

Classroom Management Guidelines for EFL Teachers in the ASEAN Community

Paul Adams

Language Institute, Bangkok University

Abstract

This overview looks at solutions to classroom management problems and issues that arise, and how these tie in with classroom management theories and methods. This is really a guide for new foreign teachers, who are looking to teach in the ASEAN community. The review presented here attempts to identify some of the theoretical models relating to classroom management. The researcher presents and identifies the relevant theories and issues, and show how they relate to the application of certain theories. This paper puts forward different strategies that fall within five aspects of classroom management (classroom environment, lesson design, teaching style, teacher-student interaction, rules and consequences). Thus, there are effective specific techniques from three models Relationship-Listening Theory, Confronting-Contracting Theory, and Rules and Consequences Theory that can be used by EFL teachers in the implementation and execution of classroom management in the ASEAN community.

Keywords: Classroom Management, EFL Teacher, ASEAN Community

1. Introduction

This overview looks at the possible sources of data from classroom management models a western EFL English language teacher can use in order to help deal with classroom management issues for teaching in the ASEAN community. Previous analysis into classroom management has mostly taken place in schools and universities in various western countries rather than in ASEAN. There are many classroom management styles to consider, and these will be discussed throughout this paper. It is unclear which of these styles suite ASEAN students. This overview should go some way to answering that question.

Classroom management is a topic of concern for not only teachers, but also administrators and the public. Some teachers see it as a pressing concern especially during their first few years of teaching. A definition of classroom management is stated as the provisions and procedures necessary to establish and maintain an environment in which instruction and learning can occur (Duke, 1979).

EFL courses are compulsory for most students at schools and universities in the ASEAN community. Consequently, there is a large variation in the level of English of the students. Some students have a great interest in learning English and others do not. Classes in the ASEAN community's universities and schools are also quite large with 30 to 50 students in each class. The students also vary widely in their English ability from completely beginner to intermediate,

which only increases the issues affecting classroom management. Students expect to just sit and listen to the teacher, and not participate too much. Many students see English as an important part of their development for their future careers. Other students have very little interest in learning English. The researcher sees these problems often from his own experience, as he has been teaching in Bangkok universities for over ten years. They are common problems and topics of conversation for teachers where he works and probably throughout Thailand. The need for classroom management is essential in order to be an effective EFL teacher to a wide variety of students.

There are various approaches to classroom management. Therefore, there is a need by EFL teachers working in ASEAN to know what kind of classroom management styles suite ASEAN students. The important point is the overview is defining classroom management theories and models and trying to isolate what would be suitable for ASEAN students. It is hoped that the findings of this overview may help teachers in ASEAN, because it should help teachers understand the best courses of action to take when classroom management problems and issues arise. It could also lead to changes in the syllabus, hiring of trained teachers or other variables. It will hopefully help students and improve their test scores, which is good for the universities and the students. In addition, the researcher hopes that this overview could give teachers some concrete guidelines for classroom management of ASEAN students.

Problems that arise are obvious differences in culture like getting students to express their feelings, protect their rights and fight for social equity, while ASEAN families traditionally emphasize seniority, such as being polite to, and deferring to, people who are senior. Students who are used to the traditional emphasis on memorizing texts may all of a sudden face the huge responsibility of having to actively participate in class activities when in the English classroom. This can be a culture shock for some students (Feig, 1989). Teachers must exercise due caution, to avoid causing students to lose face, and they must be aware of the values that honor and revere all those who are teachers. If foreign teachers are new to the profession, they may be insensitive to the culture due to a lack of training or experience. Foreign teachers need to be sensitive to ASEAN culture and to be aware of respectful gestures and manners (Feig, 1989).

