CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN THE TEACHING – LEARNING OF ENGLISH IN LARGE CLASSES

by

ABD. GANI B. ABDULLAH
5535

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Centre for Language Studies,
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

Classroom Management in the teaching-learning of English in large classes.

Classroom Management involves creating and managing optimum learning environment and organizing students so that the teaching and learning process can take place effectively and efficiently. In the teaching-learning process of English in large classes, classroom management can be a challenge for English as a second language (ESL) teacher. This research was conducted to find out the extent to which classroom management problems regularly faced by teachers are problems to the ESL teachers of the selected schools. In addition, this research also focuses on the effectiveness of the methods/strategies regularly used by teachers to the ESL teachers of these schools. The ESL teachers from SMK Semera and SMK Asajaya- Samarahan Division were involved in this research. There were two instruments used to collect the data for this research: a questionnaire and an observation checklist. The findings of the research revealed that every teacher has his/her own method/strategy in dealing with classroom management problems. This is because every ESL teacher may encounter different problems and therefore, the effectiveness of the method/strategy depends on the teacher himself/herself.
ABSTRAK

Pengurusan Bilik Darjah dalam Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris bagi kelas yang besar.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.0. Introduction and background of the study

The teaching of English in English as a second language (ESL) classroom can be an interesting job but it can also be very challenging and difficult to manage especially for large classes. A large number of students, ranging from 15 per class in small schools to 50 per class in large schools (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 1992) is normally found in the Malaysian Primary and National Secondary Schools. Teachers, whether they are experienced or not, would face difficulties in teaching large classes, particularly in the teaching of English language. According to Tengku Subahan (1991), the difficulties ESL teachers would face in the teaching-learning process of English in large classes are due to many factors. For example, students are not interested in the subject or feel bored to learn. They tend to play around and give less attention to the teacher teaching in front. Sometimes they bring magazines or comics to the classroom and read them during the lesson, which make them less interested in the lesson or even ignore the lesson. In large classes, teachers may not be able to give equal attention to all the students. Therefore, to minimize these problems from occurring, ESL teachers must be effective and creative in managing the teaching learning process. This is important so that the teaching-learning process of English can take place smoothly and efficiently.
The situation below is another example of the actual classroom incident that may occur during the teaching-learning process of English in large classes.

**Situation**

_The teacher has prepared a worksheet and is explaining how to do it. He has extended his explanation to the point where John, having lost interest in the teacher’s words, begins to tap a ruler on his desk. At first the tapping is occasional and not too noticeable, but John begins to tap more frequently and more noisily, building up to a final climax when he hits the table with a very loud bang. The class, startled by the noise, falls silent, and looks at both John and the teacher to see what will happen._


The above situation may occur during the teaching-learning process of English and other subjects in Malaysian large classes. The causes of the incident were teacher’s over-lengthy explanation, student’s impatience and the failure of the teacher to stop the disturbance when it started. Although the disturbance was caused by only one student, but it had interfered with the teaching-learning process. Here, the teacher could take effective actions such as reprimand John or could go to John, while the rest of the students are working, and make it clear to him that his behavior
is unacceptable. These actions may make him less likely to repeat the same behavior.

This research will attempt to identify the extent to which the classroom management problems regularly encountered by ESL teachers are problems to the ESL teachers of the selected schools during the teaching-learning process of English language in large classes. It also focuses on the methods or techniques used by them to deal with the problems during the teaching and the effectiveness of the methods and strategies. The findings of this study might be useful to teachers in dealing with classroom management problems. If the classroom organization is well managed, the teaching-learning process can be done systematically and effectively.

