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Negotiating Classroom Procedures and Routines to Facilitate Students' Discipline

How can the implementation of negotiated classroom procedures and routines facilitate the discipline in a group of high schoolers from the institution Jesus Rey?

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Abstract

This study is an action research project carried out with high schoolers at Institucion Educativa Jesus Rey; a public institution located in Robledo, Medellín. The aim of this project was to facilitate the students' discipline by the implementation of some negotiated classroom procedures and routines. Actions consisted of the creation of a negotiated code of conduct and the implementation of collaborative and cooperative learning in the classroom. Data collection instruments included a teacher journal, two student surveys, and two focus group interviews with the learners. Findings showed that creating a negotiated code of conduct with the students and implementing the different rules and routines could facilitate the students' discipline and ameliorate the classroom environment.

Key words: discipline, code of conduct, collaborative and cooperative learning.

Título del proyecto en español: Negociación de procedimientos y rutinas en el aula para facilitar la disciplina de los estudiantes

Degree Requirement

This action research project is submitted as a requirement for the Bachelor of Education in Teaching Foreign Languages (English-French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellín, Colombia. The research was conducted at Institución Educativa Jesus Rey from August 2021 to June 2022. This project reports my experience as a teacher- researcher in this institution in order to improve my teaching practice.

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Preface

This action research is conducted to fulfill the requirements of the Bachelor of Education in Teaching Foreign Languages (English-French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellin, Colombia. The purpose of this study was to implement some negotiated classroom procedures and routines in order to facilitate students' discipline. The participants were 40 high schoolers between 11 and 13 years old from Institución Educativa Jesús Rey. This paper is mainly addressed to educators, who play a very important role in trying to improve the teaching practices and learning experience in the area of English.

Description of the context

The school "JESUS REY" is a public institution located on the northwestern side of Medellín, in the Robledo neighborhood. Its students belong to socio-economic strata one, two and three. The institution offers education in elementary school, and high school with three media techniques for 10th and 11th grade. The school has two schedules. There are 1500 students that are organized by grades, from transition to 11th. The institution's facilities include the food service, the school library, one English room, two laboratories, an auditory, and three computer rooms. However, due to the COVID, only the school library and one computer room are sometimes available for students. The school has a special room called a support classroom. This room has a psychologist and she is in charge of finding and observing the students' mental or cognitive issues to inform each teacher and parents about them.

The mission of the institution states that the students receive an excellent and qualified education that will help them to be capable of overcoming themselves and facing social challenges; through the experience of human-Christian values, the development of criticalreflective thinking, and respect for diversity. In its vision, the school intends to be a Technical Media Educational Institution with higher recognition by 2025. It wants to give comprehensive training to the students built on acceptance and respect for diversity. Besides, the school will have an emphasis on English, research, and the development of citizen competencies, for the construction of life and society projects. Furthermore, the institution has a pedagogical model based on the socio-cognitive approach. This approach is supported by the constructivism explained by Piaget, Vygotsky, Brunner, and Ausubel; as well as flexible didactics given by Gardner with the multiple intelligences, which allows attending the students' diversity.

Regarding the English syllabus, the school has a structural syllabus. It is like that because

the content of language teaching is a collection of the forms and structures, usually grammatical, of the language being taught. For instance, nouns, verbs, adjectives, questions, and so on. The English syllabus of the sixth grade contains the topics and abilities to be taught during the three periods of the year. The syllabus has a logical and proper sequence composed of three units corresponding to the three terms of the year. Each unit illustrates the grammatical topics, the students' expectations, and the reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Regarding the resources and bibliography, the English syllabus stated that students have a TV, a video beam and computers at their disposal. Besides, they had a printed guide with workshops and web pages to study and practice.

During my year of practicum, I had two students' settings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first semester, students attended the school every fifteen days for an English class of 40 minutes. During the other days, they worked independently with the help of the English teacher and a printed guide. The sixth grade I worked with was composed of 40 students who spoke Spanish as their native language. There were 24 boys and 16 girls whose ages range from 11 to 13. The classroom had four windows and two fans that gave good ventilation and illumination to the space. However, the classroom was not big enough for 40 students. Due to the pandemic situation, the course was divided into two face-to-face groups, another virtual and one analogous the classroom was adequate for only 17 students at a time. The printed guide included topics like the verb to be, the use of adjectives, and vocabulary about family. The guide also had activities that they needed to complete and web pages that they needed to investigate during the asynchronous week.

Afterward, in the second semester of my practicum, the school returned to full face-toface classes so the virtual and analogous group disappeared. Hence, the two face-to-face groups

became a big one that went to the school together every day. Besides, in January 2022, the sixth

grade I had in practicum one, passed from sixth to seventh grade with most of the same students.

Concerning students' interests, they were in general really active during face-to-face

classes, which showed that they liked English. According to the English syllabus they had a huge

interest in learning a foreign language (three students were receiving foreign language training in

different academies in the city on a virtual basis). However, they got distracted very easily during

classes and began talking to each other about topics that were not related to the class, especially

five students with conduct disorder. According to reports from the supporting classroom, the

group has five students who present the disorder called "Attention-

Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder" (ADHD), of which a student had a cognitive disability, so he

required "Plan Individualizado de Ajustes Razonable" (PIAR) to help him with his learning

process and to foster inclusiveness.

