

A Study on the Application and Psychological Impact of AI Short Drama Videos in Middle School English Tutorial: A Case Study from an English Tutorial Institution in Chinese Mainland

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Abstract

This study, based on interviews and grounded theory, focuses on 20 middle school English teachers in an English tutoring institution in Chinese Mainland, and systematically explores the application of AI short drama videos in middle school English tutoring and their multidimensional psychological impact on students. Through semi-structured interviews and three-level coding analysis, this study identified positive changes and potential issues in students' classroom participation, learning outcomes, and learning attitudes after the application of AI short drama videos, and revealed the psychological mechanisms behind them. This research has found that AI short drama videos can significantly enhance the classroom participation and learning motivation of most students, but the "fun" may also cause "attention dilution effect" and "social comparison anxiety" for some introverted students, forming new psychological stress. The results of this study reveal the double-edged sword effect of technology empowering the teaching process, providing evidence-based psychological evidence for the scientific application of AI technology in educational and training institutions and differentiated teaching practices.

Keywords

AI Short Drama Videos, Shadow Education, Middle School, Grounded Theory, Educational Psychology

1. Introduction

The middle school stage is a critical period for individual physical and mental development, where students face rapid changes in physiological, cognitive, and social roles, while also enduring increasing academic pressure. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development stages (Piaget, 1970), middle school students have entered the stage of formal operation and possess the ability of hypothesis deduction and abstract thinking, which makes them have higher requirements for the interest, relevance, and cognitive challenge of learning content. However, under the influence of exam-oriented education, traditional English tutoring methods often focus on boring grammar rule explanations and mechanical sentence pattern exercises, which can easily lead to students' aversion to learning and weaken their intrinsic learning motivation. To address this dilemma, an English tutoring institution in Chinese Mainland began attempting to integrate AI short drama videos into middle school English teaching in February 2026. This mode utilizes AI technology to generate videos of movie characters or sports stars that middle school students enjoy, presenting complex grammar knowledge points and key oral practice sentence patterns in the form of short drama videos with character dialogues and explanations. Preliminary observations show that most students' learning outcomes and enthusiasm have significantly improved. However, is the impact of this technology-driven teaching innovation on students' psychology only positive, or complex and multidimensional? According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, learning is the result of the interaction between individuals, behavior, and the environment (Bandura, 1977). AI short drama videos have changed the learning environment and will inevitably produce different psychological and behavioral consequences through the mediating variable of individual differences among students, such as personality and cognitive style. Especially for some introverted students who prefer quiet and independent thinking, will the lively and highly interactive AI classroom cause psychological discomfort or a decrease in learning efficiency? This issue has not received sufficient attention in current educational technology research. The existing research on the application of AI in education mainly focuses on the evaluation of technological effects or the construction of macro models, lacking qualitative exploration of students' real psychological experiences and deep mechanisms, especially the detailed description of differentiated psychological reactions among different student groups in the same technological environment. In particular, through extensive reading of literature, the researcher found that there is almost no academic research in Chinese Mainland at present which is related to exploring the application of AI short drama videos as a unique new form in English tutorial in detail. There is still a big gap in the research of AI short drama videos in the academic circles of Chinese Mainland. Therefore, based on the literature review below and interviews, this study aims to systematically explore the following core questions through in-depth interviews and grounded theory methods: (1) What specific positive and negative psychological impact does the application of AI short drama videos in middle

school English tutoring have on students? (2) What are the psychological mechanisms behind these impacts? By answering the above questions, this study can theoretically reveal the “double-edged sword” effect of technology empowering teaching, and enrich the understanding of learner differences in the technological environment at the level of educational psychology; provide evidence support for the scientific application and differentiated teaching strategies of English teaching in tutoring institutions and even schools in practice. At the same time, this research can also provide a unique empirical reference from the Chinese Mainland for other countries and regions (such as South Korea) facing similar educational backgrounds of “high academic pressure and urgent demand for interesting teaching” in the process of exploring the integration of AI technology and language education, and provide a comparative perspective and dialogue basis for the classical theory of “the relationship between interest and learning effects” in the western education system in a non-western cultural context.

