CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT:
THE KEY TO STRATEGIC APPROACH IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Hope Christing H. Deita*

ABSTRACT

The scope of efficient teaching does not only include delivery of the lesson but maintaining a harmonious classroom as well. Every experienced teacher understands well that any attempt to impart knowledge to a disruptive class is futile unless the behavior of students is managed. This article discusses classroom management techniques and approaches proven to be helpful in English language teaching. These includes: 1) Know yourself, 2) Know your students, 3) Develop an encouraging class atmosphere, 4) Build an ideal classroom, 5) Be prepared, and 6) Plan lesson routines. The article aims to share teaching tips to non-native speakers who are teaching English to second-language learners. It is the concern of this article to improve teaching-learning relationship in the classroom to ensure that learning will take place. Two common errors in language teaching are discussed in this article: 1) Focus on grammar rules and 2) Teacher-learner gap. Furthermore, the article discusses the profile of second-language learners as 1) impatient, 2) technology-dependent, and 3) having hatred for English. These attitudes are just some of the problems that need to be addressed in classroom management.

classroom management

Classroom management is the process of ensuring that classroom lesson run smoothly despite disruptive behavior of students. The term also implies the prevention of disruptive behavior. It stresses methods of facilitating positive students’ behavior and achievements. Allen (1986) cited its importance in establishing “an environment in which instruction and learning can occur”. Classroom management is closely linked to issues of motivation, discipline and respect. It is a major concern of educators and administrators. Many teachers establish rules and procedures and have to be consistent in enforcing these. There are newer perspectives on classroom management that attempt to be holistic. This

* Lecturer, Liberal Arts Faculty, Sripatum University Chonburi Campus

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approach attempts to guide students toward success by helping see how their efforts pay off in the classroom.

Language teaching to second-language learners is a task too difficult to handle by a non-native speaker. One must be equipped with more than the knowledge of English but also with multiple teaching strategies, evaluation techniques, patience, and classroom management skill. A well-managed classroom will not only ensure learning, but build a teacher-student relationship that is grounded on respect, trust and partnership.

What, then, is effective classroom management? How does one develop this art? Why is it significant in second-language teaching? Underwood (1987) listed some basic techniques and approaches that focus on the organizational aspects of teaching English successfully.

1. Know yourself.
   - Be confident of the English you have
   - Be aware of the special talents you can make better use of
   - Maximize the use of your specialist knowledge on facts and ideas in some other field of literature, geography, history, robotics, etc.
   Interesting contents in language lessons ensure a communicative purpose to your students’ language learning experience.
   - ‘Bring to life’ the environment of English-speaking countries. Student’s enjoyment of the language can be heightened by showing them real objects to stimulate their understanding of English.
   - Improve your teaching performance in any area you feel you are weak. Good classroom performance will have a significant effect on the students’ perception towards you.
   - Make students busy and lead them to believe that what they are doing is worthwhile. A well-organized class is less likely to have problems with misbehaving students.
   - Allow yourself of the great opportunities for self-development.

2. Know your students
   - Calling students by their names creates a friendlier atmosphere in the classroom
   - Never ask your students in class of things you would not wish to be asked yourself
   - Provide interesting learning activities for the students
   - Check on their previous learning of English. Start your class with where they ended their previous experience.
   - Share the enthusiasm and interest in learning the language with your students

3. Develop an Encouraging Class Atmosphere
   - Give a sense of purpose. Make sure that everything done in class is worthwhile for the students.
   - Ensure that English is spoken. The teacher’s own confident use of the language has a very great influence on the student’s willingness to speak in English.
   - Provide opportunities for them to use the language freely to express their own ideas.
   - Give encouragement. Nothing beats a positive push upward.
   - Involve all students. Not all students are most likely to participate in class discussion and activities. Never allow them to habitually alien-
ate themselves.

4. Build an Ideal Classroom
   - Make sure the room has the appropriate lighting and ventilation.
   - Arrange audio-visual aids in a manner audible and visible to everybody.
   - Arrange classroom set-up in accordance to the learning activities for the day.

5. Be Prepared
   - Plan your lesson and teaching materials ahead.
   - Never waste time. Leave activities for students in case of absence.

6. Plan Lesson Routines
   - Draw your students’ attention on the day’s lesson before getting started.
   - Motivate students to learn.
   - Use a variety of teaching materials to enhance teaching.
   - Plan a variety of learning activities to stimulate students’ interest and attention.