According to the students' performance, most of them had an acceptable English level

because they were able to understand most of the words that the teacher said in English like

yes/no questions, some WH questions and simple sentences with the course vocabulary. On the

other hand, there were some students who had a low English level. They were not able to express

simple ideas in English like the date or what they did in the previous class. These students were

only able to understand a few words that the teacher said or wrote on the board.

The cooperating teacher graduated in the 90s from the English and Spanish Teaching

Program at Universidad de Antioquia. Besides, she has a master's degree in education with an

emphasis on curriculum processes done at Universidad de Medellín. Furthermore, she has a

specialization in computing. She has been teaching English for more than 23 years at the high

school level and has worked in Institución Educativa Jesus Rey since 2018. She teaches English

from 6ᵗʰ to 7ᵗʰ grade. She is in charge of organizing and delivering information to parents of students, attending meetings when called, and accompanying breaks every 15 days in the whole school, among others. In an informal conversation, she stated that her main purpose in the institution is to help students to feel motivated and to encourage participation, as well as to help develop the four skills but mainly oral production.

Statement of the problem

During my observations along these last two months I found that discipline is a big issue in the classroom. The students got easily distracted with outside noises, their own classmates or just with items around them like cell phones or notebooks and that disrupted the class. They were always standing up to gossip, to change spots and to yell. Also, their items were always falling on the floor and when they grabbed them, they began playing with them and with their classmates. Furthermore, some of them liked to talk to the teacher about their life and that wasted the class time. Thanks to the class observations, I could realize the lack of discipline and I saw that it involved some factors. One of them was that there were 5 students with cognitive disabilities in the course; four of them had hyperactivity disorder in different levels and the fifth one had an unknown disability. In fact, the four with the hyperactivity disorder were the most undisciplined and the ones that created the most chaos in the classroom. Another factor that affected the class dynamics was that the course materials were really basic. The teacher used mostly the board to explain topics or assign activities and the course guide to support the asynchronous activities. It is important to clarify that these asynchronous activities were only given in the first semester of my practicum since the second semester was held on a face-to-face modality. Due to the lack of variety and availability of materials and resources in the class, class

interaction was almost nonexistent. The students were almost all the time doing individual

activities and there was not an opportunity for cooperative and collaborative learning. These

class characteristics influenced the lack of students' motivation and their misbehavior. Also, it

affected the class environment, and the time management because what was prepared for the

class ended up being taught half of it.

The first factor that affected the discipline is that there were 5 students with ADHD that

created a lot of indiscipline in class. Two of them were usually on their phones, gossiping with

their classmates, screaming, and standing up for everything. While the other two were more

aggressive, they constantly argued with each other. One of them specifically challenged the

teacher's authority saying that everything she explained or proposed as an activity was too easy

and simple, so that is why he said that he did not like to pay attention or to do the activities.

Furthermore, these four students were not the only undisciplined ones. There were other students

who loved to stand up and stare at the window almost all the class, some others that were doing

other subjects' homework, and two or three that were always on the floor picking up their stuff

that was always falling.

The second factor that boosts the lack of discipline was the insufficiency of materials and

how the teacher used them for the explanation and exemplification of the topics. The materials

used for this class were really simple. The teacher used mainly the board for writing the agenda,

some explanations of rules, some sentences and examples. The second main material was a guide

that each grade has for each period during the year. In this guide, you could find explanations of

the topics, a few activities, and some links for extra activities and extra input. This guide was not

graded, and due to this, the students were not motivated to read it and do the proposed exercises.

This situation affected the class and students' performance because when the teacher asked for

doubts about the topics of the guide, or when she wrote some examples on the board, the students

did not understand since they did not have the first input of the guide. When this happened, the

students preferred to do other things rather than pay attention. However, the teacher sometimes

used pieces of cardboard to write some vocabulary and some worksheets to carry out tests.

Unfortunately, the pieces of cardboard activities were pointless, and the worksheets

overwhelmed students so they either asked for the test to be in pairs or they ended up cheating on

the answers. Moreover, the lack of interaction was very visible. The students were almost all the

time doing individual activities. Unfortunately, some of them only went to their friends to copy

the activity because they did not have the motivation to do it by themselves and they were not

having the opportunity to have cooperative and collaborative learning.

Due to these factors, the classroom environment was not that good. The respect of the

students towards the teacher, and the attention towards the class explanations was only seen in a

few of the students. Maybe the ones that did not get bored of the same materials and the same

interactions were the few that did pay attention. Also, the lack of discipline in the class caused

that the time ended up not be enough for the agenda the teacher had for the 50 minutes of class

time.

It is evident that discipline in the classrooms is a huge challenge that if teachers do not

pay attention to it and try to control it, it disrupts the whole class and the future of the

environment. My intention was to facilitate the students' discipline by negotiating and proposing

some procedures and routines that could benefit the class environment. Hence, the first action to

be implemented was to begin building and promoting cooperative and collaborative learning in

students through pair and group work activities. These activities could be dictations, different

workshops with peer revision and flashcards in order to increase the students' motivation. The

second action was focused on the design of a negotiated code of conduct with the students to

foment the group discipline. As part of the code of conduct, a new grading system was created to

motivate the students to participate and have a better classroom environment. Thus, bearing in

mind these class issues, I designed an action research proposal aimed at facilitating students'

discipline by creating some negotiated classroom procedures and routines.