2. Definition of the Key Terms

(1) Tutoring institutions

Tutoring institutions are educational service providers that provide subject based tutoring or quality development training outside of formal school education.

(2) AI short video

AI short video refers to the short video content generated by using artificial intelligence technology to assist or lead the content production process.

(3) Shadow Education

Shadow education refers to extracurricular tutoring activities that emulate and rely on mainstream school education, with the core of improving academic performance.

(4) AI short drama videos in this article

The AI short drama videos referred to in this article refer to the use of AI technology to generate some interesting scenario shorts, such as dialogue videos between Spider Man and other characters, and incorporate core knowledge points related to English teaching into the dialogue clock, allowing students to learn in a more relaxed atmosphere. Teachers will play AI short drama videos related to important knowledge points to enhance students' memory of the knowledge points in an interesting atmosphere.

3. Literature Review

In recent years, with the widespread application of artificial intelligence technology in the field of education, the potential of AI-generated content in language teaching has gradually received attention. Especially in the practice of middle school English teaching and tutoring, AI short drama videos, as a new teaching medium that integrates situational and interesting elements, have begun to be attempted to enhance students' learning motivation and classroom participation.

However, although previous studies have explored the value of AI in education from the perspectives of technology application, learning interest stimulation, and teaching strategies, most research still remains at the macro level of effectiveness evaluation or strategy recommendations, lacking in-depth exploration of the specific application mechanism of AI short dramas in teaching practice and their impact on students' psychology. There is still a lack of systematic qualitative research on how AI short drama videos can play a role in tutoring environments and whether they have differentiated psychological impact on different types of middle school students. Based on this, this chapter will systematically review existing literature from the following three aspects: research on the application of AI in learning; research on middle school English education; research on shadow education in middle schools. By reviewing and analyzing the above literature, the contributions and shortcomings of the current research are clarified, providing a basis for the theoretical and methodological positioning of this study.

(1) Research on the Application of AI in Learning

In recent years, research on the application of AI in learning in Chinese Mainland mainly includes: (1) Research on AI stimulating learning interest. For example, AI can make the classroom more interesting (Luo, 2026), AI can make the learning process more interesting (Xie, 2026), and AI created gamified learning can stimulate students' interest in learning (Da, 2025). (2) Research on the application strategies of AI in learning. For example, teachers can try using AI to conduct situational teaching (Ding, 2025), teachers can use AI to generate visual teaching materials (Liu, 2026), and teachers can use AI to generate virtual experiments (Zheng, 2026). (3) Research on the effectiveness of integrating AI into learning. For example, AI sometimes has a promoting effect on students' knowledge transfer ability (Zhang, 2026), AI can sometimes improve students' learning outcomes (Ren, 2026), and the effectiveness of AI in learning needs to be carefully analyzed (Xia, 2025).

However, the above research has obvious limitations. Firstly, their understanding of "interest" is too simplified, mostly treating interest as a stable and positive variable, failing to distinguish the essential differences between "situational interest" and "personal interest", and failing to explore whether technology stimulated situational interest may be accompanied by cognitive interference. Secondly, these studies lack in-depth exploration of the specific media form of AI short drama videos. Although some of these studies have begun to focus on the dual effects of AI, there is still a gap in in-depth research that combines these issues with the classroom application of AI short drama videos.

(2) Research on Middle School English Education

In recent years, the research on middle school English education in Chinese Mainland mainly includes: (1) Research on the dilemma of middle school English education. For example, some English teachers lack the ability (Liu & Yu, 2022), some outdated teaching strategies need to be changed (Wang, 2022a), and some teachers have unclear teaching goals (Chen, 2023). (2) Research on methods of

middle school English education. For example, teachers can combine unique cultural backgrounds for teaching (Gui, 2025), use appropriate reading materials for teaching (Qiao, 2025), and innovate teaching methods (Du, 2025). (3) Research on the effectiveness of middle school English education. For example, scientific evaluation methods can be used to assess teaching effectiveness (Min, 2025), multimedia technology can sometimes improve teaching effectiveness (Meng, 2025), and teacher-student interaction can sometimes enhance teaching effectiveness. However, these studies lack in-depth exploration of integrating AI short drama videos into the process of middle school English teaching.

