

Effective ways of dealing with discipline problems when teaching adolescent learners

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ABSTRACT

“As in other social settings, every classroom will have a few students who will choose not to involve themselves in classroom activities and, instead, be disruptive forces”. Managing disruptive behavior calls for a special set of techniques and ways to change it, at least during the time that the student is in school (Arends1991:170-172). The aim of this paper is to discover whether teachers employ multifarious techniques and strategies while dealing with discipline problems and how these techniques work in the classroom context.

Keywords: education, classroom management, teaching ideas, discipline

1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter one deals with misbehavior in the classroom in general. Firstly, definitions of discipline and examples of disruptive behaviors are given. Secondly, the characteristic of certain age groups is given as the knowledge of student’s development stage help the teacher to distinguish between misbehavior and behavior typical for a particular age. Once the teacher is aware of the discrepancy between these two he can now decide which behavior must be withdrawn. Finally, the author goes on to define certain motives and strategies of students behavior that need to be taken into account in order to understand students’ inappropriate behavior.

Chapter two concentrates on enumerating the causes that lead to misbehavior in the classroom and difficulties in maintaining discipline. In order to handle successfully with disruptive behavior one should be aware of the source of student’s maladjustment. Any misbehavior needs to be analyzed in search of its roots, as only when the teacher knows the root of the problem, will he be able to withdraw it.

Chapter three is devoted to describing certain methods employed by teachers while dealing with problematic behavior. The ability to manage a group of students and to resolve

discipline problems when they occur is on the paramount importance. This chapter includes useful guidelines and recommendations for teachers that can be helpful in dealing with any kind of classroom misbehavior.

Chapter four presents the action research that was conducted. It verifies the theoretical claims presented in the first three chapters and investigates the effectiveness of certain methods and strategies applied by teachers while resolving discipline problems. It includes the description of participants, design of the study, procedures and research findings.

1. 1. What is discipline?

Discipline is a pattern of behavior which is consistent to the rules set by a superior person or institution. In the educational context ‘discipline is the result of carefully designed treatment of classroom disruptions’ (Mattheoudaki, 2001:45). Emmer states that discipline means a degree to which students behave properly, are engaged in tasks and do not disturb the teacher (Emmer 1987, in Mieszalski 1997:86). Discipline means not only punishing students for inappropriate behavior but involves providing an atmosphere that prevent problems from arising (Kaplan 1990: 330-31). It “includes creating and keeping rules based on reciprocal understanding and tolerance and requires establishing limits that must not be transgressed” (Sulich 2004:33).

The teacher is responsible for what is happening in the classroom, including not only the learning process taking place but also behavior. The teacher should control the students and the activities that are supposed to lead to the realization of the learning goals (Gearheart, Wieshahn and Gearheart 1988:55). Completely undisciplined and disrupted lesson is a waste of time. In a disciplined lesson learners stand a good chance of learning and enjoying the process while in an undisciplined one they do not. That is why the smooth and disciplined process in the classroom is such a crucial issue (Ur, 1999:10).

1. 2. What is disruptive behavior?

At some stage of their lives teachers encounter disruptive behavior – as student or a group of students whose inappropriate behavior gets in the way of the class. Such misbehaviors are frequently hostile to the teacher or the other students and impede the learning process.(Harmer 1991:249). Disruptive behavior of one student or a small group of students usually impedes the progress of other pupils and create difficulties in learning for those children and for the teacher (McManus 1995:5).

Wittrock (Wittrock 1986, in McManus 1995:3) defines misbehaviors “any behavior by one or more students that is perceived by the teacher to initiate a vector of action that competes with or threatens the primary vector of action at a particular moment in a classroom activity”. Disruptive behavior can be also defined as “behavior which seriously interferes with the teaching process and/or seriously upsets the normal running of the school” (Lawrence 1984, in McManus 1995:3). Disruptive behavior can take many forms: disruptive talking, inaudible responses, sleeping in class, eating and drinking during the lesson, failure to do homework and cheating in tests (Harmer 2001:126). One can go on to list such misbehaviors as: coming in class noisily at start of the lesson, not getting out books when the class is told to do so, yawning loudly and showing general boredom or calling out silly answers (Fontana 1988:320). There can be added to this list some more serious misbehaviors such as: insolence to the teacher, yelling at the teacher, stumping out of the room, insulting or bullying other students, damaging school property or refusing to accept punishment (Arends 1991, Harmer 2001). There may be also some students who do not want to work with certain students or

who are disruptive when paired up with particular colleagues (Gower, Philips and Walters 1995:61). Such misbehaviors are not universal, they reflect the educational culture where they are taking place. Serious troubles are rare in schools and less serious misbehaviors are more frequent. The most common types of inappropriate behaviors that teacher have to deal with are talking out of turn, distracting others, idleness and general unruliness (McManus 1995:7).

1. 3. Different attitudes towards discipline

The degree of classroom control desired by teacher differs from teacher to teacher (Kaplan 1990: 332). Some teachers consider discipline as the main goal of their lessons. They see their role in the classroom primary for controlling and maintaining discipline and secondary for teaching itself. These teachers take more actions in order to prevent disruptive behavior to arise in the classroom than to achieve certain educational objectives. But disciplined students sitting silently in the classroom do not necessarily mean that they are learning. They may be afraid of the teacher. The fact that some teachers do not have to cope with discipline problems during lessons does not mean that they are effective teachers. It happens because students are afraid to learn, it is better in their opinion to sit silently and do nothing in order not to make the teacher angry (Mieszalski 1997:86). Students may not dare to misbehave in the class from fear of ridicule or punishment, but this unquestioned compliance may not teach students self – control and may inhibit active participation in the learning process (Kaplan 1990: 331). Discipline is not synonymous with absolute quiet and although quiet pupils may not be interfering with learning process they may not be learning anything (Kenneth 1988:157-58).