Theoretical background

Discipline is a very common issue that can be found in any educational institution. It has

been a challenging practice for teachers to analyze it and manage it. Teachers and researchers are

trying to find ways to address students' bad behavior but the issue keeps existing in institutions.

Misbehavior can affect the classroom environment and learning process. Almeida Soares (2007)

states that some of the main issues concerning discipline are lack of participation in the class,

absence of attention and deficit of interest in the English lessons (p.42). Thus, in order to

facilitate the students' discipline, it is suggested that building a negotiated code of conduct with

the students is beneficial because it can reduce the discipline problems encountered in the

classroom and it can increase motivation in students (Almeida Soares, 2007, p.42). Also,

Rawlings (2017) illustrates how class routines are the key to have classroom order and save

valuable teaching time (p.398). Furthermore, when students have the possibility to interact

among them, some events like cooperative and collaborative learning can be built in the students.

Chen (2021) states that group work gives the possibility to have interaction among learners and

this promotes an effective cooperation full of communication and trust (p.3). This section will

examine the concepts around *discipline*, its meaning, and also specific strategies implemented to

facilitate an appropriate class environment like *self-regulation, code of conduct, procedural negotiation, cooperative and collaborative learning***.**

Lack of discipline is one problem faced in any classroom in the world. Successful teachers need to develop strategies and practices that favor an appropriate class environment. According to Harmer (1983) (as cited in Rahimo & Karkami 2015, p.59) "discipline is viewed to be associated with the act of teaching students' self-control based on a contract that binds a teacher and a group of students together so that learning can be more effective". Another definition of this concept is illustrated by de Almeida Soares (2007, p.42) citing The Cambridge International Dictionary that consider discipline as "the training which produces obedience or self-control, often in the form of rules and punishments if these are broken, or the obedience or self-control produced by   this   training". Another perspective of this concept according to Tulum (1979) (as cited in Polat et al., 2013, p.885) "discipline is to provide the conditions necessary for expected behavior". Considering these different perspectives of the concept, it could be pointed out that discipline is characterized by a group of attitudes that students should have so the class runs smoothly without interruptions and facilitates a proper learning environment. However, these class conditions suggested by the authors, do not imply that the students are going to act as quiet robots, only that they are going to be able to regulate themselves and favor a good class environment.

Discipline itself can be related to the act of self-regulation in the students. Schunk & Zimmerman (1997) (as cited in Morrison, Ponitz & McClelland 2010, p.203) states that "Selfregulation refers to a complex of acquired, intentional skills involved in controlling, directing, and planning one's cognitions, emotions, and behavior". According to DH Schunk &

Zimmerman (2013, p.60) "People cannot regulate their actions if they are not aware of what they do". This suggests that if students are conscious of their cognitions, emotions and behavior, they can start controlling and regulating these aspects for themselves and then, contribute to a better class environment.

Since students' self-regulation is an attitude that should be developed and requires time and reinforcement to happen, other effective strategies to facilitate the class environment are necessary. Some authors suggest that in order to improve students' discipline, creating a code of conduct can be very useful. This code of conduct is highly important and beneficial to fill in the gap of the class rules and routines. Almeida Soares (2007, p.44) defines it as "A list of guidelines that enables students to know, from the very beginning, what is expected of them and how their performance affects their test score and evaluations" These guidelines are considered as some routines that help students to have a better focus on the class explanations and activities. Paniagua (2017, p.142) defines routines as "teachers' dispositions to organize and manage their lessons in certain ways, stand as the most salient outcome of their institutional habitus". Therefore, the use of a code of conduct helps to control the class environment and to start fading the lack of strictness. Nunan & Lamb (1996) (as cited in Almeida Soares 2007, p.44) states that "we must decide before stepping into the classroom what we expect our students to be doing, and we need to formulate a set of strategies for dealing with situations in which our expectations are not met"

In the process of implementing these routines, there should be a procedural negotiation between the students and the teacher to create the code of conduct. This procedural negotiation is going to facilitate the students' willingness to accept and apply the different rules and routines.

Breen & Littlejohn, 2000 (as cited in Tuan 2011, p.14) define this procedural negotiation as "the discussion between all members of the classroom to decide how learning and teaching are to be organized". Bloor & Bloor, 1988 (as cited in Tuan 2011, p.14) states that "there should be no conflict between the goals of the parties, the teacher's aim being to achieve what is best for the students".

