**Classroom Management Skills of The Language Teachers**

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**Abstract**

Teachers or educators, most of the time, concentrate on the theoretical aspects of language teaching and study them as much as possible. However, in practice, we start thinking that we will have to keep a number of people together in the same place. These are often the people who come from many different backgrounds and whose expectations differ. In this case, it becomes more and more difficult to appeal to every individual in class. Therefore, as teachers we should initially be trained on how to manage our classrooms and how to provide the necessary environment to put into practice the things we have learned to teach a language. Obviously, we need management skills as well as the language teaching skill. Actually, it is not as difficult as many people think. As teachers if we fulfill our duties properly, a well-managed class will ensue. In this study, therefore, the definition of class management is regarded roughly "to keep people from different environments directed to one single goal". When this is accomplished, we are unlikely to live discipline problems.

**Key Words:** Classroom management, teacher, teacher-training, management.

**Özet**

Çoğu zaman öğretmen ya da eğitimciler dil öğretiminin teorik boyutu üzerinde yoğunlaşmakta ve mümkün olduğu kadar bu konuları işlemektedir. Ancak uygulamada ise, bir çok insanı aynı yerde toplamamız gerektiğini düşünmeye başlarız. Bu insanların farklı geçmişleri ve beklentileri vardır. Bu durumda, sınıfta her bir bireye hitap etmek oldukça zor bir iştir. Bu yüzden, öğretmen olarak bizler sınıflarımızı ne şekilde yöneteceğimiz ve öğrendiğimiz şeyleri uygulamaya geçirmek için gerekli olan ortamı nasıl oluşturmamız gerektiği konusunda eğitimden geçirilmeliyiz. Açıkçası, dil öğretme becerisi gibi yönetme becerilerine de ihtiyacımız bulunmaktadır. Aslında bu bir çok kişinin düşündüğü kadar zor bir iş değildir. Öğretmen olarak eğer görevlerimizi tam anlamıyla yerine getirirsek, iyi yönetilen bir sınıf hemen akabinde kendiliğinden oluşacaktır. Bu yüzden, bu çalışmada sınıf yönetimi tanımı kabaca "çok farklı çevrelerden gelen insanları tek bir hedefe yönetmek" olarak benimsenmiştir. Bu başarıldığında disiplin sorunlarını yaşamak olası değildir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sınıf yönetimi, öğretmen, öğretmen-eğitimi, yönetim.

**Introduction**

Classroom management is a crucial point that has recently gained due attention. Traditionally the term classroom management has been used interchangeably with the term "discipline," and still it is possible to see many teachers recalling the word discipline at the mentioning of classroom management. The reality, however, is something different. Today when we say classroom management, we mean a variety of factors that help us turn the classrooms into places where learning and teaching can best take place. That is to say, we mean the factors that make the classrooms "workable systems" which will render classrooms productive places (Burden, 1999). In the light of this, we can say that the term classroom management, on the

surface, refers to such factors as time management, sitting arrangements, disruptive behavior, interruptions, teaching styles and so on. A quick glance over these considerations will reveal the fact that all these factors are the primary needs of a teaching-learning environment. Namely, these are the things we have to do before we take up the teaching of any topic. Then, it is undoubtedly a fact that we should determine certain guidelines for both teaching and learning behavior which is important for establishing an environment where learning will take place. Therefore, within the definition of this crucial field we can expect to find the following points:

 - ➢ how we arrange classroom
 - ➢ how we present our teaching behaviors in that classroom
 - ➢ how we expect students to demonstrate that they have learned what we wanted them to learn

Broadly speaking, therefore, classroom management refers to the actions and strategies teachers use to maintain order and systems for classroom groups rather than spot and punish misbehavior, resolve behavioral disorders, or capture the attention of individual students (Burden, 1999). Another important aspect of successful classroom management is that it involves not only responding effectively when problems occur, but preventing the frequent occurrence of problems as well. The most effective decisions in classroom management are based on a clear concept of the goals and intended outcomes that a teacher wishes to accomplish. Consequently, it is possible to see that classroom management has many facets, ranging from the physical appearance of the teachers to teaching techniques and from the use of humor properly to disruptive behaviors and so on.

