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10

Classroom management for teaching English to young learners

*Subhan Zein*

Introduction

Effective classroom management sets the stage for optimal learning. This explains why classroom management positively correlates with higher student participation, greater learning satisfaction, dropout prevention and reduced disruptive behaviour (Evertson 2013; Evertson and Weinstein 2006), and it is even suggested as the single variable with the strongest impact on student achievement (Marzano and Marzano 2003). Defined as the abil- ity of teachers to establish and maintain order in a classroom within an education system that aims to foster learning as well as social and emotional growth, classroom management encompasses all of the teacher’s practices related to developing mode of instruction (e.g., lecturing, group work) and dealing with learner behaviour (Elias and Schwab 2006, Emmer and Sabornie 2015). The instructional dimension of classroom management includes teach- ers’ works such as grouping and seating, regulating classroom routines, timing activities, setting up and sequencing tasks, giving instructions, providing feedback and monitoring the learners. The learner behaviour management dimension, on the other hand, includes activities such as preventing, correcting and redirecting inappropriate student behaviour and developing learner self-regulation.

The bulk of research on classroom management has been drawn from Western classrooms where language education is not necessarily the focus. This chapter attempts to address this issue by bringing what the mainstream classroom management research has to offer to the English for Young Learners (EYL) classroom. The chapter first provides an overview of the historical perspectives of classroom management, shifting from its early develop- ment in the 1900s to the emergence of the ecological and the behavioural approaches to recent approaches to classroom management. The chapter further discusses five critical issues related to EYL classroom management, namely theoretical approaches, educational cultures, teachers’ backgrounds, classroom conditions and technology. Third, the chapter demonstrates how current contributions in EYL pedagogy have been devoted to the fairly mechanical aspects of instructional management with little attention paid to young learn- ers’ behavioural management. Next, the chapter provides recommendations for practice to assist teachers with managing young learner behaviour. Finally, the chapter points to future

directions for EYL pedagogy at both the theoretical and practical levels and the much- needed reorientation in teacher education for EYL teachers.

Historical perspectives

*Early development*

One of the early modern Western educators, Bagley (1908), wrote that educators prior to the twentieth century embraced the machine-like and ‘military organization’ (p. 30) style of classroom management, while at the turn of the twentieth century, ‘most of the advanced and progressive educators’ were proponents of the self-government theory of classroom management (p. 31). The machine-like style of classroom management placed emphasis on rules and punitive consequences to manage student behaviour, whereas the self-government theory focused on the development of self-discipline within students. This conceptualisa- tion of classroom management is consistent with the dual meanings of the term ‘discipline’ (Emmer and Sabornie 2014). The first meaning refers to the creation and maintenance of an orderly learning environment conducive to learning in which punitive consequences are used for correcting and prevent problem behaviour. On the other hand, the second meaning of discipline refers to ‘self-discipline’, also referred to as ‘self-regulation’, ‘responsibility’ and ‘autonomy’ within students. In this chapter, the term *self-regulation* is used, as it is associated with the students’ ability to inhibit inappropriate behaviour and exhibit pro-social behaviour under their own volition.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the development of self-regulation was the primary aim of classroom management. Within this perspective, teachers employed a combination of teacher-centred and student-centred techniques, with greater emphasis on the latter (Emmer and Sabornie 2014). However, as a consequence of increasing behaviour problems in the second half of the twentieth century, there was a shift on the focus of class- room management and prevention from developing self-discipline to establishing order and managing student behaviour (McClellan 1999). With the prevalent views in the 1970s and

1980s pointing to school discipline as the greatest problem, classroom management was equated with maintaining classroom order and controlling student behaviour. The use of teacher-centred techniques of prevention and correction was the emphasis of practice and research, as seen in the emergence of the process-product, the ecological and the behav- ioural approaches.

*The process-product approach*

Researchers embracing the process-product tradition aimed to identify predictors of teacher effectiveness by drawing from the methodology of systematic classroom observation (Emmer and Sabornie 2014). They explored the relationships between classroom processes (particularly teacher behaviour and teacher-student interaction patterns) and subsequent outcomes (particularly adjusted achievement gain). The focus was on the system-level characteristics of schools that were successful in promoting high achievement and positive classroom behaviour among students (Doyle 2006). This perspective led to the notion of the importance of activity management, including how the teacher engages students and mini- mises disruptive behaviour by keeping activities on track, preventing intrusions and main- taining the flow of activities. Brophy (2006) stated that various studies within this tradition demonstrate that effective classroom managers: (1) provide sufficient advance preparation

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155

2 Evertson, C. M. (2013). *Classroom management for elementary teachers,* 9th ed. Boston, MA: Pearson.

This book provides teachers with the skills, approaches and strategies necessary to establish effec- tive management in the primary school classroom.

3 Evertson, C. M., and Weinstein, C. S. (Eds.). (2006). *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice and contemporary issues*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

This handbook provides a rich account of classroom management that includes classroom man- agement approaches, models and programmes.

4 Reid, R., and Johnson, J. (2012). *Teacher’s guide to ADHD*. New York: The Guilford Press.

This book provides a comprehensive overview of ADHD including introduction, assessments of

ADHD learners, medication, classroom-behaviour interventions and self-regulation strategies.

Related topics

Motivation, differentiation, difficult circumstances, classroom language

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167

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168

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