Although these studies provide useful references for middle school English teaching practice, their exploration of emerging technologies mostly stays at the macro level of “multimedia technology”, and fails to deeply analyze how AI generated content, especially AI short drama videos, specifically affect the psychological field of classroom teaching. Although some studies have shown that digital scenario teaching based on AI generated content can effectively improve language teaching effectiveness, similar research is almost missing in AI short drama videos and middle school English tutoring contexts, and needs further supplementation and in-depth exploration.

(3) Research on Shadow Education in Middle Schools

In recent years, the research on shadow education in middle schools in Chinese Mainland mainly includes: (1) Research on the problems of shadow education in middle schools. For example, middle school tutoring sometimes teaches too difficult knowledge (Wang & Li, 2022), middle school tutoring sometimes leads to unequal educational opportunities (Zhang, 2022), and middle school tutoring may create issues related to educational equality (Li, 2022). (2) Research on the methods of shadow education in middle schools. For example, tutoring should pay attention to breaking through difficult knowledge points (Tong, 2022), focus on key content (Fu, 2021), and tailor tutoring to specific situations (Guo, 2020). (3) Research on the impact of shadow education in middle schools. For example, tutoring may increase students' academic burden (Li, 2024), tutoring may increase the economic burden on families (Wang, 2022b), and tutoring may affect students' physical and mental health (Wang & Wang, 2022). However, these studies lack exploration of integrating AI short dramas into shadow education of middle school English.

However, these studies have a relatively general discussion of “psychological burden” and lack a procedural analysis of how specific technological environments shape this psychological burden. Against the backdrop of AI technology permeating education, a key question has emerged: may technology enabled teaching models bring new psychological costs while enhancing interest? Although some of their studies have mentioned the complexity of learning psychology in a technological environment, there is currently almost no research that introduces AI short drama videos into the context of middle school English shadow education, systematically exploring the coexistence of technological empower-

ment and psychological risks.

In summary, existing research has made some progress in exploring the application of AI technology in education and high school English teaching practices, providing important theoretical basis and literature support for this study. However, through a systematic review of the literature mentioned above, it can be found that current research still has the following main shortcomings: firstly, most studies only focus on quantitative evaluation of the effectiveness of AI technology or the construction of macro teaching models, lacking qualitative characterization of the psychological experience and learning behavior of students in the teaching process through AI short dramas as a specific medium; Secondly, existing research has paid little attention to the differential reactions of students with different personality traits or cognitive styles in learning performance and learning mentality in AI teaching environments, especially ignoring the potential negative effects such as “attention dilution” and “social comparison anxiety” that AI short drama videos may bring; Thirdly, research on the application of AI short drama videos in English shadow education is almost blank, lacking in-depth exploration of the coexistence of technological empowerment and psychological risks in the special educational scenario of tutoring institutions. Based on the research gaps mentioned above, this study adopts the grounded theory method and conducts in-depth interviews with 20 middle school English tutoring teachers from a tutoring institution in Chinese Mainland to systematically explore the current application status of AI short drama videos in middle school English tutoring and their multidimensional psychological impact on students. The aim is to reveal the “double-edged sword” effect of technology empowering teaching process, and provide evidence-based psychological basis for the scientific application and differentiated teaching practice of AI technology in education and training institutions.

4. Research Methods

4.1. Research Design

This study adopts grounded theory in qualitative research and captures the observation and understanding of changes in student behavior and learning outcomes by frontline tutoring teachers after integrating AI short drama videos into teaching through in-depth interviews. Adopting the grounded theory method for data analysis and theoretical construction to ensure that research conclusions are rooted in real classroom contextual data.

Note: At the beginning of this study, this institution already had three months of experience in AI short drama video teaching, from February 2026 to May 2026. This tutorial institution actively utilizes various software that can produce AI short drama videos, such as Doubao and Dreamina AI. The tutorial institution in this study primarily provides tutoring for middle school students in the English subject, aiming to help them improve their English proficiency and exam skills.