Another attitude towards discipline is to treat discipline as a good condition for acquisition to take place in the classroom. In this case discipline “is a means to an end not an end in itself”(Kaplan 1990:332). If students are obliged to be disciplined the teacher also has an obligation to be disciplined. This situation has positive effect on the atmosphere in the classroom and improve conditions for learners to be filled with the teacher’s knowledge. The main goal of the teacher who represent this kind of attitude is to conduct the lesson and to achieve educational objectives not to terrorize his or her learners (Mieszalski 1997: 86). In such kind of classes a lighter type of discipline exists, discipline which is less punitive (Kaplan 1990:332).

1. 4. Different age groups and different problems

“Disruptive behavior is not confined to one age group”. Children can be unruly and noisy, adolescents may refuse to cooperate and adult students can be disruptive by challenging the teacher or trying to disagree with him or her (Harmer 1991:249).

While teaching children the teacher has to always take into account the fact that it is impossible for young learners to behave silently during the lesson time. The teacher can not always treat talking to friends or a desire to play as a sign of misbehavior. At this level good teacher need to plan a range of activities for a given period of time, activities which make the young children involved and enthusiastic of the learning process (Komorowska 2003: 99).

Teachers of young learners must bear in mind that that they are responsible not only for teaching English, but also for teaching children how to behave appropriately in the classroom. Young learners have extremely short attention span and they easily forget to use English so teachers have also troubles helping them to remember to use English (Linsle 2004:23).

Adolescents learn differently from young children. Some teachers expect from these learners to behave like children while others want them to behave like adults. These first

expect from their learners willingness to draw or sing while these second expect awareness of the fact that learning English is an important tool in their future (Komorowska 2003:100). Teachers have to remember that the key issue in adolescence is the search for individual identity. Friends' approval is more important for the student than the teacher's attention. Apart from the need for the peers' approval there is a number of reasons why adolescent learners may be disruptive in the classroom. The reasons may be such factors as the boredom, problems they bring into class from outside school, previous learning experiences or attitudes to English and to learning in general. The teacher's job while teaching adolescents is provoke students' engagement with material which is relevant and involving but at the same time he or she must be always conscious of the student' need for identity (Harmer 2001:39). There is no student more creative and responsive than adolescent learner, but when the things in the classroom are not going well there is no learner more disruptive and damaging to teacher's self-esteem than such kind of student (Rudiger-Harper 1998:55).

Adults are also never entirely problem-free learners, and have number of characteristics which can make teaching problematic. They can be critical of certain teaching methods and hostile to certain activities, because they have some previous learning experiences which may have predisposed them to one particular learning and teaching style. They may worry that they are too old to learn and that their intellectual power may be diminishing. That is why the teacher of adults should involve his or her learner in more indirect learning as well as encourage adult students to use their previous experience in the learning process (Harmer 2001:40).

1. 5. Strategies and motives of students behavior during the lesson

Every behavior is motivated by the desire to achieve some goals and students have a national basis for their behavior. McManus (McManus 1995:11) states that pupils' classroom behavior can be taken under two major headings: testing teachers and displaying, developing and defending personal identity. How students perform under each of these headings will depend upon their beliefs, expectations and attitudes. Testing teachers involves testing their rules, resolution and ability to maintain order. For some pupils, misbehavior is no more than a temporary strategy adopted to break the tedium of boring lesson or to punish or humiliate the incompetent teacher. They want to know what rules have to be obeyed in any given situation. They also form expectations of teachers, and they may be pleased when they discover that they were correct in their prediction but they may be troublesome as well if the teacher turns out to be too permissive or unaccountably strict. McManus states that there are two kind of testing teachers: verbal and non-verbal. Verbal testing includes requests for readily available information, absurd answers or over-literal oral response to instruction. Non-verbal testing often takes the form of walking in the classroom that is too fast or too slow, an inappropriately relaxed posture, extravagant yawns and displays of tiredness. Such testing cannot be ignored by the teacher who has to remember that students 'expect teachers to be worthy of their attention and respect and to be able to withstand their probing and provocation' (McManus 1995:114-117). In addition to testing the teacher there may be threats to the teacher's self-esteem. These can take many forms: positive comments about other teachers, direct negative comments about the class and the teacher or nickname with the aim to embarrass the teacher (Kenneth 1988:159).

Adolescent learners perceive the classroom as an extension of a world of stress, poverty and cruelty. For them school is a relatively safe environment for the exploration of their anger and distrust. This kind of misbehavior may appear even in the most exciting and well-conducted lessons and is almost impossible to eradicate.

Adolescent student wants to become an autonomous person and carve out what he is and what he is not. This involves rejecting some characteristics and adopting others in order to become a person in one's own right. It is important for the teacher to show that although students' behavior is disapproved of, she or he still values the individual. The inappropriate behavior must be corrected without rejecting or attacking the learner's self-image (McManus 1995: 117).

Komorowska (2003:90) enlists some additional strategies of pupil's behavior: - implementation of own cognitive goals - it is a strategy typical of students who are highly motivated and interested in the subject. Although their main goal is to gain knowledge they show little interest in what is happening in the classroom. They can very easily get bored and display lack of interest when the tasks are too easy. - endorsement – strategy typical of learners who are highly motivated but they want to get endorsement from the teacher. Their main goal is to feel secure by being praised by the teacher.

- *withdrawal* – students are not engaged in the learning process, they do not learn to much. They prefer to stay passive in order not to gain teacher's attention. - *hiding* – students' main goal is to hide their own opinions and beliefs in order to avoid troubles. Learners are afraid of confrontation with the teacher what prevents genuine communication in the classroom to take place, - *rebellion* – typical of students who want to gain others' attention by being disruptive. They do not listen to the teacher's instruction and their main goal is to prevent the teacher from conducting the lesson.

In this chapter the definition of discipline has been given and examples of misbehavior have been presented. The author has described teachers' attitude towards discipline and students' strategies for misbehavior. The characteristic of a particular group has been also given. In the next chapter the author will describe the sources of disruption in the classroom.

2. SOURCES OF DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

Very often teachers have problems with discipline when they do not understand students' reasons for misbehaving (Sulich 2004:33). But whatever form the behavior takes, it needs to be analyzed in search for the causes why it occurs (Harmer 2001:126).