Before examining the more complex aspects of classroom management, it will be proper to define three important concepts; misbehavior, off-task, and discipline. ***Misbehavior*** "includes behaviors that interfere with teaching, with the rights of others to learn, and that are psychologically or physically unsafe". ***Off-task*** behavior "includes student actions that are not focused on the instructional activities, yet would not be considered disruptive or defined as misbehavior." And finally ***discipline*** "is the act of responding to misbehaving students in an effort to restore order (Levin&Nolan, 1991 cited in Burden 1999). In this study the focus is on comprehensive classroom management in general. Then, we will see how to design our classrooms in such a way that will leave little or almost no room for discipline problems to occur and then we will examine what actually the causes of these problems are and after that we will have a look at the problems of large classes which are nightmares for teachers, and finally we will reconsider the place of classroom management in teacher training programs.

## 1.Comprehensive Classroom Management

Jere Brophy (1998) offered us the comprehensive definition of classroom management:
> Good classroom management implies not only that the teacher has elicited the cooperation of students in minimizing misconduct and can intervene effectively when misconduct occurs, but also that worthwhile academic activities are occurring more or less continuously and that the classroom management system as a whole (which includes, but is not limited to the teacher's disciplinary interventions) is designed to maximize student engagement in those activities, not merely to minimize misconduct (cited in Jones, 2001).

In the broad light of this definition, we will talk about "five areas of knowledge and skill."

1. "Classroom management should be based on a solid understanding of current research and theory in the classroom management and students' personal and psychological needs" (Jones, 2001). So the first step is to understand students' personal and psychological needs.

2. After the identification of needs we should decide how these needs will be met. Therefore, a second factor is "classroom management depends on establishing positive teacher-student and student-student interaction (Sarıçoban, 1998) that create classrooms as communities of support"

3. The following step is *instructional excellence*. No matter how perfectly we have understood all the needs and decided how to meet them, it is worthless unless it is connected to the instruction which must be as best as possible. Thus, the third step is "comprehensive classroom management involves using instructional methods that facilitate optimal learning by responding to the academic needs of individual students and the classroom group" (Jones, 2001).

4. Now it is time to put them into practice. Normally in state schools we have approximately thirty five students in our country and it is the teachers' duty to keep them together and orchestrate these people. Therefore, the *forth step* is to use organizational and group management methods that involve students in developing and committing to behavioral standards that help create a safe, caring community and using the teaching methods that facilitate clear classroom organization" (Jones, 2001).

5. All these four factors combined, a suitable environment for education will be established. However, as teachers we cannot always be so optimistic; we should always be alarmed that at least students are likely to behave improperly at some points. This case requires *good counseling skills* on the part of the teacher. In this respect, therefore, our final step is to develop the ability to use a wide range of *counseling and behavioral methods* that involve students in examining and correcting their inappropriate behavior" (Jones, 2001). This does not come to mean that teachers should be perfect counselors, but they should at least have the basic skills in problem-solving.

So far we have examined the five factors that are crucial in the process of classroom management in terms of creating the needed classroom atmosphere and the process of preparation to avoid any disciplinary misconduct. We can summarize as follows (Good and Brophy 1991, cited in Jones, 2001):

1) Students are likely to follow rules they understand and accept.
2) Discipline problems are minimized when students care regularly engaged in meaningful activities geared to their interests and aptitude.
3) Management should be approached with an eye toward maximizing the time students spend engaged in productive activities, rather than from a negative viewpoint, stressing control of misbehavior.
4) The teacher's goal is to develop self-control in students, not merely to exert control over them.

## 2 . Factors Influencing How Teachers Manage Their Classrooms

As you may remember when we talk about classroom management we actually mean a number of factors that have a profound effect on the atmosphere in the classroom. These are

very practical aspects, but any impractical implementation of them may bring about unwanted results. These are the physical environment of the classroom, teacher's voice and body language and planned teaching.