4.2. Research Subject

The research subjects are 20 middle school English tutoring teachers from the same English tutoring institution. The inclusion criteria are: (1) full-time teaching at the institution with teaching experience of ≥ 1 year; (2) Having fully experienced the pre- and post-stages of AI short drama videos teaching reform; (3) Voluntarily participate in research and are willing to share in detail their observations of students and reflections on teaching.

Note: All participants in this study provided informed consent forms, and all participants were anonymous. All participants in this study were physically and mentally healthy adults. All teachers will describe the changes and impacts brought to students before and after the application of this kind of video based on their daily teaching experience, students' report cards, and other real situations.

4.3. Data Collection

Adopting a semi-structured in-depth interview outline. The core questions such as: "Please describe the specific changes in classroom behavior of a student who left the deepest impression on you before and after the application of AI short drama videos." "Have you observed any students experiencing negative emotions or learning difficulties due to the AI short drama videos teaching mode? Please provide examples to illustrate." "What types of students do you think AI short drama videos have mainly influenced? What are the positive and negative impacts reflected in?"

The interview was conducted one-on-one by the researcher in a quiet environment (offline or online), with an average interview duration of about 45 minutes. All interviews will be fully recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim into text.

4.4. Data Analysis

This study uses a three-level coding program based on grounded theory:

Open coding: This stage mainly extracts rich initial code. At this stage, the researcher read the interview text word for word and sentence by sentence, capture the original information points related to "student behavior changes," "emotional reactions," and "learning outcomes," and form the initial code (such as "reduced yawning in class," "actively raising hands," "introverted students feel isolated," "only focusing on the plot and ignoring knowledge points," etc.).

Axial coding: At this stage, specific frameworks and categories are summarized and categorized based on open coding. Classify, compare, and correlate the initial code to identify higher-level categories and themes. Classify, compare, and correlate initial codes to identify higher-level categories and themes. In this stage, three core dimensions were identified: classroom participation, learning outcomes, and learning mindset, and it was found that "student personality" is a key moderating condition.

Selective coding: At this stage, extract the specific content and storyline under

each major theme category, and conduct integrated analysis and specific description. Based on the core phenomenon of “the dual impact of AI short drama videos on middle school students’ English learning psychology”, integrating various categories, and constructing a “storyline” with inherent consistency: AI short drama video as a highly entertaining and visually stimulating teaching medium, influence students through the “cognitive emotional” dual path. For most students, it promotes active participation and deep learning (positive pathway) by enhancing situational interest and reducing anxiety; But for students with introverted or field dependent cognitive styles, it may lead to decreased learning efficiency and negative emotions (negative pathway) due to attention dilution and social comparison pressure.

After completing the third-level coding, the researcher will also appropriately apply relevant knowledge from educational psychology to analyze and interpret the results.

4.5. Reliability and Validity Guarantee

Peer debriefing: Inviting another researcher to independently encode the transcribed text, both researchers manually encoded without using any AI tools. The two encodings have a high degree of similarity in all aspects such as topic recognition and content description, indicating that the research has good reliability.

Member checking: The preliminary analysis results were fed back to the interviewed teachers, who all stated that the analysis results accurately reflected their teaching observations. Among them, 18 teachers stated that they “fully comply”, while two teachers stated that they “highly comply”, this shows the research has good validity.

Theoretical saturation: When this study attempted to include more interviews with teachers for analysis, it was found that the new data could no longer provide new concepts or themes for the original framework. This indicates that the original twenty samples have reached theoretical saturation, which also reflects the good validity of this study.

Rich citation of raw data: When refining and analyzing the interview content, the researcher will also appropriately quote some original interview sentences to enhance traceability and reliability.

5. Core Findings

Through systematic coding and analysis of 20 interview texts, this study clearly identified that after the application of AI short dramas, students exhibited complex and even polarized psychological and behavioral behaviors in three dimensions: class participation, learning effectiveness, and learning mindset.

