SPECIFIC FACTORS AND FEATURES OF CLASSROOM INVESTIGATION

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Annotation: *This article is devoted to problems of teaching English and the importance of classroom investigation. This article mainly focuses on using effective classroom activities, materials of the lesson, the role of teachers and students in classroom investigation.*

Key words: *classroom investigation, acquisition, effectiveness, incorporation, cultural background.*

The use of the language of the learner as well as the target language, or of a common communication language other than the two, is among the problematic issues of foreign and second language studies. At the center of the discussion of the place of these languages in the teaching process is the question of how the relationship between the acquired mother tongue, the target language, and other languages known and learned outside them, is processed in the mind of the individual. Differences in the approach to the problematic of whether the individual processes the structural and semantic elements of the language separately or together are decisive in the approach to these languages. Ignoring the mother tongue of the learner completely, rejecting it, and attempting to put the languages into separate sections is doomed to fail because they are interdependent in many ways. Because the acquired learned language is not just adding rooms to your house by building on an extension at the back: it is rebuilding all the internal walls. The suggestions of mental processing limited to the target (single) language which is under the influence of children's experiences in the acquisition of the mother tongue ignore the fact that two languages (the mother tongue and the language learned) together are effective in the minds of foreign second language learners.

In the language teaching processes which are conducted so that the learners become natural and active members of the environments in which the people write and speak the target language as their mother tongue, the exposure to the target language and production in target language can be considered as one of the main success criteria. [1]

Fundamentally, classroom research involves doing research in school settings about teaching and learning. We define classroom research as a process of investigating questions about teaching and learning that is undertaken in a systematic way by teachers who want to better understand their own work.

Teaching and learning a foreign language is a social process which requires the interaction of two important parts of the process, the teacher and the students, in a social environment. As this process takes place in a social context, it is inevitable to experience some problems while teaching the students having different needs, interests and levels. These problems may be caused by the

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[1] Atkinson, D. (1987). The mother-tongue in the classroom: a neglected resource?. ELT Journal, 41(4), 241-247.

students, teachers as well as the physical environment in which teaching and learning take place. It is clear that language teaching skill is not enough to handle these problems; teachers also need classroom management skills so that they are able to manage their classrooms. It is believed that successful classroom management is highly related to effective instruction. As classroom management is a general term that is affected by many factors, the effectiveness of classroom environment depends on how teachers cope with these factors and provide their students with a positive and friendly classroom atmosphere. It is clear that a detailed analysis of the factors that affect successful classroom management and adequate teacher training on how to cope with them will make unmanageable classrooms manageable which will immediately result in effective teaching and learning process. In this article, factors that influence successful classroom management will be analyzed and possible solutions to these problems will be presented.

Classroom management has become an indispensable part of language teaching and learning process owing to the fact that it has a crucial effect on teachers, students and classroom procedures. It can be defined as a way of organizing the physical setting of the classroom, students, resources and the equipment so that effective and successful teaching and learning can take place. It is believed that successful classroom management is closely related to effective instruction. "Research findings converge on the conclusion that teachers who approach classroom management as a process of establishing and maintaining effective learning environments tend to be more successful than teachers who place more emphasis on their roles as authority figures and disciplinarians. It means that the teacher must try to enhance students learning as well as maximize appropriate students behavior. [2]

Classroom management is a broad term that is affected by many factors and it is these factors that make classrooms manageable or unmanageable. In this paper, these factors will be handled under three main categories as factors concerning students, factors concerning the school environment and factors concerning teachers. These three factors will be analyzed in details and solutions will be provided so as to deal with each situation.

As it is stated before, classroom investigation is an important figure in teaching and learning environment that is influenced by many factors. In this paper, these factors will be dealt with under three categories as factors concerning the students, factors concerning the school environment and factors concerning teachers. It is important to take students' needs and characteristics into account while designing the language programs, classroom activities and materials so that effective and successful instruction can take place. As classroom investigation is closely related to effective instruction, students' needs and characteristics are also essential in managing classrooms. Jones and Jones state that high expectations, active engagement of students, cooperative learning and the incorporation of various aspects of students' cultures are important figures in effective teaching. It is believed that incorporating one of these methods that are designed in line with students' personal, developmental and cultural needs into instruction will help teachers to reduce classroom management problems.

