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Opportunities and Challenges that Class Agreements Bring to Lowering Fifth Graders'
Disruptive Behavior

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Abstract

This action research aimed at identifying the opportunities and challenges on classroom agreements that may be implemented to diminish students' disruptive behavior in class and improving their behavioral engagement. It was conducted in a public school in Rionegro, Antioquia with 26 fifth graders. Action strategies included involvement of students in the creation of classroom agreements which helped them reflect about their own behavior in class. Data gathering instruments included teacher's journal, students' reflections, and a focus group. Findings referred to the opportunity of how classroom agreements helped some students become aware of their own behavior to self-regulate and encourage other classmates to regulate themselves, and the challenge of how recognizing classroom agreements represented an issue for some students who continued misbehaving and self-regulated was perceived only after receiving a reward.

Keywords: Disruptive behavior, behavioral engagement, classroom agreements, self-regulation.

Título del proyecto: Oportunidades y desafíos que los acuerdos de clase brindan para disminuir el comportamiento disruptivo de los estudiantes de quinto grado.

Degree requirement

This action research project is submitted as a requirement to obtain a bachelor's degree in foreign language education (English- French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, El Carmen de Viboral, Colombia.

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Preface

I am a student of foreign languages teaching program from a public university in Antioquia, Colombia. I embarked on a research endeavor to explore the opportunities and challenges surrounding the implementation of class agreements in managing disruptive behavior among fifth graders. I was motivated by a commitment to humanistically examine students' behavior in young learners within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context and how that affected language acquisition. This study spanned from late January to late November 2023 in a public school in Rionegro, Antioquia. Observing a group of 26 fifth graders. This research project is tailored for educators who recognize the pivotal role of student's behavior, engagement, and self-regulation in shaping teaching practices. By examining the dynamics of behavioral engagement and disruptive behaviors through the lens of class agreements, this study aimed at contributing with valuable insights to the effective pedagogical strategies for fifth-grade classrooms.

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Rionegro, Antioquia, November 30th, 2023

Description of the Context

The institution where this action research was carried out was a rural public school, located in the countryside of Rionegro, Antioquia (Colombia). The school's mission was to promote the integral and inclusive development of students as well as to promote the development of skills in basic, citizenship, and labor competencies. As for the vision, the school wanted to be recognized as an educational entity that promoted the development of cooperative relations between the members of the educational community, industrial and tourist development of the region (Institución 2022).

Concerning the English class, it was a 5th grade level and lessons were three hours per week. The main guidelines for the development of the objectives, contents and competencies for the school year were based on the Basic Learning Rights (Derechos Básicos de Aprendizaje) by Ministerio de Educación Nacional (MEN hereafter). The predominant methodology was Direct Method in which its focus was on learning the language through visual aids, sounds or demonstrations to illustrate meaning, as well as props, images, or gestures were used to incorporate the words or concepts. Besides, listening, pronunciation and repetition were prioritized to learn how the language is used.

Participants in this study included 26 students, whose ages ranged between 10 and 13. Most of them were middle-low class students and came from the urban areas in Rionegro. They liked to learn English through videos, stories, role plays and in teamwork. Regarding my cooperating teacher (CT), she held a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with English Emphasis. She had thirty years of teaching experience, four of them in the current institution (CT's personal communication, February 7, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

After the observation period, I evidenced how common students' misbehavior was during all activities in the class. There were indications of the lack of opportunities for students to feel as part of the class and limitations for creating a safe and calm environment which negatively affected students' behavior toward EFL classes.

Establishing a safe learning environment in primary schools is essential for fostering effective education and promoting the well-being of students. However, numerous challenges can impede the creation of such an environment for these fifth graders, leading to disruptive and noisy behaviors that disturb classmates as well as the dynamic of English class. As seen in the observation period and reported in the research journal, students were frequently seen screaming, yelling and making all kinds of noises in class (journal entries August 8, 9, 16, 23, 30, September 6, 12, 13, 19, 20, 26, 27, October 18, 24, 25, November 4, 8 2022, February 9, 16 March 1, 2, 8, 10, 16, 17 2023). According to Johnson (2017), excessive noise often takes the form of exuberant screaming, especially when students become enthusiastic and eager to partake in various classroom activities. Noise can be a disruptive element, hindering students' ability to hear instructions and engage in meaningful interactions with their peers as was the case in this classroom.

