

## Becoming a more efficient classroom manager

Paul Seligson, Richmond Publishing, IATEFL Aberdeen, April 19<sup>th</sup> 2007

Class management is about ...

Environment, grouping & seating

Starting, guiding, fixing & finishing lessons

Atmosphere & relationships

### Creating the best possible

Tools & techniques

conditions to foster

learning opportunities

Deciding roles

Balancing individual vs group needs

class time vs amount of practice for all the group

To me, efficient group management is in many ways the key teaching skill. Too many ELT techniques tend to prioritise either

- a) the individual over the group leading to an unnecessary lowering of pace & bored sts wasting time doing little or nothing whilst the T interacts with 1 st at a time, or
- b) stronger sts at the expense of the weak, leading to division, time-wasting & missed opportunity.

This plenary offers 10 key classroom management tips based on what I feel were errors in my own teaching over the years, as well as things learnt from recent observations as a trainer.

**Avoid making these 'errors' so you won't be a dinosaur like me!**

### Classroom management tips

1. Use pairwork as your basic modus operandi for doing/checking activities to maximise practice, give everybody an equal opportunity & allow you a chance both to see/hear what each individual is thinking/has understood & to decide what to do next. Monitor hard to include as many students as you can and (at least appear to) listen to / be 'discreetly available' to everybody. Take notes or intervene quietly as necessary.
2. Manage the room & the students, don't let them manage you. Move chairs & students to your advantage & mix students up regularly so all levels, weaker & stronger work together & don't fossilise into 'fixed' groups.
3. Prioritise speed over beauty at the board. Don't waste time fiddling with what is anyway only ephemeral. Divide the board into 'sections' & practise economising layout to keep the amount students have to copy to a minimum. Ensure students all copy at the same time.
4. Make sure you input language visually as much as verbally. Try to design & teach in a dedicated ELT room to facilitate sts switching into English together with phrases & interesting language on the walls. Use body language, the board, flashcards & realia to allow you to speak faster. Exemplify rather than instruct, ie give visual as well as verbal eg of what to do/say rather than rely on instructions.

*Thanks for coming. Enjoy your teaching: if you don't, who will?*

To give feedback of any kind, + or -, or for freelance training, please contact me at:

seligson04@yahoo.co.uk

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### Gesture/facially express ...

Past/present/future	Think.	Imagine.
Stand up.	Listen to me.	Listen to each other.
Repeat - altogether.	Read the instructions.	Open your books.
Come here!	I didn't hear what you said.	Nearly - but not quite.
Just one mistake.	Say it more quickly.	Can anybody help?
Work in pairs.	Stop (working in pairs)!	Pronunciation.
Make a full sentence.	That's right. Well done!	Keep the noise down.
Contraction: It is - It's	To/at/in/on	Five minutes left.
Word stress	The intonation was flat.	Please speak English!
Homework.	The person on the right of the pair is Student A.	

5. Don't always feed off the strong, eg Ask a question then say *Don't tell me, tell your partner!* to give everyone a chance to formulate an answer (or at least understand the question & think) before you take an answer.
6. Use L1 intelligently rather than prohibit it dogmatically & thus hold back weaker or shyer students. Especially be lenient about students using it when in closed pairs, eg to check what they have to do, to compare what they understood from a listening, to confirm answers, etc. But try not to allow them to get away with using L1 lazily, eg for what they can paraphrase or express in (broken) English, via mime or drawing.
7. Change (something) every (5) minutes: move/make students move their minds/focus/eyes/necks/bodies to add pace to classes. Eg in the middle of an exercise change the seating or partnership arrangements.
8. Ask yourself *Who's talking to who? & Who's really listening?/ What are the others doing?* at any stage & react accordingly. Eg, avoid echo to make students listen to each other: stand back & say *Pardon?* & encourage students to do the same so they can speak up & hear each other & break eye contact with students when they're talking to you to encourage them to turn, look at & speak to the rest of the class.
9. Don't get trapped doing things you hadn't planned or which are unsound pedagogically just because students start doing them, eg reading aloud textbook Qs, each student in turn answering every single Q right round the class, students writing Qs & As on the board, etc. Don't be a dinosaur just because you were once "dinosaur" yourself at school!
10. Involve sts in your pedagogy by letting them know your managerial intentions, & giving clear choices to respond to, eg seating arrangements, using more or less pairwork. Teach in different ways on different days & invite comments: eg, correct/give feedback/write or speak a lot one day, very little another, then ask for their opinions. If learning is your objective, what have you got to lose?

Good luck - you'll need it!

You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself. Galileo

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