



A Qualitative Study of Classroom Management Efficiency of High School English Class

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Abstract. High school classroom management constitutes a very important part in classroom teaching. It challenges a teacher's management ability, influences his/her teaching quality, and affects the mental and physical development of his/her students. Contemporary studies show that a student-centered model is advocated in classroom management, which aims to stimulate students' subjective initiative, arouse their enthusiasm of study and, promote their overall development. To this end, many researchers put forward strategies to improve the quality of classroom management such as rearranging the layout of the tables and chairs in the classroom, enriching teachers' theoretical knowledge about classroom management, and so on. This paper conducted a qualitative study by interviewing an excellent and experienced high school English teacher. It attempts to discover some valuable strategies of classroom management and thus provide insights for other high school English teachers.

Keywords: classroom management · interview · high school English class

1 Introduction

As an indispensable part of classroom teaching, classroom management has always been one of the research focuses in classroom teaching of primary and secondary schools. Classroom management refers to regulating students' behaviors through positive interaction between teacher and students in order to obtain prospective teaching objectives [1]. The purpose of classroom management is not to control students' behaviors but to promote students' overall development through guiding them to participate in class actively [2]. Recent research indicates that the concept of classroom management is shifting from a teacher-centered to a student-centered model. Unlike the teacher-centered class where students are the passive recipients of knowledge, the student-centered class tries to stimulate their initiative and engage them in class. Also, some scholars believe that too many rules or directions in class may create a distance between teacher and students, which may lead to a boring classroom atmosphere and restrict the students from participating in classroom activities [3].

Some studies focus on the research of classroom environment management and interpersonal relationship management. Some researchers point out that the arrangement

and layout of the classroom is very important. For instance, to arrange the tables and chairs in a circle or U shape could help students concentrate and get involved in class activities [2]. However, this is difficult to realize in a large class.

We have also noticed that the concept of classroom management is now more student-oriented. Ren suggested that teachers have a full understanding of their students before designing all the classroom activities [4]. Moreover, teachers should provide individualized tutoring and training. Similarly, some researchers think that we should tailor our teaching plan according to students' learning ability and level. Teaching at different levels should be implemented in schools [5]. Also, students should be encouraged to have more autonomy in classroom management and more chances to express themselves [6].

We found that most of the research focuses on the classroom management in colleges and universities. Research on high school classroom management is comparatively less. However, it is well-known that classroom management is of vital importance for high school teaching, where many problems wait to be solved. Through observing high school English class, the author saw many problems. Quite a few students sleep, talk, and write homework of other subjects in English class. Also, most of the time high school English class is very inactive. Only several students respond to the teacher actively while most of the students keep silent. Therefore, we believe that it is very important and necessary to conduct research on high school English classroom management.

This paper conducted a qualitative study by interviewing an excellent and experienced high school English teacher. It tries to discover some valuable strategies that could enhance the efficiency of high school English classroom management and thus provides insights for other high school English teachers.

2 Research Method

The major research method of this paper is carrying out an in-depth interview with a high school English teacher. A regular high school class contains 50 to 60 students in China, so it is vital to keep the class well-organized; otherwise it is very difficult to guarantee teaching quality. The interviewee is a very experienced teacher who has been teaching English for 29 years. She has a reputation of keeping her class in order and her students focused. By observing her class, the author discovered that most students are very concentrated and are actively taking notes and responding to her questions. Most of her students obtain brilliant test scores and the average scores of her class often exceed other classes.

This study uses semi-structured interview which mainly focuses on classroom discipline management, classroom interaction management and classroom environment management. The questions are designed based on the hypotheses of factors that might influence a teacher's classroom management such as personality, passion, training, and teaching experience. Some representative questions are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview questions

index	question
1	How did you maintain your passion for teaching through all these years?
2	Have you ever attended any relevant classroom management trainings?
3	Why did you choose the teaching style of being serious in class and friendly after class?
4	How do you establish prestige among your students?
5	What is the most important aspect in classroom management?
6	If students do things unrelated to your class, what would you do?
7	If students disturb classroom order on purpose, what would you do?
8	How do you manage English-themed activities such as roleplay and English singing contest?
9	The concept of classroom management is now more student-oriented. What is your opinion?
10	What improvements would you make in the future in classroom management area?

The whole interview was recorded with the interviewee's permission and the recording was later transcribed for data analysis.

3 Findings and Discussions

After the interview, the author studies the transcript carefully and thoroughly and classifies the strategies into four main categories.

3.1 Maintaining Classroom Discipline

Classroom discipline could be considered as one important part in the classroom management. Through the interview, the author discovered some important methods for disciplining students.

Establishing Prestige

Teachers need to establish prestige among their students. It is necessary to keep distance between teachers and students. The distance creates a sense of awe towards their teachers, which is beneficial for managing classroom discipline.

Prestige could be established through internal and external methods. On the one hand, being fair to each student is the internal method of establishing prestige. High school students are relatively sensitive. They will feel left out easily and assume the teachers being nicer to their favorite students. However, if students find out their teacher provides everyone with the same opportunities and treats everyone in the same way, it is likely that they are more willing to trust and communicate with the teacher. In this way, teachers could win their students' respect by impressing them with their virtue. On

the other hand, external ways require teachers to sound and act seriously and formally in class. In this way, students are informed by teachers' speaking and body language that the classroom is a serious place for study. This is helpful for regulating students' behavior.

