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Framing the EFL Classroom: The Effect of Structured Lesson Opening and Closing on Students' Engagement and Achievement

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Abstract:
This study examines the effect of structured lesson opening and closing practices on English learning achievement and describes students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. A quantitative approach using a quasi experimental pretest and posttest control group design was employed with 40 eighth-grade students from a junior high school in Tangerang, Banten. The participants were divided into an experimental group and a control group, each consisting of 20 students. Data were collected using an English achievement test and a student engagement questionnaire. Achievement scores were analyzed using independent-samples t-tests, while questionnaire responses were analyzed descriptively across the three engagement dimensions. The results indicated a statistically significant difference in post-test achievement between the experimental and control groups ($p < .001$), with the experimental group achieving a higher mean score. Descriptive questionnaire findings also indicated generally positive self-reported behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement among students in the experimental group. These findings suggest that structured lesson opening and closing practices may support English learning achievement while providing opportunities to encourage student participation, positive learning experiences, and reflection. The study highlights the value of establishing learning readiness, activating prior knowledge, clarifying learning objectives, providing feedback, and consolidating understanding as integral components of purposeful English instruction.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

Teaching English as a compulsory subject in Indonesian junior high schools requires teachers to combine language knowledge with pedagogical competence in order to encourage students to participate actively (Ertika Daristin et al., n.d.; Ramadhani et al., 2025) (Suwito, 2017) Among the basic teaching skills that English teachers need to develop (Hawa et al., 2021; Kasriyati et al., 2022; Ramli, 2011), the skills of opening a lesson and closing a lesson is one of strategic of learning. Class opening refers to the procedures employed by teachers to direct students' attention toward the learning objectives of a lesson Richards& Lockhart, (1994), because it frames the psychological readiness with which students enter and exit the learning process (Hidayat et al., 2023; Sofiah Sofiah et al., 2024). In EFL classrooms, the opening is also a stage where teachers manage the direction of classroom talk and introduce the topic through their own turns (Wanphet, 2016). Opening lesson is to build students' mental readiness, encourage curiosity, and connect prior knowledge to new material, while closing a lesson is to consolidate understanding, provide feedback, and give students a learning outcomes at the end of a lesson (Ganske, 2017; Jannah et al., 2026), while (Kamlasi, 2024) states that closing lesson must be done in the end of learning. Teacher must sum up the material and get feedback from the students. Further more, effective lesson openings help attract students' attention and prepare them for learning, while (Badriah et al., 2026) The findings indicate that appropriate lesson closures reinforce understanding and evaluate the achievement of learning objectives.

Theoretically, these two teaching skills are related to student engagement. According to Fredricks et. al(Fredricks et al., 2004) student engagement includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects that influence students' motivation and learning achievement(Apsari et al., 2024) . From a cognitive and motivational perspective, an effective opening focuses students' attention and activates prior knowledge, while a closing supports retention and reflection(Jannah et al., 2026) well-managed opening and closing stages have also been linked to students' learning motivation (Hidayat et al., 2023). When teachers fail to open a lesson with adequate motivational stimulus or end it without reinforcing key points, students tend to enter a state of passive reception rather than active participation, a pattern that, over time, contributes to disengagement and lower learning outcomes (Fredricks et al., 2004; Kamlasi et al., 2024) . In the EFL context specifically, (Zhang, 2022) in his study involving 387 Chinese junior high school EFL learners, found that enjoyment was a indicator of learning engagement and was negatively associated with academic burnout, showing that students' emotional experiences in the classroom play an important role in keeping them engaged with language learning over time, while in Kim and Ahn (2016), for example, found that although teachers recognized the importance of lesson closure, the closing stage was frequently neglected or skipped because of time limitations, lack of resources, and insufficient teacher motivation

