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## EFL Classroom Management Problems in an English Course

**Pipit Sri Mularsih**

Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto

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### ABSTRACT

Achieving target lessons is the aim of teaching learning process. It also requires good classroom management conducted by the teachers. It deals with not only physical aspects but also emotional psychological aspects of the class such as managing the disciplines and rules of the class and maintaining good relationships with the students. They are needed to be concerned in order to create a comfortable learning ambience. In fact, challenges and problems faced by either newbie or experienced teachers, both formal and informal school teachers exist and make the teaching learning process. In the context of the English course, this study is aimed to figure out classroom management problems, the factors causing the problems, and the solutions are done by the teachers to solve the problems. There were 6 English teachers from the English Course as the research participants. Open-ended questionnaires were administered and class observation was conducted to gather the data. After gathering and analyzing the data, 2 major classroom management problems appeared, namely 1) instructional problems, and 2) behavioral and psychological problems. Instructional problems are about the obstacles which make the target lessons difficult to achieve. Meanwhile, behavioral and psychological problems tend to come from the attitude or emotion in the classroom which makes the classroom environment not conducive. More elaboration about each findings, discussions, conclusion, suggestion and limitation of the research are presented deeply in the paper.

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**Corresponding Author:**

**Pipit Sri Mularsih**

Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto

Jl. KH. Ahmad Dahlan, PO BOX 202 Purwokerto 53182

Email: [pipitsrimularsih@gmail.com](mailto:pipitsrimularsih@gmail.com)

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Classroom management is one of the basic skill that should be mastered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) both novice and experienced teachers. It deals with everything that happens in the classroom starting from the board usage, lighting, seating arrangement, teacher talking time, time management, and so on. It also covers how the teachers control the teaching learning process, including the students' behavior, in order to make it runs smoothly and the target objectives are achieved. In line with this, Richard and Rodgers (2001) in Soleimani & Rasmjoo [14] state EFL classroom management demands teachers' authority over teacher-students interactions, and students' attitude in the class. Furthermore, Rinda & Indrastana [10] mention classroom management may be defined as the teacher's capacity to lead and coordinate classroom activities in order to achieve the lesson's goal. It becomes a crucial element that should be concerned by the teachers because there are many obstacles or unpredictable situations that happen in the class and the teachers' ability to overcome them are also one of classroom management scope. When it comes to classroom management, both formal school and English course teachers should have the ability to control and to manage their classrooms efficiently and effectively.

However, some people tend to think English course teachers will have less problems in managing their classrooms rather than English teachers in formal schools because the numbers of the students are less than in a formal school. In fact, both of them face classroom management problems in the classrooms. The previous study was conducted by Soleimani & Rasmjoo [14] figured out some problems in classroom management, particularly in private language institutes, such as instructional problems, behavioral and psychological problems, and contextual problems. By doing this research, it is aimed to investigate whether or not the same problems will appear, or other problems might appear differently. It is also aimed to figure out the reason why those problems happened and how the teachers solve those problems particularly in English course context.

Therefore, the research question of this study can be formulated as follows:

1. What are EFL classroom management problems in English Course?
2. Why do the problems happen?
3. What do the teachers do to overcome the problems?

## LITERATURE STUDY

How can an EFL classroom be considered successful? From this question, some teachers have different opinions. It can be from the lesson plan, the technique used in executing the activities, or certain approaches are used to achieve the terminal objectives. Besides, classroom management has also a prior role in determining the success of EFL class. The way teachers execute their plan in the classroom influences the classroom success particularly in creating the class atmosphere to become enjoyable and comfortable for the students to study. In line with this idea, Rosnani [11] states classroom management is aimed to make an atmosphere conducive to student learning, which includes a set up rules, routines, teacher's response to students' attitude, and the instruction.

