

REVIEW

of the official opponent

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor Natalia Dmitrenko

for the dissertation of Maksym Rutkovsky

**“CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN 7-9TH GRADES ENGLISH LESSONS
(APPLYING THE CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH)”**

submitted for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD)

Field of study: 01 Education

Specialty: 011 Educational, Pedagogical Sciences

Relevance of the dissertation topic and research

The relevance of the dissertation by Maksym Rutkovsky is driven by the transformational processes in Ukraine’s general secondary education, specifically the implementation of the “New Ukrainian School” reform, which emphasizes the humanization and democratization of schooling. The current educational paradigm requires a shift from a traditional, authoritarian, teacher-centred model to a learner-oriented, competence-based approach where the child is an active subject of the educational process. This shift is particularly critical in foreign language teaching for adolescents (7-9th grades), where educational activities are directly linked to communication, collaboration, and socio-emotional development. The need to bridge the gap between traditional classroom management and the requirements of modern digital and blended learning environments further underscores the timeliness of this research.

Definition of the research problem, scope and goals

The study addresses several key contradictions, mainly between the societal need to foster autonomous, socially mature adolescents and the predominance of traditional, strict classroom management in English lessons. It also highlights the lack of scientifically grounded pedagogical conditions that integrate digital technologies and socio-emotional learning into a child-centred framework. The

object of the study is the process of teaching English to students in grades 7–9 in general secondary education institutions. The subject is the pedagogical conditions for classroom management of these students in English lessons based on a child-centred approach. The primary aim is to determine, scientifically justify, and experimentally test the effectiveness of pedagogical conditions for classroom management of 7-9th graders in English lessons, implemented on the basis of a child-centred approach.

To resolve these contradictions, the author established four rigorous objectives:

1. *Theoretical Synthesis*: Analyzing the evolution of child-centred theory and clarifying the conceptual apparatus of “classroom management” within the NUS framework.
2. *Model Construction*: Designing a comprehensive child-centred model for classroom management in 7-9th grade English lessons.
3. *Condition Substantiation*: Theoretically justifying the specific pedagogical conditions required to activate the child-centred approach.
4. *Experimental Validation*: Testing the efficacy of the developed model and conditions through empirical classroom application.

These objectives align perfectly with the national mandate to redefine the teacher’s role as a facilitator of learning interaction.

Connection of the research with scientific programmes, plans, and topics

The dissertation is closely connected to broader academic initiatives. It was carried out in accordance with the thematic plan of scientific research at Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University. Specifically, it forms a component of two state-registered research themes: “Training of Future Specialists in Pedagogical Education in the Context of European Educational Integration” (state registration number 0123U105311) and “Creating a safe, flexible, multilingual educational environment for the effective training of future teachers in

the context of classroom, distance and blended learning” (state registration number 0123U104168).

This explicit alignment ensures the practical integration of the author’s findings into the broader European educational integration process. By focusing on the creation of safe, multilingual environments, the research provides a validated pathway for Ukrainian education to meet international standards of psychological safety and instructional flexibility.

Evaluation of author’s contribution to knowledge and practice, reliability and novelty of the dissertation results

The scientific novelty lies in the fact that the author is the first to identify, theoretically substantiate, and experimentally validate three specific pedagogical conditions (organisational-subjective, environmental-adaptive, and reflexive-motivational) for a child-centred approach in 7-9th grade English lessons.

Contribution to knowledge (Theoretical Significance) is based on the fact that the author expands the theoretical understanding of “child-centredness” as a methodological basis for organizing learning activities and clarifies the relationship between adolescents’ socio-emotional development and foreign language learning effectiveness.

Contribution to practice is occurred that the author created a highly applicable methodological toolkit, including algorithms for small-group work and digital templates, which can be directly used by English teachers and in teacher training programs.