5.1. Class Participation

(1) **Positive performance: situational interest awakening and learning behavior activation**

The vast majority of teachers indicate that AI short drama videos have significantly increased the class participation of the majority of students. Previously, many students engaged in avoidance or fatigue behaviors in the classroom, but after the application of AI short drama videos in the classroom, many students are willing to participate in classroom interactions. The psychological mechanism behind this is in line with the situational interest theory (Renninger, Hidi, & Krapp, 1992), where stimuli associated with knowledge points and personal preferences (such as movie characters) quickly trigger students' situational interest, which then transforms into learning engagement behavior. For example,

"In the past, there were often students sleeping or remaining silent in my classroom. The situation is very different now. Many students actively raise their hands to play the roles in AI short drama videos for oral communication practice, and classroom participation has significantly increased." (M03, 3 years of teaching experience)

"Many students used to complain to me that English tutoring was boring, but now most of them tell me that they feel that the classroom with AI short drama videos has become much more interesting, and most students have expressed interest in learning English." (F11, 2 years of teaching experience)

(2) Negative manifestations: social anxiety and collective alienation

However, this study also found shadows under the trend of "active participation". Some introverted students experience social anxiety in this highly active classroom. When classmates around actively participate, introverted students who dare not express themselves are more likely to classify themselves as "failures", resulting in a stronger sense of relative deprivation and alienation. As social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) suggests, individuals evaluate themselves by comparing themselves to others. For example,

"There is a quiet girl in my classroom. She privately told me that in the past, almost everyone remained silent in class, but now most students are actively participating in classroom interactions. However, due to her introverted personality, she dare not participate in classroom interactions. She feels like she has been isolated from the group and has lost interest in learning." (F05, teaching experience of 4 years)

5.2. Learning Effectiveness

(1) Positive performance: Enhance situational memory and oral confidence

Most teachers have observed significant improvements in students' grammar accuracy and oral fluency. According to the dual encoding theory (Paivio, 1986), AI short drama videos provide both verbal and visual information, forming stronger memory traces. Especially for oral output, students are willing to imitate and retell the lines of celebrities in AI short drama videos, making them more courageous and confident to practice speaking. For example,

"Many students used to forget some of the complex grammar knowledge I had taught. Now I have used AI short drama videos to explain, and the students have

a particularly deep impression. Their exam scores have significantly improved overall.” (M08, 5 years of teaching experience)

“In oral tests, many students used to speak not very fluently. Now they unconsciously imitate the tone of AI short drama videos, and they begin to speak more fluently and confidently.” (F16, 3 years of teaching experience)

(2) Negative manifestations: Attention dilution and frustration

But some teachers also point out that the strong plot appeal of AI short drama videos leads some students to only focus on the plot and ignore the knowledge points. This may lead to the “attention dilution effect” described by the cognitive load theory (Sweller, 2023). Students’ limited cognitive resources are occupied by interesting but irrelevant information such as plot, resulting in insufficient processing depth of core knowledge points, ultimately leading to frustration after failing the test. For example,

“A few boys were just watching Spider Man fly into the sky, but through classroom tests, I found that they didn’t remember the subjunctive language knowledge mentioned in the video at all. They feel very frustrated about not doing the right thing, and they complain to me that they feel this new teaching method is distracting their attention.” (M20, 2 years of teaching experience)

5.3. Learning Mindset

(1) Positive Performance: increased Intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy

Most teachers indicate that the majority of students have become very active in learning and more confident in learning English under this new teaching model. AI short drama videos successfully transform external rewards (interesting videos) into intrinsic motivation (interest in English learning itself). The successful learning experience further enhanced students’ self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), forming a positive belief that “I can also learn English well”. For example,

“There is a boy in my class who used to be very resistant to English, but now he has started to actively discuss grammar knowledge with me. He said that because he could understand everything taught by Spider Man, he began to feel that English wasn’t difficult.” (M01, 6 years of teaching experience)

(2) Negative manifestations: learned helplessness caused by cognitive style mismatch