There is a need to look at Thai culture to fully understand classroom management issues in ASEAN education. Characteristics of the Thai culture include: respect for age, seniority and hierarchy, face, deference, dignity, honor, true friendship, dislike of pomposity and arrogance, interest in learning, and belief in moderation. Family ties play an important role in Thai society. Several generations may live in the same household and take good care of one another. Thais have a very high respect for parents and the elderly. Children are taught from childhood to follow the advice of their elders. Children do not talk back or voice contrasting views. Familial respect and respectability is extended to respect for authority and status in Thai hierarchical society. These respectful attitudes are evident in linguistic behavior. Thai abounds in kinship terms that can show the right degree of respect, deference and intimacy (Dresser, 1996). To perpetuate friendship, Thais use kinship terms (e.g., older brother, younger sister depending

on age) to address each other, as if they were blood siblings. “Pi” is used for someone who is older and “nong” is used for someone who is younger (Axtell, 1991).

Since education is free in state schools and compulsory for all children between the ages of 7 and 15, Thailand has a high literacy rate of 94 percent. Children go to either public primary schools, private schools or those operated by Buddhist monasteries. As in most other Asian countries, traditional Thai culture places a very high value on learning. Because of this, teachers are highly respected and are typically considered as being knowledgeable and authoritative (Axtell, 1991). Out of respect, Thai students may not feel as comfortable asking questions and voicing their opinions as Western students. Eliciting a response can be difficult sometimes, but this should not be taken as non-cooperative on the part of the students. A salient feature of Thai learning style is rote memorization. Students tend to spend considerable time memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary at the expense of oral practice. As a result, most Thai learners of English have better reading and writing skills than listening and speaking abilities. Because having fun is an important part in Thai lifestyle, a ‘learning while having fun’ approach can be very effective to most Thai students. Because teachers are revered Thailand, Thais do not understand why students can be disrespectful to teachers (Dresser, 1996).

In ASEAN education, many ASEAN teachers still seem to follow the traditional teaching style, which is the teacher-centered. Teachers are the controllers of the classroom. Theories of the student-centered approach seem to be completely neglected. As a result, Chaiphan (1999) stated that most students who finish compulsory education are still illiterate, lack creative thinking, and lack of problem solving ability. Teachers seem to ignore those theories they have studied. They may see other teachers still doing the same old thing as well. Therefore, why should they change? In fact, they should reconsider and apply the theories that are suitable for ASEAN education. Teachers will find new ways of teaching to apply with their teaching style in order to promote a new academic atmosphere, where both teachers and students will gain.

2. Guidelines for EFL Teachers in ASEAN

The classroom management techniques, which western EFL teachers in ASEAN can use for their students are derived from different theories of classroom management. One approach cannot fit every class, every teacher, and every situation. This paper puts forward some useful strategies that fall within five aspects of classroom management (classroom environment, lesson design, teaching style, teacher-student interaction, rules and consequences). Thus, there are effective specific techniques from three models that can be used by EFL teachers in the implementation and execution of classroom management in the ASEAN classroom. These models are Relationship-Listening Theory, Confronting-Contracting Theory, and Rules and Consequences Theory.

The Relationship-Listening approaches are very optimistic in their methodologies. Each model stresses the point that students only need to be shown the way through their own development to realize self-controlling behavior. "You acquire more influence with young people

when you give up using your power to control them ... and the more you use your power to try to control people the less influence you'll have on their lives." (Tauber, 1995, p. 165) Thus, communication is the key element as the teacher takes on the role of making sure the student reaches self-rationalization. Indeed, these models are an ideal way to achieve discipline, and in turn, maximum learning. "It is difficult to take issue with an emphasis on a warm, accepting relationship between a teacher and a student and the subsequent need to help students acquire healthy, positive self concepts" (Wolfgang, 1995, p. 316). By teaching students to be self-supportive and to teach students why they should behave in such a manner instead of ordering or punishing them into submission is a more desirable option.

However, there are weaknesses associated with this type of approach. The biggest limitation is the lack of response for students who are unable or unwilling to reach a competent level of self-rationalization. "We cannot expect all ages of students to possess cognitive structures to make rational and positive decisions" (Tauber, 1995, p. 164).