Besides, initiating with the students' fomentation of discipline and interaction, cooperative learning is going to play a significant role as well. This cooperation is going to make possible different types of interaction like pair and group work. Kagan (1994) (as cited in Chen 2021, p.2) defines cooperative learning as "a community activity in which learning was carried out through the exchange of information. Within this framework, team members are responsible for their own knowledge building and facilitating the learning of other team members". Furthermore, Tuan (2010, p.65) states that "Cooperative Learning conspicuously is not simply putting students together in groups and giving them tasks to do, but an environment in which teachers have to guarantee that the subsequent four elements transpire". Kagan (1994) (as cited in Demirel 2019, p.245) asserted four basic principles of Cooperative Learning as "Positive Interdependence, Individual Accountability, Equal Participation, and Simultaneous Interaction". Kagan (1994) (as cited in Tuan 2010) states some definitions for each principle. Concerning positive interdependence, the author states that it is to be mutually reliant on one another. This suggests that each learner has a role and their success in the final goal depends on each of their contributions. Regarding individual accountability, the author explains that it is when all the participants have the same amount of responsibility. In this case, there are not going to be leaders doing everything for the team, on the contrary, all together are going to work the same as hard to finish the given task. Moreover, equal participation implies that all the learners have the same

amount of participation in the process of the work and activities they have to do. Finally, the author states that simultaneous interaction is possible when participants interact with each other, not only with the teacher since discussing with their peers is seen as more beneficial for their learning (p 345-346). These four elements are key for the implementation of cooperative learning in classrooms because when the students have the same amount of responsibility and participation, when they depend and trust in each other, this cooperation can be a success.

On the other hand, collaborative learning is another strategy that can also improve and facilitate discipline and interaction among students. Sumtsova et al. (2018) defines collaborative learning as:

"Students' mutual (distributed) learning which encourages them to work together collectively designing or "producing" new scholastic attainments, rather than absorbing the knowledge provided by the instructor. In this context class assignments are set in such a way that all members of the team become interdependent, but sufficiently autonomous to master the learning material as well as to solve specific problems" (p.161).

Sumtsova et al. (2018) states some benefits of implementing collaborative learning in classrooms:

"Students learn to work in teams and come to a consensus in spite of differing views, cultures or personality traits; students are provided with the opportunity to appreciate various viewpoints and have a critical look at their own understanding of the problem".
(p. 164)

This points out that when students have the opportunity to collaborate among them, they are also learning for the outside world to understand and respect other people's points of views and preferences.

In summary, the negotiated creation of a code of conduct with routines could help to facilitate the students' discipline since it promotes students' self-regulation and collaboration in the class environment. This could be possible due to the fact that the learners are going to start having roles and routines in class that they were not used to and thanks to the negotiation of these procedures, it is going to be more comfortable for the learners to put them into practice. Moreover, the use of cooperative and collaborative learning could be a good way to keep the students' motivation and focus on the class activities because the learners are going to experience and practice English through different interactions which can be very beneficial for their performance and discipline in class.

Research Question

How can the implementation of negotiated classroom procedures and routines facilitate the discipline in a group of high schoolers from the institution Jesus Rey?

Objectives

General objective:
To implement negotiated classroom procedures and routines in order to facilitate the students' discipline

Specific objectives:

- To foster students' discipline by creating a negotiated code of conduct.

- To promote the students' cooperative and collaborative learning through pair and group work activities.

- To encourage a good classroom environment by assigning roles in the class.

Action plan

In order to answer the research question stated for this project, two actions were developed from March to June. The first action was focused on building and promoting cooperative and collaborative learning in students through varied pair and group work activities like workshops, board games, presentations and dictations with peer revision. The second action had the purpose of designing a negotiated code of conduct with the students to foster the group discipline. Some class rules and routines were presented in the classroom to facilitate a better class environment. Besides, as part of the code of conduct, a new grading system was going to be created to motivate the students to participate more and have better behavior in the classroom.

Development of actions

This section describes the actions developed during the implementation of negotiated classroom procedures and routines that were used to facilitate students' discipline.
In February, I was supposed to start with my practicum implementation. However, due to some issues with the school schedule, I began to give classes in March. On March 15th it was my first class. This class was very important because the students had a new classroom special for English lessons. This was beneficial for my implementation since students were seated in groups of four or five so my action of building cooperative and collaborative learning was going to be easier. During my practicum implementation, the topics that I had to teach in this course were based on the English syllabus and suggested by the cooperating teacher and. However, I was in

charge of planning the lessons, explaining these topics and designing the different activities to practice them.

The first action consisted of building cooperative and collaborative learning in the classroom. During the first two months we explored the topic: places in my neighborhood and the city. This topic allowed me to implement different activities to build collaborative and cooperative learning in the class. For instance, the students were arranged in two pairs per table with the purpose of discussing with a classmate about similar places around their real neighborhoods and creating a neighborhood together. So, in this case the learners could help each other with concepts, ideas and practice together with the new vocabulary. Also, I created some groups and gave them worksheets with short texts and some reading and vocabulary activities like true/false or simple questions for them to start analyzing along with their classmates and exchanging information to come up with the answers together as a group. During March, I only had the opportunity to give three classes because the school had a lot of parents' and teachers' meetings during my practicum schedule. Therefore, in the following months, I gave the students as many pair and group activities as I could to build this cooperative and collaborative learning.