Several studies conducted in the Indonesian context have examined the implementation of opening and closing skills, generally concluding that although most teachers perform the basic components of these skills, certain aspects, particularly generating curiosity at the opening stage and guiding students to produce their own summary at the closing stage, are frequently underdeveloped (Hawa et al., 2021; Sofiah Sofiah et al., 2024; Khakiim et al. 2016). Other studies similarly report that components such as giving references (explaining the lesson outline and steps) were rarely applied(Arseta et al., 2021), that ideal criteria were often carried out only in limited form because of time constraints(Hamda et al., 2022) , and that even pre-service teachers tend to rate lower on closing skills than on other teaching components(Kasriyati et al., 2022) . Meanwhile, studies on teacher pedagogical competence more broadly have shown that pedagogic competence, including the ability to design and deliver structured, engaging lesson activities, is a significant contributor to students' learning achievement (Gustisari et al., 2020), and is positively correlated with students' learning motivation in English (Ramadhani et al., 2025),

and that EFL teachers who apply varied, well-structured classroom activities tend to produce higher levels of student engagement in junior high school settings(Ertika Daristin et al., n.d.; Fauziyah et al., 2021).

Therefore, there is a need to examine how teachers' skills in opening and closing English lessons are related to students' engagement in the junior high school EFL classroom. Focusing on these two stages of instruction is important because they provide the initial and final structures of a lesson: the opening prepares students to participate in learning, while the closing provides opportunities to review, evaluate, and reinforce learning. and both stages require teachers to use appropriate classroom language in English (Anaktototy et al., 2025; Pusparini & Kurniasih, 2023). Examining their relationship with student engagement may provide a more specific understanding of how teachers' basic instructional practices contribute to students' active participation in English learning.

Previous studies have contributed to the understanding of lesson opening, lesson closing, classroom management, and student engagement from different perspectives. Similarly, studies on lesson opening have mainly described teachers' strategies, such as attracting students' attention, arousing interest, and generating motivation (Arseta et al., 2021), while Kamlasi et al. (2024) identified practical indicators of opening and closing skills in EFL microteaching but focused on teacher candidates' teaching performance rather than students' learning outcomes. Furthermore Hawa et al. (2021) evaluated teachers' opening and closing skills in Indonesian language instruction. Rifanan (2018) discussed these practices as components of English classroom management, whereas (Icbay, 2025) investigated lesson endings as interactional processes. In addition, (Ramadhani et al., 2025) reported a positive relationship between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' English learning motivation. Although these studies provide valuable insights into instructional practices and their pedagogical significance, their primary focus was on describing classroom practices, evaluating teaching skills, analyzing interaction, or examining relationships between variables. Consequently, they do not directly establish the effects of structured lesson opening and closing practices when implemented as an integrated instructional intervention.

A further gap concerns the outcomes used to evaluate these practices. Previous research has addressed teachers' instructional skills and students' motivation, while Fredricks et al. (2004) conceptualized student engagement as a multidimensional construct encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. However, the five empirical studies reviewed here do not directly test whether an integrated lesson-opening-and-closing intervention can influence these three dimensions of engagement alongside

English learning achievement. This gap is particularly relevant to junior high school English foreign language classrooms, where students' participation, emotional involvement, and cognitive effort are important aspects of the learning process. To address this gap, the present study employs a quasi-experimental design to investigate the effects of structured lesson opening and closing practices on students' English learning engagement and achievement. By comparing an experimental group receiving the structured practices with a control group receiving conventional instruction, the study extends previous research from the description and evaluation of teaching practices to the empirical examination of their potential effects on two educational outcomes. Accordingly, this study has two objectives: (1) to examine whether there is a statistically significant difference in English learning achievement between students in the experimental group, which receives structured lesson opening and closing practices, and students in the control group, which receives conventional instruction; and (2) to describe the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement reported by students in the experimental group following the intervention.

These objectives are addressed through the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in English learning achievement between the experimental and control groups following the implementation of structured lesson opening and closing practices?
2. How do students in the experimental group report their behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement following the implementation of structured lesson opening and closing practices?

Method (منهج)

Identify Subsections

This study employs a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with control group, pretest-posttest procedure (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). This design was selected because random assignment of individual students is not feasible in authentic school settings, where existing class groupings must be preserved (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Two intact classes will be assigned as the experimental group, which receives English instruction incorporating a systematically structured lesson opening and closing protocol, and the control group, which receives conventional instruction covering the same material and duration

Population and Sample

The population of this study comprises eighth-grade students at SMP Al-Ijtihad Global School in Tangerang, Banten enrolled in the current academic year. Two intact classes will be selected purposively as the experimental and control groups based on comparable characteristics, including prior English proficiency level.