In the ASEAN community, peer learning and peer supervision would seem to make sense as a classroom management system. The Confronting-Contracting advocates believe that students learn correct behavior by working with their peers to establish working social guidelines. Thus, students did not act in their own self-interest but with their group's interest in mind. The teacher sets the boundaries and gives choices to the students to act upon based on group needs. Confronting-Contracting models have strengths in the way that they are so clearly outlined in identifying student goals and meeting such goals. Additionally, these models also teach the teacher not to 'give up' on students. "The teacher becomes sensitive and appreciative of a student's attempts to improve rather than the improvement itself." (Wolfgang, 1995, p. 321) There are weaknesses with this type of approach. The main problem associated with such models is the ability to uncover student goals.

In ASEAN schools and universities, most teachers have a system of rules. Rules and Consequences Approaches, such as Lee Canter's Assertive Discipline believe that pupils' behavior is molded by external stimuli. Thus, EFL teachers must change the environment surrounding the student to eliminate negative stimuli. In addition, the EFL teacher should ensure that appropriate behavior is more rewarding than inappropriate behavior and give rewards or consequences to shape such behavior.

There are many benefits to this approach. First of all, the approach is consistent, uniform, fair, and clear to each and every student. Secondly, EFL teachers do not have to spend a lot of time on communication and psychology and can spend more time on teaching English. Thirdly, there are measures to deal with violent acts. "Teachers have been unable to find these effective control skills for their classrooms in other models" (Charles, 1992, p. 89).

There are many critics of Rules and Consequences types of models. Most critics pointed out that these models did not teach students why behavior is bad, and so, once out of the classroom, they might be bound to repeat the offense when there were no consequences to deter them.

"A reinforcement program may be beneficial to the teacher but it does not help the student or parents resolve the underlying problem." (Wolfgang, 1995, p. 330) A similar criticism is that it is unfair to impose certain conditions on students. This type of behavior shaping is too authoritarian in nature and does not take in the needs of the students to learn self-rationalization. "If a student is not allowed to bring his or her mental operations into use ...then a major area of intellectual or rational development would be neglected" (Wolfgang, 1995, p. 5).

EFL teachers should practice using good classroom management by focusing on teacher-student interaction, lesson dynamics, and the classroom environment. However, there are other factors to consider. An EFL teacher really must consider his school or university's policy, the strengths and weaknesses of his class, and his or her own teaching style. Teachers can not practice punitive discipline if their university forbids it. Teachers must be on their guard when using an open classroom when faced with violent students.

Teachers can also look at the differences between the theories and look into the research that accompanies such approaches to find possible solutions for their classroom or specific classroom behavior. This is one way for teachers to find ways of dealing with discipline issues. Punishment, praise, psychology, and rewards are examples of issues where the teacher must have a strong opinion on the merits of each. Still, there is a middle ground where the teacher can isolate and utilize specific practices. Therefore, from the research available, an EFL teacher may become more educated in helping him or herself to choose a more logical approach to discipline.

Research into over fifty studies on classroom management by Grant Miller and Tracey Hall (Classroom Management by Grant Miller http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac_classroom.html) revealed that there are constant key strategies used for successfully implementing classroom management for effective learning. Elements of these strategies are discussed below. They all fall within the categories listed by Borich (1996), Levin and Nolan (1991), Nakamura (2000), Charles (1992) and others: classroom environment, lesson design, teaching style, teacher-student interaction, and rules and consequences. If teachers follow the strategies below and recognize that classroom management consists of at least five distinct categories, then EFL teachers should have a greater chance of minimizing disruptions and maximizing effective learning.