This study found that the “noisy” and “fast switching” styles of AI short drama videos are not suitable for all students. Some students who prefer quiet learning may find the new classroom mode noisy, making it difficult for them to absorb knowledge. According to the cognitive style theory (Witkin & Goodenough, 1981), field dependent learners tend to learn in external frameworks and quiet environments, while the strong stimuli and fast-paced nature of AI short drama videos may interfere with their information processing processes. The mismatch between this cognitive style and the teaching environment can lead to a decrease in their learning efficiency and may develop into doubts about their own abilities or even learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975). For example,

“An introverted girl told me that she likes the quiet way of taking notes before. She feels that the classroom is always noisy now, and the amount of information in the videos is a bit large. She finds it difficult to keep up with the style and pace of the new classroom, and she feels very uncomfortable and even hates taking English classes. She doesn’t hate the subject of English itself, she just doesn’t adapt to this new classroom mode.” (F07, teaching experience of 4 years)

6. Discussion

6.1. The Double-Edged Sword Impact of AI Short Drama Videos

This study found that the impact of AI short drama videos on middle school students’ English learning psychology is not solely positive or negative, but presents a distinct “double-edged sword” impact. This discovery supports and deepens the view in the cognitive theory of multimedia learning about “Extraneous Load” (Mayer, 2001), that interesting but irrelevant information can distract learners’ attention and impair learning outcomes. This study extends the theory from abstract theoretical contexts to real extracurricular tutoring situations, confirming that interesting details may also have significant cognitive interference on some students in real learning environments. More importantly, this study constructed a “dual path model for AI short drama videos teaching” to explain how AI short drama videos affect students through two different psychological pathways:

(1) Positive path (interest-driven path): AI short drama videos awaken students’ situational interests, making them more willing to engage in learning and interaction, thereby enhancing learning effectiveness and self-efficacy. This path is effective for the majority of students in this study.

(2) Negative path (distraction and maladjustment path): The strong plot appeal of AI short drama videos may lead to the dilution of some students’ cognitive resources, forming the “attention dilution effect”. At the same time, a highly active classroom atmosphere can induce social anxiety among introverted students (Festinger, 1954), leading to a sense of collective alienation, weakening learning motivation, and causing some field dependent students to experience discomfort, thereby reducing learning efficiency.

The unique contribution of this model is that it also reveals the dual mechanism of “AI empowerment” and “burden” of AI short drama videos, rather than simply judging the quality of technology applications.

6.2. Individual Differences among Students Are Key Moderating Variables for AI Teaching Effectiveness

This study is not a general discussion of whether AI short drama videos are effective, but rather delves into the deeper questions of educational psychology, such as who is effective, who is ineffective, and why they are effective or ineffective. The research results indicate that students’ personality and cognitive style are two key variables that regulate the effectiveness of AI short drama videos teaching.

(1) The regulatory role of student personality

This study found that extroverted students adapted better in the lively and highly interactive classroom created by AI short drama videos, and their active participation behavior further strengthened the positive learning cycle. However, introverted students experience social anxiety in the same environment (Festinger, 1954). When observing positive and fluent expression from peers, introverted students are more likely to evaluate themselves as “not good enough”, leading to withdrawal behavior and emotional alienation. This discovery suggests to educators that the “activity level” of classroom atmosphere is not always necessary, and its suitability varies depending on students’ personalities.

(2) The regulatory role of students’ cognitive styles

According to the cognitive style theory (Witkin & Goodenough, 1981), field dependent learners are sensitive to external environmental cues and tend to learn in structurally clear and relatively quiet environments. However, the multi role dialogue and strong plot push in AI short drama videos may cause cognitive overload (Sweller, 2023). The teacher’s report in this study that “the student felt unable to keep up” is a typical manifestation of cognitive overload. This is not due to insufficient student abilities, but rather a mismatch between teaching media and their cognitive styles.