Furthermore, Susanti [15] emphasizes that classroom management is essential to master by ELT teacher and they have to be ready for any unpredictable situations to happen in the class. For example, the class can be noisy, conducive, quiet, or natural and ideal as the teacher expected. Classroom management is not only about the physical aspects (the facilities) of the class but also the emotional condition of the class (the students). The physical aspect covers seating arrangement, lighting, ventilation, teaching aids and media that the teachers use. Meanwhile, the emotional condition is about the relationship between the teacher and the students, the teacher leadership style, the students and teachers' attitude and interest, teaching and learning motivation, the group dynamic, discipline, and the way teachers create a comfortable class for the students to learn.

In addition, Harmer [7] defines the scope of classroom management is about the presence of teacher in the class, the use of intonation or voice, talking to students, TTT (teacher talking time) and STT (students talking time), giving instructions, using mother tongue (L1), making lesson steps, seating arrangements and various grouping or pairing. Furthermore, Cevallos & Soto [2] state classroom management deals with not only the class rules to control students but also the teacher's strategies and lessons to create a conducive teaching learning atmosphere. Thus, maintaining good relationships among teachers and students is essential in order to make a stress-free classroom. As a result, the motivation is improved and the lesson objective is achieved.

In the context of English courses, it is not really different from public schools, except for the support. Choy [3] defines public schools are largely financed by local, state, and federal government monies, whereas private schools are often sustained by tuition revenues and, on occasion, funds from nonpublic sources such as religious groups, endowments, grants, and charity gifts. Private schools in several states get public subsidies for some services (e.g., transportation). In this study, the English course is supported by a foundation and the tuition is paid by the students monthly or full-payment per 3 months. Furthermore, the teachers are trained to teach English similarly as public schools teachers are. Therefore, in terms of classroom management, both public and English course teachers have gotten the education or training before they teach.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is qualitative research, which is descriptive interpretive. Soleimani & Rasmjoo [17] mention some refer to basic qualitative investigations as fundamental interpretive studies because they give extensive descriptive narratives aimed at comprehending an event, a process, or a certain point of view from the perspective of individuals involved. Therefore, this research is aimed to investigate what classroom management problems are encountered by English course teachers, what reasons behind those problems, and how the English course teachers solve the problems.

The population of this study is the teachers in one of the English courses in Purwokerto, Banyumas, Central Java, Indonesia. There are 6 teachers who volunteered to participate in this study. All of them are from Purwokerto and Purbalingga and they have experienced to teach EFL in some different level of programs such as General English for Young Learners (GEYL), General English (GE) for teens and adults, Conversation, and TOEFL Preparation. Open-ended questionnaires and class observation were conducted in this study. The information of research participants (RP) is in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Information of Research Participants (RPs)

Demographic features	Gender		Education			Teaching Experience	
	Female	Male	Diploma	B.A	M.A	<6 years	>6 years
Number	6	0	1	4	1	1	5

Before the class observation, open-ended questionnaires were given to the participants. It was given 3 days for RPs to answer the questionnaires thoroughly. There were 6 open-ended items of questionnaires, and RPs were allowed to explore their answers freely in the context of classroom management. After all the questionnaires were submitted, then the class observation was conducted in each RPs' classes. 3 classes were in young learner programs, while 2 classes were in general English of teenager class, and 1 class was general English of adult class (consisted of Senior High School and college students). The classes were observed from the beginning until the end of the class, and some notes during the observation. Thematic data analysis was used to analyze the data after the data were gathered.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After the questionnaires were administered, it was found that all the participants have the same perception on classroom management. It is about how teachers manage the classroom starts from seating arrangement, grouping or pairing the students, making the lesson plan to make sure it is on the track, managing students' behavior, making a good learning environment so that the learning goals are achieved optimally and the teaching learning process runs smoothly, effectively and efficiently. It is supported by Richards [9] and Rinda & Indrastana [10], classroom management is defined as the organizing and control of behavior by the teacher in order to achieve learning goals effectively.

In terms of challenges or problems appearing in the research participants' questionnaires response, as they were introduced by Wolfgang (2005) in Soleimani and Rasmjoo [14], those are: a) instructional problems, b) behavioral and psychological problems, and c) contextual problems. However, contextual problems were not found in this study. Based on that, the analysis of questionnaires and observation notes formulated into specific problems, the causes, and how the teachers overcome instructional problems as well as managing behavioral and psychological problems.