2. 1. The family

McManus (McManus 1995:12-13) says that responsibility for the students' problematic behavior lies in the situation at home. Pupils who suffer from parental neglect may find that teachers are a safe target for the hate they feel for their family. Domestic experiences can dispose some students to problematic behaviors and strategies such as struggles for attention or power or revenge. In most cases teachers are not able to make amends for the lack of parental love and attention. Some teachers believe that while paying more attention and giving more understanding they can minimize the disruptive behavior of problematic pupils and change students' attitude towards learning. But teachers must remember that their primary goal is to realize educational goals not to play parents' role (Robertson 1998:105). Domestic problems cannot be solved, but teachers "can go a long way towards alleviating them if they recognize they exist" (Chandler, in McManus (1995:23). "Students out – of school lives (family or community) produce psychological and emotional problems that they play out in school" (Arends 1991:170). Indiscipline and problematic behavior are sometimes traced back to a difficult home situation. Parental neglect as well as family attitudes towards school, learning and teachers can predispose students to cause troubles (Harmer 2001:126).

Pupils may sometimes be the agent of their parents motives (McManus 1995:122). These parents tend to believe that their interest are served by having disruptive child at school. Parents who were humiliated and have negative attitude towards schooling may take satisfaction in having a child who illustrates their conviction that teachers are incompetent and ineffectual. In other cases a parent may hope to hold together a crumbling marriage by encouraging a child to behave inappropriately – perhaps to convince the partner that their child needs both of them (McManus 1995:122-123).

Behavioral problems can occur when students are forced by their parents to learn English and thus are sent to different schools. Parents believe that English will give students advantage in employment, will be useful for travel and future education and that is why their children have to learn it whether they want or not (Nunan and Lamb 1996:126).

2. 2. The student

“Student rebelliousness and attention seeking are part of growing-up process” (Arends 1991:172). Adolescent learners want to be noticed and often are disruptive in order to gain the recognition and attention they need. Disruptive student may encourage other pupils in the classroom to behave problematically and thus gradually influence the whole group. Two or more disruptive students who act together may be far more effective than one. It is more difficult to control few students and to prevent them from causing behavioral problems (Harmer 1991:251).

Key issue to understand why adolescent learners cause discipline problems is the importance of students’ self-esteem. Self-esteem may result from teacher’s approval, other learners’ approval or it can be a result of success. A lack of respect from teacher or peers and failure in doing some tasks can cause students’ frustration and feeling upset. This can lead to an inappropriate behavior which in this case seem to be an attractive option for learners. Through misbehavior they can impress peers and force the teacher to treat them seriously (Harmer 2001:127).

Students’ learning experience of all kinds may affect their behavior in the classroom. Adolescent learners come to the classroom with some previous educational experiences which to some degree influence their attitude towards the subject and the teacher. Some pupils may have unpleasant memories, some may be challenging to the teacher, while others may be completely undisciplined because previous teachers allowed them to be (Harmer 2001:126). Students’ attitude towards school, the way they view the class, the teacher and the subject being learnt affect their behavior during the lessons. It is important for these to be seen in positive light, but it often happens that students are hostile to the teacher, the rest of the class and the subject. When students start with negative attitude they are willing to show their frustration through different kinds of misbehavior (Harmer 1991:251).

Another aspect to focus on is the time of day when the lesson is taking place. If students are tired after a long day of study or when there are early morning classes and they are sleepy even the most exacting lessons may be too challenging for them. When the teacher plans lessons she or he has to take into account whether the classes are just before lunch or just after, because learners may tend not to pay too much attention to the English lesson as to the lunch (Harmer 1991:251).

2. 3. The teacher

Disruptive behavior can be also attributed to the teacher's behavior and attitude. When the teacher comes to the class unprepared or gives boring lessons students are not engaged with a task or a topic and thus they are more likely to behave disruptively. Being inconsistent and saying that one action is going to be taken if it is not also encourage students to behave problematically. One of the mistakes of many teachers is to try and establish control by shouting. Raising voice by the teacher contribute to a general raising of the level of noise in the classroom (Harmer 1991:250).

Being fair is vitally important if effective learning is to take place. The teacher cannot be unfair, either to the class as a whole or to particular students. Most teachers have students that they like or dislike more than others, but they cannot allow themselves to show their preferences and prejudices in front of the class. When the teacher has a negative attitude to learning and does not really care what is happening in the classroom he or she is also likely to lose the respect of pupils. Losing the respect is the first step to cause problems of misbehavior (Harmer 1991:250).

Table 1. Teacher's leadership methods (Morse and Wingo 1969:396-7).

Rigid leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - removal of privileges as a means of punishment - inappropriate requirements for some students - an attempt to make all pupils do the same excellent work - little attention to students who have are not as good as other pupils in the classroom - demanding each learner to work quickly and at the same rate
Too little adult leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the teacher is anxious , defensive, afraid - employs very limited number of techniques in order to control the students - in unable to cope with situation that differs from the ordinary - students very easy take advantage of such kind of teacher
Vacillating leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - teacher is not able to control the class and enlist a set of rules that are consisted and understood by all - he or she is unable to determine what kind of organization is most suitable for a particular group of students - teacher is not consistent , differs behavior from day to day and situation to situation.

In order for affective teaching to take place the teacher must encourage students to cooperate and participate and be active during the lesson. But some teachers are unable to establish good relationship with their pupils because of the way they fulfill their leadership role. Morse and Wingo (Morse and Wingo 1969:396-7) enlist some of the leaderships

methods applied by the teachers that can encourage pupils to being disruptive and lead to increased tension among the pupils.

