TEACHER STRATEGIES TOWARDS STUDENTS' DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR IN LEARNING ENGLISH

Shanty Halim
Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to describe about the theory of teachers strategy towards students disruptive behavior. There is no a specific definition for disruptive behavior since the definition differs according to its relevance to the case of each study (Arbuckle & Little, 2004). Nevertheless, many studies identify some types such as self-reported data from schoolteachers which help identify types of the most frequent disruptive behaviors. Ranking which behavior is more frequent differs in Western and Eastern cultures. Selecting effective classroom management strategies can help teachers deal with an important issue that may hinder the learning and teaching process, which is students' disruptive behavior.

Keyword: Disruptive behavior, teachers' strategies.

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Research indicates that teachers' actions in their classrooms have twice as much impact on student achievement as assessment policies, community involvement, or staff collegiality; and a large part of teachers' actions involves the management of the classroom (Marzano, 2003; Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Classroom management is critically important in the middle grades years when students are more likely to experience declines in academic motivation and self-esteem (Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley, 1999). Research indicates that these declines can be linked to the classroom, and particularly to teacher-student relationships (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). When

surveyed about their goals, adolescents have claimed that academics and the completion of their education are important to them. However, repeated studies of sixth through ninth graders have shown interest in academics, motivation for academics, and academic achievement levels decline dramatically during early adolescence, and especially during seventh grade (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995).

Teachers in middle level schools face overwhelming demands and challenges in their classrooms. They are expected to know content and pedagogy, develop engaging lessons that meet the needs of diverse learners, and use a variety of instructional strategies that will boost student achievement while they simultaneously develop positive relationships with, on average, 125 students each day who are experiencing the personal, social, and cognitive challenges and opportunities of early adolescence (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995; Schmakel, 2008).

Teaching is complex and cannot be reduced to discrete tasks that can be mastered one at a time. Teachers must "win their students' hearts while getting inside their students' heads" (Wolk, 2003, p. 14). As Haberman (1995) suggested, this winning of the hearts occurs through very personal interactions, one student at a time. This perspective is supported by research suggesting that teachers who develop such relationships experience fewer classroom behavior problems and better academic performance (Decker, Dona, & Christenson, 2007; Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003).

Selecting effective classroom management strategies can help teachers deal with an important issue that may hinder the learning and teaching process, which is students' disruptive behavior. Many studies have investigated this topic within the school context, but rarely, if ever, within the university context. There is also a lack of research in this area in Egypt.

The idea of this small scale action research emerged from the complaints of some Egyptian university teachers' colleagues about handling disruptive behaviors in their classrooms. They sometimes wondered if they

had selected the right management strategies to control disruptive behaviors.

To deal with disruptive behaviors, some teachers use different management strategies, some of which are not effective. The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between the management strategies that some teachers choose to apply and students' disruptive behaviors. Additionally, the study investigates teachers' reactions towards the success or the failure of their methods, the most frequent types of disruptive behavior in some Egyptian university classrooms and some of the reasons that make students tend to practice such behavior.

Types of and reasons for disruptive behavior

There is not a specific definition for disruptive behavior since the definition differs according to its relevance to the case of each study (Arbuckle & Little, 2004). Nevertheless, many studies identify some types such as self-reported data from schoolteachers which help identify types of the most frequent disruptive behaviors. Ranking which behavior is more frequent differs in Western and Eastern cultures. In China, some studies report that "day dreaming (also called non-attention and off task) behavior" is the most frequent disruptive behavior in some of their schools (Ding, Li, Li, & Kulm, 2008; Shen et al., 2009). Other studies report that "talking out of turn" is the most frequent disruptive behavior in some schools in England (Arbuckle & Little, 2004) and Australia (Ross, Little, Kienhuis, 2008).

Teachers and students have different perceptions of the reasons behind disruptive behavior. Some students see that disruptive behavior is a result of bad teaching skills. Other students mention that they use this behavior to handle their problems against the whole school system; therefore, they choose to act against teachers' power in order to assert their own power

(Verkuyten 2002). On the other hand, some schoolteachers believe that some students use disruptive behavior as a way of rejecting work and drawing attention to themselves. They also think that students use such behavior to defy teachers' power (Axup & Gersch, 2008; Shumate & Wills, 2010). Further, other teachers mention that students may practice disruptive behavior to establish an identity in order to belong to a "peer group" (Axup & Gersch, 2008). Sometimes the injustice of teachers and the vulnerability of students can be the main causes of disruptive behavior (Miller, Ferguson and Byrne, 2000).

The relation between disruptive behavior and the learning and teaching process

Inappropriate behavior impacts learning and teaching. It wastes classroom time, distracts students from learning and teachers from teaching, lessens students' motivation and causes students' and teachers' stress (Charles and Senter cited in Ding et al., 2008). Many studies have investigated the stressors that lead to teachers' burnout and annoyance, which could hinder the teaching process. In a study done on 1386 secondary teachers working in Spanish schools, disruptive behavior has been found as a major source of teachers' stress and annoyance (López et al., 2008). Furthermore, students' disruptive behaviors can provoke negative feelings in teachers such as frustration and lack of confidence. As a result, teachers become too stressed to make the right decisions (Arbuckle & Little , 2004; Ross et al., 2008; Thompson & Webber, 2008). For instance, teachers sometimes give up on disruptive students, remove them from their classes and let others deal with them (Egyed and Short, 2006). What is more, some teachers, especially inexperienced ones, decide to quit teaching and change their career (Ross et al., 2008; Tsouloupas et al., 2010).

Teachers' selection of management strategies and disruptive behaviors

Some teachers do not always realize that they are repeatedly using ineffective management strategies in order to handle disruptive behaviors in their classes. Before deciding which management strategies to apply, teachers could first try to understand why students are practicing this kind of behavior (Stoughton, 2006). Recognizing how disruptive students think can help teachers decide on which management strategies to apply in order to deal with disruptive students (Ding et al., 2008). Furthermore, it is advisable for some teachers to realize that if they want to reduce disruptive behaviors, they have to abandon their authoritative identity and maintain a strong relationship with their students (Lee and Powell, 2006). Some teachers lack knowledge of the kind of management strategies that they need to select in order to handle disruptive behavior. Therefore, it is always important to provide teachers with the necessary consultation on this kind of information (Egyed & Short, 2006; Thompson & Webber, 2010). Consultation can help teachers feel more capable of and knowledgeable about handling disruptive behaviors. This may also help increase teachers' confidence and reduce their stress (Egyed & Short, 2006; Reinke, Palmer & Merrell, 2008).

Effective management strategies can help reduce disruptive behaviors and improve the learning process (Reinke et al., 2008). Some teachers believe that positive management strategies such as praise and engaging students in decision-making are the best management strategies to use in order to handle students' disruptive behaviors. Other teachers believe that negative management strategies such as punishment and reprimands are more effective than the positive. Some studies show that teachers who lack patience, confidence and the necessary consultation skills tend to use more negative management strategies to control disruptive behavior (Axup & Gersch, 2008). On the other hand, some studies show that students' disruptive behaviors decrease when teachers apply positive management strategies and avoid using the negative ones (Reinke et al., 2008). Applying positive management strategies to classrooms is also found beneficial as it

increases on-task behavior and enhances students' learning identity (Arbuckle & Little, 2004; Lee & Powell, 2005; Ross et al, 2008).

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