

Classroom Management: An Essential aspect of Teaching

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1. Introduction:

Classroom management is one of the important issues in teaching. Classroom management is concerned with maintenance of discipline by keeping friendly relationship with the class. It is an essential aspect of a teacher for effective language learning in ESL class.

I got the opportunity to work as an intern in an English medium school. I was appointed there as a language teacher for standard 4. I taught there all the three sections of standard 4 as a language teacher. The number of students of each class was 40-45. So at the beginning of my teaching, classroom management was a challenging task for me. From my own experience, I think the first obstacles for a new teacher are the difficulties that the teacher encounters concerning classroom management. To manage any class properly a teacher needs to acquire different techniques for different situations. To make the students involved in the class, teacher needs to motivate his/her students. It is a responsibility of the teacher to make the class effective by managing class properly. Classroom management is a challenging factor for a teacher, especially if it is a large class. It becomes very much challenging for any teacher if the class size and the environment are not in favour of applying teaching techniques. Teacher should have an idea about each and every student and class, so that he/she could have a plan regarding classroom management before taking the class. I got motivated to work on this topic, as at the beginning of my teaching it was the most challenging factor for me and by the time I was gradually successful to overcome this difficulty. In my teaching, different techniques and theories that I learnt from my different language teaching courses helped me a lot regarding classroom management. My intention was to apply those theories and techniques in my class and it was really effective for my teaching. In my paper I am going to analyze the different aspects of classroom management that requires some teaching techniques especially for a large class.

2. Literature review:

We know that classroom management is an important issue in teaching. Different authors gave various opinions about dealing classroom in proper way. Keeping discipline in class is the main factor of classroom management.

2.1 Establishing rapport and maintaining discipline:

Penny Ur. In her book "A course in language teaching" discussed about different aspects of dealing problem and keeping discipline in class. He discussed about the actions that needed take before and while problem arises. He mainly suggested three main preventive strategies **before the problem arises**.

1. Careful planning: When a lesson is clearly planned and organized there is likely to be a constant momentum and a feeling of purpose, which keep students' attention on the task in hand. Moreover, the awareness that everything is planned that contributes a great deal to have confidence and have ability to win the trust of the students.
2. Clear instructions: problems sometimes arise due to student's uncertainty about what they are supposed to be doing. The necessary information needs to be communicated clearly and quickly, courteously but assertively: this is precisely what the task involves.
3. Keep in touch: Teachers need to be constantly aware of what is going on in all quarters of the classroom, keeping eyes and ears open. This achieves two things: first, students know you are aware of them all the time which encourages participation and personal contact on the one hand, and discourages deviant activity on the other; second, teacher becomes able to detect a student's incipient loss of interest or distraction and do something about it before it has become problematic.

When the problem is beginning:

1. Deal with it quietly: The best action is a quiet but clear-cut response that stops the deviant activity, keeping the latter as low profile as possible. Over-assertive reactions can lead to the very escalation teacher wish to avoid.
2. Don't take things personally: Inexperienced teachers of adolescents are often upset by remarks that were not intended personally; a more difficult piece of advice for the teacher is even if he/she is quite sure about the criticism was meant personally, teacher should do his/her best to relate to it as if it was not: should not let the student pull you into personal conflict.
3. Don't use threats: Threats are often a sign of weakness; teachers should use the formula 'if you...then...' only as a real, factual option that you are ready to put into practice, not as a weapon to make an impression or intimidate.

2.2 Class size: large class

Class size is an important factor of classroom management. Class size could be large or small. It depends on the educational institution. In primary and secondary education a class of over 35-40 pupils may be a large class; in private EFL schools, over 15 students could be large.