2. 4. The learning activities

Sometimes the material may be presented in such a way that it causes discipline problems. Even the most interesting activity may become very boring because of the way it is presented to the learners, who perceive the time spending on doing it as a wasted time. When the expectation are too low and classroom activities are not challenging for the students, frustration and misbehavior are likely to occur. The same can happen when the teacher expects too much and the competitive attitude is promoted by constant testing and imposing high standards. This can be hard to those who want to be on the top as well as those who know that they will never be the best. It can lead to students' frustration that provide not challenge but block. When the student is frustrated by inappropriate curriculum or by the way the teacher conducts the lesson he may turn to any of the following ways of behavior:

- aggressive behavior as the effort to do the task
- aggressive behavior against the object of frustration (the subject, the teacher)
- aggressive behavior against better and successful peers
- withdrawal behavior seen in passive attitude, lack of interest and slowness
- lack of participation in activities
- feeling of inadequacy, not believing in ones ability to do the task (Morse and Wingo 1969:401-02)

Once the author has presented and described reasons for misbehavior, the next chapter will be devoted to enumerating different techniques and methods as well as useful guidelines for teachers that may be effective while handling any kind of misbehavior.

3. DEALING WITH DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

Misbehavior creates such stress for teachers that it would be recommended to look for approaches and techniques which resolve problems (Mongon 1989:32).

“The ability to manage a group of pupils is not a natural gift with which teachers are born. It is something teachers have to work at; to be learned, practiced and improved” (Walker and Newman 1991). Teachers know how to deal with discipline problems because they have learnt the hard way. They have found out what works and what does not, they know how students behave in different situations and they know what their own weak and strong points are (Ur 1999:10).

Teacher's reaction to student's disruptive behavior cannot be prescribed but it must always be seen in relation to particular incidents and students (Mattheoudaki 2001:47).

There are number of things the teacher can do when students behave badly. The ability to control a group of students when things get out of control depends to a large extent on the personality of the teacher. While handling with any kind of misbehavior one must be also sure that any punishment is in the line with the policy of the school (Harmer 1990:215).

3. 1. Useful guidelines for teachers

The general approach recommended to teachers for dealing with misbehavior is not to ignore it whatever the causes for the disruptive behavior are. As mentioned above the way the teacher reacts depends upon particular type of disruption and the person behaving badly. Nevertheless it is advisable to remember some general guidelines that can be helpful in handling any kind of classroom problem (Kaplan 1990, Arends 1991, Harmer 2001).

- focus on the misbehavior not on the pupil who misbehaved. While handling with misbehavior one should remember not to humiliate the disruptive student or make him lose face in front of their peers. Humiliation attacks student's status in the eyes of peers and he or she may then use a variety of strategies, all aimed at teacher's authority, in order to re-establish it. If the teacher tells the student "You're the worst behaved person in this classroom" it impacts on him as a person and is unlikely to be effective (Fontana 1988, Kaplan 1990, Harmer 2001).
- act immediately and as quiet as possible when a problem appears. Lack of response can be interpreted as "I don't mind, you can carry on" and a small problem can become a bigger one. Remember that loud comments may provoke loud responses and the whole thing escalates. A fast, swift and quiet reaction is the best (Ur 1999, Harmer 2001). Soft reprimands keep a problem more private and do not encourage loud denials and protests (R.B Gearheart, Weishahn and C.J. Gearheart 1988:56).
- reprimand in private as it is not advisable to discuss student's misbehavior in front of the rest of the class. A student will respond better when being given reprimand in private where she or he does not have to impress their peers. While reprimanding after the lesson the teacher avoids being get into useless debate during which the pupil wants to gain points with the other students or extra attention or show the teacher of. Disciplining the disruptive pupil in front of their peers can also have a negative effect on student's self-esteem. It will be useful to tell the student how you see the situation and how you feel about it and spell the consequences if the behavior continues (Kaplan 1990, Harmer 1990, Gower, Philips and Walters 1995).
- avoid raising your voice as shouting to assert one's authority is a sign of losing control and raises the overall level of the noise in the classroom(Harmer 2001). When the classroom begins to get noisy the teacher may try to out-shout their students. The students may become quiet for a while but then they may get louder than they were before the teacher raised his voice. That is why quiet and soft voice can be often a better way to grab their attention (Komorowska 2003, Linsle 2004).
- avoid anger as the teacher who remains calm is far more effective than the one who easily loses his temper. The loss of self-control may lead to the situation when the teacher says and does things that he comes to regret later. The heated outbursts do nothing either for teacher's standing in the school or for the improvement of students' behavior (Kaplan 1990, Fontana 1988).

Few additional teacher's skills can be used to spot and deal with misbehavior. One of these skills is called 'withitness' which is defined as the teacher's ability to know what is going on at all time. Teacher who is with it spot deviant behavior, identify the student who is responsible and deal with misbehavior before it becomes more troublesome. He or she does not wait too long before spotting misbehavior and does not make mistakes when assigning blame (Arends 1991, Kaplan 1990, Robertson 1998, Child 1997).

'Withit' teacher very often uses nonverbal methods like moving around the room and gaining eye contact, walking towards the disruptive student or pointing. While applying these techniques ones must be certain that the student is not continuing misbehavior before going on to something else (Kaplan 1990:338).

An ability called overlapping is a second skill applied by teachers. Overlappingness means doing more than one thing at a time. It means being able to spot the learner behaving inappropriately, deal with it so the lesson is not interrupted and monitor other events going on (Arends 1991, Kaplan 1990). The idea is that no student should feel able to go unnoticed and the teacher is able to cast eyes around the class for disruptive behavior while e.g. helping one pupil (Child 1997: 320). When instructing a small reading group, an effective teacher can confer with one pupil from another group without stopping or interrupting the group activity (Kaplan 1990:340). Teachers use many overlapping tactic like moving close to an undisciplined student, putting a hand on a shoulder of an offender while giving instruction to the rest of the class or integrating a question intended to delay instruction (Arends 1991:172).

Apart from being 'within' the teacher must be able to read students' signals as well as give students signals. Once the teacher noticed the signs of misbehavior he should interpret these signals correctly. It is not enough just to monitor the class but some sensitivity to the meaning of what is going on is essential. Effective teacher not only notices f ex. The signs of students boredom (e.g. looking out of the window, closing the books, talking to the neighbor) but also 'reads' and 'interprets' them.