The classroom environment was marked by student disruptions and a lack of discipline, characterized by challenges to teachers, disruptive behavior, tardiness, and distractions. They were also distracted most of the time looking at the window waiting for people to pass by or looking at the ceiling. It was also common to see some students

entering the class late, and some students left the classroom without permission several times, some other students tended to take longer time to finish activities because they preferred to talk with each other, draw or do assignments from other subjects or doing other subjects assignments (Journal entries, August 8, 9, 16, 23, 30, September 6, 12, 13, 19, 20, 26, 27, October 18, 24, 25, November 4,8 2022, February 9, 16 March 1, 2, 8, 10, 16, 17 2023), All these conducts were making it difficult for the teacher to maintain control and create a calm atmosphere for teaching and learning. These disruptive behaviors not only hinder the learning process but also contribute to a negative classroom climate that can have detrimental effects on students' academic performance and overall development. To address these challenges and create an optimal learning environment, it is crucial for educators to understand the underlying causes and implement strategies that promote a safe and supportive atmosphere.

Additionally, the lack of common rules for safe and calm classroom behaviors or the minimum ground expectations for students to act respectfully in class was evident. For example, it was noted that some boys would deliberately get up and bother their classmates during lessons, often going over to peer at their classmates' work, purposefully attempting to divert their attention away from the assigned activities. Furthermore, there were instances where these boys would playfully touch their partners' heads, further interrupting the learning environment. These situations disrupted the flow of the class and distracted others from their learning (Journal entries February 9, 16 March 1, 2, 8, 10, 16, 17 2023). Such types of disruptive behaviors can significantly impact the learning atmosphere by impeding concentration, interrupting lessons, and disrupting the overall flow of classroom

activities (Smith & Peterson, 2019). Furthermore, all this not only affected their own learning but also distracted their peers, who may find it difficult to focus and participate actively in the lessons.

To summarize, the major issue identified in this context was the high tolerance for disruptive behaviors, excessive noise, and misbehaviors that bother and disturb classmates' learning process and the class dynamic. Nonetheless, the possibility of implementing strategies that promoted positive behaviors and conduct could mitigate these challenges and establish an environment that supported optimal learning experiences for all students. By addressing misbehavior through classroom agreements and encouraging positive interactions, the classroom atmosphere can be transformed into a conducive space for learning and personal growth.

Theoretical Background

This section presents the foundational concepts that underpin the present study. To begin, I provide an explanation of the terms, disruptive behavior, and behavioral engagement. Subsequently, I offer a conceptualization of classroom agreements as well as the student's role in the classroom, and the benefits of their implementation. Next, I provide the class structure by using Task-Based Learning (TBL) as the teaching approach to be implemented in class. Lastly, I correlated how the implementation of some Classroom Agreements could lead to diminishing disruptive behavior present in this group.

The first concept to address is that of *Disruptive behavior*, which pertains to actions that interrupt the classroom environment during instruction. Porter (2000), Silva and Neves

(2007), and Dobmeier and Moran (2008) contribute to its conceptual understanding. Such behavior encompasses actions hindering the teaching-learning process, such as shouting out, off-topic conversations, learning-obstructing activities, disengagement, talking during instruction, provocations, attention diversion, and unauthorized seat changes, impacting the learning environment and negatively affecting the learning experience. Likewise, teachers' misattribution and rushed responses to behavioral incidents, highlighted by Kuhlenschmidt and Layne (1999), are underscored. Such behaviors hamper overall learning and necessitate balanced, thoughtful intervention strategies to preserve a conducive learning atmosphere and foster decision-making.

Furthermore, the harmful effects of disruptive behavior extend beyond individual learners to impact the collective classroom dynamic. The Institution of Education Sciences (IES, 2008) accentuates its potential to create chaotic environments obstructing learning for all students. The possible factors for such actions include diverse student backgrounds, inadequate classroom management, teacher experience, and teaching strategies used. Mitigating disruptive behavior necessitates multifaceted solutions and the formulation of prevention and intervention strategies to ensure appropriate classroom conduct, with individualized and class-wide teaching methodologies.