1.1. Statement of Problem

Upon completion of primary and lower secondary level of education, students sit for UPSR and PMR. After that all students are allowed to proceed with their studies to Form One and Form Four regardless of whether they pass or fail in the examinations. This is one of the factors that have contributed to the increase in the number of students in Malaysian secondary school classrooms, especially in the National Secondary Schools. Students’ enrolment rate in the National Secondary Schools from 1990 to 1995 was increase by 4.18 per cent and the rate is expected to increase by 25 per cent in the year 2000 (Development of Education National Report Malaysia, 1999). This situation has contributed to the existence of what is called
"large classes" in the Malaysian National Secondary Schools. According to Tengku Subahan (1991), these large classes in Malaysian National Secondary Schools have caused some classroom management problems, particularly with classroom discipline problem. Problems, such as physical constraints, class control; individual attention, evaluation and learning effectiveness are commonly encountered by teachers teaching English language in large classes (Hayes, 1997). The physical constraints imposed by large number of students in a class can hinder students-students and students-teacher interaction to occur during the teaching-learning process, as there was no room to move about. The failure to promote these interactions during the lesson may lead to problems in class control, individual attention and learning effectiveness to occur. If these problems are not dealt with properly and efficiently, they could interfere and interrupt the flow of teaching-learning process to take place.

The purpose of this study is to find out whether those classroom management problems as mentioned by Hayes (1997), are problems to the ESL teachers of the selected schools in the teaching – learning process of English language in large classes. Apart from that, the findings of this research could also serve to provide some effective techniques or methods that could be used to deal with classroom management problems.
1.2. Research Objectives

There are two objectives of this research. They are:

1.2.1. To find out the extent to which classroom management problems regularly encountered by teachers in teaching are problems to the ESL teachers of the selected schools during the teaching – learning process of English in large classes.

1.2.2. To identify the effectiveness of the methods or techniques regularly used by ESL teachers to the ESL teachers of the selected schools in dealing with classroom management problems during the teaching – learning process of English in large classes.

1.3. Research Questions

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1.3.1. To what extent do the classroom management problems regularly face by ESL teachers in teaching are problems to the ESL teachers of the selected schools during the teaching-learning process of English in large classes?

1.3.2. How effective do the methods or techniques regularly used by ESL teachers in dealing with the classroom management problems to the ESL teachers of the selected schools during the teaching-learning of English in large classes?
1.4. Significance of the study

It is hoped that this research could benefit ESL teachers and trainee teachers by providing them with the information and ideas on what is needed in order to overcome the classroom management problems that they may encounter during the teaching-learning process of English language in large classes. It is hoped too, the findings of this research could provide examples to ESL teachers and trainee teachers on the effective methods or strategies that they could use in dealing with classroom management problems during the teaching-learning process of English language.

1.5. Definition of key terms

Nesamalar, Saratha & Soo Choon (1995) stated that classroom management involves creating optimum conditions for the business of teaching and learning. It involves managing the learning environment and organizing students so that the activities teachers plan may be carried out efficiently. Therefore, classroom management refers to the creation and management of learning environment that enable effective teaching and learning to take place in the classroom. The ability to manage the teaching-learning process well is very important in the teaching of English in large classes. This is because a well-managed class enables teaching-learning process to be carried out smoothly and systematically without much disruption.
**Large classes** refer to those classes that have a large group of students studying together in the same class or setting. People have many opinions on how “large” the number of students should be in a so-called “large class”. Hayes (1997) stated that there could be no quantitative definition of what constitutes a “large class” as perceptions of this will vary from context to context. In this study, the number of students in a class ranges from thirty to fifty is considered as “large”. This is because the number of students in a Malaysian classroom ranges from fifteen to fifty (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 1992) is generally considered as “large” to be handled by one teacher within a limited time slot of forty or eighty minutes for a lesson. According to Nesamalar, Saratha & Soo Choon (1995), a teacher teaching English for forty or eighty minute’s lesson will approximately have one or two minutes for each student in a class of forty. Therefore, this may lead to problems of managing the teaching-learning process of English in large class such as class control, giving equal attention to all students, catering for students’ different needs, getting students to participate in the lesson and also organizing group works.

**Effective classroom management methods/strategies** as stated by Nesamalar, Saratha & Soo Choon (1995) are methods/strategies used by teachers during the teaching-learning process that could produce the best conditions for effective teaching and learning to take place. In addition, effective methods or strategies would decrease classroom disorder, student misbehavior and would increase the quality of teaching and learning. Effective classroom management methods/strategies require teachers to be able to make effective and efficient actions
and decisions regarding classroom management that could suit their classroom situations in order to enhance effective learning. Therefore, effective teachers and effective classroom management methods/strategies are very important for teaching-learning process to take place effectively.