It is important for a teacher to know that the establishment of prestige takes time and effort. One must be patient and confident.

Setting up Classroom Rules

Presenting classroom rules to students on the first period of English class is a valid way of managing classroom discipline. Chinese high school students are divided into different classes at the beginning of a semester. Each class has its own teachers assigned for different subjects. These teachers will accompany their students until graduation. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to make their classroom requirements clear at the beginning of a semester. In this way, students are aware of these rules and are likely to pay more attention in class. However, one should not expect students to remember and obey his or her rules immediately. For example, despite understanding the teachers' requirements, there are still students who write other subject's homework, fall asleep, and wander off in class. Under these circumstances, teachers should constantly remind their students of the rules they should obey in class. It takes a while to cultivate them to form good learning habits.

Handling Misbehaviors Wisely

Thirdly, it is crucial to handle unexpected events that occur in class wisely. Some students are extremely naughty or rebellious. Sometimes they disturb classroom order on purpose, which irritates their teachers. At this moment, a teacher should not lose temper in class. In high school, a period lasts for forty minutes which is very precious. When a teacher is dealing with a specific misbehaving student in class, not only will it waste his or her own time, but also it will take up the whole class students' time. Therefore, a teacher should immediately take control of the situation and directly tell the student to discuss the matter after class. Communicating with these students takes time and patience. My interviewee indicates that she won't give up on any student in her class. It is her determination and efforts that make many rebellious students in her class more cooperative.

3.2 Discussion of Classroom Management Model

The contemporary study shows that a student-centered model is advocated in classroom management. The scholars think it is important to inspire students' potential and creativity by giving them more freedom and chances in class. Some even recommend student-dominant classes which means putting the students in charge of giving lessons while the teachers provide assistances. My interviewee states that this model is not very suitable for high school English classes. For English, students need a large amount of input which is mostly provided by textbooks and teachers in class. In general, teachers have broader ranges of knowledge and better teaching abilities compared to students. Thus, they can provide students with input and education of higher quality. Therefore, students are likely to benefit more from professional teachers' lectures. However, under circumstances such as holding English-themed activities, students are the main decision

makers and the performers. As such, not only can students learn and have fun at the same time, but also their awareness of teamwork and participating in a group could be enhanced. Also, a teacher's duty in activities is to introduce basic rules and maintain classroom order. If competitions are involved, a teacher must be a fair judge.

In a word, for high school English class, teachers still need to take dominance as giving instructions and analyzing students' problems. However, as holding some activities, students could be given more autonomy to develop their overall abilities.

3.3 Techniques in Classroom Questioning

Classroom questioning is also a subject worth studying, especially for an English class. Generally speaking, students in one class could be simply divided into three categories: the ones with satisfying test scores, the ones with room for improvement, and the ones that need more effort and help. Thus, when teachers are designing their questions in class, they need to consider students from each category. Different questions should be made according to different students' abilities. Students from the three levels are therefore more focused in class which could increase teaching efficiency and they could sense the teacher's fairness. In addition, due to the large number of students in one class, it is difficult to question everyone. That's why dividing students into study groups for discussion is necessary. Of course, teachers could randomly select one student as a representative from each group to answer their questions.

3.4 Creating a Pleasant Classroom Atmosphere

A pleasant classroom atmosphere is the foundation of a successful class. Creating a good classroom atmosphere is a trial to many teachers especially the younger ones. Our interviewee adopts the teaching style of being serious in class and friendly after class. Being serious could promote students' concentration and thus improve learning. However, this doesn't mean a teacher should be serious throughout the whole period. When a teacher is lecturing on a relatively relaxing or casual topic, it is acceptable for students to join in and start a discussion. Also, when a teacher is telling a joke, it is all right for students to laugh out loud. To sum up, a class of high quality should not be tedious or monotonous. Instead, it should consist of both serious and relaxing moments, making a class interesting.

There are other tips from my interviewee for teachers to better manage their classrooms such as reading books to gain expertise, communicating with colleagues about classroom management methods and observing the classrooms of brilliant teachers. In addition, developing a passion for teaching is also an indispensable factor of maintaining a well-organized classroom.

4 Conclusion

Based on the research, the author has come up with some advice for both teachers and schools. For teachers, it is essential to keep one's classroom in order. To this end, one must establish prestige among his or her students by winning their respect through being

fair to everyone and being strict in class. Announcing classroom rules in the first period of English class is a good start of maintaining classroom discipline. When encountering students who disturb classroom order on purpose, one should always remain calm and take control of the situation immediately. In addition, a teacher should also provide students with some freedom in class. The classroom rules should be reasonable instead of being harsh and depressing. Also, it is acceptable to let students be in charge when holding activities.

For schools, they can offer more training for teachers in classroom management. What's more, they should organize more meetings for teachers to share their thoughts and opinions on teaching techniques and classroom management methods. Schools should recommend some books or articles about classroom management for teachers to gain more expertise in this specific domain.

Above all, teachers should have responsibilities and passion for teaching and always learn from their mistakes. It takes time, patience, effort and confidence to manage one's classroom effectively.

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