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Classroom Management Techniques

Jim Scrivener

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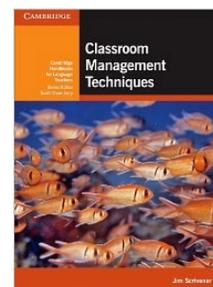
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All teachers need to know how to manage the classroom to make learning effective, and here are many things that teachers need to pay attention to when they are in the class, such as adjusting the volume of the voice, dealing with learners, setting up the tables, and grouping students to name a few. Jim Scrivener dedicates his latest book, *Classroom Management Techniques*, specifically to teachers of English as a second or foreign language; however, teachers of other disciplines will also find this book helpful toward improving their skills in classroom management.

Every teacher would agree that classroom management is important to support effective learning and every teacher has choices to make regarding the organization of the class. Borg (2001) tells us that teachers' beliefs influence their thinking and actions, and, concurring with Borg, Scrivener strongly suggests that classroom management "reflect what you believe about teaching and learning, about learners and their potential and about the relationship of teacher to learner" (p. 1). Indeed, classroom management is a complex issue because managing something requires skill in dealing with time, other people, resources, culture, and the self. But Scrivener is encouraging, offering an approach in which classroom management is also simple because there are "many small, easy-to-learn, concrete, practical techniques that can be read about, practiced, improved and then used as part of any teachers' repertoire of classroom skills" (pp. 2-3).

Classroom Management Techniques consists of seven chapters, and each chapter addresses problems that are commonly faced by teachers in the classroom. Throughout the book, he Scrivener offers ample alternatives as solutions, each approach accompanied with why and how the strategies can be implemented. The first chapter of the book, "The Classroom," discusses possible ways to effectively deal with the physical state of the classroom, such as the sitting arrangement, the use of the limited space, and the decoration of the room.

In chapter two, "The Teacher," Scrivener shows that teachers should pay attention to themselves when they are in class, suggesting that teachers should maintain their position of authority in the class without taking too much control of the students' learning. To do this, they need to know and learn about themselves as well as be able to demonstrate this to the students and be able to model this to students. According to the author, teachers should employ their intuition when teaching, and that it is important to "constantly challenge and consciously upgrade [their] intuition" (p. 71) because this process will help them become more effective teachers.

Chapter three, “The Learners,” addresses the issue of what teachers can do to build relationship with their students and the students with their peers. In this chapter, Scrivener offers techniques that can help with a simple problem in class, such as remembering student names, to a much more complex issue such as motivating students to take control of their own learning. On the latter issue, the author emphasizes that a learner-center approach is a matter of “having trust in [the] students’ ability to learn and in their abilities to make decisions about what and how to learn” (p. 108). To do this, Scrivener suggests that teachers move slowly from teacher-centered to learner-centered pedagogies because students might otherwise feel that “The teacher is lazy, or unskilled or [is] abandoning them” (p. 111).

Chapter four, “Key Teacher Interventions,” informs teachers of what to do and say in the classroom. Here, the author indicates that interventions should be “purposeful and effective” (p. 119), and lists fourteen key interventions regarding being supportive, asserting authority, giving effective instructions, and questioning.

In chapter five, “Facilitating Interaction,” the author draws teachers’ attention to organizing the class into whole-class work, pairs and group work, and beyond the classroom. In whole-class work, Scrivener indicates that students need to contribute more and teachers need to listen more in class discussion. As far as pairs and groups work, he suggests techniques that can encourage quiet students to participate more actively in small-group discussions in the language they are learning. The technique offered at the end of the chapter regards ways to encourage students to communicate in English outside the classroom.

Chapter six, “Establishing and Maintaining Appropriate Behavior,” highlights the behavioral problems that are commonly found in secondary classrooms, and the author provides a number of techniques to deal with small to serious. Some tactics are also applicable to younger students. Finally, chapter seven, “Lessons,” informs teachers how to carry out a lesson from the beginning to the end to make “the lesson more effective and engaging” (p. 246).

Classroom Management Techniques is a powerful resource for all teachers, but especially for new and student teachers. The strategies offered in the book are based on everyday problems that can be found in the classroom of any discipline and any age of students. Thus, new teachers will be able to anticipate the problems they would face and find the best way to solve them. With more than one technique to address a problem, new teachers will have alternatives to help them so they do not have to be anxious when a particular technique does not work as well as intended. The book is easy to read and includes some illustrations which are helpful to teachers to visualize the ideas proposed.

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