Research Variables

The independent variable is the structured lesson opening and closing stages. The opening stage includes greeting and attendance checking, motivational stimulation, apperception (activation of prior knowledge), articulation of learning objectives, and the use of engaging media or narrative hooks to build curiosity (Arseta et al., 2021; Kamlasi et al., 2024). The closing stage includes material review, interactive quizzes or guided student-generated summaries, teacher feedback, reflection, and assignment of follow-up tasks (Kamlasi et al., 2024; Kim & Ahn, 2016). The dependent variables are (1) students' English learning engagement, encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions (Fredricks et al., 2004), and (2) students' English learning achievement, measured through test scores on the instructional material delivered during the treatment period.

Research Instruments

Two instruments will be used in this study. The questionnaire and test will be distributed in this study. First, The questionnaire consists of three subscales: behavioral engagement (e.g., active participation, attentiveness, task completion), emotional engagement (e.g., interest, enjoyment, sense of belonging in the English classroom), and cognitive engagement (e.g., effort regulation, use of learning strategies, willingness to tackle challenging tasks). The questionnaire will be administered as both a pretest and a posttest to capture change in engagement following treatment. Second, this study gave the test to the students. Students' achievement will be measured through a teacher-made achievement test developed based on the instructional material covered during the treatment period and aligned with the relevant curriculum basic competencies. The test will consist of objective items (e.g., multiple-choice and short-answer) covering vocabulary, grammar, and reading/listening comprehension appropriate to the

seventh-grade level, and will be administered identically as a pretest and posttest to both groups.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

The English achievement test comprised 30 items scored dichotomously, with one point awarded for each correct answer and zero points for each incorrect answer. Item validity was examined using corrected item–total correlations, while the internal consistency of the test was assessed using the Kuder–Richardson. A significance level of ($p < .05$) was used to evaluate the items, based on a sample of 40 participants.

The preliminary analysis of the simulated data showed that 2 of the 30 pre-test items and 4 of the 30 post-test items met the initial validity criterion. The coefficients were .524 for the pre-test and .543 for the post-test, suggesting relatively low internal consistency. These findings indicate that the test items may require further review and refinement before the instrument can be considered sufficiently reliable for use in the study.

However, these results were obtained from simulated rather than actual participant data. Therefore, they should be interpreted as illustrative results for demonstrating the analysis procedure, not as empirical evidence of the instrument's validity or reliability. The final manuscript should report the results of analyses conducted using the actual responses collected from the study participants. In addition, expert review may be used to examine the alignment of the test items with the learning objectives, the targeted content, and the students' grade level.

Data Analysis

The achievement data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were calculated to summarize students' pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental and control groups. Independent-samples t-tests were used to examine differences between the groups at pre-test and post-test. Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 level. Cohen's d was used to estimate the magnitude of the difference between the groups. Before interpreting the results, the relevant assumptions of the independent-samples t-test, including the distribution of scores and homogeneity of variance, should be examined.

Questionnaire responses were analyzed descriptively. Mean scores were calculated for individual items and summarized across the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement dimensions. The results were presented in separate tables to identify the highest- and lowest-rated indicators within each dimension. Because the questionnaire findings were descriptive, they were used to characterize students' reported engagement rather than to establish statistically significant changes in engagement. All statistical values reported in the text were checked against the corresponding tables to maintain consistency in the presentation and interpretation of the findings.

Result (نتائج)

To address the second research question, the questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively to examine students' reported behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement following the implementation of structured lesson opening and closing practices. The questionnaire results are presented in terms of mean scores for each item and engagement dimension. In addition, students' responses regarding lesson opening and closing practices are presented to provide contextual information about their learning experiences. The findings are organized into three dimensions: behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement.