#### 1. Instructional problems

Instructional problems are about the obstacles which make the lesson objectives are hindered to be achieved by the learners. In this category, 4 major problems appeared. Most of research participants responded that their classroom management problems are learners tend to speak in L1 and talk out of lesson topic, several learners are not in the right level of class, the learners do the activities not as it was instructed or they did not know how to do the activities, and how teachers deal with time management.

Table 2. Instructional problems and solutions

Instructional problems	Solutions
a. Learners tend to speak in L1 and talk out of lesson topic	a. set class contract about the use of L1 b. monitor learners activity when they talk out of lesson topic c. help learners if they do not know the vocabulary or expression in English
b. Learners are not in the right level of proficiency class	a. evaluate the placement test, replace the learners into the right class level b. find more challenging topic for the high competence learners c. promote group/pair work
c. Learners do not understand or misinterpret in doing the activities	a. give clear and detail instruction b. keep the supervision when learners are doing tasks c. help or answer learners' questions if they find difficulties

d. time management	a. making preparation / lesson plan in every meeting b. promoting group/pair activities
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In the first instructional problems, learners prefer to speak in their L1 because they are afraid of making mistakes which lead to being mocked by their peers in the class. The supported findings in the previous study conducted by Ningrum, Mahdum and Novitri [8], it was found 77,1% students are embarrassed when they mispronounce English words. They are mostly afraid of making mistakes, especially in using the tenses, so that the listeners do not know what they are saying. Besides, they also have a lack of exposure in English so that they have limited vocabulary and expression to say. It happens especially in the beginner level of competence classes. In the higher level class, the learners are mostly reluctant to speak because their personalities are quiet, and they are tired with their previous activities at school. Based on the class observation, this problem was found in the class of RP 2, RP 4, and RP 5. Most of the students spoke in their L1 (Bahasa Indonesia), and when the teacher was out of supervision the students were busy talking with their classmates and forgot to do the tasks.

The second problem was mentioned by RP 5 that she had students who are higher or lower in level of competence. She assumed the placement test result was not satisfactory and the students are difficult to understand the lesson, or even think that the lesson is too easy. Placement test is conducted in the very first place in this English course, so that the learners are placed in their level of competence. However, making the learners in a homogenous class does not always solve the problems. Many factors make the result of the placement test not satisfactory because the test takers were late, not in a good condition or in hurry, nervous, and so on. As a result, sometimes learners are found to be higher or lower in their true level of competence class. It can be a problem for the teachers if the “low” ability learners are finally unable to follow the pace of the teaching learning process. Therefore, it is suggested for the teacher to promote pair or group work to mix the high and low ability of learners. Zamani [16] found in his study that group or pair work helps low level of competence learners especially when they are combined with the high level of competence learners. Additionally, Fritsche [5] finding study supports that heterogeneous ability students in class is more time consuming for teachers rather than homogeneous one. Therefore, although the result of placement tests is sometimes not satisfactory, teachers can group or pair the learner whom teachers believe has “high ability” to help the low ability learners achieve the material.

Giving instruction is also a challenge for EFL teachers, as a result learners sometimes do not understand what they should do or misinterpret the instruction given. When they do not know what to do, it is because the teachers give unclear, inconsistent or undetailed instruction. In adult learners, they are more critical to do the instruction with “shortcut” strategies. To illustrate, RP 1 stated: *“The students are asked to have a conversation and take note of the answer from their partners. They do well if the teacher supervises. If the teacher is not supervising in some periods of time, they won’t do the conversation activity, they trade answers by writing them directly instead. This makes the learning objective not achieved where the students are supposed to be able to speak and deliver something orally.”* This phenomena was actually beyond the teachers’ prediction in giving the instruction. The prediction can be either they understand or does not understand what to do. However, the result of learners’ activities does not represent their true understanding and do not optimize their potency to reach the learning objective. It happens because they are more focused on the result rather than the learning process.