The term 'large class' generally sets up negative connotations of undesirable consequences and problems. The difficulties teachers of large classes around the world feel they face are similar. The challenges which teachers around the world have listed during workshops revolve around the issues such as control, for example of behaviour and noise; assessment and feedback; individual attention; mixed abilities; and use of the mother tongue. (Book- "Developments in ESP; classroom practice and beyond")

In the book *Developments in English for Specific Purpose*, the authors Evans and St. John (1998:200) introduced four 'I's concerning large classroom management. The essence behind most of these approaches seems to be the four 'I's: Involvement, Interaction, Individualisation and Independence with a modified teacher role as manager rather than controller. Involvement can actually reduce rather than raise noise levels as the buzz of active interaction is different to that of noisy boredom. Individualisation is not one-to-one attention but allowing each person to be an individual and work and contribute in their own manner. Independence results from the teacher allowing students to learn in their own ways rather than controlling them through teaching.

The four 'I's are one-way of sharing responsibility within the class. The load on teachers is dramatically reduced when they see themselves as responsible only for answering what the class, as a whole cannot solve.

2.3 Seating arrangement:

Organization of the class and seating arrangement of class is of great importance concerning classroom management. How the seats are arranged depends on the size of the class, the size of the groups, the type of activity and the style of the furniture. To make the class effective and to involve the students in group work, say with four students per group, ideal is probably to have students sit round desks café style, or to remove the desks altogether. If it is possible, move furniture to make good use of it so that students could see each other face. In-group activities, group partner need to face each other. Also need to avoid separating the members of a group too far, making it difficult for them to talk easily.

Richards, Jack C. (1990), author of the book "The Language Teaching Matrix" stated that -

Classroom Management refer to the ways in which student behavior, movement, and interaction during a lesson are organized and controlled by the teacher to enable teaching to take place most effectively.

According to Fisher et. Al. (1980) students “Pay attention more when the teacher spends time discussing the goals or structures of the lesson and/or giving directions about what the students are to do”(p.26). At the beginning and end of my classes I pay more attention on discussing the goals or objectives of the class, so from the beginning they got the idea about the topic that we were going to cover. I made sure that at the beginning of the class the objective is clear to my students. I usually wrote down the objective of the class and at the same time I asked my students to share with the class whatever idea they have about the topic. For the teacher-student discussion on the objectives or goals the whole class got benefited.

The author of the book “Language teaching matrix”: Richards, Jack C. (1990) - talked about the concept of task regarding effective teaching. He stated that – studies of time-on-task have found that the more time students spend studying content, the better they learn it. In one study (Stalling and Kaskowitz 1974), the students with the highest levels of achievement in a reading program were spending about 50% more time actively engaged in reading activities than the children with the lowest achievement gains.

Regarding classroom management this theory is very much applicable in large classes. As my class size was large, most of the time I tried to engage my students with different task and found it very much effective. As the author said Good teaching is said to be task oriented. Effective teachers monitor performance on tasks, providing feedback on how well tasks have been completed. So I could say that through the task that has been assigned to the students and the feedback provided by the teacher facilitates effective learning in proper classroom environment.

3. Implementation of the teaching techniques and method:

In my linguistic courses I learned different teaching theories and techniques. From my linguistic courses I have learned that classroom management is one of the important factors of teaching. While I learned different techniques and theories on this important aspect, I had a great desire to apply those in my real field. When I got the opportunity to teach elementary level students, I tried to prepare myself to implement all the techniques of classroom management. Classroom observation of different schools was another essential requirement of my teaching course. So, I got another opportunity to observe the implementation of teaching techniques regarding classroom management of other teachers.

3.1 My Experience: (As an Intern)

I got the opportunity to work as an intern at BIS (Bangladesh International School). I joined there as a language teacher of standard 4. I was assigned to take all the three sections of the class. BIS basically follows both national and international curriculum. While I started taking class I had faced some problem regarding classroom management, as the class size was large. It was the first time that I taught such a large class. There were about 45 students in each section and the class duration was 40minutes. As the class size was large and I had to complete the class within 40 minutes I had to concern about my lesson plan and to manage the class within the time. After I had taught the class I realized that I would need to improve myself in certain areas concerning classroom management. I faced some problems like controlling the large class or dealing with some of the students' personal problem in the class. At the beginning of my teaching I tried to sort out the common problems regarding classroom management. As the classes were mixed ability class, all students were not participative or interactive in the class. There were some shy students and also some naughty students who used to make noise in the class. At the first week of