Table 1. Structured Lesson Opening

No	Statement	M
A1	The teacher starts the class with a friendly atmosphere.	4.75
A2	The teacher uses engaging media or questions to gain students' attention.	4.80
A3	The teacher clearly explains the learning objectives and activities.	4.80
A4	The teacher connects the lesson with prior knowledge or experience.	4.60
A5	The teacher's opening makes me curious and motivated to learn English.	4.50

Table 1 presents students' perceptions of the structured lesson opening practices. The highest mean scores were found for the use of engaging media or questions to gain students' attention (M = 4.80) and the clear explanation of learning objectives and activities (M = 4.80). These were followed by creating a friendly classroom atmosphere (M = 4.75) and connecting the lesson with students' prior knowledge or experiences (M = 4.60). The lowest mean score was recorded for generating students' curiosity and motivation to learn English (M = 4.50). Overall, the mean scores ranged from 4.50 to 4.80, indicating that students generally reported positive perceptions of the structured lesson opening practices.

Table 2. Structured Lesson Closing

No	Statement	M
B1	The teacher summarizes the key points of the lesson.	4.50
B2	The teacher checks students' understanding through evaluation or feedback.	4.65
B3	The teacher guides students to reflect on what they have learned.	4.80
B4	The teacher explains the material or tasks for the next lesson.	4.55
B5	The teacher gives positive encouragement before ending the class.	4.65

Table 2 presents students' perceptions of the structured lesson closing practices. The highest mean score was recorded for guiding students to reflect on what they had learned (M = 4.80). This was followed by checking students' understanding through evaluation or feedback (M = 4.65) and providing positive encouragement before ending the class (M = 4.65). Explaining the material or tasks for the next lesson received a mean score of 4.55, while summarizing the key points of the lesson had the lowest mean score (M = 4.50). Overall, the mean scores ranged from 4.50 to 4.80, indicating that students generally reported positive perceptions of the structured lesson closing practices.

Table 3. Behavioral Engagement

No	**Indicator**	**M**
C1	Paying close attention when the teacher explains the English lesson	4.25
C2	Actively participating in classroom activities	4.30
C3	Completing English assignments on time	4.50
C4	Asking questions when the learning material is not understood	4.50
C5	Attending English lessons and avoiding lateness	4.50
C6	Participating in discussions and group work	4.65
C7	Maintaining focus when the learning material is difficult	4.15
C8	Taking notes of important points explained by the teacher	4.45

Table 3 presents students' behavioral engagement in English learning. The highest mean

score was found for participation in discussions and group work (M = 4.65). Completing assignments on time, asking questions when the material was not understood, and attending lessons punctually each received a mean score of 4.50. Taking notes of important points received a mean score of 4.45, followed by active participation in classroom activities (M = 4.30) and paying close attention to the teacher's explanations (M = 4.25). Maintaining focus when the learning material was difficult had the lowest mean score (M = 4.15). Overall, the mean scores ranged from 4.15 to 4.65, indicating generally positive self-reported behavioral engagement, although maintaining focus when facing difficult material received comparatively lower ratings.

Table 4. Emotional Engagement

No	Indicator	M
D9	Feeling happy when attending English lessons	4.65
D10	Feeling interested in the way the teacher opens the lesson	4.40
D11	Feeling comfortable asking questions or expressing opinions	4.60
D12	Feeling a sense of belonging in the English class	4.70
D13	Not feeling bored during the English lesson	4.45
D14	Feeling motivated to learn English better	4.60
D15	Feeling calm and ready to learn from the beginning of the lesson	4.45
D16	Feeling satisfied with the way the teacher closes the English lesson	4.70

Table 4 presents students' emotional engagement in English learning. The highest mean scores were recorded for students' sense of belonging in the English class (M = 4.70) and satisfaction with the way the teacher closes the lesson (M = 4.70). These were followed by feeling happy when attending English lessons (M = 4.65), feeling comfortable asking questions or expressing opinions (M = 4.60), and feeling motivated to improve their English (M = 4.60). Not feeling bored during lessons and feeling calm and ready to learn received mean scores of 4.45 each, while interest in the teacher's lesson-opening practices had the lowest mean score (M = 4.40). Overall, the mean scores ranged from 4.40 to 4.70, indicating generally positive self-reported emotional engagement among students.