Teacher also gives students signals in a way that does not interrupt the lesson. He may move to an inattentive student, gain eye contact, direct a question to him or her or make a brief comment (Kaplan 1990:340).

3. 2. 1. Nonverbal techniques

It is strongly recommended to use nonverbal techniques before employing verbal ones. One of these method is to stop talking immediately. The teacher who stops talking is more likely to get students' attention and thus increase their awareness. Writing important information on the blackboard with very small letters catches students' attention and makes them ask for reading it (Komorowska 2003:97). Standing closer to the student, moving around the classroom, shaking one's head or placing one's finger to lips ("sh") may appear to be enough to discontinue minor misbehaviors without interrupting the lesson (Kaplan 1990:342). Looking at the student and gaining eye contact can reduce small instances of misbehavior. A quizzical or firm look may be all that is needed (Kaplan 1990, Arends1991, Komorowska 2003).

If the student is inattentive one way to reduce this lack of attention and engagement is to point at the book in order to encourage him or her to get down to work (Kaplan 1990:244). The teacher may as well try to combine two of above methods e.g. eye contact and shaking head or standing closer to a student and looking at him or her (Komorowska 2003:97).

Cues are also nonverbal reminders of rules or expectations. Cueing may involve facial expressions, raising one's hand, pointing or clearing one's throat. Some cueing is done automatically without planning, other must be learned and students must learn what a particular cue means (R.B Gearheart, Weishahn and C.J. Gearheart 1988:56).

3. 2. 2. Verbal techniques

When nonverbal techniques appear to be ineffective and not sufficient enough the teacher should employ verbal methods. One of the way to reduce the problem is to mention

disruptive student's name in the speech to make the pupil to pay attention to the teacher and the subject. The teacher may also ask misbehaving student to repeat the last sentence.

While applying this method one must mention a particular student's name before this sentence is said in order to give the learner the opportunity to hear it and repeat and not to cause a discussion about misbehavior.

Another way is to begin a series of repetitions, starting from more attentive students and then asking the disruptive ones, so those who are talking may stop doing it, start listening to the teacher and be able to repeat the sentence. Changing the character of activity may work as well.

Standing up, covering up eyes or listening to the sounds can be sufficient. Activities such as singing or reciting a poem together may stop misbehavior. While employing these techniques the teacher must remember that they are not used in order to prove that the student has not been listening or does not know answer to the question, because it is obvious. The main point is to draw back student's attention to the subject or activity without interrupting other learners and ruining the smoothness of the lesson (Komorowska 2003: 97-8).

3. 3. Behavioral methods

If all misbehavior could be solved through simple nonverbal or verbal techniques without stopping the lesson, discipline would not be seen as a significant problem. There are cases when these simple methods are not sufficient enough and something more is required. Some additional techniques based on operant conditioning model of learning may be effective. These techniques can be used to reduce misbehavior through providing reinforcement for desirable and correct behavior (Kaplan 1990:345).

3. 3. 1. Behavior modification technique

Behavior modification technique is based on the assumption that behavior, whether good or bad, is likely to recur if it is reinforced or rewarded while behavior which is ignored and not reinforced has a tendency to disappear. In classroom environment this means that undesirable behaviors are recurring because they are somehow reinforced by surrounding, while desirable behaviors are not reinforced enough and thus may fail to be established (Fontana 1998, Nunan and Lamb 1996).

The key to this approach is to determine the nature of reinforcement and to eliminate it or to use a more powerful reinforcement to bring about desired behavior. The teacher becomes manipulator of the environment of the student and by such manipulation systematically plans changes in the student's behavior (R.B Gearheart, Weishahn and C.J. Gearheart 1988:313).

This technique gives the teacher the opportunity to analyze the child's behavior carefully, to identify the factors that reinforce undesirable behavior and to formulate strategies that will change these factors in desirable directions Wong (Wong, in Nunan and Lumb 1996) suggests using five strategies to make this technique effective:

- in order to recur desirable behavior need to be reinforced,
- the best kind of reinforcement is immediate one,
- reinforcement should be systematic and consistent,
- reinforcement is more effective than punishment,

- tasks which are not difficult for students and in which they can succeed lead to reinforcement.

When employing this technique the teacher's first duty is to create a list of a child's problematic behaviors which are called 'target behaviors'. Opposite, the teacher writes down his or her response to a particular situation. The list may look like this:

Table 2. Problem behavior and teacher's response (Fontana 1988:319).

Behavior	Teacher response
Child comes in a class noisily at start of lesson	Teacher says "I've told you before not to make that row".
Child does not get out books when class is told to do so.	Teacher says 'Why can't you do as you're asked like everyone else?'
Child yawns loudly and shows obvious boredom.	Teacher comments sarcastically that of course child can't be expected to be interested.
Child makes facetious remarks.	Teacher stops lesson and casts doubts on what child has between ears.
Child calls out silly answer to a general class question.	Teacher tells child to put hand up first

That list may go on but it is not endless. The teacher will be surprised by the small variety of a particular student's misbehavior as well as by the homogeneity of remarks made by himself or herself. Language used by both, the teacher and the child, may differ from situation to situation but child's remarks and teacher's responses may seem always to be the same. The teacher interrupts the lesson with an aim to reprimand the disruptive learner who usually replies with a grin or a glance around the classmates. Far from being a punishment, teacher's responses are serving as reinforcement for behavior which should be eliminated (Fontana 1988:320).

It may be useful to concentrate on disruptive child's possible backgrounds and the origins of problematic behavior. The main source may be the need for teacher's attention which can be easily obtained through problematic behavior. Such behavior is called attention-seeking behavior. Student prefer to gain teacher's notice, whether positive or negative, to be ignored. Teacher's response act as reinforcement through which disruptive behavior becomes an established part of learner's behavioral repertoires (Fontana 1988:321).

Once the teacher identified that the main source of disruptive behavior is pupil's need to gain his or her attention it would be advisable to prepare second lists. This list contains desirable behaviors and again teacher's response to a particular situation.