The second action consisted of creating a negotiated code of conduct with the students that included some rules, roles, routines, and a new grading system. In march, I started implementing in an informal way some aspects of the code of conduct like the students' roles in the groups and some class routines to start facilitating the students' discipline. However, it was not until April that I finally presented the whole code of conduct with different rules and routines. This code of conduct was created and negotiated with the students as a result of a survey I made in March where I asked them about several aspects like their perspective of the classroom discipline, their own discipline, proposals to improve it, and questions to check their

awareness of respect, responsibility, and motivation in the classroom. Thanks to their different

answers and perspectives, I was able to create a code of conduct with the classroom specific

needs to facilitate the discipline. The class rules negotiated with the students were:

- Each table is going to have a leader in charge of the little group discipline and performance.
- Raise your hand when you want to participate.
- Raise your hand if you have any questions or need help.
- Do not eat in the classroom.
- Do not use the phone for non-academic purposes.
- You can go to the bathroom one student at a time, no more than 4 minutes. Say: can I go to the bathroom please?
- Do not fight with your classmates physically.
- Do not argue with your classmates for unnecessary things.
- Do not stand up from your table for unnecessary reasons.
- Do not talk while the teacher is talking.
- Do not interrupt your classmates when they are talking.
- When you finish the activities, stay at your table and do not disturb the other students.
- Do not scream in the classroom.
- When you participate in oral activities, speak loud and clear.
- Do not do other subjects' activities while we are in English class. ● Do not play with objects in the class.
- Do not disrespect the teacher and your classmates.

Besides, this code of conduct included the implementation of roles and responsibilities for

students. The students had to select a leader per table who was in charge of the small groups'

discipline, of monitoring their peers' work and asking questions to the teacher if the task was not

clear or they needed to clarify instructions. These leaders were going to receive a grade per class,

depending on their performance. Furthermore, I presented the new grading system which mainly

consisted of giving a percentage and grade for the criteria of discipline and participation in the

class. The main purpose of this action was to increase students' motivation to participate and to

behave positively. In this case, their behavior and participation were going to affect or benefit

them for their final grades.

During the whole semester I was reinforcing the different rules, roles and routines all the time, and paying close attention to the students' response, attitude and improvement with this code of conduct. Furthermore, I was taking each opportunity to give them pair and group work activities to promote interaction among them and to monitor their process of building cooperation and collaboration with the tasks they performed.

The last two class sessions were held in June. These last two classes were key for me to check the students' final performance in the last group work activity and the leaders' role in the session, as well as their attitude and application of the code of conduct. So, in these two sessions I could finally see if my actions and strategies facilitated the students' discipline or not.

Findings and interpretations

This study intended to facilitate a group of high schoolers discipline through the implementation of some negotiated classroom procedures and routines. To analyze the data gathered throughout this action research, I cross-checked the data collected through three different instruments: two surveys about students' opinions, impressions and knowledge about discipline, responsibility and activities made in class, one at the beginning and another at the end of the project; some journals with reflections and class report lessons; and two focus group interviews, one for the students that ameliorated their discipline with the implementation of the code of conduct and another for the students that did not change their lack of discipline in a positive way.

To analyze the data, I followed the next steps: first, journal entries were read carefully and later analyzed and categorized in main concepts; second, surveys were applied, analyzed and compared with the journal entries; third, focus group interviews were transcribed, analyzed and

compared with the other two data collection techniques. To triangulate data, First, I designed a recurrence chart to organize categories and subcategories that emerged from the data and from the literature that supported the study. Then, I looked for recurrences in the three main sources of data. Second, I established connections among the recurrences and themes that emerged from the data. Finally, after the triangulation and analysis of categories that occurred from the recurrence chart, I decided to come up with the following final main categories: Building Cooperative and collaborative learning and Effectiveness of classroom procedures and routines in the class.

Building Cooperative and collaborative learning

After finishing with the data analysis process, I noticed that cooperation and collaboration were happening in the class thanks to the new seat arrangement of the students that facilitated the implementation of different pair and group work activities. During the first part of my practicum, each student had their own separate chair and the cooperating teacher did not like to create pair and group activities for them. One of the reasons could be because the classroom was smaller and the students could make a lot of noise by moving their chairs for group activities. Also, this act of moving could create chaos in the classroom since the students took advantage of any situation to play and be undisciplined. So, knowing that this group was considered the noisiest and the most undisciplined in the school according to teachers' meetings, perhaps, group work was not a good idea for the cooperating teacher. However, at the beginning of my practicum, I handed my learners a survey to know about many aspects. One of them was the type of activities and interactions they would like to have in the English sessions. The results showed that 29 out of 36 learners would like to have pair and group work activities. The aforementioned can be evidenced in the analysis of students' responses to the survey, specifically in the question "What

kind of activities would you like to see in class?": "29 learners stated that they would like to have pair and group work activities". (Survey #1, March 16th, 2022).

Therefore, considering that they wanted to have pair and group work activities in the classroom and that the new English classroom was arranged on tables for 4-5 students, I decided to introduce different types of activities. This seating arrangement facilitated promoting interaction through pair and group work. This can be evidenced in the observations I wrote in my journals about the pair activities to check how the students worked together:

"Each table has 2/3 pairs so I go table by table checking the texts, if they have questions or doubts related to vocabulary, order or anything they need. Also, to check that both students write, discuss and practice, not only one for the pair work". (Journal Entry #10th, March 15, 2022)

As a dedicated teacher, I was always monitoring the students to check their learning process and the discipline in the classroom. At first, as part of the actions I was implementing, I designed some pair and group activities to favor class interactions. However, I observed that these types of activities were also favoring the students' ability to come to agreements together, despite their different points of view. Sumtsova et al. (2018) recognize the benefits of collaboration "Students learn to work in teams and come to a consensus in spite of differing views, cultures or personality traits; students are provided with the opportunity to appreciate various viewpoints and have a critical look at their own understanding of the problem". (p. 164)

