4. Learning engagement in basic administrative classes.

Basic Administrative Classes	Before		After		Mean Range
	M	SD	M	SD	
Emotional Engagement	2.041	0.176	2.084	0.126	+0.043
Behavioral Engagement	2.207	0.144	2.422	0.158	+0.216
Cognitive Engagement	2.290	0.085	2.421	0.065	+0.132

First, Behavioral Engagement: From Passive Silence to Active Response

The most substantial change was observed in behavioral engagement, which showed a marked increase ($\Delta M = 0.216$). This suggests that students invested more time and effort in their English studies and participated more actively in learning activities after the streaming.

This quantitative trend is strongly supported by student interview responses. Their behavioral patterns underwent a fundamental shift from "not raising hands because I didn't understand" to "actively raising hands because I could understand", as student 1 from Basic Administrative Classes explained (Coded as BS1, the same as below). Also, many reported a newfound ability to engage with the homework, as student 3 from basic administrative classes(BS3) stated, "I can finally understand and complete most of my homework on my own now, which I never could before." This transformation confirms that stratified mobile class teaching can significantly enhance students' active participation in the classroom (Chi, 2019). This process from silence to response was observed and summarized by the mobile class teacher as: "When the classroom is returned to these students, they will find their own confidence and stage" (T2).

Second, Cognitive Engagement: From Rote Memorization to Basic Application

A steady increase was also found in cognitive engagement ($\Delta M = 0.132$), indicating that students began to employ basic learning strategies and engage in deeper thinking. This aligns with the theoretical premise that teaching within students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) can promote cognitive development (Yu, 2019).

Qualitative data sheds light on this cognitive shift. Students described engaging in metacognitive activities that were previously absent. For instance, one student

noted, "After finishing exercises, I now check where I made mistakes," and "I try to understand the meaning of sentences before memorizing them." (BS3) These reflections demonstrate that the reduction in cognitive overload created the mental space necessary for strategic and thoughtful learning to emerge, a key objective of stratified teaching (Li, 2025).

Third, Emotional Engagement: Alleviating Anxiety and Building Self-Confidence

The growth in emotional engagement was minimal (ΔM = 0.043). This indicates that students' intrinsic interest in and enjoyment of learning English remained largely unchanged.

However, Quantitative data indicate a significant improvement in the mean value of emotional engagement among students in the foundation class. This shift is reflected in the qualitative data as a reduction in learning pressure and the establishment of self-efficacy. Students generally reported that "the pressure has lessened compared to being in the large class... I'm not as afraid of attending English class anymore" (BS4). This transition to "no longer being afraid" marks the starting point for increased emotional engagement. Another student's comment highlights the key factor: "I felt like I understood it, and it's actually simple... it gave me confidence" (BS4). This confirms that stratified mobile class teaching can effectively alleviate learning anxiety among struggling students and help them rebuild learning confidence through successful experiences (Chen, 2020). The teaching practices of the foundation class teacher are designed precisely for this purpose, with the core aim being to "reduce the sense of frustration from being unable to keep up" and to "provide a more supportive environment to help them gradually build confidence" (Teacher 1).

Therefore, the apparent discrepancy between the modest quantitative gain in emotional engagement (ΔM = 0.043) and the overwhelmingly positive qualitative feedback from the foundation class students can be explained by the nature of affective change. The interview data, filled with reports of "reduced pressure" and "no longer being afraid," primarily reflects a crucial alleviation of negative affect—a removal of the anxiety and frustration that previously blocked learning. This is a significant and positively perceived first step. However, moving from a state of "non-anxiety" to one of deep, intrinsic interest and enjoyment is a slower, more complex process. The quantitative measure, sensitive to the intensity of positive feelings, thus registered only a slight increase, indicating that while students felt relieved and more confident, a genuine passion for English itself had not yet fully taken root.

2) Advanced Stratified Mobile Class: from Competence to Mastery

The impact on the Advanced Stratified Mobile Class presented a more complex picture, characterized by clear cognitive gains coupled with a concerning affective trend as shown in **Table 5**.

First, Cognitive Engagement: From Knowledge Mastery to Thinking Expansion

Students in the Advanced Level demonstrated the largest gain in cognitive engagement (ΔM = 0.140), confirming that the more challenging curriculum effectively stimulated their higher-order thinking skills.