my teaching I observed the classes and tried to communicate with the students especially with the students who make noise in the class. Sometimes I assigned them different task for the next class. To handle the large class properly I asked them to work in groups, in that case I also encountered some problem while making the groups. I noticed that students were much excited to make group of their own but it makes the class more chaotic. So I decided to form the group by myself. While I got some idea about the students I arranged the groups with mixed ability students. As they were not used to work in groups I gave them instruction on group work function. Each group contained four members and each student has different task to complete the group work. As they need to discuss in-group the classes became a little bit noisy and out of control. But I asked them to discuss in low voice. Though there was time limit for group work but sometimes I encountered some problems with the group members that crossed the time limit. So in that case I found the group work difficult for such a large class. Sometimes I also asked the students to work in pair and found that it was more effective than group work. There were some reasons behind it, the seating arrangement and the class environment made the pair successful concerning effective learning. It did not make noise like the group works.

While I first introduced group work in the class, I gave instruction first and then asked them to seat in-group. As it was the first time, I helped them to sit in groups. In forming the groups and to make the seating arrangement I faced problem as the class size was large. The whole classes did not have enough space so that student could seat in circle. We know that in-group work students in-group needs to seat in circle so that could have face-to-face interaction. It was problematic to make seating arrangement for such a large class with less space. I solved this problem, after the first class. As I told them not more then four members in-group one group, I asked two of them

from each group to turn their chair and face them. When I applied this technique students got acquainted with it and whenever I asked them to seat in-group they easily from it.

In the third week of my teaching the cultural program of the School was held. As most of the students were taking part in their cultural program they were more excited about their rehearsal, so I needed to make them concentrate on their study. Most of my classes were before their break time, so it became difficult to make them concentrate in the class. I made them busy with different activities, for example in the comprehension classes I randomly chose two/three students and asked them to act like the characters in the story. I asked the other students to concentrate so that they could answer properly after those students' participation. I think the different activities that I had assigned, made them busy and I also told them if they can finish their task in time I would let them go early for the rehearsal. So they became serious about finishing their task properly in time.

In my classes, most of the time I applied CLT (Communicative language teaching method) and direct method. I tried to apply CLT method most, so that students could be more interactive in the class. For applying CLT method, students could work independently in groups or in pair. They could come up with answers after having discussion among them. There was teacher- student interaction and also student-student interaction. I could see that in communicative class students became more active in the class regarding their lesson so class could easily and effectively managed.

In one of my class the objective was to develop the student's comprehension skill. The number of students was 42. It was their second comprehension class. As in the first class I had already taught them the story, I asked my students to discuss the story briefly and came up with the answers to the questions. I asked them to work in groups. But it was difficult to make them work in small

groups as the number of students was large and it was more difficult to make them sit in circle. So I divided the whole class in rows. To make the class interesting and to motivate the students, I told them, each row would have a specific name. According to their performance I would mark them. During the class I found very good response from the students and I could see that all of them enjoyed the class.

Regarding classroom management, I could say that whenever I asked the students to work in pair or group, students became conscious about their task, as their intention was to get the highest score. I had seen that in pairs, a student became more dominating. To handle this problem, I asked them to contribute equally, so that they could answer properly when I would ask any of them to give the answer. While they worked in pair I could see that they became very serious about their task. Regarding group work as I divided the whole class into 5 rows and gave different interesting name for each group, my students enjoyed their task a lot. I could see the competitive attitude among the groups as I gave them mark according to their performance. As I need to be concerned about classroom management and at the same time effective learning, I told my students if they make any noise during their group work I would stop doing this kind of activity. My students took it as a game and at the same time they learnt their lesson. So I felt that this technique was an effective teaching technique for me. As my students liked this kind of activity, whenever I asked them to do group work they became very responsible for their task. I gave them some rules regarding group work or pair work so if they break any rule they lose mark. I could see each of them made an effort.