A common mistake committed by the language teacher is to spend most of the class period teaching the target language. Students hate it when they are bombarded with rules. Although, the focus of language teaching is indeed on grammar rules, structure and usage, it pays to teach general knowledge to language students. In fact, an effective approach to teaching language is to make use of one’s general knowledge on a variety of subjects. This knowledge and the maximum use of ‘realia’ or real objects will stimulate the students’ imagination. Thus, a meaty information about health and science, mathematics and technology, history and culture, anthropology and geography, and a lot other sciences paired with the appropriate learning materials pave way to a more interesting learning experience. Every educator will agree that meaningful learning materials do wonders in teaching. These materials provide a touch of reality for every abstract ideas or a feeling of ‘being there” for places outside the four corners of the classroom. Once the teacher has directed the students’ attention on the day’s lesson, it would be easier to instruct them to perform a number of learning activities. In doing so, one must bear in mind that there are many roles a teacher should perform in the classroom. One should not refrain from being an actor, a model, a guidance counselor, a parent, a motivator, or even a friend. These roles make our performance in teaching versatile and we gain our students’ trust and confidence. Failure to gain a positive perception from them will affect our credibility.

This will lead us to another error in student-teacher relationship—building walls rather than bridging the gap. Most teachers believe that they are superior and treat their students as subordinates. Definitely, there is more to just knowing their names and treating them as clients. Reaching out to our students develop a healthy relationship in the classroom. Once established, a student-teacher-peer relationship will bring harmony in the teaching-learning process. Instructions will be followed with gratitude rather than resentment, passion rather than hatred, and enthusiasm rather than passivity. Students will be putting their heart and mind in every learning task because they understand the significance of doing so. Everybody will be a key player of a major team project and
everybody will be treating each one as a teammate rather than a competitor. However, a precaution should be undertaken in a manner that as we extend boundaries, we should make amends not to invade privacy. Students’ personal lives should be kept private unless an effort was initialized from their end. In the same manner, our personal life should be kept a matter of our concern.

Today’s generation of learners is different from those a decade ago. The fast-changing fad from technology and fashion, the globalization of business and communication, and the influx of internet websites and internet connections are a few of a number of factors that have changed present day learners. These learners have lost patience above all things. They have grown very comfortable with “one-click” lifestyle that they want it the easy way. One of the important skills affected with these change is reading. Despite the amount of information provided by the Internet, students understanding of knowledge had depreciated for a number of years. When surfing the net for home works or projects, students failed to take time to read and look for the needed information. Whatever comes in a handy is automatically printed on paper and submitted to their instructors. It would turn out however, that the paper does not contain the information asked for. They did not bother to go through what they have cut and pasted from the internet. Their listening skills are also greatly distorted. With so much faith that the internet can provide them with everything they need, classroom discussions have become a monopoly of the teacher doing all the talking. Students are not paying attention to lecture because they believe they can download everything from the internet. These realistic classroom scenarios are evidence of the pressing need for classroom management.

A greater number of problems are experienced in a second-language class. One of these is how to address the “hate English” issue among the learners. Students seemed to have a mountain load of hatred over learning English. They have blocked all possibilities to melt this fury and thus make language teaching a heavy burden for the teacher. Rooted in this hatred is misbehavior in class, a hostile attitude towards the teacher, distracted listening, low-level participation, and poor performance in quizzes and exams. A painful reality is that they seemed not to mind a failure grade for English classes— as if it is something they have fatefully expected. These are the challenges that call for a strategic approach. For unless answered upon, this problem will become “fossilized” and there will be a repeated cycle of the problem.

From these, allow me to share the following ESOL (English as a Second Language) principles to help understand non-native students better and promote a classroom atmosphere conducive for second-language learning.

- They are not stupid and they can hear what is being said. They just don’t necessarily understand the language or culture, yet.
- They come from a variety of backgrounds, even in the same country. For example schooled, unschooled, Americanized, etc.
- It is easy to misunderstand body language and certain behaviors. For example, eye contact, spitting, chalk eating, etc.
- Don’t assume they understand something just because it seems simple to you. Simplify, boil down.

- Even when they have lost their accent, they often misunderstand common words and phrases.

- Correct repeated patterns or mistakes.

Classroom management and management of students conduct are skills that teachers acquire and hone over time. Effective teaching requires considerable skills in managing the myriad of tasks and situations that occur in the classroom each day. This skill requires ‘common sense’, consistency, and courage. The skills associated with classroom management are only acquired with practice, feedback and willingness to learn from mistakes.

To summarize all the techniques and approaches, Kizlik (1987) put them together into four points. The following are effective classroom management context:

1. Know what you want and what you don’t want
2. Show and tell your students what you want
3. When you get what you want, acknowledge it
4. When you get something else, act quickly and appropriately

Teaching is a complicated task. Face the challenge of being an educator. Equipped with a learning plan, a well-defined goal, classroom management skills, and a passion for teaching, you can answer the call of molding the young generation.

REFERENCES