In their review of all of these studies, Grant Miller and Tracey Hall found that there is no empirical evidence to support any teaching strategy over another. However, many of these studies have revealed that there are certain truisms that exist in most of the available research. "Studies reveal that multiple and effective teaching strategies promote student engagement (Stright et al, 2002), take full advantage of class time (Goolsby, 1996), and establish clear expectations for students (Sharpe, Crider, Vyhlidal and Brown 1996). They also reveal that cooperative learning is a learned skill (McManus et al, 1996); teachers should be consistent (Webb, 1991) and promote a positive learning environment (Christenson et al, 1997). These are all skills that a teacher can provide in his or her classroom management plan to promote

effective learning." (Classroom Management by Grant Miller http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac_classroom.html)

There is no one program with a monopoly on curing all classroom woes. Indeed, it has been observed that a lot of the research is mixed, unsubstantiated, or inconclusive. However, from each theory certain specific techniques can be used effectively in Thai and ASEAN classrooms. Certainly, teachers must tailor a discipline program according to their own needs or requirements. However, they can certainly incorporate the strategies found in this overview to help deal with misbehavior. These suggested techniques are listed below under the headings of Relationship-Listening Theory, Confronting-Contracting Theory, and Rules and Consequences Theory.

3. Guidelines for Relationship Listening Theory

Relationship-listening theories that follow the idea that the student can be taught self-rationalization, this will lead to the students controlling their own behavior.

Monitoring

There are other actions that an EFL teacher can take to help ensure on-task behavior coincides with a good lesson design. These actions are taken from the Relationship-Listening Approach, which states that teachers should monitor their class at regular intervals. EFL teachers should talk to the entire class and let their eyes roam over the entire class. They should not talk with their back to the chalk or whiteboards. Thus, besides being prepared, an EFL teacher should be able to check on every student quickly. This guideline will help EFL teachers in ASEAN's schools and universities due to their large class sizes. The EFL teacher is responsible for the learning of all students and not just the learning of a few or the misbehavior of one. "Once other students realize you are preoccupied with one of their peers, problems with other students in other parts of the classroom may be inevitable (Borich, 1996, p. 484).

Use Signals, Body Language, and Movement

The Relationship-Listening Approach, specifically Kounin, presents the ideas of using body language, eye contact, signals, and maintaining close proximity to the students are key tools to deter misbehavior before it happens. Furthermore, Jones's and Kounin's suggestions to re-organize classroom seating to allow for easier movement from student-to-student or group-to-group has significant merit in preventing time wasting.

Communicate

EFL teachers should be close to their students but not too close. EFL teachers should also get to know their students because it would be easier to analyze their behavior and communicate with each student. Communication is an important tool in preventing behavioral problems as the teacher can talk with students about particular problems. "A drawback to punishment is that, by itself, it doesn't teach students the behaviors that should be practiced. Consequently, it is important to communicate clearly what behaviors are desired" (Emmer, 1997, p. 169).

4. Suggestions for Confronting-Contracting Theory

Confronting-contracting theories that follow the idea that when students are taught to act as a group, they will behave to satisfy their peers

Peer-Tutoring

EFL teachers may also divide the class into groups of two for peer tutoring, or larger groups to help students develop their self-awareness and sense of responsibility from working in a team. "The student does not propose answers that are wholly in his or her own self-interest, but rather finds solutions that are acceptable to the teacher and the classmates" (Wolfgang, 1995). In those cases, both positive and negative reinforcers could be handed out to groups based on the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals within the groups as supported by Confronting-Contracting theories. Thai students would be well suited to peer-tutoring as they like to collectively work in pairs and groups rather than individually.

Giving Positive Reinforcement, Motivating Students

BF Skinner is not alone in considering reinforcement as a strong option when dealing with troublesome behavior. Many researchers: Brophy 1983, 1986; Cobb and Richards 1983; Cotton 1988; Crouch, Gresham, and Wright 1985; Docking 1982; McNamara, Harrop, and Owen 1987; and Moskowitz and Hayman 1976 have identified reinforcement (verbal, symbolic, or tangible) as effective in improving the classroom conduct of misbehaving students. Reinforcement does not have the negative implications that are connected with using punishment (http://www.real-life.co.uk/simpleminds/neo_skinnerian_model.html).