Some problems that I faced regarding managing the class like, I asked the students to read the story and after reading discuss among them. When I gave them chance to read the story, some of them started screaming. For those students I changed their seat and told that I would ask them

question first. So the whole classroom became more quiet and calm. In this way sometimes I had to control the class.

As the classes were extensive class it was not always possible for me to manage the class equally. Sometimes I had to handle some student's problem and at the same time I had to be concerned about the lesson that I was suppose to complete in class. So sometimes I find it much difficult to manage all things within 40 minutes. As the class size was so large, it was not possible to get each student response in one class. Though it was very challenging for me at the beginning of my teaching but while I got acquainted with my students' it was less problematic. It was a mixed ability class so I tried to get response from the weak students or the students who felt shy to respond in the class. I handled those students in a way so that they do not get scared of my class or me.

I always tried to make my classes relaxed rather than tensed. As I knew that effective learning occurs in relaxed class rather than tensed class, I always tried my students to be interactive in the class in a relaxed environment.

3.2 Based on class observation:

It had been required to have classroom observation in our teaching practicum course. So we got the opportunity for this course to observe some English and Bangla medium schools. The purpose was to observe the real life implication of different teaching technique and procedure of language classes of different institutions. Regarding classroom observation, we had our first observation in Aga Khan School. Aga khan school is an English medium school. We were required to observe the language classes of this school. Main focus was on the techniques and methods that the language teachers were applying. Through the observation we get the opportunity to observe real life teaching, where different aspects of teaching are involved. We had a very good observation.

After observing the class I could say that the environment of the class was relaxed. Students got the whole freedom while working in pair. Students were easily sharing their feeling and ideas with the pair mate and sometimes with their teacher. The teacher was highly appreciating them to discuss and had encouraged them to speak. At the end of my observation I could say that the overall classroom atmosphere was friendly, relaxed, interactive, and non-threatening and students were contributing spontaneously. The teacher managed the class properly.

We had our second observation in Viqarunnisa Noon School. Viqarunnisa Noon School has both Bangla and English medium. It is a large and well-reputed school. We were required to observe the language classes of English medium of this school. I observed language class of standard 2. The number of students was 70. It was such an extensive class that I ever seen. It was well-managed class and I got a very good impression about whole classroom environment. The teacher managed such a huge class so efficiently that I got a very good experience regarding classroom management. After the class ended I asked the teacher outside the classroom, how could she manage such a large class so efficiently. She just told me that students are always attentive and listen to her every instruction very carefully in each class.

Regarding classroom observation, we had our third observation in Banani Bidiya Niketan School. Banani Bidiya Niketan School is a Bangla medium school. This time we were required to observe the language classes of this school. At the end of my observation I could say that the overall classroom atmosphere was calm and quiet. I could say that in the beginning while they were having lively discussion about their pet, their personal life, the class was relaxed. After certain time when the teacher started asking questions, they became tensed. The teacher applied grammar translation method in the class. We know that in grammar translation method the teacher became the authority of the class. I could find out that most of the instruction was provided by the teacher

so it became a teacher-centered class. There were no scope of peer interaction but there were teacher-student interaction. While the teacher conducting the class I found that she was not observing the students in the last rows. Basically she was only interacting with few students from the front rows. As a teacher she should have concern about the response of the whole class.

We had our fourth observation at The City School Dhaka. It is a complete English medium school at Gulshan-2, Dhaka. This school is up to primary level. At the end of my observation I could say that the overall classroom atmosphere was relaxed. Regarding classroom management, I felt that teacher tried her best to control the class. As the students were in junior level, it was quite tough to handle some students, but the teacher handled them nicely. Teacher encouraged the students to participate in class activity. After observing the class I felt that the teacher was quite efficient in teaching. She praised her students a lot to encourage them. As she was taking junior level class she was quite concern about their level so she taught them in soft voice. She was always asking the students by their name. For naughty students she changed their seat. I must say she had great patience to handle the class.