Table 5. Learning engagement of advanced stratified mobile class.

Advanced Stratified Mobile Class	Before		After		Mean Range
	M	SD	M	SD	
Emotional Engagement	2.407	0.069	2.385	0.062	−0.023
Behavioral Engagement	2.378	0.124	2.464	0.106	0.085
Cognitive Engagement	2.299	0.103	2.439	0.037	0.140

This finding was echoed in the interviews. Advanced class teaching emphasizes depth and breadth in cognition. Teachers set the goal of leaving basic content for "pre-class preview," while classroom time is used to "guide them through reading, oral expression, and writing for in-depth learning" (Teacher 2). This approach was appreciated by students, with one noting, "The reading materials and questions now require real analysis and critical thinking, not just finding information", as student 3 from Advanced Stratified Mobile class mentioned (AS3). Another student highlighted the value of deepened understanding, stating, "The teacher explains grammar from different perspectives, which helps me grasp it more profoundly" (AS4). To achieve this, the school leader emphasized the need to integrate "multiple versions of textbooks" and "diverse curriculum resources" to guide students in "cross-disciplinary" inquiry-based learning as school leader introduced. This kind of teaching that emphasizes knowledge extension and interdisciplinary integration effectively expands students' cognitive boundaries and cultivates their ability to think critically and solve complex problems (Tang, 2021).

Second, Behavioral Engagement: From Active Response to Leading Inquiry

The classroom behavior of advanced class students demonstrates higher autonomy and depth. Their homework forms are more diverse, including "research reports" and "designing future transportation vehicles" projects that require imagination and knowledge integration (AS3). In the classroom, they transition from "faster question-answering speed" to engaging in "free discussion, interviews, and reports" in English (Teacher 2). Their learning behaviors have shifted from responding to known answers to exploring unknown territories. The teaching design for the advanced class precisely guides students to gradually transition from independent learning to collaborative inquiry (Gao, 2019).

Third, Emotional Engagement: A Complex Interplay of Drive and Pressure

The impact on the emotional engagement of Advanced Class students presented a nuanced picture, with quantitative data showing a slight decline ($\Delta M = -0.023$). This marginal decrease should be interpreted alongside the complex qualitative feedback, which reveals a dual influence. On one hand, students reported positive drivers for their interest, citing the intellectual stimulation from "increased challenge" and the fulfillment of "finding a learning method more suitable for themselves" (AS4; AS1). On the other hand, interview data provides

a clear explanation for the dip in the quantitative data. Students described an environment where increased peer comparison and pressure became significant factors. One student admitted, "Everyone around me is so strong; if I don't work hard, I will fall behind immediately" (AS4), pointing to a source of anxiety. Another student reflected on the change in classroom dynamics, noting, "It feels like we are competitors more than classmates; the collaborative atmosphere from before is gone" (AS3). This suggests that the model, while cognitively stimulating, may have inadvertently intensified a competitive climate, which slightly eroded the intrinsic enjoyment and sense of community for some learners.

In summary, the Stratified and Mobile Class Model demonstrated a differential impact on student engagement. For students in the foundation level, the intervention facilitated a positive developmental cycle, characterized by reduced anxiety in emotional engagement, increased participation in behavioral engagement, and the emergence of strategic understanding in cognitive engagement. This trajectory effectively supported their transition from a state of alienation to active classroom integration. Conversely, for the advanced cohort, the model successfully promoted deeper cognitive engagement through challenging inquiry-based tasks and enhanced behavioral engagement through autonomous learning activities. However, these gains were accompanied by a slight decline in emotional engagement, attributable to an intensified competitive climate that partially undermined intrinsic learning motivation.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Major Findings

This study yields several key findings regarding the implementation of the Stratified and Mobile Class Model in junior high school English teaching, which are summarized as follows.

First, regarding academic performance, the model effectively enhanced students' overall English scores. Notably, its impact was most pronounced for students in the foundation level, whose average score improvement significantly surpassed that of their counterparts in the Advanced Group. This provides strong evidence that the model is particularly effective in promoting the academic development of students with lower initial proficiency, thereby facilitating equity in the educational process (Chen, 2020).