## 2.1. The Physical Environment of the Classroom

One very simple factor that is likely to change the atmosphere and disturb the peace is the physical environment of the classroom. It is the prime responsibility of the language teacher to establish a non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom. Therefore, language teachers should be sensible to create environments that promote standards based language learning in supportive, accepting classrooms. Classrooms must be secure, positive, and motivating learning environment. Any inconvenience may result in unease and bring the lesson to a halt. This is because of the fragile attention of students on the lesson; whenever there is a difference like the sound from out side or the sudden loss of electricity may revert their attention somewhere else.

### 2.1.1. Sight, Sound, and Comfort

Brown (2001) truthfully declares: that "students are indeed profoundly affected by what they se, hear, and feel when they enter the classroom". Unless the teacher ensures the followings in his classrooms, management problems may occur (Brown, 2001):

- ✓ The classroom is neat, clean, and orderly in appearance,
- ✓ Chalkboards are erased, and the whiteboard is clean,
- ✓ Chairs are appropriately arranged,
- ✓ If room has bulletin boards and you have the freedom to use them, can you occasionally take advantage of visuals?
- ✓ The classroom is as free from external noises as possible (machinery, outside, street noise, hallway voices etc),
- ✓ Acoustics within your classroom is at least tolerable,
- ✓ Healing or cooling systems (if applicable) are operating.

In addition to this list, we can offer a concept like this: the audio-visual machinery (overhead projectors, slide machines, television, video, etc.) must be placed in a comfortable place.

In this fashion we can conclude that we should try to exert influence on as many of them as possible in order to provide a good classroom.

### 2.1.2 Seating Arrangements

Seating arrangements are also influential how we manage our classrooms. Contrary to the traditional way of arranging the seats in our modem world, with the help of the compiled research, we shape our classes in such a way that will give way to as much communication as possible. The best way for this is semi–circles or U-shapes (Sarıçoban, 1998), while arranging the seats it is also important who will sit next to whom, yet the students will sooner or later full into comfort table patterns. The students must be allowed to choose their partners in seats.

### 2.1.3 Chalk Board Use

Brown (2001) States that "White board is one of our greatest allies." It is the place where we make use of the visualization we need. However, we must be careful about its use; we must be clear and neat. A messy whiteboard will drive students crazy.

### 2.1.4 Equipment

We may have chance to use certain instructional equipment in our institution, there are a number of factors that will help us avoid any danger in regard to the resultant disorder in the class. We should make sure that:

- ✓ The room has outlets,
- ✓ The equipment fits comfortably in the classroom,
- ✓ The visual / auditory stimulus must be placed in such a way that every individual can easily see them,
- ✓ You leave enough time before and after the class to get the equipment and return it to its appropriate place,
- ✓ We know how to operate the machinery in the classroom or in the lab,
- ✓  There is extra light bulb or battery or whatever else you will need if a routine replacement is in order.

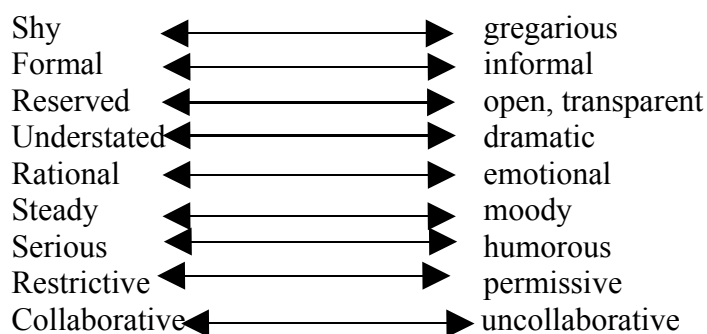### 2.2. Teachers Roles and Styles

At that stage, after relating the topic both to students and teachers, it would be foolish and even selfish to suggest that all management problems stem from careless students. Teachers themselves can also give rise to a number of management problems if they don't act properly.

### 2.2.1. Roles

In education a teacher should take on many roles such as knower, guider, provider, director, and so on, while performing this wide range of problems we have to be careful and consistent. We should know our limitations and strengths.