Thanks to these observations, I found out that the learners were starting to promote collaborative and cooperative learning in their activities. This can be evidenced in the reflections I wrote in my journals about the group activities to check how the students were working collaboratively and cooperatively:

"Each table has 4/5 students so each has to draw two places and mandatory paint them, put their names and the table number that I gave and the beginning of the class. Fortunately, the groups worked really well in general, they were all discussing the places to not repeat, helping themselves with ideas, and drawing and painting". (Journal Entry #16, April 5th, 2022). According to Johnson & Johnson (1994) (as cited in Chen 2021, p.2) cooperative learning has some positive effects "increasing learner retention, building communication and social skills, and developing students' critical thinking abilities". These students seemed to start developing these abilities when working together.

At the end of my practicum, I gave them a second survey to ask about their perspective on the implementation of different activities in the classroom. 28 out of 32 learners expressed that they liked to have pair and group work activities. The aforestated can be evidenced in the analysis of students' responses to the survey, specifically in the question "What kind of activities and interactions did you like in the English class with Susana?": "Almost 100% of the students (28) expressed that they liked having pair and group activities after the practicum implementation".

These answers showed that the learners felt glad about the implementation of different types of interaction in the classroom rather than only individual activities because they have a classmate to help each other during the process of creating and doing activities that might be harder to do alone. They have people to come to when they do not understand something or need help, more than only the teacher's guidance.

In sum, although developing collaborative and cooperative learning were not considered as main goals and actions for this research study, it was possible to see that they were starting to

cooperate and collaborate for a main goal, they were exchanging information, discussing it, and doing the final work together. Kagan (1994) (as cited in Chen 2021, p.2) explains this effect:

"learning is carried out through the exchange of information. Within this framework, team members are responsible for their own knowledge building and facilitating the learning of other team members".

Effectiveness of classroom procedures and routines in the class

As a result of the code of conduct implementation in the classroom, data revealed that this action had a positive influence on the students' discipline and therefore the classroom environment. This main category is going to be divided into three subcategories: effects of the code of conduct, assigning roles in the class, and usefulness of the grading system.

Effects of the code of conduct

As described in the action plan, I designed a code of conduct that intended to facilitate the students' discipline in the classroom. Before implementing this action, the lack of discipline in the class was so visible that there were teachers' meetings to talk about this group and to think about ways to address this problem in a good way.

"It is shocking that the discipline in this particular group is so bad and so big that all teachers are having meetings to talk about it. I hope that together they can come to ideas to improve this lack of discipline" (Journal Entry #6, March 1st, 2022).

Therefore, when I started with my actions' implementation, I began to apply some rules and routines in the class since I considered it could facilitate discipline and influence the learning environment. In the journal observations I explained this idea:

"It is very important to start implementing some routines for the class to run smoothly and with as few interruptions as possible. A good class environment can influence better learning and time management" (Journal entry #16, April 5th, 2022)

Since the first class, I started to implement some rules and routines in an unofficial way. I told the students they had to raise their hands to participate, not stand up at their table to gossip with their classmates, not use a cellphone in the class, and not eat in the classroom. However, it was not until April that I formally presented the negotiated code of conduct that was created thanks to the students' answers to a survey I gave to them. These rules and routines were written on many cardboards and stuck on the wall of the English classroom and also written in their notebook. The purpose of doing this was to have the opportunity to reinforce these rules as frequently as possible to start making it a routine for the students. Since the second week of April when I formally introduced the code of conduct, I began to see positive changes in the students' discipline, they were following some rules without posing a problem. This can be reflected in the following journal observation: "I do not know if it is just me but I saw some changes right away like the one of not standing up on the tables to bother other classmates. Another was that they were asking me to go to the bathroom in English and paying attention when one arrived for the other to go because in one rule it says that one at a time" (Journal entry #25, May 10th, 2022).

At the end of my practicum implementation, I was very satisfied due to the fact that both me and the students' saw an effectiveness in the code of conduct implementation. This can be reflected in the following journal observation:

"I think that the presentation of the code of conduct with the cardboards in the wall was just what was needed for them to put this into practice. When I first started the practicum I right away started to implement some of them but it was a vague reminder. Now that they can go back to

them by looking at the wall, it is just perfect. Now I never see that they do other subjects'

activities, now they never go to the paper store without asking me, when they want to go to the

bathroom they ask me in English and they go once at a time. I can see an improvement because

they are getting used to these routines" (Journal Entry #29, May 31st, 2022).