The reliability of the results is confirmed by a robust experimental design involving 460 students across multiple schools, utilizing diverse empirical methods (questionnaires, testing, and observation) and rigorous mathematical statistics, such as Pearson’s criterion. Furthermore, in co-authored publications, the primary material processing and conclusions belong exclusively to the researcher.

The main results obtained personally by the author

The author successfully developed and implemented a holistic pedagogical model for classroom management that integrates cooperative learning, socio-emotional practices, and digital solutions. Personally obtained experimental results demonstrate that this small-group interactive system significantly enhances academic achievement, positive motivation, and cognitive interest in learning English. The author proved that psychological comfort, clear role distribution in heterogeneous groups, and formative assessment reduce language anxiety and foster 21st-century skills like critical thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy.

The author's personal contribution to the field is substantial, evidenced by a rigorous publication record that details specific advancements in pedagogical theory. For example, in the 2023 article (with Rutkovska), the author was responsible for determining the specific content features of innovative technologies for English instruction. In the 2022 Haifa conference paper, the author provided a critical definition of information technology features for foreign language environments.

Content, style and structure of the text

The dissertation is well-structured and logical. It consists of an introduction, two main chapters with corresponding conclusions, general conclusions, a list of references, and appendices. The total volume of the work is 292 pages, including 196 pages of main text enriched with 14 tables and 5 figures. The text is written in a professional, scientific style. The author demonstrates a strong command of pedagogical and psychological terminology, effectively synthesizing historical perspectives with modern educational frameworks.

The structural logic – moving from the theoretical foundations of child-centredness in Chapter 1 to the experimental testing and statistical analysis in Chapter 2 – facilitates a clear understanding of how child-centred concepts are operationalized. The academic style is authoritative and intellectually rigorous, reflecting the author's maturity and expertise in the field of pedagogical science.

Discussion points and comments on the dissertation

While generally positively evaluating the scientific and practical significance of the results obtained by the dissertation author, certain discussion points and comments should be highlighted, as well as some wishes expressed:

1. On p. 68, the definition of communicative competence is presented without indicating the author of this definition, and a brief description of some components (linguistic, speech, sociocultural, sociolinguistic) is also provided, while the discursive and strategic components are left out of attention. In our opinion, the author should have provided a definitive analysis of the term “communicative competence”, focusing specifically on the foreign language communicative competence and its components.

2. On p. 156, the questionnaires used during the experiment are presented, without indicating the authorship and clarifications regarding adaptation.

3. Inconsistencies were noted between the pedagogical model (p. 139) and the description of the experiment (names and number of criteria (p. 157), number of levels (p. 164).

4. The modes and methods presented on p. 84 would have been easier to understand if they had been presented in the form of a table with comparative characteristics.

5. In the conclusions to the second part (p. 191) and in the annotation (p. 4, p. 9) “low motivation decreased” is mentioned, it would be appropriate to provide clarification regarding the object of measurement.

However, the expressed remarks and discussion points do not negate the positive assessment of the scientific level of the dissertation work. Ultimately, this dissertation is a significant contribution to the humanization and modernization of Ukrainian education, providing a clear and statistically validated roadmap for fostering autonomous, socially competent, and psychologically resilient individuals.

Correspondence of the dissertation to the specialty and the profile of the specialized academic council

On the basis of the conducted analysis, it can be concluded that in terms of its relevance, the significant amount of research carried out, scientific novelty, the reliability of the results obtained, the validity of the conclusions, the structure of the paper, the dissertation by Maksym Rutkovsky "Classroom management in the 7-9th grades English lessons (applying the child-centred approach)" submitted for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree (PhD), field of study: 01 Education, specialty: 011 Educational, Pedagogical Sciences meets the requirements of the "Procedure for awarding the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and canceling the decision of the onetime specialized academic council of the institution of higher education, scientific institution on awarding the degree of Doctor of Philosophy", approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated January 12, 2022 No. 44. The author of the dissertation Maksym Rutkovsky deserves to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the specialty 011 Educational, Pedagogical Sciences.

Opponent:

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