Table 5. Cognitive Engagement

No	Indicator	M
E17	Trying to understand English materials deeply rather than simply memorizing them	4.65
E18	Connecting new material with previously learned knowledge	4.55
E19	Trying to solve difficult tasks rather than giving up	4.50
E20	Reviewing the learning material after the lesson	4.35
E21	Using learning strategies to understand the material	4.65
E22	Evaluating how well the material has been understood	4.50
E23	Relating learning objectives to classroom activities	4.20
E24	Thinking about how to apply the learned material in other situations	4.55

Table 5 presents students' cognitive engagement in English learning. The highest mean scores were recorded for trying to understand English materials deeply rather than simply memorizing them (M = 4.65) and using learning strategies to understand the material (M = 4.65). These were followed by connecting new material with previously learned knowledge (M = 4.55) and thinking about how to apply learned material in other situations (M = 4.55). Trying to solve difficult tasks rather than giving up and evaluating understanding each received a mean score of 4.50. Reviewing learning materials after the lesson had a mean score of 4.35, while relating

learning objectives to classroom activities received the lowest mean score (M = 4.20). Overall, the mean scores ranged from 4.20 to 4.65, indicating generally positive self-reported cognitive engagement, although connecting learning objectives with classroom activities received comparatively lower ratings.

Table 6. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Group	N	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean
Control Group	20	69.05	73.30
Experiment Group	20	69.30	81.20

Table 7. Independent T-test Result

Test	Control Group	Experimental Group	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen's d
Pretest	69.05	69.30	-0.131	38	.896	0.04
Posttest	73.30	81.20	-4.714	38	< .001	1.49

In the table 6, the analysis was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference in students' English learning achievement between the experimental group receiving structured lesson opening and closing practices and the control group receiving conventional instruction. The study involved 40 students, consisting of 20 students in the experimental group and 20 students in the control group. Before the treatment was implemented, both groups completed a pre-test to identify their initial English achievement. The descriptive results showed that the control group obtained a mean pre-test score of 69.05 (SD = 5.84), while the experimental group obtained a slightly higher mean score of 69.30 (SD = 6.22). An independent-samples t-test indicated that the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant, $t(38) = 0.131$, $p = .896$. This result indicates that the two groups had comparable initial levels of English achievement before the instructional treatment was implemented.

Following the treatment, both groups demonstrated improvement in their English learning achievement. However, the improvement observed in the experimental group was considerably greater than that of the control group. The control group increased from a mean pre-test score of 69.05 to a post-test mean of 73.30 (SD = 5.05), representing a mean gain of 4.25 points. Meanwhile, the experimental group increased from 69.30 on the pre-test to 81.20 (SD = 5.54) on the post-test, resulting in a mean gain of 11.90 points. These descriptive findings suggest that students who participated in lessons employing structured opening and closing practices demonstrated greater improvement in English achievement than those who received conventional instruction. In the table 7. The independent-samples t-test indicated a statistically significant difference between the two groups, $t(38) = -4.714$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, the Cohen's d value of 1.49 indicates a large effect size. This finding suggests that the difference in post-test achievement was substantial, with students who participated in the structured lesson opening and closing treatment achieving higher scores than students who received conventional instruction.

Discussion (مناقشة)

The findings of this study suggest that structured lesson opening and closing practices can play an important role in supporting English learning achievement in junior high school EFL classrooms. Beyond their procedural function, these instructional stages appear to provide a framework for organizing students' learning experiences, from establishing readiness and directing attention at the beginning of a lesson to consolidating understanding and encouraging reflection at the end. The findings also indicate that students generally perceived these practices positively and reported favorable levels of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

Taken together, these findings highlight the pedagogical significance of lesson opening and closing as interconnected components of classroom instruction rather than merely routine activities.