The second concept that shapes this action research is *Behavioral Engagement* which is one of the three dimensions of the broader concept of *engagement* stated by Fredricks et al. (2004). They categorize engagement into behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions but to attain the objectives of this study, focus was placed only on the behavioral dimension. This dimension is also subdivided into three actions -positive

conduct, involvement in learning academic tasks, and mode of students' involvement in school-related activities. Nevertheless, due to the disruptive behavioral issues identified in the context of this research, attention was placed on *positive conduct* only, which involves dealing with disruptive behavior amongst other actions (Finn et al., 1995). Additionally, as illustrated by Skinner et al. (2009) behavioral engagement seeks for students' visible involvement and active participation in academic endeavors within the classroom. This encompasses behaviors like attentiveness, consistent adherence to classroom protocols and norms, involvement in learning tasks, and sustained focus on academic tasks. Hence, this action research concentrates on behavioral engagement, namely positive conduct, aiming at diminishing the level of students' disruptive behavior and enhancing positive classroom dynamics.

Regarding the conceptualization of Classroom Agreements, as described by Newbould (2018), it is a collaborative and negotiated set of rules and expected behaviors established between the teacher and students at the beginning of a course or semester. It outlines the ideal practices and conduct for both students and the teacher within the classroom environment. Newbould (2018) also establishes a set of steps for creating and implementing classroom agreements, which are described as follows:

1. **Brainstorming and Discussion:** The teacher divides the class into groups, where students brainstorm and discuss the qualities they expect from both students and teachers. This step encourages students to think about their learning expectations and ideal classroom behaviors.

2. Introduction of the Concept: The teacher introduces the concept of a “contract” or “agreement” as a set of ideal practices that benefit both parties—students and the teacher. Students are made to understand that it is a mutual commitment to creating a conducive learning environment.
3. Creating the Agreement: Students work together in groups to draft the Classroom Agreement based on the qualities of good students and teachers identified earlier. The agreement can include expectations regarding attendance, homework, classroom behavior, and other relevant aspects of the learning process.
4. Negotiation and Finalization: The teacher and students negotiate the inclusion of each point in the final contract. While some points are non-negotiable, others may be discussed and adjusted.
5. Signing and Display: Once the contract is finalized, all students and the teacher sign the document. It is then prominently displayed in the classroom, either on the wall or digitally, serving as a visual reminder of the agreed-upon classroom practices.

Newbould (2018) further explains that students play an active role in shaping the rules and guidelines for the learning environment. They are encouraged to voice their expectations and actively participate in the negotiation process. Students take ownership of the agreement, and their signatures represent their commitment to follow the agreed-upon practices. Now, referring to the benefits of implementing classroom agreements, Newbould (2018) suggests that it increases engagement, as students are involved in the creation of a conducive learning environment; it enhances ownership and accountability, fostering a sense of responsibility; it promotes autonomy and agency; it contributes to community

building, where the creation of an agreement together helps to build a sense of community within the classroom; and it promotes conflict resolution skills as the agreement can serve as a tool that provides a shared reference for addressing classroom behavior issues.

Another concept to address refers to the teaching approach implemented in this action research, namely Task-Based Learning; clarifying that it was not considered in the research question or objectives, but it was used to attempt to give order and coherence to the lessons. This approach, as described by Nunan (2004), revolves around placing the learner at the center of the educational experience, it tailors students' specific needs and diverse backgrounds, addresses learners' communicative needs, and views language as a vehicle for communication. Moreover, the use of engaging tasks, which are interesting, innovative, and enjoyable favors interaction and cooperative work. In terms of task implementation, TBL follows a three-stage cycle proposed by Willis (1996): pre-task, task cycle, and post-task. During the *pre-task stage*, the teacher assesses learners' prior knowledge of the topic, introduces a similar task to help them understand the task instructions and prepare for it, and the vocabulary practice is done. In the *task cycle stage*, learners perform real-world tasks under the guidance of the teacher. This stage involves active language use and exposure, as students engage in the task in front of their peers. The third and final stage is the *post-task or language focus stage*, where students have opportunities to analyze and practice specific linguistic features; and to clarify and explore new language concepts that emerged during the previous stages.

In summary, the implementation of classroom agreements could represent an opportunity for students to identify and understand their behavior and how it impacts the

environment of EFL lessons, therefore the possibilities to diminish students' disruptive behavior can increase. Hence students can have more meaningful learning experiences and cultivate a more conducive learning atmosphere.

Research Question

What are the opportunities and challenges that the creation of class agreements can bring to the lowering of fifth graders' disruptive behavior?