1.6. Summary

In chapter one, the background of the study, the problems researcher is interested to find out, the objectives of the study and the research questions, the significance of the study and the definition of the key terms are being discussed. In the next chapter, the review of the related theories, articles or researches regarding the topic will be discussed.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0. Introduction

This chapter reviews some related literature relating to classroom management. It is divided into sections with their elaborations. This literature review touches on classroom management, classroom management problems, approaches and their effectiveness in managing the teaching-learning process of English.

2.1. Classroom management

According to Scrivener (1994), classroom management involves both decisions and actions. The actions refer to what are being done in the classroom, for example, rearranging the chairs. The decisions are about whether to do these actions, when to do them, how to do them and who will do them. The essential basic skill for classroom management is therefore to be able to recognize options available to make appropriate decisions between these options, and to turn them into effective and efficient actions. As teachers grow in experience, the awareness of possible actions will grow too. Therefore, the ability in classroom management depends very much on ones experience as a teacher.

In the teaching-learning process of English in Malaysian secondary schools, teachers need to be able to make wise decisions and be confident when dealing with classroom management problems, particularly with discipline problems. According to Arends (1997), classroom management is the most important challenge teachers
are facing. Many teachers encountered with problems in managing the classroom during the teaching-learning process of English in large classes. Therefore, it is necessary for ESL teachers to be able to manage the teaching-learning process of English in large classes in order to create or establish a positive environment for learning to take place.

2.2. Classroom management problems

The lack of skills and experiences in classroom management during the teaching and learning of English in large classes, may lead to classroom management problems. Hayes (1997), summarized the problems with the teaching of English in large classes that ESL teachers may encountered as physical constraints, class-control, individual attention, evaluation and learning effectiveness.

The problems mentioned above may occur in Malaysian schools, particularly with class-control. The inability to control the class well during the teaching-learning process could lead to the occurrence of disruptive behavior in the class. According to the national survey (Carnegie Foundation, 1988; Hamachek, 1994) of 22,000 teachers, 89% of them considered that disruptive students' behavior as one of the major problems teachers are facing. The disruptive students' behavior may occur during the teaching-learning process of English in large classes due to the inability of the teacher to control and organize the class well. This inability may be caused by lack of experience in classroom management and also the physical constraints. In addition, the large number of students in a class could also lead to the
problem of paying attention to individual student. Therefore, if these problems are not solved or partially solved by the teacher, they could interfere with the teaching-learning process of English in large classes.

Harmer (1993) said that there seem to be three reasons for classroom management problems, particularly with discipline problems, to occur. They are the teacher, the students and the institution.

In relation to that, Harmer (1993) said, the teacher’s behavior and attitude play an important role in the teaching-learning of English in large classes. They can have a major effect on the discipline of the students. For example, if the teacher goes to the class unprepared and the students can identify that he/she is not sure of what to do, may lead to classroom management problems to occur. Therefore, it is very important that the teacher must be well prepared and knowledgeable about the subject, particularly with large classes that might cause trouble.

Apart from that, Harmer (1993) also stated that the classroom management problems can also be caused by the students themselves. Sometimes the teacher had done everything to avoid problems from occurring during the teaching-learning process, but still problems occur. This may be caused by several factors such as the time of the lesson, the student’s attitude or a desire to be noticed. For example, an ESL teacher teaching English language during the last period of the day may find the class too challenging to handle. Many of the students may not be able to pay
attention because they are all tired after a long day of study. In addition, the teacher could not give equal attention and recognition to all the students, as there are many of them in a class. These factors can lead to classroom management problems if they are not dealt with properly and efficiently.

Another reason mentioned by Harmer (1993) that could lead to classroom management problems to occur is the policy of the institution in dealing with the disruptive students. An institution should have a recognized system for dealing with problem classes and students. The teacher can consult discipline teachers or heads of department when facing with cases of extremely bad behavior during the teaching-learning process. Therefore, the policy of the institution regarding classroom management problems plays an important role in minimizing them from occurring.