It can be noticed that the teacher response to each of these desirable behaviors involves ignoring and taking no notice of the child. Instead of teacher's good response and attention which serves as reinforcement the child is ignored. This can lead the child to misbehaviors during the next lesson only in order to attract teacher's attention. It shows that the child's behavior cannot be understood unless we observe and analyze teacher's responses as well.

In order to change the undesirable behavior one must make a change in ‘forces’ that create and sustain it.

In the case of the class teacher this means reversing what we have been doing up to now and applying the first set of reinforces to the second set of behaviors and vice versa. In other words, attention is withdrawn when the child is producing the problem target behavior, and is offered when their desirable counterparts are produced (Fontana 1988:323).

“It should be remembered that at the same time that a teacher is trying to reduce students misbehavior, the student ought to be reinforced for the correct behavior” (Kaplan 1990: 345).

This means that the teacher should praise and reinforce target behavior and ignore misbehavior. It involves ignoring the child who is coming into the classroom noisily but greeting and praising when is coming quietly. Over a period of time, child should notice and learn that he or she attracts attention only by good behavior (Fontana 1988: 323).

Table 3. Desired behavior and teacher’s response (Fontana 1988:322).

Behavior	Teacher response
Child comes in room quietly at start of lesson	Teacher breaths sign of relief and turns to lesson notes in order to make a quick start.
Child gets book out with the rest of the class when asked.	Teacher starts lesson
Child puts hand up to answer question without calling.	Teacher ignores the child and asks someone else for the answer, afraid that child will give silly response and spoil what is far a good lesson.
Child works quietly.	Teacher continues thankfully to let sleeping dogs lie.

3. 3. 2. Contingency contracting

Contingency contracting is a kind of contract signed by both the teacher and students which specifies the exact behavior desired and the consequences for performing and not performing the behavior (Kaplan 1990:345). It specifies in exact terms what the student must do and what the teacher will do after the student has performed his portion of the contract (B.C Gearheart, Weishahn and C.J Gearheart).It usually contains five elements:

- it specifies what each side (the teacher and the students) expect to gain
- it specifies the desirable behavior
- it provides sanctions for not performing the behavior
- it provides extra privileges for consistent performing
- it provides for a way of monitoring performance

Contingency contract can be used in a number of situations. The teacher may want the student to complete the homework while the student may want e.g. to have free time. This method can involve parents (who cooperate with the teacher) and who may provide positive reinforcement through using extra praise and rewards (Kaplan 1990:345).

3. 3. 3. Response cost

Next of behavior modification technique is response cost in which misbehavior results in losing previously earned privileges and rewards. This method allows student to earn reinforcers for good behavior and lose them for misbehavior (Kaplan 1990:345). The learner gains a token for desirable behavior and loses it for incorrect behavior (Fontana 1988:327). While applying this method the teacher must be certain that the student has the reward that can be taken away. One must also remember not to overuse it and be able to deal with problems that may arise when e.g. student is taken away a point on the test for talking when all he did was to ask the neighbor to borrow him a pen (Kaplan 1990:346).

3. 3. 4. Time out for misbehavior

Another technique involves placing misbehaving student for a short period of time in a less reinforcing environment following misbehavior. When students encourage each other to behave inappropriately, when they are fooling around, talking and bothering other pupils, isolating one of them may cause the problem to die away. Sending the student who is misbehaving to sit in a hallway or even moving him to a more isolated area of the classroom is a possibility. Providing a physical space between the student and the rest of the class may reduce the amount of reinforcement from other students. It reduces show-off behaviors and prevents the disruptive student from annoying and bothering others. One must remember that time-out period should not be too long – the student can be isolated for no more than five minutes (Kaplan 1990, B.C Gearheart, Weishahn and C.J Gearheart.)

3. 4. The teacher cannot do it all

“If control over a class is lacking it is essential to seek advice or support from someone else in the school” (Gower 1995:61). When the problem is getting beyond teacher’s control one should consult colleagues or talk to principle. One may assume that they have experience in handling discipline problems and that offer the benefit of this experience (Harmer 2001:130). Discipline is more likely to be successful when teachers act together and not in isolation and when whole school is engaged. But before something can be done teachers must admit that the problem exists and that they can do something about. Once they have defined the problem they should produce a whole-school policy on behavior (Walker and Newman 1991:15). This process should involve teachers and administrators formulating the rules and procedures, defining who is responsible for dealing with different problems when they arise and specifying rewards for good behavior and punishments for misbehavior (Walker and Newman 1991, Nunan and Lumb 1996).

Schools should also encourage parents’ involvement in the classroom and develop a partnership with them in promoting good behavior. School should explain its behavior policy to parents and involve them in solving disciplinary problems as soon as they arise and not wait till the moment when contacting the parents is a last resort (Morse and Wingo 1969, Walker and Newman 1991). This seems to be a reasonable thing since parents should be involved in their children’s education. School can contact them in case of continual lateness, truancy, forgetting to bring materials or general unruliness (Harmer 1990:216).

In this chapter the causes of students' misbehavior have been presented. The next chapter will be devoted to present the research projected conducted by the author and its results.

4. ACTION RESEARCH

In the previous three chapters the theoretical claims and hypothesis that underline research project have been presented. Now the time has come to consider the way in which the research project was conducted as well as its results.

4. 1. Background to the study

In the past keeping discipline in the classroom was at almost the same importance as teaching. Teachers were showing domination in the classroom and were allowed to use corporal punishment. Nowadays lack of discipline and ability to keep peace and order in the class is perceived as one of the most serious problems that teachers face. Teachers, especially those who beginning their work, usually begin to have problems with discipline when they cannot keep students attentive or when they do not understand students' motives and reasons for misbehavior (Sulich 2004:32-3). If all students are hard-working, intrinsically motivated, active and dedicated it does not have to mean that discipline problems do not exist. Even while working with such kind of students the teacher can still have what can be labeled as discipline problem (Brown 1994:417).