5. Guidelines for Rules and Consequences Theory

The rules and consequences theories follow the idea that the teacher is in charge and the students need to be told how to behave.

Follow Through with Consequences: Immediately, Logically, and with Fairness

EFL teachers should establish clear rules with students from the first day and follow through with these rules. If a teacher does not follow through with consequences, the students will not respect the rules. Posting the rules is an effective reminder to the students as the rules and consequences remain visible year round. Consequences should match the students' misbehavior with a penalty when possible. Logical consequences (of discipline), in contrast, require the students to take action and make amends or give back to those whose lives may have been affected by the misdeed (Wolfgang and Lynn, 1995, p. 178). These logical consequences teach ASEAN students about the repercussions of their behavior. Consequences should be enforced consistently, immediately, and fairly. The EFL teacher must show consistency in dealing with misbehavior. If the teacher shows favoritism toward one student over another, then classroom behavior is likely to get worse.

Don't Punish the Group for the Actions of One

Most of the theorists reviewed were against punishment in general and therefore, against punishing the group for the action of one individual. This type of punishment can turn the entire

class against the teacher. "Whole class punishment is ineffective. This practice frustrates good students and increases misbehaviour"(Wascisko, 1994, p. 249).

Explain the reasons for consequences

EFL teachers should also be direct and not be vague in telling the ASEAN students the rules that have been broken. Consequences should be geared toward positive outcomes or the denial of those outcomes and not just negative conditions. "A classroom in which the main consequences are negative does not have a very good climate" (Emmer, 1997, p. 169). EFL teachers should never ignore misbehavior as this can only lead to more misbehavior. "Both student behavior and attitudes are adversely affected when teachers ignore violations of school or classroom rules" (Emmer, 1982).

Control Classroom Seating

EFL teachers also have the power to control where the students are situated. Teachers can use seating plans to limit problem behavior and maximize learning potential. They can seat problem students at the front of the class, or seat strong students next to weak ones. A teacher can change his or her classroom from a more formal setting to a more informal setting to encourages more interactive and cooperative student environment.

6. When trying to implement good lesson design teachers should use the following techniques:

Have Well Planned and Interesting Lessons

In general, a good place for EFL teachers to start maximizing learning and minimizing disruption is with the lesson itself. A poorly designed lesson not only encourages misbehavior, it also may not benefit the students at all. Teachers can also make lessons more exciting, interesting, well-paced, well-transitioned, and contextual for Thai students. If students pay attention to the lessons in class, they will naturally spend less time disrupting the class or doing off-task behavior. The introduction of the lesson itself is a key element in lesson design. If a teacher lets the students know what they are supposed to learn, it gives the student a sense of security and a focal point to concentrate on. In addition, a teacher should give a clear explanation of the content and check for initial student understanding. Following that, a teacher should give some guided practice and then some subsequent solitary practice intermixed with periodic reviews (Levin and Nolan, 1991, p. 96).

Appropriate Lessons

Giving students challenges that are not too easy and not too difficult to achieve can also be effective in establishing and maintaining positive, orderly classroom environments. "Engaging in misbehavior is sometimes a response to academic failure ... there have been improvements in classroom order when marginal students are provided opportunities to experience academic and social success (Cotton and Savard, 1982, p. 8).

Set Clear Rules from the First Day of Class

An EFL teacher must make the behavioral expectations explicit, and students should share some responsibility in the classroom. "Good classroom management depends more upon teachers and students working equitably together because they are confident together, than upon peremptory instruction and resigned obedience" (Smith and Laslett, 1995, p. viii). The expectations should be high and the students should have a voice in deciding the rules and consequences. "Researchers have found that student participation in developing and reviewing school discipline programs creates a sense of ownership and belonging" (Short, 1988, p. 2). Furthermore, if the rules are made clear from the outset, then this guarantees that all students understand what constitutes good behavior before the school year begins.