Moreover, Students expressed that the code of conduct was useful for them. Two focus

group interviews carried out with 8 students in the last session illustrate their opinions about the

benefits of this strategy to improve discipline. To the question "¿Do you think the code of

conduct was useful?" students answered: "Student 3: Yes, the classroom already shows an

impressive change. Student 4: I think the code of conduct has worked because we have improved

as a group". (Focus Group Interview, June 1st, 2022). It can be seen that the students liked the

implementation of this code of conduct with the rules and routines because they have seen an

improvement of the class discipline. I also saw it and it was magnificent. This can be illustrated

in the following students' responses to the question "Do you think the code of conduct was

useful?": "Student 3: Yes, the code of conduct worked because we have improved in our

performance of activities. Also, people know now that to participate they need to raise their hand,

compared to the past when they were all speaking at the same time. Student 1: They worked,

now if they want to go to the bathroom they have to say it in English or they can't go, and they

are doing it, also they are not using the cell phone anymore" (Focus Group Interview, June 1st,

2022)

Gains and challenges of assigning roles in the class

The implementation of the leaders' roles in the classroom had as main purpose to

encourage a good classroom environment. However, this strategy had their benefits and

challenges. Concerning benefits, the implementation of roles had an impact from the very first

class. As it was evidenced in my journal: "The students' roles are being beneficial for the class

discipline and also help the students to be responsible and aware of the class environment"

(Journal Entry #16, April 5th, 2022). During my practicum implementation, I saw that this role of

putting a leader per table was useful, not only for their discipline but also for their performance

in the class activities. Students could help each other to perform a task, solving the doubts they

had about the activities or about the linguistic topics they were working on, as was evidenced in

my journal: "I put some students in charge of their group discipline. In this case, when they

started creating the presentations, they were more focused and disciplined, doing beautiful

cardboards" (Journal Entry #18, April 19th, 2022).

Moreover, in a focus group interview I did with four students, data showed that the use of

roles in the class was a success according to their perspective. The aforementioned can be

evidenced in the students' responses during the focus group interview, specifically in the

question "Do you think the roles that were assigned in the work groups worked?": "Student 1:

they have worked, being a good leader of the table calms those at the table. The leader sets an

example. Student 4: Yes, they have worked because with a leader we work much better, they

make the others behave in a better way" (Focus Group Interview, June 1st, 2022)

Thanks to the monitoring I did during all the classes, I could see that some students did a

good job as leaders and some tables were doing what the leaders said to control the discipline

and the progress of the different activities in the class. Nevertheless, I had some challenges with

the implementation of this action. Every session I asked them to choose one leader per table,

anyone in the group could apply for the role and they would decide the leader if there were two

candidates, if not, the only postulant would be the leader that day. In this case, what happened in

the last sessions was that almost nobody wanted to be the leader since it was difficult sometimes

to control some specific classmates. This challenge about the leader's role can be evidenced in the following student's answer about her perception of the effectiveness of roles: "Student 2: I think they have worked but almost no one at my table wanted to be the leader because it was difficult to control the noise". (Focus Group Interview, June 1ˢᵗ, 2022)

Besides, during the focus group interviews, most of the students stated that they had one difficulty when they had the chance to be leaders, mainly with a specific person in the classroom. Apparently, this specific classmate was very rude with her classmates and never did what the leaders asked her to do. The following students' answers unveil their perception of the effectiveness of the leader's role: "Student 2: I was a leader twice. The biggest difficulty was to silence them, because I was with a classmate who we know who is, she is very talkative and does not stop talking. Student 3: I had issues with the same person who student 2 is referring to, I tried to silence her and it was a problem". (Focus Group Interview, June 1ˢᵗ, 2022)

Usefulness of the grading system

One of the main successes in this practicum implementation was the creation of a new grading system. This new grading system consisted mainly of giving a percentage of the grades for the criteria of discipline and participation in the English subject. I was also going to give grades for all the class activities, not only for homework. In this case, I observed the participation and discipline during the whole practicum implementation. In the discipline aspect, if they were undisciplined, I wrote observations in the discipline book and gave them a bad grade in that class, or if they did not do the class activities, I gave them a bad grade. This was a huge motivation for them because they realized that their behavior and participation could influence their grades and may have good or bad consequences.

"A few minutes before finishing the class, I saw that basically all the students wrote the sentences very studiously. However, I saw two students that did not do anything. I said to them that they had those 5 minutes or they were going to have a bad grade so they started right away doing it. It shows that only with a few scary words they can have the extra motivation to do things and it shows that the teacher is not good with deadlines". (Journal entry #15, March 30th, 2022)

In terms of the grades assigned for discipline, I had a specific problem with a student that did not believe that I was going to write an observation in the discipline book for his bad behavior. However, when he saw I was being serious about this decision, he changed his attitude. And the rest of the students that might not believe me also recognized that I was firm in my decision. "I was monitoring the whole class to see that they were doing what they were supposed to. One of the students was always on the phone. So, at the third wakeup call I told him that it was time for an observation in the book, he was like "oh no, please do not do it, I am going to do the posters right now. But, it was too late for him. This student was not believing in my role or command, but, after the annotation, he completely changed" (Journal Entry #18, April 19th, 2022)

After this first uncomfortable situation, the students began to change. As was evidenced in my journal: "Some students were talking a lot so I told them that I was going to write observations if they were still doing it. They got it and changed it" (Journal Entry #21, April 26th, 2022). Thanks to this action, I could also see that the students were being more aware of their discipline and they started to self-regulate in order to improve their grades.