When the problem occurs the teacher can apply many techniques to deal with it. But one must remember to try out establish methods that are the most suited for the teacher's personality and the temperament of the group (Linsle 2004:23-4).

4. 2. The aim of the study

Since the subject of this project are the effective ways of dealing with discipline problems when teaching adolescent learners, the research project was designed to check whether teacher use multifarious methods while dealing with discipline problems and how these methods work in the classroom environment. With more and more teachers claiming that they cannot successfully maintain discipline and handle with problematic behavior when it occurs, the author also tried to check whether teachers are aware of how many factors can cause students' misbehavior.

4. 3. Participants of the study

The study involved fifteen female English teachers from primary schools in the area of Konin and Turek. They did not vary as much with the duration of professional experience as well as with the number of lessons with adolescent learners per week, which oscillated around ten hours.

4. 4. The design of the study

The questionnaire (see Appendix 1), which constituted the basis for the study, was employed and the interviewers were asked to fill it in. The questionnaire was designed for teachers and constituted three major parts. The first part, including questions 1, 2 and 3, was implemented to collect some personal data, namely to determine work experience of the teacher, the size of the classes and the number of lesson with adolescent students per week. The second part, comprising of questions from 4 to 7, was formulated in such a way as to

name misbehavior according to the frequency of their occurrence in the classroom as well as to elicit teachers' viewpoint upon causes of misbehavior and students' motives that lead to inappropriate behavior. In the third part 26 questions were formed. They appeared in the order in which they were described in the theoretical part. Firstly, there were several questions investigating the ways teachers deal with disruptive students and the application of nonverbal and verbal methods. Secondly, questions concerning implementation of behavioral methods and their effectiveness appeared. Thirdly, there were questions examining the effectiveness of cooperation of teachers who face misbehavior with other teachers in the school, the headmaster and parents.

The questionnaire was designed in such a way that the respondents had to rank some factors (by putting them in the hierarchy of importance or occurrence), put a tick in a right column to state their opinion or determine whether they agree or disagree with a statement by circling the appropriate answer. The interviewers were also asked to elaborate on some of the questions in order to give the author the better view on the effectiveness of certain methods and strategies. After that, the collected data was analyzed and conclusions were drawn.

4. 5. Research findings

To start with, it should be stated that in order to formulate ultimate results for few questions the author of this project designed certain points for each answer. While giving answers to the question which dealt with the misbehaviors that the respondents face the most often, the misbehavior that occurs the most often got 5 points and, similarly, the behavior almost never occurring 1 point. The highest results could be 75, whereas the lowest 15 points. After analyzing the data the researcher added up all the results and established what follows. According to respondents the disruptive behavior that occurs the most often is disruptive talking – 68 points. The rest of the answers established as follows: disturbing other learners – 57 points, failure to do the homework – 43 points, calling out silly answers – 28 points and cheating during tests - 23 points. While asked which of these misbehavior is the most problematic 66% agreed that talking with colleagues as it involves few students and distract them from the very subject of the lesson.

The question number 7 was created to establish whether the respondents are aware of how many factors contribute to students being disruptive. According to the interviewers the most important factor that leads to problematic behavior are boring lessons. The factor that contributes to discipline problems in the smallest degree are factors such as the time of the day when the lesson takes place or the weather. A diagram, in which percentage relation shows the extent to which a certain factor influences students' misbehavior, can present all the results. The following 8 questions on the very way the teachers react when the problem occurs were analyzed and the author established what follows. All of the respondents answered that:

- ◆ they react immediately when the problem appears
- ◆ while resolving the behavior problem they try to avoid anger and remain calm
- ◆ they focus on the misbehavior not on the pupil who misbehaved
- ◆ they consider reprimanding students in private after lesson far more effective than disciplining the disruptive pupil in front of the rest of the class (all of the respondents agreed that they have tried this method)

73% of respondents agreed upon the fact that reprimanding students in front of their peers can lower their self-esteem. Although all the interviewers agreed on the effectiveness of reprimanding disruptive learner in private, when answering question number 15 they gave

opposite to the previous claims answers. When asked to rank the spoken reprimands in order of the frequency of their application 80% of the respondents answered that they reprimand students in front of their peers. Half of them prefer reprimanding in the classroom during the lesson in a silent way not to draw other learners attention. Only 62% replied that they talk to disruptive learner in private after the lesson although all of them believe in the effectiveness of this method. Diagram 1 below summarizes these findings.