Consequences should Include Proper Guidance

EFL teachers should also be careful about giving consequences that are not accompanied by encouragement or guidance for the improvement of said misbehavior. By all accounts listed above and in most research, corporal punishment is widely condemned, as are any punishments that humiliate the students. Most of the literature on corporal punishment is unrelated to research on effectiveness.

The overall result of this overview was that EFL teachers can implement certain strategies to help improve classroom management problems and increase effective learning. EFL teachers can use these strategies to effectively control their classes and help maintain good classroom management.

Further studies should be done into the field of classroom management in ASEAN. There are very few studies on this topic and it is an important topic especially when considering the classroom sizes in ASEAN. Further studies should include a case study into what happens in the ASEAN classroom with regards to classroom management. Further studies should also take into account a comparison of styles such as Relationship-Listening or Rules and Consequences approaches to see which aspects of these styles work better to build a constructive classroom.

7. References

- Axtell, Roger. (1991) *Gestures: the Do's and Taboos of Body Language around the World*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Borich, G.D. (1996). *Effective Teaching Methods*. New Jersey: Merrill.
- Chaipan, Kanchana. (1998). Constructivism and Application to Teaching, *Academic Journal, Khon Khaen University*, 11(4), 112-121.
- Charles, C.M. (1992). *Building Classroom Discipline From Models to Practice*-Longmans Inc. New York.
- Cotton, K. and W.G. Savard. (1982) *Student Discipline and Motivation*. Portland, OR: Northwest Research.
- Dresser, Norine. (1996). *Multicultural Manners: New Rules of Etiquette for a Changing Society*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Duke, D.L. (1979). "School Organization, Leadership, and Student Behavior. In Strategies to Reduce Student Misbehavior." Washington, D.C: *Office of Educational Research and Improvement*, 31-62.
- Emmer, T. Edmund. (1997). *Classroom Management for Secondary Teachers*. (4th ed.). MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Fieg, John. (1989). *A Common Core: Thais and Americans*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Jones, V.F., L.S. Jones. and S. Hughes. (1996). Comprehensive classroom management (BOOK REVIEW) *Educational Horizons*, 74(2), Winter, 51-3.
- Kounin, Jacob, S. (1977). *Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms*-Krieger Pub Co.
- Levin, James, Nolan, James. (1991). *Principles of Classroom management: A Professional Decision Making Model*. Boston: Allyn.
- Nakamura, Raymond, M. (2000). *Healthy Classroom Management Strategy*. Unpublished Paper.
- Short, P.M. (1988). Effectively Disciplined Schools: Three Themes From Research. *NASSP Bulletin*. Vol.18 issue 2: 87-103
- Smith, Colin. J., Laslett, Robert. (1995). *Effective Classroom Management: A teacher's Guide*. (2nd ed.). NY: Routledge.
- Tauber, Robert, E. (1995). *Classroom Management: Theory and Practice*. (2nd ed.). FT Worth, Texas: Holt Rinehart and Winston.
- Wasicko, M. Mark and Ross, M. Steven. (1994). How to Create Discipline Problems. *Clearing House*. Vol. 67 Issue 5 May/June 248-252
- Wolfgang, Charles, H. (1995). *Solving Discipline Problems*. (3rd ed.). MA: Allyn.

World Wide Web Sources

- http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac_classroom.html last accessed date February 2011
Stright et al, 2002, Goolsby, 1996, Sharpe, Crider, Vyhldal and Brown 1996, McManus et al, 1996, Christenson et al, 1997.
- http://www.real-life.co.uk/simpleminds/neo_skinnerian_model.html last accessed date February 2011 Brophy 1983, 1986; Cobb and Richards 1983; Cotton 1988; Crouch, Gresham, and Wright 1985; Docking 1982; McNamara, Harrop, and Owen 1987; and Moskowitz and Hayman 1976.