In Malaysian schools, the classroom management problems ESL teachers may encounter during the teaching learning of English in large classes are somehow similar to the factors mentioned above. The attitude and leadership style of ESL teachers, attitude of the students and the policy of the schools are the factors that can lead to the success or failure in the classroom management (Savage, 1991). In order to minimize classroom management problems from occurring during the lesson, teachers must be confident and knowledgeable about the subject. According to Peterson (1992), planning the lesson well can do this and properly that have clear objectives to be achieved, as the core of the learning strategy.
2.3. Classroom management strategies

Effective and efficient classroom management strategies involve not only responding to the problems that occur in the classroom but also preventing them from occurring. Strategies involve effective classroom organization skills, communication, monitoring and delivery of instruction (Jones & Jones, 1990) can help teachers in preventing the frequent occurrence of classroom management problems. In the teaching-learning process of English language in large classes, it is very important for the teachers to master those skills so that the intended goals and outcomes can be accomplished.

In the organization of teaching-learning process, teachers should develop rules and procedures in relation with teaching strategies. These rules and procedures may help students to achieve their personal and academic needs. For example, by arranging students seating arrangement in a U-shape, rows or a circle, may enable teachers to see and move closely to students. By moving closely to them, teachers can give individual attention to students and at the same time can prevent classroom management problems from occurring.

The way teachers communicate during the teaching-learning process may contribute to the occurrence of classroom management problems. Therefore, it is very important for teachers to be able to communicate effectively. According to Jones & Jones (1990), communication skills can be divided into two categories:
sending and receiving. The sending skills are skills used when speaking to someone and the receiving skills are techniques for becoming a more effective listener.

Effective teachers when speaking to students should deal with the present matters. This is because the present information is more useful when shared at the earliest appropriate opportunities. During the teaching learning of English language in large classes, teachers should talk directly to students about the lesson rather than about them. When teachers practice this regularly, students may respect the teachers. When students respect the teachers, the classroom discipline problems could be controlled easily and effectively. In addition to that, teachers also should speak courteously in order to create positive role models for students to follow. All these sending skills are important and necessary to be mastered by teachers in order to minimize classroom management problems from occurring.

The ability in the speaking skill alone may not be able to prevent classroom management problems to occur. Teachers need to become a more effective listener too. For example, during the teaching-learning process, teachers can make the students feel being recognized or heard by listening to them in a non-evaluative way and respond to them using paraphrasing. Therefore, the ability in receiving skills is essential to minimize the frequent occurrence of problems during the teaching learning of English in large classes.
Another important skill that teachers should have in order to manage the teaching-learning process effectively is the classroom monitoring skills. There are several useful techniques listed by Jones & Jones, (1990), which teachers can use to respond to minor classroom disruptions:

- Scan the class frequently in order to notice and respond to potential problems.
- React calmly and quickly to a student's disruptive behavior in order to create a positive ripple effect.
- Make positive initial contact with students by praising the positive behavior that competes with the negative behavior.
- Remind students of the classroom rule or procedure that they are not demonstrating.
- Make students clearly aware of the rules and procedures and the consequences for violation.

In the teaching learning of English language in large classes, teachers must be able to monitor classroom disruptions or even prevent them from occurring. This is important because if the problems are not dealt with efficiently at the initial stage, they may disrupt the teaching-learning process. The mentioned strategies above maybe useful and could be used by ESL teachers to monitor classroom disruptions.

The last strategy in classroom management mentioned by Jones & Jones (1990) was the delivery of instruction. The quality of instruction is a key factor
influencing students’ behavior and achievement. Below are some of the strategies listed by them to improve their quality of instruction:

- Vary learning style as well as the content of instruction in order to address diverse student learning styles.
- Provide work of appropriate difficulty to complement varying ability levels.
- Relate materials to students’ lives whenever possible.
- Be animated, create anticipation, and use activities to catch student’s interest or increase student motivation to participate.

In the teaching-learning process of English, a good quality of instruction is essential in order to control students’ behavior and also to improve students’ achievement. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to master this skill.

The strategies for classroom management as mentioned above may be useful for Malaysian ESL teachers to prevent classroom management problems to occur during the teaching learning of English in large classes. This is because these strategies cover several aspects of classroom management skills such as the organization, communication, monitoring and delivering of instruction. The abilities of teachers in these classroom management skills may determine their success or failure in managing the teaching-learning process of English in large classes. These classroom management strategies can be adapted or adopted by ESL teachers to suit their classroom situation.