"This new grading system has been working a lot. In the past where participation and discipline was not seen as a grade, they did not care about going to the board, paying attention and staying

quiet and judicious. Now, I can see that they are aware of this and they are motivated for these new grades". (Journal Entry #27, May 24th, 2022)

Due to the fact that the activities in class also had a grade, their commitment was much more visible because they wanted to participate more and carry out the activities. The following journal observation reflected this aspect: "It is good when they see that the activities that we have during the class are worth it. That they really have a grade. When I gave them portfolios with the grades, they were happy, motivated to do more things. Some of them told me, what is for today? I want another 5". (Journal Entry #28, May 25th, 2022)

During our last session, I had two focus group interviews where I asked them about their opinion of the percentage for participation and discipline. It was very important for me to know what they thought about it. Fortunately, all of them told me they liked it since it promoted more participation and a better class environment. The aforesaid can be evidenced in the answers of some students during the focus group interviews, specifically in the question "What do you think about participation and discipline being part of the final grade of the course?": "Student 1: I think it is very good because we participate more and we get scared of annotations. Student 4: I like it because people participate more and try to behave better for the grade". (Focus Group Interview, June 1st, 2022)

In sum, it was found that this research project had an impact on the students' discipline and performance in the classroom. The implementation of the code of conduct made the classroom environment a better place for the teaching and learning practice. Besides, thanks to the strategy of assigning grades for discipline and participation, the students got more engaged with their participation and performance with the different kinds of activities made in the classroom. Moreover, the implementation of the grading system created a sense of the students'

self-regulation with their own behavior since they were aware how their discipline could affect

their learning process and grading aspect. Furthermore, the strategy of assigning roles in the

classroom was very effective but at the same time it was difficult to choose leaders in some

specific tables due to some classmates' attitudes. Finally, the implementation of different

interactions in the classroom like pair and group work facilitated collaboration and cooperation

among the students and made it easier for them to carry out their activities.

Conclusions and suggestions

This action research was carried out with the purpose of facilitating discipline by

implementing negotiated classroom procedures and routines in a group of high schoolers. The

results suggest that learners significantly improved their behavior in the classroom setting thanks

to the creation of the code of conduct. This code of conduct which included the different rules

and routines gave the path for the students to follow and be aware of what they should do to

contribute to a better classroom environment. Besides, the implementation of roles in the

classroom was a possibility for students to start having responsibilities in the groups and try to

use their strengths to manage their group's discipline.

Additionally, the application of a new grading system in the English subject was very

profitable for the students' participation and discipline in general. Thanks to this, they began to

self-regulate their behavior and attitude towards the subject in order to get good grades in aspects

they never thought were going to matter for the English final grade.

Furthermore, building cooperative and collaborative learning was a success due to the

new seating arrangement in the new English classroom. At the beginning of my practicum, this

was not even an action I considered to build or implement. However, over time, I saw that the

new interactions that I fostered in the classroom like pair and group work began to facilitate this

cooperative and collaborative learning, so I could not miss the opportunity to promote these types of learning that I consider can be very profitable for the students' future.

Nevertheless, there were some issues with the implementation of these actions. One of them was the selection of the students' roles where sometimes nobody wanted to be the leader. Besides, I consider that the time that I had during the practicum was also an issue because some actions that I had prepared before the implementation could not be carried out due to the lack of time. Leaving that aside, I would like to suggest more investigation about the different strategies that were implemented, in order to improve the use of this code of conduct with all its components and also the implementation of collaborative and cooperative learning in the classrooms.

To conclude, I would like to suggest the implementation of a negotiated code of conduct as I consider it a highly effective and positive tool that helps students to facilitate mainly their discipline, but also their self-regulation, participation, responsibility and awareness of their learning process. Moreover, building cooperative and collaborative learning can be just the key to improve and facilitate the students' learning since working with peers can mitigate the difficulties students may encounter in their school process. Besides, it can help them to acknowledge and respect different points of views when they exchange information, and divide the different responsibilities to reach the final goal together.

Reflection

Reflecting on the practicum, I have to recognize that it was a challenging experience for me since it was my first time teaching at a school. Besides, this was my first experience teaching to youngsters, 40 to be exact and it was not an easy task. During the first part of my practicum,

this group of 40 students was broken into two groups due to contingency rules of COVID. However, during the second semester of my practicum, where I was going to start being the head teacher and not only observing like the first part of the practicum, the contingency was over and the two groups became a big noisy one.

When I first met the students, I noticed that the main issue was discipline without a doubt. This classroom environment was a mess, it was that bad that the group was known as the most undisciplined group of the school. Thus, I knew I needed to do something to address this issue. I came up with three actions which were a little different from the ones I ended up implementing. This occurred due to the lack of time and some issues with the school availability during my schedule for the sessions. However, I managed to adjust these actions in my favor and within the allotted time in order to have a decent and profitable practicum implementation.

In spite of the fact that it was a big challenge to work with this group, my implementation of actions had a positive impact on these learners. At the end of my practicum, I was really happy to see that the code of conduct facilitated in a way the discipline, the participation and their motivation with the English subject.

I am very grateful to my cooperating teacher, she was a huge help in this process and she helped me understand my students and the context that I was getting into. Besides, there were some students that I will remember with love and appreciation since they were very kind to me and made me feel welcome during this process. I am also very grateful to the school for allowing me to have my practicum experience since they helped me and gave me time and space for doing anything I consider right in the implementation.

Finally, after living this challenging experience, I consider that being an educator is a huge responsibility, it demands time, effort and discipline. Although this was a hard context and experience for the practicum experience, I am certain that being a teacher is what I like and what I want to be after I finish my undergraduate.

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