4. Opinion/ recommendation:

As an intern, classroom observer I felt that classroom management plays a vital role in teaching. Based on my internship experience and my teaching course knowledge, I think every teacher should have clear idea about the teaching technique so that they could successfully handle any type of class. As a fresher in teaching, I had also faced some problems regarding classroom management. After conducting each class I realized in certain areas I should have more careful. Like in one class I felt that if I made them work in pairs rather than in groups they could have done better. So I applied it in another class and the response was really good. I should not always make the students work in groups. I realized that for a large class group work would not

always work out well. For a large class, I could only concentrate on my lecture and individual student's performance. Sometimes I felt that I could have applied some techniques to make the class more effective. While students' were working in pair, I could not monitor all the pair equally. I needed to be more concerned about the pair work. As it was an extensive class, pair work did not work well. I could see some of them were very extrovert and they liked to dominate in the pair work. Though I asked them to participate equally, I could not monitor each pair. As the class size was so large, it became tough for me to control the students while they were working in pair. So I should have asked them to work individually and chose randomly for give me the answers.

After conducting one class I felt that I should have more concerned about the seating arrangement. I could have made the groups so that there would be a balance among the group members. As the class was a mixed ability class, all students did not have same capability to work. Some students were very sharp and some were not so sharp to catch the subject matter, so while forming the group I needed to be conscious about the fact. Concerning group work I saw that students made noise or sometimes they made chaos when they were not clear about the task. So teachers should concern about providing instruction clearly. After conducting the class sometimes I felt that I could have give them some more clear instruction in the beginning before they started working in group or while they discussing in group.

Most of the time I have seen that the students at the back had the tendency to talk more or they pay less attention while any teacher taught in the class, so in my classes before the classes ended I asked some students randomly, especially from the last rows of the class to briefly discuss whatever we learnt in that class. So the students in the last rows concentrated in the class properly.

There are some principles hints can be developed for teachers to keep discipline in classroom, like:

- ✓ Achieve silence before start speaking to the class.
- ✓ Know and use the students' names and keep eye contact.
- ✓ Speak clearly or make sure that instructions are clear.
- ✓ Start class by being firm with students.
- ✓ Prepare lessons thoroughly and structure them firmly.
- ✓ While taking the class; be mobile: walk around the class.
- ✓ Have extra material prepared (to cope with slower/faster-working students)
- ✓ Be consistent in behaviour.
- ✓ Praise rather than punish, be warm and friendly to the students.
- ✓ Use humour constructively.
- ✓ Choose topics and task that will active students.
- ✓ Show as a supporter and helper to the students.

These principles should be practiced by the teachers for proper classroom management. If teachers can keep these hints in mind and apply properly in real life then class could be easily managed.

5. Conclusion:

We have seen that in an effective ESL classroom, an ideal teacher creates an environment in the class that stimulates students for learning. Proper use of organizational practice of the teacher can make a well-organized classroom. Though maintaining discipline or managing the class properly is one of the most difficult tasks for young inexperienced teachers, they can depend on various opinions and techniques on classroom management. If they can apply those techniques

according to the situations, it will not be a number one problem for them. Now- a- days it becomes a common phenomenon for the teachers to facing many disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Before it becomes a serious classroom management problem, teachers should have the ability to employ effective organizational practices. These kinds of practices facilitate teaching process and are essential to establishing and maintaining classroom control. I believe that classroom management will not be a challenging task for any teacher; no matter she/he is very young in teaching if they have the proper knowledge of classroom management theories and techniques. The only thing they have to do is to concentrate on the proper implication of those techniques according to the classroom environment and situation. If the teachers' can manage the class properly and generate interest in learning, it is obvious that they will enjoy teaching rather than taking it as a challenging task.

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