It is also necessary to learn child's family and cultural setting so that the teacher can pay attention to students' cultural values and family background as well as incorporate them into teaching

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[2] Butzkamm, W. (2003). We only learn language once. The role of the mother tongue in FL classrooms: death of a dogma. Language Learning Journal, 28(1), 29–39.

and learning situation. It is teacher's responsibility to design teaching and learning process according to the factors that are present in the classroom, school and community.

The summary of different learner needs and characteristics are given in the following list. Learners may have differences in their characteristics such as:

•Age
•Personality
•Attitude
•Aptitude
•Motivation
•Learning styles and strategies
•Multiple intelligences

Learners may also have differences in their needs such as:

•Personal needs
•Developmental needs
•Cultural needs

It is not possible to keep classroom management away from school variables such as school climate, structure, decision making and the type of professional support provided in the building. Classroom investigation, effective instruction and enhanced student behavior, is highly affected by these variables. It is asserted that students show more positive behaviors in schools where they feel the sense of belonging and support. Moreover, they are more successful when they are engaged in instructional activities designed in tandem with their own lives and cultures.

Some people may think that physical setting of the classroom is not very important in managing classrooms until they experience any environmental problems that change the atmosphere of the classroom and prevent them form teaching effectively. However, it is essential to recognize that the physical environment can influence the way teachers and students feel, think and behave.[3]

As a result, it is really necessary for teachers to establish a classroom environment that is nonthreatening, friendly, motivating, positive and really conducive to effective learning and enhanced student behavior. Your environment is all that surrounds you at the moment, sights: the things you see, sounds: the things you hear, smells: the things you smell, feelings: the things you feel. As a teacher, it is important to provide students with appropriate sights, sounds and

feelings in order to prevent classroom management problems and enhance desired student behavior. It is important to create a visual environment that: Is Attractive: The materials prepared should be neat, colorful and appealing to the eye of the students.

• Is Functional: It is important that the materials should teach and reinforce what is aimed to teach, and they should have a social and communicative value.

• Is Stimulating: The materials being used should provoke critical thinking and be questioning in nature.

• Is Motivational: It is essential that the materials should raise students' awareness and encourage them to learn.

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[3] Butzkamm, W. (2017). Monolingual principle. M. Byram & A. Hu (Ed.). Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning. (471-474).

• Creates pride and fosters self-esteem: The materials should help students feel self-confident and proud of them by praising their accomplishments and strengths so that students are able to persist in their studies.

It is important to create an audio environment that will enable students to feel relaxed during the classroom procedures. It is suggested that music should be employed while attendance is being taken, during an introductory activity, or during class work times so as to motivate students and set a friendly and nonthreating atmosphere. However, there may be some students, who are disturbed by the music, so it is the teacher's duty to assess the learners' characteristics and design classroom procedures accordingly. Besides creating an effective visual and audio environment, it is also important to create an environment that is contributory to concentration, study and learning. This means an effective classroom environment in which students feel relaxed, comfortable and at ease.

Seating arrangement is an important physical factor that affects teacher- student, student-teacher and student-student interaction in classroom procedures. If our aim is communication and interaction in the target language, it is important to design the seating system in such a way that students are able to communicate with each other. Semi- circles or U-shapes are really desirable as they allow students to face each other; as a result, they feel socially secure. In addition to social security, it is also important to increase psychological security of the students. It is important to arrange the classroom space so that students are free from being disturbed. Allowing students to select their own seats is another way to increase psychological security.[4]

As Brown (2001) states that "White board is one of our greatest allies." (also cited in Sarıçoban:2005). It is clear that the things you are teaching are only visible
through the use of whiteboard. It is the place where student's attention can be directed; as a result, the teacher should be careful in using the board clearly and effectively. Instructional equipment is a necessary part of teaching and learning process, but there are certain things that teachers should bear in mind while they are employing them. It is advisable to consider that:
• Students are provided with outlets in a classroom,
• The classroom is big enough for the equipment to fit comfortably,
• The visual and auditory stimuli are within easy reach of every student,
• Enough time before and after the class is allotted for the students to get and return the equipment,
• The teachers are equipped with necessary information on how to operate the machinery,
• Extras, extra light bulb or battery, are provided in case of emergency.