### 2.2.2 Teaching Styles

It is believed that each teacher varies in his preferences of teaching styles. There is no problem as long as the styles merge into a certain set of fixed attitudes on the part of the teacher. Consider the following continua.

| Shy | ⟷ | gregarious |
|---|---|---|
| Formal | ⟷ | informal |
| Reserved | ⟷ | open, transparent |
| Understated | ⟷ | dramatic |
| Rational | ⟷ | emotional |
| Steady | ⟷ | moody |
| Serious | ⟷ | humorous |
| Restrictive | ⟷ | permissive |
| Collaborative | ⟷ | uncollaborative |

Where can you place yourself? Obviously, we should not have a certain place. Instead, we should make alterations in this continuum in order not to accustom our learners to a fixed,

monotonous, tedious and/or boring flow of instruction. We must be careful when we are approaching to either end of the lines. In such a case it is natural that we lose control.

## 2.3. Unplanned Teaching

As teachers we should plan before lessons. However, planning doesn't necessarily imply that we have to follow a certain, rigid succession of activities even though they turn out to be a headache for students. Of course, it is impossible to follow every detail of the lesson. There will naturally be unexpected and unavoidable changes in the flow of the lesson. Then language teachers should plan students' learning experiences based on assessment of language proficiency and prior knowledge. Imagine that you have planned a discussion and neatly you have settled that it will take five minutes, but in class this turns out to be a very lively discussion and prolonging as learners add point.  The followings are the cases where you take action in order to preserve the peace in the class (Brown, 2001):

- ✓ Your students digress and throw off the plan for the day
- ✓ You digress and throw off the plan
- ✓ An unexpected but pertinent questions comes up
- ✓ Some technicality prevents you from doing an activity.
- ✓ A student is disruptive in class
- ✓ You are asked a questions you don't know the answer
- ✓ There isn't enough time at the end of a class period to finish an  activity that  has already started.

In addition to this, there may be gangs, disturbing your control in class. Moreover, will the class conduct be student-fronted or teacher-fronted? The teacher must bear this question always in mind.

### 2.3.1. Teacher's Voice and Body Language

Another concern in classroom management is about the teachers' use of verbal and non verbal messages. Teachers must be careful when they are speaking in the class. All students should hear their voice even at the back rows in crowded classes and most importantly his language should be clear and understandable. Learners need to hear every bit of language in order to gain further practice. In order for your verbal and non verbal language to succeed its aims you have to abide by a certain set of principles: These are as follows;

- ✓ Let your body pasture exhibit an air of confidence
- ✓ Your face should reflect optimism, brightness, and warmth.
- ✓ Use facial and hand gestures to enhance the meanings of words and sentences that might otherwise be unheard. Make frequent eye contact with all students in the class.
- ✓ Do not "bury" yourself in notes and plans
- ✓ Do not plant your feet firmly in one place for the whole hour.
- ✓ Move around the classroom, but not to distraction.
- ✓ Follow the conventional rules of proxemics (distance) and kinesthetic (Touching) that apply for the cultures of your students.
- ✓ Dress appropriately (Brown, 2001).
- ✓ Help students to communicate in socially and culturally appropriate ways.

We have seen the general considerations that are crucial in managing a classroom appropriately. You might have noticed that these are all the factors teachers can control. There

are also some uncontrollable cases against which teacher cannot take actions beforehand; these are mainly crowded classes, discipline problems, and so on.

## 3. Teaching in Large Classes

Normally, the ideal number in a language classroom should neither be more than twelve or fifteen in order to provide enough communication nor should it be too small in order not to lose the atmosphere of communication. However, the situation is not at all so. Due to the lack of schools, classrooms, teachers, there are many classes that hold thirty to fifty students together in Turkey. We pile up students in the classes even up to 60 and expect high performance from them. Is it possible? This is very questionable. In such a case there will be no attention-gathering to the subjects of the lesson. This is not what we mean by enough number of students for communication? So, what problems do large classes pose?

- ✓ Widely varying proficiency level
- ✓ Reduced interaction between teacher and students.
- ✓ Less opportunities for learners to speak
- ✓ Limited feedback to students.