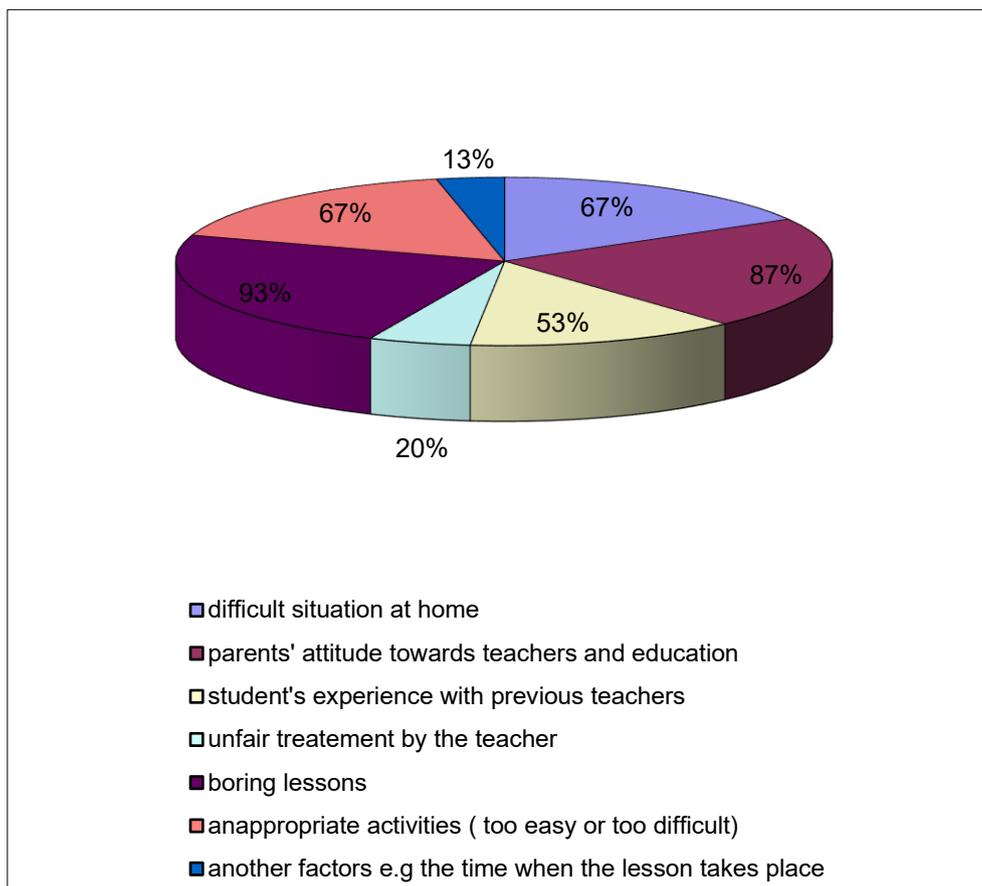


Diagram 1. The depiction of reasons for students misbehavior.

All the respondents admitted that they employ nonverbal techniques while resolving behavior problem. Only one respondent does not believe in their effectiveness even when the problem to be dealt with is not too serious and using nonverbal techniques seems to be enough to handle it.

When it comes to the employment of the behavioral methods all the respondents answered that they try to notice desirable behavior during the lesson. Moreover, all of them, with the exception of one, try to reinforce the correct and desirable behavior when it occurs using greeting, praising or positive comments on the appropriately behaving student. Next question concerned the employment of contract signed by both the teacher and the students which specify the exact behavior and consequences for performing and not performing the behavior. Only one quarter of respondents employ this kind of contracts while teaching and they believe in the effectiveness of this method. When asked whether they reseat misbehaving learner almost all of the respondents gave positive answer. All of them believe in the

effectiveness of punishment like additional homework or staying after lessons and practicing English and they apply this method while handling with appropriate behavior.

The last 8 questions examined the effectiveness of cooperation of the teacher facing the discipline problems with parents, the principle and other teachers. All the respondents, with the exception of one, agreed on the effectiveness of the collaboration with parents and 66% of them admitted that they have talked to the disruptive learner's parents. 86% think that talking to the principle is effective and again 66% answered that they cooperated with the headmaster while resolving discipline problems. All the respondents agreed on the effectiveness of talking to the tutor of the class where the problem appeared. The diagram, in which percentage relation shows the effectiveness of cooperation with parents, the principle and other teachers, can present all the results more lucidly. Most of the interviewers replied that in schools, where they work, teachers cooperate with each other when it comes to dealing with discipline problem but only 3 of them admitted that in school where they work there exist a whole school policy that helps to deal successfully with misbehavior.

4. 6. Weaknesses of the study

Once the data was collected and analyzed, the author can name few limitations that seem to have an influence of the results of the study. Firstly, too few participants were interviewed and their professional experience in mostly cases was too short. These seems to influence the results of the study, as the respondents are aware of the effectiveness of some of the methods and techniques but they do not apply them. Because of the fact that their practice as teachers was not too long, the author did not manage to prove the effectiveness of some methods presented in the theoretical part of this paper.

4. 7. Pedagogical implications

After conducting the study and analyzing the collected data some tentative recommendations for other language teachers could be given. For the author herself, conducting the research project was very instructive since it can serve her as an effective aid in improving her teaching practice with reducing misbehaviors. The results of the research show that discipline problems in the classroom can be dealt with effectively. Obviously, it depends on the character of misbehavior, its reasons and on the way the teacher will handle with it. The teacher should not ignore the misbehavior whatever forms it takes and should take some steps to resolve the problem. Sometimes the nonverbal techniques or reseating are enough but when the problem becomes more serious the teacher should not be afraid to cooperate with other teachers or parents as the research showed the effectiveness of this kind of cooperation. The author hopes that acknowledging methods and techniques that are effective in the classroom context will help teachers to resolve discipline problems when they occur. Moreover, the author believes that the further detailed research in this area will highlight which actions to employ in order to deal with any potential disruption in the classroom environment.

5. CONCLUSIONS

As could be seen from this paper the reasons for students' misbehavior may lay in their out-of-school life as well as the peers' influence or the teacher's actions. Thereof, in order to manage a group of students successfully and to resolve problems with discipline the teacher

should employ methods that in a particular situation seem to be the most effective. Firstly, while handling any kind of misbehavior, one should try to avoid anger and focus on the misbehavior not on the student behaving inappropriately. What is more, one should also remember not to raise their voice, humiliate misbehaving student and not to lower his or her self-esteem as adolescents' search for their identity and peers' approval is far more important than teacher's approval. The results of the analyzed data indicate that the respondents who participated in the study are aware of the effectiveness of active cooperation with other teachers, the principle and parents of the disruptive student. The are situations when the teacher is not able to deal with discipline problem on their own and the help of the school as an institution and engagement of parents is essential. Unfortunately, the generalizability of the results is limited by the small scale of the study and not too long professional experience of respondents. In addition, although they are aware of the effectiveness of reprimanding students in private, most of them employ reprimanding in the classroom in front of students' peers. What is more, the research showed that most of them tend to raise they voice when reacting on misbehavior. Additionally, the collected data did not support the effectiveness of contracts signed by both the teacher and the students and only few teachers admitted to employ this kind of technique. These issues are undoubtedly an area which should be subjected to further research. In order to deal successfully with any kind of misbehavior one must learn it hard way and try to establish techniques that work the best. Any misbehavior, whatever forms it takes, must be dealt with as completely undisciplined lessons impede the learning process and deprive students from the chance to enjoy it.

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