RP 2 experienced the same context of giving instruction and it was also found in her class observation. She gave instructions of activities in detail, then she assumed the learners had known what to do. However, after she monitored the learners’ activities, some learners still did not know what to do. It happens because each learner has a different level of understanding, some are fast learners while the others are slow. Deal with instruction problems, El Kemma [4] mentions it happens because there is frequently a scarcity of management and technical expertise to offer instruction. Delivering excellent instructions is a difficult task that requires expertise and experience. Therefore, he suggests utilizing several tips, such as: doing pre-planning instruction, being concise, repeating or paraphrasing, doing demonstration or simulation, giving support in non-verbal actions, making improvisations, and checking learners’ understanding.

In terms of time management, it is also crucial for teachers in managing the classroom. If they cannot allocate the time effectively and efficiently, the class would be in a hurry or at a slow pace. Therefore, preparing the lesson plan is essential to make sure the activities run well and smooth, with the right time allocation. Promoting work in group or pair activities can be also a solution to optimize the time and also supporting 4Cs 21st century skills in the class (critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity). Furthermore, Cevallos & Soto [2] state when a teacher makes effective use of class time, learners are interested and involved in learning, academic success rises, and class attitude and management enhances. RP 2 mentioned she must prepare and make lesson plans as well as fun activities to make students not feel bored and are engaged

enthusiastically in the teaching learning process. In her class observation, it seemed her students loved the activities, looked relaxed, and the learning objective was achieved in the right time.

## 2. Behavioral and psychological problems

Different with instructional problems, behavioral and psychological problems are more individual in terms of attitude and psychology sides. Previous study conducted by Rozimela [12] found the biggest problem in the EFL classroom was behavioral problems. The teachers had difficulties in controlling students' behavior such as: talking to classmates, being noisy, saying impolite words, or disturbing their classmates.

Table 3. Behavioral and Psychological problems and Solution

Behavioral and psychological problems	Solutions
a. reluctant to speak and participate learners	a. give example on how to say something in English and do simulation on how to do the tasks, or give example of the tasks learners will do b. motivate learners to do not be afraid of making mistakes c. give achievable tasks d. promote pair / group activities
b. exhausted, stressed, unmotivated learners and teachers	a. prepare fun learning activity but still stay on the track b. promote pair / group activities c. have a chit-chat or throw jokes as intermezzo to make the class is more relaxed
c. noisy, uncontrolled learners who make situation gets chaotic	a. set classroom contract b. give attention to the students alternately c. change learners' seat d. ask learners to raise hand before asking
d. different personality of learners	a. make mixed personality of learners in groups or pairs b. help learners individually
e. out of track learners when teachers lost supervision	a. keep the supervision or monitoring in the learners' activities b. be ready to guide and help learners if they find difficulties

Meanwhile, in this study, major behavioral problems are learners are reluctant to speak and participate in the teaching learning process. It is because they are nervous, shy, or they have quiet personalities and because they are exhausted with previous activities at school, they also join the English course not because of their will. Therefore, they attend the class just for the sake of being present. In other situations, learners are so noisy or being attention seekers, because they want to be cared for by the teachers. Another reasons is that the learners need appreciation, they are competitive and being ignored at home or school. In line with this, Şanlı [13] mentions if the learners get adequate teachers' attention, the motivation and values development are increased. This problem was found in RP 3 and RP 6 classes, the students or some of them were reluctant to speak and participate in some activities.

In the findings of unmotivated teachers, teachers can also feel unmotivated to teach. This is what has been mentioned by RP 6 that she sometimes feels unmotivated to teach. It is because she has many classes to teach in a day, overwhelmed in facing their learners' behavior in the class, burned out with teaching routines and so on. Thus, how would an unmotivated teacher meet unmotivated learners? Han & Mahzoun [6] state what keeps learners involved in the classroom is their belief that their teachers can provide an exciting learning environment. Thus, the teachers must be motivated first to motivate their students. They also found in their study that the unmotivated teachers are because of ineffective communication between them and their students. Again, bonding and relationships among teachers and students are essential to make the classroom environment being secure, convenient, and stress-free for all. Hence, in RP 6 class observation, she had casual conversation with the students. The class environment seemed stress-free, the students expressed their feelings freely, the teacher was also enthusiastically getting into their conversation.