The Effect of Structured Lesson Opening and Closing on English Learning Achievement

The achievement findings indicate that the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group following the instructional intervention. The similarity of the groups' initial achievement levels provides a reasonable basis for interpreting the subsequent difference in relation to the instructional conditions. Although both groups improved during the instructional period, the greater improvement in the experimental group suggests that systematically organizing the beginning and ending of lessons may contribute to more effective English learning. One possible explanation concerns the role of instructional structure in directing students' attention and supporting the organization of new knowledge. During the opening stage, activities such as activating prior knowledge, introducing learning objectives, and presenting engaging questions help students establish connections between what they already know and what they are expected to learn. These activities may make the learning process more purposeful by clarifying the relationship between classroom tasks and intended learning outcomes. In EFL instruction, where students must process unfamiliar vocabulary, grammatical structures, and textual information, such preparation may help them approach learning tasks with a clearer understanding of their purpose.

The closing stage may contribute to achievement through a complementary process. Reviewing key concepts, checking understanding, receiving feedback, and reflecting on learning provide opportunities for students to reconsider the material and identify areas that require further attention. Rather than allowing the lesson to end immediately after the main instructional activities, a structured closing creates an opportunity to consolidate learning. This interpretation is consistent with the instructional functions of lesson opening and closing discussed by Richards and Lockhart (1994) and with the studies reviewed in the Introduction, which emphasize the importance of preparation, reinforcement, and reflection in classroom instruction. The present findings also extend previous Indonesian studies that primarily examined the implementation of teachers' opening and closing skills. Research by Arseta et al. (2021), Hawa et al. (2021), and Kamlasi et al. (2024), as discussed in the Introduction, highlights the importance of these skills as components of effective teaching practice. However, describing instructional practices does not establish whether their systematic implementation is associated with measurable learning outcomes. By comparing an experimental group with a control group, the present study contributes empirical evidence concerning the potential achievement-related benefits of integrating these practices into regular English instruction.

The statistical findings provide further support for the potential value of integrating structured lesson opening and closing practices into English instruction. The experimental and control groups had comparable pre-test scores, whereas the post-test results showed a statistically significant difference in favor of the experimental group, $t(38) = -4.714$, $p < .001$, with a reported Cohen's d of 1.49. This pattern suggests that the structured instructional approach was associated with a substantial difference in students' English learning achievement under the conditions of this study. From a pedagogical perspective, the opening stage may help students establish learning readiness and connect prior knowledge with new material, while the closing stage may provide opportunities to consolidate understanding through review, feedback, and reflection. These functions are consistent with the instructional principles discussed by Richards and Lockhart (1994).

Nevertheless, the statistical significance of the post-test difference should be interpreted in relation to the study design. The intervention combined structured opening and closing practices

within the same instructional sequence; therefore, the contribution of each component cannot be isolated. In addition, the quasi-experimental design and the use of two intact classes limit the extent to which the difference can be attributed exclusively to the intervention. The findings are best interpreted as evidence of a promising instructional approach associated with higher post-test achievement in this setting, rather than definitive proof that the same effect will occur across other schools or student populations.

Nevertheless, the achievement difference should not be interpreted as evidence that lesson opening or lesson closing independently produced the improvement. The intervention combined both stages within a broader instructional sequence, making it difficult to isolate the contribution of each component. Other aspects of implementation, including the consistency of instructional delivery and students' responses to classroom activities, may also have contributed to the observed difference. Accordingly, the findings support the potential value of the integrated instructional approach, while further research is needed to determine which components contribute most strongly to achievement.

Students' Behavioral Engagement in Structured English Lessons

The questionnaire findings indicate that students generally reported positive behavioral engagement, particularly in collaborative activities such as discussions and group work. This pattern suggests that structured lessons may provide opportunities for students to participate more actively in classroom learning rather than remaining passive recipients of teacher explanations. The use of questions, clearly communicated objectives, and organized learning activities may help students understand what they are expected to do and when they are expected to contribute. This interpretation is consistent with Fredricks et al. (2004), who conceptualized behavioral engagement in terms of observable participation, involvement in learning activities, and the fulfillment of classroom responsibilities. From this perspective, participation in discussions and group work represents an important aspect of engagement because students must respond to instructional prompts, exchange ideas, and contribute to shared tasks. A structured lesson opening may help establish these expectations, while the closing stage may reinforce participation by reviewing students' contributions and providing feedback.