Second, regarding learning engagement, the model demonstrated a differentiated yet complementary impact. For the students in the Basic administrative classes, significant improvements were observed in behavioral and cognitive engagement. They became more active participants and began employing learning strategies effectively, a change facilitated by reducing cognitive overload and aligning instruction with their readiness, as theorized by Yu (2019) regarding the Zone of Proximal Development. Emotionally, while their positive intrinsic interest did not show significant growth, qualitative data confirm a meaningful reduction in anx-

iety alongside a rise in self-confidence—a crucial shift that helped them transition from alienation to integration towards sustainable development.

Conversely, for the students in Advanced stratified mobile class, the most notable improvement was in cognitive engagement. Through challenging interdisciplinary project-based learning (e.g., research reports, future vehicle design) and in-depth inquiry, their higher-order thinking skills were effectively stimulated (Tang, 2021). However, this cognitive gain was accompanied by a slight decline in emotional engagement, linked to increased peer pressure and a more competitive classroom atmosphere, echoing concerns about potential negative affective impacts. Thus, the learning paths of the two groups, one focusing on rebuilding confidence and the other on challenging limits, together form a comprehensive picture of stratified teaching that caters to different needs.

6.2. Pedagogical Implications

The findings offer concrete pedagogical implications within the framework of the "Double Reduction" policy. Firstly, the Stratified and Mobile Class Model is established as a powerful tool to address individual differences, moving beyond one-size-fits-all instruction. By enhancing in-school education quality through tailored interventions, the model alleviates students' excessive homework burden and reduces the reliance on off-campus tutoring, thereby directly contributing to the policy's core objectives.

However, the implementation of this model introduces significant practical challenges that must be addressed for its sustainability. Teacher interviews revealed a differentiated increase in workload: teachers of the Basic classes reported an increased burden in classroom discipline and management due to concentrating students with similar learning needs, while teachers of the Advanced classes faced the demanding task of curating more challenging and expansive materials for in-depth inquiry. Furthermore, for English teachers who also served as homeroom teachers, the dual-role added a layer of managerial complexity. They were tasked with holistically assessing and supporting students' progress across two parallel systems—the fixed administrative class and the mobile teaching class—which required considerable additional coordination.

Therefore, to implement this model effectively and sustainably, teachers require dedicated institutional support. This includes protected preparation time, access to shared platforms for stratified teaching resources, and streamlined administrative protocols. Crucially, support must be tailored, enabling all teachers to develop tiered objectives, layered content, and differentiated assessments aligned with their students' Zones of Proximal Development.

Beyond these structural supports, practitioners must intentionally address the affective domain, an area where the model currently falls short to creating a "low-threat, high-support" environment. For lower-level groups, strategies to foster intrinsic motivation and build genuine interest alongside foundational skills are crucial. The core goals are to reduce frustration and build self-efficacy through meth-

ods such as creating lifelike scenarios, providing positive feedback, and designing foundational, achievable homework. For higher-level groups, cultivating a collaborative rather than purely competitive environment is essential to safeguard their emotional engagement and passion for learning.Strategies should focus on safeguarding their intrinsic passion for learning and mitigating the emotional risks associated with increased peer pressure.

Addressing these affective needs is inextricably linked to the institutional support mentioned above. The provision of shared teaching resource platforms and targeted training in differentiated instruction and classroom climate management are thus not merely logistical steps, but foundational to fostering the sustained, student-centered environment that encompasses both academic and emotional well-being.

6.3. Limitations and Suggestions

This study has several limitations. The sample was confined to one school with a limited number of participants, which may affect the generalizability of the results. The relatively short intervention period of one semester prevents conclusions about the model's long-term effects. Furthermore, stratification was based primarily on exam scores, potentially overlooking other important aspects of student readiness, advocating for more scientific and dynamic standards.

Future research should involve larger, more diverse samples and longer experimental periods to validate and extend these findings. Longitudinal research designs tracking student development over one or more academic years are strongly recommended to elucidate the long-term trajectories and potential sleeper effects of stratified and mobile class models. It is also critical to develop and test more holistic, multi-dimensional stratification criteria that incorporate factors like learning attitudes, interests, and potential.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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