Having different personalities of learners in the class can be a big challenge for the teachers. RP 3 stated: *"Problems I had in some of my classes were the existence of several "odd ducks", shall we say, those who are dubbed as "different" from others in terms of behaviour, competence, etc. A very low competence student in a*

*whole class of high competence students is a disaster for both the student him/herself and the classroom vibe and pace.*” It is supported with the observation notes, there were some quiet learners in the class. When the teacher grouped them with more talkative learners, the quiet learners made the pace of group activity become more slow and awkward. They kept silent, while actually they had to talk and do the tasks given by teachers. The teachers monitored their activity, asked them if they had any difficulties, and they just smiled. It can happen because the learners are not close to each other as well as with the teacher. The class atmosphere is not friendly enough, they are in the class just for the sake of being present, teach and study the lesson, and it is done. However, maintaining good relationships from teachers and students, students to students are also important in classroom management. It can make the class atmosphere more relaxed or we can say it is “homey” for them to do the teaching learning process. Moreover, Şanlı [13] emphasizes that the psychological environment of EFL class is better to make the learners feel comfortable and enjoy being able to freely express themselves. When the learners enjoy studying in the classroom, their motivation will be improved and the learning objectives are achieved. Furthermore, Cevallos & Soto [2] mention teacher-students relations must be good in order to create an environment for students to not resist the classroom rules, disciplines, or procedures in the class. Thus, teachers are suggested to have respect, personal interest, balance, and enthusiasm to their students. However, in RP 3 class observation, it was found that she does not have a good teacher-students relationship. There were not any casual conversations or jokes in the middle of the teaching learning process. It was just straight forward on the teaching learning process, moved from one task to another, checked the answer, and it was done. Therefore, it was undeniable that the students were reluctant to speak because there was not any topic which they were interested in. Moreover, if they are not familiar with the lesson topic.

When the learners are out of track in doing the tasks, it is mostly because they meet their friends. Then they like having conversation with them which is out of the lesson topic, it is fine for the teachers to get involved in their conversation. It is not only to tighten the bonding among teachers and students, but also to make the class situation stress-free. Related to this finding, Alicia [1] states interaction between teacher and students promotes students’ linguistics competence to communicate, and it also gives language input and output in order to build students’ attitude to accept the language and culture they are learning. Thus, teachers can set rules and it is allowed to have out of topic conversation as long as they use English, for example.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Classroom management is an essential element that should be concerned by EFL teachers. It will lead the teacher to do efficient and effective pre, during, and post teaching learning activity to make the target lesson is achieved. However, inevitable problems in classroom management might appear, from the students, the teacher, or other factors. This study figured out some problems in classroom management such as instructional problems, behavioral and psychological problems in the context of English courses. Having less student numbers rather than in formal school does not make the problems vanish. Therefore, EFL teachers in both formal and informal school (English course), either novice or experienced, must be aware of classroom management problems. They are also suggested to know the reason why the problems occur in order to know what to do to overcome them. Deal with the instructional problems, teachers need to consider good preparation in planning the teaching learning process, to promote group or pair works, to manage the time effectively, and to be aware of techniques in delivering lessons and giving the students activities. Besides, it is essential for the teachers to build good relationships with their students. Having good relations with the students will decrease the tension in the class, make the situation more relaxing and improve students’ motivation to engage in the teaching learning process.

This study has 3 limitations, such as the small number of research participants, the use of open-ended questionnaires, and the lack of time in doing the study. It is suggested for the next research to have a bigger number of research participants. Doing observation is compulsory in order to see the accurate problems happening in the classroom then cross-checked it with an interview.

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