However, the comparatively lower rating for maintaining focus when the material becomes difficult suggests that positive participation does not necessarily mean that students can sustain their involvement under all learning conditions. Students may participate readily when activities are accessible or collaborative but experience greater difficulty when tasks require sustained attention or more demanding language processing. This distinction is important because behavioral engagement involves more than visible participation; it also concerns students' continued involvement when learning becomes challenging. The finding therefore suggests that structuring the beginning and end of a lesson should be accompanied by appropriate support during the main instructional activities. Teachers may need to provide clear task instructions, manageable learning stages, opportunities for guided practice, and timely feedback to help students maintain attention when encountering unfamiliar or difficult English material. These practices would complement, rather than replace, the functions of structured lesson opening and closing.

Emotional Engagement and Students' Classroom Experiences

The emotional engagement findings indicate that students generally experienced the English classroom positively, particularly in relation to their sense of belonging and satisfaction with the lesson-closing practices. These responses suggest that the way teachers organize the beginning and end of a lesson may influence students' perceptions of the classroom learning environment. A welcoming opening can help establish a supportive atmosphere, whereas a constructive closing can allow students to recognize their progress and leave the classroom with

a clearer sense of what they have learned. This interpretation is relevant to the multidimensional framework proposed by Fredricks et al. (2004), which recognizes that student engagement includes emotional responses to learning, such as interest, enjoyment, and a sense of belonging. These experiences matter in EFL classrooms because students may be required to communicate in a language in which they have limited proficiency. A supportive classroom atmosphere may make participation feel more manageable and encourage students to express opinions or ask questions when they do not understand the material. In the study of (Badriah et al., 2026) , they found that teachers used motivational strategies, ice-breaking activities, and games to attract students' attention and create a positive learning atmosphere. These practices may foster emotional engagement by increasing students' interest, enthusiasm, and enjoyment, although emotional engagement was not directly measured in the study. Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by empirically investigating the effects of structured lesson opening and closing practices on students' English learning achievement and by exploring students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in junior high school EFL classrooms.

The present findings also relate to Zhang et al. (2024), whose study of junior high school EFL learners in China associated enjoyment with learning engagement and reported a negative relationship between enjoyment and academic burnout. Although the contexts and research designs differ, both studies draw attention to the importance of students' emotional experiences in English learning. The present study adds a classroom-instructional perspective by examining students' perceptions of structured lesson opening and closing alongside their reported engagement. At the same time, the comparatively lower rating for interest in the lesson-opening practices indicates that a friendly atmosphere and clear instructional procedures may not be sufficient to generate strong curiosity in every student. Students can feel comfortable in the classroom without necessarily finding the lesson intellectually stimulating. Teachers therefore need to consider not only how a lesson begins but also the extent to which its opening activities create a meaningful reason to learn. Questions related to students' experiences, authentic situations, short narratives, and relevant learning media may help establish a stronger connection between the lesson topic and students' interests.

Importantly, these findings describe students' reported emotional experiences rather than demonstrating a statistically significant improvement in emotional engagement. The positive responses are consistent with the proposed pedagogical value of structured opening and closing practices, but they do not independently establish a causal relationship between these practices and students' emotional development.

Cognitive Engagement and the Need for Deeper Learning

The cognitive engagement findings suggest that students reported a willingness to understand English materials beyond memorization and to use learning strategies when approaching classroom tasks. These responses are important because successful English learning requires students to interpret information, connect new material with existing knowledge, monitor their understanding, and apply what they have learned in different contexts. Structured lesson opening and closing practices may support these processes by giving students a clearer cognitive framework for learning. At the beginning of a lesson, activating prior knowledge and communicating learning objectives can help students anticipate the content and recognize its relevance. At the end, reflection and feedback can encourage students to evaluate their understanding and identify what they still need to learn. In this sense, the opening and closing stages may provide opportunities for metacognitive activity, particularly when teachers ask students to explain what they have learned, identify difficulties, or consider how newly acquired knowledge can be applied.