As well as the physical factors affecting the classroom environment, social
factors are also important in classroom management owing to fact that classroom is a community in which teachers and students interact socially. The size of the classroom- large or small, the number of students or classrooms consisting of mixed-ability students all has certain effects on structured interaction between teachers and students, effective teaching and successful management of the problems that can be experienced in any classroom. In this part, problems in overcrowded and mixed-ability classes will be presented.

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[4] Brophy, J. & McCaslin, M. (1992). Teachers reports of how they perceive and cope with problem students. The

Elementary School Journal, 93, 3-68.

In order for foreign language teaching to be successful, it is important to limit the number of students to at least 15 or 16. However, it is not possible to have classrooms that have this ideal number in Turkey because of the fact that there are too many students and the physical conditions most of the schools have are not appropriate enough to manage these students. As a result, most of the students have to be taught in overcrowded classrooms which pose a great difficulty for the teacher in terms of teaching as well as managing classroom procedures. Some of the most common problems of overcrowded classrooms and possible solutions are summarized as the following:

a. Discomfort:

This may pose the following problems:

● it may not be possible for some students to move easily and join in some of the activities,
● the voice of the teacher must be loud and attractive enough so that even the students sitting at the back can hear him/her,
● some of the activities cannot be conducted owing to the lack of room,
● the teachers who have to teach large classes may feel frustrated and tired,
● the students have the tendency not to attend the classes.

Possible solutions:

● It is important for the teachers to choose the seating arrangement that will enable students to see the board clearly, interact with each other effectively and move around the classroom easily.
● Pair or group work activities are essential to make the most of class time.
● It is advisable to have semi-circle sitting arrangements in small classes so that the teacher can have the control of the students.

b. Control:

It is difficult to control classes:

● when there are too many students,
● when students make noise while they are doing the activities,
● when uninterested students try to disturb the other students,
● when teachers fall short behind the curriculum.

Possible Solutions:

● Conducting pair or group work activities as well as assigning roles to the students are vital in controlling the large classes.
● Never act like a king.

c. Individual Attention:

It is not possible for the teachers to give individual attention to the students because:

● they don't have enough time to deal with each student,
● students having some psychological barriers such as being shy or introvert may not be given the necessary help.

Possible Solutions:

● the teacher should call students by their names so that they can show that they consider them individuals.
● They should try to reduce the anxiety of the students.
● They should ask students' opinions.

d. Evaluation:

Evaluation may be ineffective:

● time and opportunities for teachers to listen to their students are very limited,

● it takes a long time to check student- generated work,

● it may not be possible to complete the syllabus,

● right evaluation in grading may not be made,

● it may not be possible to have objective quizzes or exams as students may have

the tendency to cheat.

Possible Solutions:

● It is important for the teachers to encourage their students so that they can share the responsibility of teaching and learning process. Some techniques such as peer check and teacher's reflection as well as self-reflection of students on their progress may also help teachers to cope with problems posed by evaluation. Learning Effectiveness: effective learning may be a problem in large classes because:

● the teachers cannot be sure that their students get everything they teach,

● they cannot learn about the weaknesses and strengths of their students easily

through quizzes or other measurements.

Possible Solutions:

● It is important for teachers to work collaboratively with the school organization
and design goals that are attainable by the students at the end of the term. They
should design their activities in such a way that students can get the most of
them.

In conclusion, as teaching and learning is a social process that takes place in a social environment, it is quite normal to experience problems while teaching students. Owing to this fact, classroom management which means the prevention of disruptive behaviors form occurring and maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere has become an important part of teaching and learning process. It is also important that effective teaching is highly related to successful classroom management skills.

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1. Atkinson, D. (1987). The mother-tongue in the classroom: a neglected resource?. ELT Journal, 41(4), 241-247.
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