Yet, don't be frightened and step back. There seems to be some solutions. They may not be total remedies, but at least they may reduce the seriousness of the situation. Brown (2001) offers us some.
  a) Call him or her by his or her names at least.
  b) Have as much interaction as possible by assigning "ice breaker "type of activities
  c) Increase pair – work and group work activities.
  d) Use more listening activities, using tape, video and yourself.
  e) Give students extra – class work to keep them engaged.

As stated above, they may not be the exact remedies, if there ever is a remedy for this kind of a situation, yet they may prove to be helpful and effective when dealing with large classes.

## 4. Discipline Problems

Here comes the most problematic area: how to treat discipline problems or how to cope with them? Here are some suggestions (Brown 2001, Sarıçoban 2001).
  - ✓ Learn to be comfortable with your position of authority
  - ✓ Gain the respect of your students by treating them all with equal fairness
  - ✓ State your expectations clearly
  - ✓ Be firm but warm in dealing with variance to these expectations.
  - ✓ Try to solve disciplinary problems outside the class.
  - ✓ When resoling disciplinary problems, try to friend the source of the problem instead treating the symptoms

In addition, try to get proposals from the students to solve some discipline cases; teacher says to the student, "what would you do if you were in my place; or how would you solve this problem?"

Discipline problems most of the time appear to be difficult, but we should look inside the problem; we should be reflective instead of reactive in case of an unwanted behavior in the classroom. We should search the reasons that lead students to unwanted or unsuitable behavior and then take the appropriate strategy to overcome it.

**5. Creating a Positive Atmosphere in the Classroom**

All physical arrangements completed properly, now you are in a position to conduct and put into practice your class management knowledge into practice, the part where you come closest with the audience and keep them within a body the aim of which is directed to language learning. Here are some basic considerations:

**5.1 Establish Rapport**

Rapport is creating the atmosphere of togetherness. It is based on trust and respect between the teacher and the students and it is necessary to help learners feel that they are capable, competent and creative (Brown, 2001). But, how to do it? Not very difficult, we should just fallow these steps.

- ✓ Interest in each student as a person
- ✓ Give feed back on each person's progress
- ✓ Value and respect what students think and say
- ✓ Laugh with them and not at them
- ✓ Work with them as a team, and not against them

In addition, as a proposal, give remedial opportunities to shape the students' positive conduct.

**5.2. Balance Praise and Criticism**

There will always be times in the classroom when you will either have to praise or criticize students. The golden rule here to remember is the saying, "Too much everything, kills everything". This means that we have to balance praise and criticism, here is the contrast between effective praise and ineffective praise.

| EFFECTIVE PRAISE | INEFFECTIVE PRAISE |
|---|---|
| ➢ shows genuine pleasure and concern <br> ➢ shows verbal and non-verbal variety <br> ➢ specifies the particulars of an accomplishment, so students know exactly what was performed well <br> ➢ is offered in recognition of noteworthy effort on difficult tasks <br> ➢ attributes success to effort, implying that similar success can be expected in the future <br> ➢ fosters intrinsic motivation to continue to pursue goals <br> ➢ is delivered without disrupting the communicative flow of ongoing interaction (Brown, 2001) <br> In addition to the above list, it must be born in mind that "effective praise" must not be overdone; otherwise, it will spoil good conduct of the students, blocking their way to see the realities of life. | ➢ is impersonal, mechanical and "robotic" <br> ➢ shows bland uniformity <br> ➢ is restricted to global comments, so students are not sure what was performed well <br> ➢ is offered equally strongly for easy and difficult tasks <br> ➢ attributes success to ability, luck, or other external factors <br> ➢ fosters extrinsic motivation to perform only to receive more praise <br> ➢ disrupts the communicative flow of ongoing interaction (Brown, 2001) <br> ➢ must be mild so that it should not harm the self-esteem of the students. It should also be properly constructive so that students do not get discouraged. |

So far we have talked about the classroom atmosphere and how to keep this atmosphere as lively as possible . In order to have this positive, friendly, learnable and non-threatening atmosphere in the class you can do some activities such as giving some or each of your learners certain jobs. For example:

## 6. Problems of Large Classes

One basic problem teachers face when they are teaching is large classes which pose a number of problems. The situation is a common problem all around the globe, yet it seems to be more persistent in Turkey. Our classes are too crowded and this blocks every instructive issue in education. Some of the mostly occurring problems in large classes are:

### 6.1.Discomfort

Discomfort may give rise to following cases (Sarıçoban, 2001):
- ➢ the students cannot move easily and some students do not want to join in some of the activities
- ➢ teachers must speak very loudly with an attractive tone of voice so that their students can hear them as much clear as possible for understanding
- ➢ there is not enough room to do some of the activities
- ➢ large size classes make teachers frustrated and tired, and they may feel hopeless to manage the class successfully
- ➢ students do their best not to attend the classes

### 6.2.Control

It becomes difficult to control large classes (Sarıçoban, 2001):
- ➢ if the students are too many, the teacher cannot control them
- ➢ when students do in class activities, they make loud noise
- ➢ it is noisy because some students who are not interested in class activities disturb others
- ➢ large classes naturally create discipline problems
- ➢ teachers may fall short behind the curriculum

### 6.3.Individual Attention

In crowded classes individual students receive less attention (Sarıçoban, 2001):
- ➢ teachers do not have time to help all the students
- ➢ if it were a small class, it would be easy to assist individual attention
- ➢ Introverted students cannot receive proper help from the teachers

### 6.4.Evaluation

Teachers cannot provide rightfully accurate evaluation of all students (Sarıçoban, 2001):
- ➢ teachers do not have enough opportunity or time to listen to them. For example when they want to practice speaking, they may not pay the necessary attention to their pronunciation to see if it is right or wrong,
- ➢ it also takes a long time to check all students' exercises,
- ➢ it is impossible to finish the course program,
- ➢ it is also impossible to make the right evaluation in grading,
- ➢ it is hard to have objective quizzes, midterm and final exams, for students tend to copy

from each other,
➢ cheating increases.

## 6.5. Learning Effectiveness

Teacher will absolutely become worried if their students cannot learn and this seems to be common in large classes (Sarıçoban, 2001):

➢ they are not sure that their students get what they have taught exactly
➢ it is difficult to see in which points their learners need help through pop quizzes because in crowded classes there will be papers and papers to evaluate every day or so.
➢ even if we are able to demonstrate that class size is not an effective factor on learner achievement, we will still have an evidence to tell us that teachers, for example, have a whole range of valid reasons as to why smaller classes are preferable

There are, however, some precautions we can take to prevent these problems. First of all, we should make maximum use of pair work and group work activities and we should arrange seating in the best possible way that will enable each student to see the board and hear the teacher.

## Conclusion

In this study a general outline of classroom management has been given. A comprehensive description of classroom management was given which included a wide range of topics like physical appearance of classes, teaching methods, student needs and so on. Then we have seen what is included in the process of managing a classroom and then we have observed the factors that affect teachers' classroom management skills. Among them are the socio-economic background, school, and personal factors. We have stated that although teachers can have a relatively little influence on social and economic factors, the others-school and personal factors-can be effectively treated provided that teachers exert some effort to diagnose the roots of the problems and cooperate with the school personnel to minimize the problems. In respect to this we have outlined major steps which included the above mentioned processes. Later came the discussion whether to include classroom management course in teacher training programs. Lastly, we have examined another problematic area, large classes, which cause a number of difficulties on the part of the teachers. We have seen some useful activities and two sample situations in which the strategies teachers should follow in order not break the uniformity in the classroom are given.

To conclude, classroom management is crucial for education to take place and there may be a number of factors that trigger misconduct; yet, by means of effective inspection of the problems they are not insurmountable. As teachers, therefore, we must know our students, we should carefully identify their needs and tailor our instruction accordingly. It must be noted that classroom management is as important as the curriculum. Thus, we can create a non-threatening atmosphere in which we are less likely to live discipline problems. We must serve as Professional resource personnel in their educational environment. Finally, it is an unavoidable must for language teachers to assess learners' language skills and communicative competence and performance using multiple sources of information.

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