6.3. Dynamic Balance Mechanism of “Situational Interest Cognitive Load”

This study reveals the dynamic balance mechanism of “situational interest cognitive load” behind the effectiveness of AI short drama videos teaching in real tutoring situations. The discovery of this mechanism goes beyond the simple answer of “whether AI technology is effective” in previous research, and delves into the refinement of “under what conditions, what effects it has on what students”. Specifically, this study found that the “fun” of AI short drama videos is not a fixed attribute, but plays two opposite psychological roles simultaneously: on the one hand, as a powerful situational interest trigger, it can quickly attract students’ attention, reduce their defensive psychology and anxiety towards English learning, and thus open the emotional entrance to learning; On the other hand, it may also become an external cognitive load source, and its vivid plot can occupy students’ limited cognitive resources, reducing their processing depth of core knowledge points (Sweller, 2023). These two effects coexist and balance each other in the same teaching process, forming a dynamic equilibrium. When students’ attention is successfully anchored on knowledge points, interest plays a positive role; When students’ attention is captured by the plot itself, the fun becomes a source of interference. This balance point is significantly regulated by individual characteristics of students. The value of this theoretical contribution lies in its correction of some existing research’s “interest hypothesis”. Some existing studies simply assume that the interest of learning materials is positively correlated with learning outcomes, but this study shows that the relationship between the two is not a simple linear relationship, but a conditional relationship moderated by individual dif-

ferences. This discovery provides a clear theoretical hypothesis for subsequent research: the design of AI teaching materials should not pursue “maximum fun”, but should pursue “optimal fun”, that is, while maintaining sufficient attractiveness, minimizing its interference with core cognitive processing.

6.4. Reflection and Critique: Alternative Interpretations and Research Boundaries

When interpreting the results of this study, it is necessary to carefully consider alternative interpretations and research boundaries. For example, in this study, some teachers observed changes in students’ positive behavior, which may be partly due to the “novelty effect”, that is, students’ short-term curiosity about new teaching forms leads to positive learning behavior rather than the teaching quality of AI short drama videos themselves. This effect may decay over time, and future similar studies can be analyzed by combining students’ perspectives and longitudinal research. This alternative explanation and research boundary are worth continuously updating and optimizing in future research. However, at the same time, every research and analysis in the world has unique new contributions and limitations. It cannot be denied that this study, which approaches from the perspective of teachers and conducts in-depth analysis and interpretation, also has unique theoretical contributions. It can provide richer material references for teachers’ innovative teaching methods and progress in teaching practice. The contribution and limitations of this study can also serve as a starting point and reference for future research, jointly making new explorations for the academic development of related fields.

6.5. Practical Suggestions

(1) Implementing a guided watching strategy to reduce the risk of attention dilution

This study found that the plot interest of AI short drama videos may become a source of cognitive load for some students, causing their attention to shift from knowledge points to the plot. According to the cognitive theory of multimedia learning (Mayer, 2001), learners need clear guidance to focus their attention on the core content. Therefore, before playing an AI short drama videos, teachers should set up a pre-focus task (such as “Please find three sentences in the video that use subjunctive mood” or “After watching, please repeat the two grammar rules mentioned by the character”) to anchor students’ attention to the teaching objectives. After watching, a post-focus discussion should be conducted to test students’ ability to extract knowledge points through questioning, rather than just discussing the plot. This approach utilizes metacognitive monitoring mechanisms to help students become aware of what they should pay attention to during the viewing process, gradually cultivating their ability to autonomously regulate their attention.

(2) Providing differentiated participation channels to alleviate some stu-

dents' social anxiety

This study found that a highly active classroom atmosphere can induce social anxiety among introverted students (Festinger, 1954), leading to feelings of withdrawal and alienation. According to the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), meeting students' "competence" needs is an important factor in maintaining intrinsic motivation, but introverted students have a different path to obtaining this psychological satisfaction than extroverted students. Therefore, teachers should not require all students to participate in interactions in the same way. Teachers can try to provide diverse channels for participation, such as allowing shy students to input answers through online chat platforms or submit written interactive content after class. These alternative forms of participation reduce the psychological risks of public expression, while still meeting students' basic psychological needs for "attention" and "recognition". In addition, teachers should avoid overemphasizing "who raises their hands the fastest" and "who has the loudest voice" in evaluations, and instead focus on "who has deeper ideas" and "who thinks more carefully", shaping a classroom evaluation culture that is inclusive and diverse in expression.