General Objective

To analyze opportunities and challenges that the creation of class agreements brings to the lowering of fifth graders' disruptive behavior.

Specific Objectives

1. To establish the behaviors students can change or improve when involved in the decision-making process of classroom agreements.
2. To determine the way in which this group of students learn to internalize and adhere to the class agreements, and the impact of this internalization on their disruptive behavior.

Action Plan

The action plan was designed based on the 5 steps suggested by Newbould (2018) and applied over a period of three months. The first step was brainstorming and discussion about the classroom environment and how students' disruptive behaviors affected the class dynamic. The purpose of this action was to encourage students to think critically about the qualities they expected from both students and teachers and, at the same time to identify and understand the specific disruptive behaviors that were negatively impacting the

classroom dynamic. The second step was an introduction of the concepts of “contract” or “agreement” as a set of ideal practices that benefit both parties—students and the teacher. The goal of this action was to establish a clear and mutually beneficial contract or agreement between students and the teacher, outlining ideal practices that enhance the educational experience for both parties. The third action was creating the agreements that included expectations regarding attendance, homework, classroom behavior, and other relevant aspects of the learning process. The objective of this action was to formalize and document agreements that clearly define expectations for classroom behavior, and other pertinent aspects, promoting a shared understanding and commitment among students and the teacher. The fourth step was negotiation and finalization of the agreements that were to be followed in class. This action aimed at facilitating a negotiation process that allowed students and the teacher to reach a consensus on the final agreements, ensuring that they are acceptable and feasible for all parties involved. In the fifth step, signing and display, students and teachers agreed to sign the list of agreements and displayed it in the classroom to create a visible classroom commitment to reinforce a shared sense of responsibility and accountability for maintaining a positive learning environment. Additionally, the strategy of using a stoplight to measure students’ behaviors in class was also implemented.

The data was collected through the teacher’s journal, students’ written reflections and a focus group. The journal was written and codified weekly; the written reflections and the focus group were transcribed and codified as well.

Development of Actions

The development of some actions in this project was hindered by time constraints due to school academic and extracurricular issues but it was possible to implement all actions.

1. **Brainstorming and Discussion:** The teacher divided the class into groups, where students brainstormed and discussed the qualities they expect from both students and teachers. This step encouraged students to consider their learning expectations and ideal classroom behaviors. For this, I gave them some examples by applying a recognition activity using their own behavior as examples.
2. **Introduction of the Concept:** The teacher introduced the concept of a “contract” or “agreement” as a set of ideal practices that benefit both parties—students and the teacher. Students were meant to understand that a contract is a mutual commitment to creating a conducive learning environment. I could not fully incorporate the explanation of these concepts because I did not provide students with an in-depth exploration of these concepts because I believed it wasn't suitable for a class-wide implementation.
3. **Creating the Agreement:** Students worked together in groups to draft the Classroom Agreement based on the qualities of good students and teachers identified earlier. The agreement included expectations regarding attendance, homework, classroom behavior, and other relevant aspects of the learning process. In this part, I provided students with markers to write the agreements they discussed on the board to vote and choose eight principal agreements.

4. Negotiation and Finalization: The teacher and students negotiated the inclusion of each point in the final contract. While some points are non-negotiable, others may be discussed and adjusted. To implement this step, I let students explain those agreements and we all had a talk to prioritize the ones that may be more important in class or dismiss the ones that may be irrelevant or repetitive.
5. Signing and Display: Once the contract was finalized, all students and the teacher signed the document. It was then prominently displayed in the classroom. To make this signing more significant, I used some papers in various colors to write every agreement and then we all together stuck them on the wall next to the board to be constantly seen and remained by the students.

Finally, with the intention of exploring student behaviors and their cognitive reflections, four distinct inquiries were employed. These included questions such as, "How can I enhance my classroom conduct?" and "Did I adhere to the agreements? Why or why not?" The questions were conspicuously displayed on the chalkboard, prompting students to write their responses onto pieces of paper, ensuring identification with their respective names. This practice unequivocally showcased a profound level of self-reflection and awareness concerning their actions and behaviors.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed by following the stages proposed by Burns (2010): Assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretations, and reporting the outcomes. I assembled data and stored it in different folders. To assign sub-codes and codes to the data I followed the strategy of 'process-coding' proposed by Saldaña (2015). Then, I

organized the codes and subcodes in an Excel chart identifying categories to understand the codes easily. After that, I compared the categories to find similarities and contradictions and propose themes. Later, I built the interpretations making a contrast with the theory to corroborate the findings. Finally, I reported the outcomes in a written report.