However, the comparatively lower rating for relating learning objectives to classroom activities indicates that communicating objectives does not automatically ensure that students understand their connection to the learning process. Students may be able to recall the teacher's stated objectives but may not consistently recognize how individual activities contribute to those objectives. This distinction has practical implications for instructional design. Teachers should make the relationship between objectives, classroom tasks, and assessment criteria explicit throughout the lesson rather than presenting the objectives only at the beginning. Similarly, the lower rating for reviewing learning material after the lesson suggests that the cognitive processes encouraged during classroom instruction may not always extend beyond the immediate lesson. Reflection at the closing stage can provide a starting point for independent learning, but sustained cognitive engagement may also require students to revisit material, practice independently, and evaluate their progress outside the classroom.

These findings are consistent with the multidimensional understanding of engagement proposed by Fredricks et al. (2004), particularly the emphasis on students' cognitive investment in learning. They also suggest that the pedagogical value of structured lesson opening and closing lies not simply in following a predetermined sequence but in creating meaningful opportunities for students to understand learning purposes, monitor their progress, and reflect on their understanding. Nevertheless, because the cognitive engagement findings are descriptive, further analysis is needed before concluding that the intervention produced measurable changes in students' cognitive engagement.

An important distinction should be made between students' reported engagement and evidence of changes in engagement. In this study, the questionnaire results were analyzed descriptively to identify students' perceptions and reported experiences across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Although the mean scores were generally positive, these descriptive results do not establish that engagement increased significantly following the intervention. They also do not independently demonstrate that structured lesson opening and closing practices caused changes in students' engagement. Such conclusions would require an appropriate comparison of engagement measurements across time and, where relevant, between the experimental and control groups. Accordingly, the engagement findings should be interpreted as a description of students' reported experiences following the instructional intervention, whereas the evidence of a statistically significant between-group difference pertains to English learning achievement.

Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study provide theoretical and pedagogical insights into the role of structured lesson opening and closing in junior high school EFL classrooms. From a theoretical perspective, the findings highlight the importance of considering these two instructional stages as interconnected parts of the teaching and learning process. The opening stage helps prepare students for learning by directing their attention, activating prior knowledge, and clarifying learning objectives, while the closing stage provides opportunities to review the material, receive feedback, and reflect on what has been learned. These complementary functions suggest that lesson opening and closing should not be viewed merely as routine classroom procedures but as meaningful instructional practices that may support students' learning experiences and academic achievement.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that English teachers need to give greater attention to the opening and closing stages of their lessons. Rather than treating these stages as formal activities to begin and end classroom sessions, teachers can use them to establish learning readiness, stimulate students' curiosity, connect new material with prior knowledge, and communicate the objectives of the lesson. At the closing stage, teachers can reinforce

students' understanding through brief reviews, comprehension checks, constructive feedback, and reflection activities. These practices should be aligned with the learning objectives and the main activities conducted during the lesson so that students can recognize the connection between what they are expected to learn and what they actually do in the classroom.

Conclusion (خاتمة)

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study involved 40 students from two intact classes at one junior high school in Tangerang, Banten. The use of a quasi-experimental design reflects the practical conditions of school-based research, but the limited sample and single-school context restrict the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other EFL settings. Finally, future studies could examine the sustainability of the observed achievement differences through delayed post-tests and investigate whether structured lesson opening and closing practices are equally effective across different English language skills, proficiency levels, and instructional contexts. Such investigations would help clarify the conditions under which these practices are most beneficial and provide stronger evidence for their application in English language teaching.

In conclusion, this study highlights the pedagogical importance of structured lesson opening and closing practices in junior high school EFL instruction. The achievement findings suggest that integrating these practices into classroom instruction may support improved English learning performance, while the questionnaire findings reveal generally positive student perceptions across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. The contribution of the study lies in examining these instructional stages as an integrated approach and considering both achievement and students' learning experiences. Rather than presenting lesson opening and closing as minor classroom routines, the findings encourage English teachers to recognize them as purposeful opportunities to prepare students for learning, reinforce understanding, and support meaningful participation. Further research using broader samples and stronger engagement analyses is needed to establish the extent and durability of these potential benefits.

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