(3) Adopting an "activity alternating structure" to match the cognitive style needs of different students

This study found that students with field dependent cognitive styles are more dependent on quiet and structured learning environments, and the strong stimulation and fast-paced nature of AI short drama videos may lead to cognitive overload (Sweller, 2023). According to the cognitive style theory (Witkin & Goode-nough, 1981), the degree to which the teaching environment matches the learner's cognitive style may directly affect learning outcomes. Therefore, classroom teaching should not only rely on frequent use of AI short drama videos, but should adopt an activity structure that alternates between high and low stimuli. For example: watching AI short drama videos (high stimulation) → practicing quiet exercises such as filling in the blanks or correcting mistakes (low stimulation) → group role-playing (medium high stimulation) → independent written summaries (low stimulation). This alternating structure provides a "cognitive breathing space" for field dependent students, allowing them to consolidate and digest knowledge in low stimulus stages; At the same time, it does not deprive independent students of their need for diverse stimuli, achieving a teaching inclusiveness of "each taking what they need".

(4) Optimizing the content design of AI short drama videos to reduce cognitive interference from the source

This study found that the plot appeal of AI short drama videos is the root of the "attention dilution effect", but this does not mean sacrificing fun. According to the theory of cognitive load (Sweller, 2023), the goal of instructional design should be to reduce external cognitive load (interference information unrelated to learning objectives) while increasing relevant cognitive load (processing activities that promote schema construction). Therefore, the design of AI short drama videos

should actively incorporate knowledge point emphasis mechanisms at the script level: for example, allowing core sentence patterns to naturally repeat in character dialogues (rather than appearing only once); Design characters to summarize key points in the form of dialogue (such as “Remember, we just used the present perfect tense, its structure is...”); set “pause thinking” prompts at key plot points (such as voiceover: “What tense do you think the protagonist used in this sentence? Think about it and continue”). These designs transform fun from a “cognitive enemy” to a “cognitive ally”—it still attracts students, but at the same time constantly draws attention back to teaching objectives, achieving an organic unity of fun and education.

6.6. Research Limitations and Future Directions

This study is based on a small-scale sample of a single tutoring institution, and larger sample studies can be attempted in the future. Secondly, the data for this study comes from teacher observations, and future research can attempt to incorporate student perspectives and conduct mixed studies.

7. Conclusion

This study is based on grounded theory and systematically explores the multidimensional psychological impact of AI short drama videos on students in English teaching through in-depth interviews and three-level coding analysis of 20 middle school English tutoring teachers. The research results indicate that AI short drama videos is not a “neutral” technical tool, but a complex teaching variable that deeply interacts with individual learner traits. On the one hand, it can significantly enhance the learning confidence and academic performance of most students by arousing situational interest; On the other hand, its strong plot appeal may also cause an “attention dilution effect”, while a highly active classroom atmosphere can trigger “social comparison anxiety” among introverted students, leading to decreased learning efficiency and emotional alienation. In terms of theory, this study reveals the dynamic balance mechanism of “situational interest cognitive load” in real tutoring situations, corrects some simplified hypotheses in existing research that “interest inevitably promotes learning”, and proves that the effectiveness of AI teaching is the product of the interaction between technological features, student personality, and cognitive style. In practice, the introduction of AI short drama videos into the classroom is not a “right or wrong question”, but an “application question”. Its value does not depend on how advanced the technology itself is, but on whether educators can identify the psychological needs and cognitive characteristics of different students and flexibly adjust teaching strategies accordingly. This study calls for not only embracing technological empowerment, but also being wary of the “one size fits all” application thinking, shifting the focus of teaching innovation from “how to use AI well” to “how to make AI adapt to every unique student”. Only in this way can technology truly become a scaffold for promoting educational equity and individual growth, rather than a

new barrier that exacerbates learning differentiation. Every student deserves to learn at their own pace and in a way that suits them, and this is the ultimate concern of the integration of educational psychology and technology research.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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