Findings and Interpretations

This study aimed to analyze opportunities and challenges that the creation of class agreements brings to lowering fifth graders' disruptive behavior. The analysis of the data resulted in one opportunity and one challenge. On the one hand, the opportunity related to how creating classroom agreements helped some students become aware of their own behavior to self-regulate and encourage other classmates to regulate themselves. On the other hand, the challenge found referred to how recognizing classroom agreements represented an issue for some students who continued misbehaving and they only self-regulated after receiving a reward. In the following paragraphs I explain each of the above findings.

Opportunity

Creating Classroom Agreements Helped Some Students Become Aware of their Own Behavior to Self-regulate and Encourage other Classmates to Regulate Themselves

Data demonstrated that students become aware of their behavior at certain moments and with certain activities. Students could demonstrate that they recognized what they agreed upon as a positive environment, creating a community where students have a safe learning environment; Moreover, agreements recognition helped students to self-regulate

and motivated them to help their partners to regulate themselves, these behaviors were observed through students written reflections. To illustrate, students were expressing in their texts, their desire to follow the agreements as follows.

Figure 1

Student #7 written reflection #2, August 10th, 2023

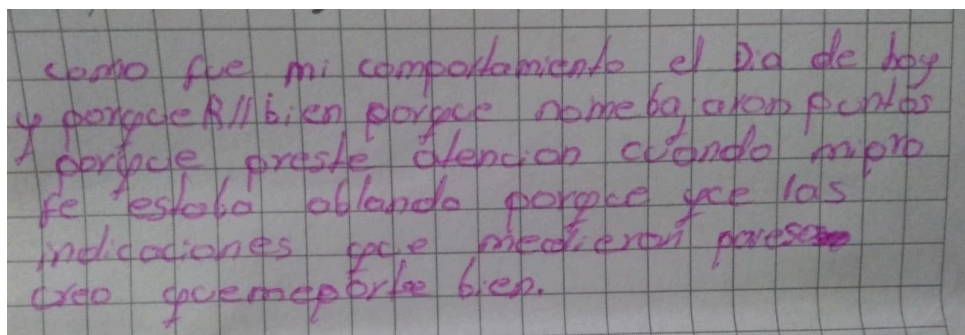
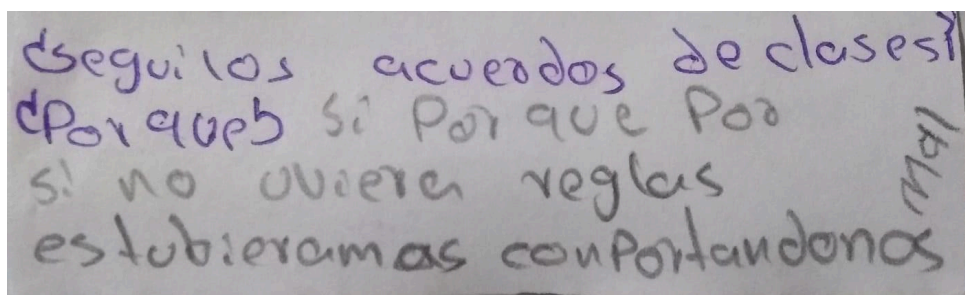


Figure 2

Student written reflection #4, October 4th, 2023



These excerpts show that students become aware of their own actions in class regarding their behavior based on classroom agreements and highlight the importance of the creation of rules in the classroom and a behavioral contract. According to Newbould

(2018) the benefits of implementing classroom agreements suggest an increase in students' engagement, and enhancement of ownership and accountability. Becoming aware and self-regulating shows a sense of responsibility, autonomy, and agency.

Data analysis also revealed that as students become aware of their behavior, it also permitted students to lend a hand to their classmates when realize of partner's continuous disruptive behavior. It happened at certain moments and with certain activities in the class particularly when their grades or points were affected, as with the stoplight. This heightened awareness, particularly triggered by reflections on collectively established classroom agreements, fostered a positive and communal learning environment. The recognition of these agreements not only contributed to a sense of community but also played a fundamental role in students' self-regulation. This self-awareness motivated students not only to regulate their own behavior but also to assist their peers in doing so, as reflected in the journal entries. To illustrate, during the lessons some students were expressing their desire to follow the agreements and also asked their classmates to do the same

[...] in this moment, some students were disrupting the class, but one student said “que se sienten, hagan silecio pues! ¡vean donde va el semáforo!”

(Journal entry #8, October 4th 2023)

[...] when developing the task, I overheard some students telling their partners to hush and pay attention. (Journal entry #6, October 13th, 2023)

These excerpts corroborate how students were calling their partners' attention to regulate discipline in the classroom as they realized the stoplight was lowering and diminishing their points as the stoplight is linked with classroom agreements accomplishment. Based on the benefits of the creation of classroom agreements Newbould (2018) proposed, the fact that students help each other's control disruptive behavior, this contributes to community building, and acknowledgment of the agreement in this classroom served as a tool to address classroom behavior issues. Furthermore Skinner et al. (2009) established that when students help to lowering disruptive behavior in class, it contributes to increase attentiveness and consistent adherence to classroom protocols and norms.

Data analysis further unveiled that as students gained insight into their conduct, it empowered them to actively support their peers upon recognizing persistent disruptive behavior from their partners. These instances were noticeable during specific moments and activities in the classroom. To illustrate, when asked about what they learned from the creation of classroom agreements in the focus group, one student commented. Hacer silencio. Y para mejorar el de mis compañeros, que la mamá le diga que en la casa arreglamos. Decirles que no hablen tanto (Max's opinion, focus group, October 18th 2023)

This piece of evidence unveiled the students desire for a quieter environment and suggested involving parents in reinforcing behavioral expectations at home. These remarks from the focus group align with the idea that creating and adhering to classroom agreements contribute to community building. The shared responsibility established through such agreements serves as a reference point for conflict resolution, as evidenced by

students' suggestions for self-regulation and peer encouragement. The insights from Newbould (2018) highlight the benefits of involving students in the creation of classroom agreements. The author specifies that this participatory approach not only increases engagement but also cultivates a conducive learning environment. Furthermore, it fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among students, promoting a heightened awareness of their behavior.

Challenge

Recognizing Classroom Agreements Represented an Issue for Some Students who Continued Misbehaving and they Only Self-regulated after Receiving a Reward

Data analysis brought to light that, despite the recognition of classroom agreements aiding some students in gaining awareness of their disruptive behavior, a notable subgroup of students continued to exhibit systematic misbehavior during different activities of the section. Intriguingly, for this fifth-grade group, self-regulation manifested primarily in response to external rewards, such as extra points to improve grades. The acknowledgment of classroom agreements appeared to serve as a trigger, prompting self-awareness, but sustained self-regulation was observed predominantly when a reward system was in place. This finding underscores the diverse nature of student responses to behavioral interventions, with some relying on external incentives for sustained positive conduct, leading to self-regulation within the classroom setting. To exemplify students commented in the focus group some reflections about how the possibility to earn points influenced their behavior for positive or negative outcomes. Portarse bien, porque nos debemos portar bien

para que no nos bajen 10 puntos. (Student 'Bieber' opinion, Focus group, October 18th, 2023); No tanto, pero si he mejorado un poquito, prestando más atención para que no nos bajen los puntos (Student 'Macarena' opinion, Focus group, October 18th, 2023)

These pieces of evidence unveiled that students are aware of their misbehavior, and have some little intentions to self-regulate, but still, they do not feel motivated enough to modify it unless they get some sort of evaluative stimulus or any other academic incentive.

Opposite to what Skinner et al. (2009) and Finn et al. (1995) stated about positive conduct, which involves students' active participation in academic endeavors within the classroom and consistent adherence to classroom protocols and norms, none of these behaviors were identified in this groups of fifth graders. Students' misbehavior continued systematically affecting the environment of the class.

Moreover, the data analysis confirmed the hypothesis that students became aware of their behavior only during specific moments and activities which involved constant teacher warnings and reminders of conduct improvement in the classroom. Conversely, an additional insight indicated that the introduction of rewards, such as extra points in their final grade, served as a potent incentive, encouraging some students to ameliorate disruptive behavior. These findings highlight the strategies that contribute to a conducive and cooperative learning atmosphere. To exemplify, the journal entries reported the instances in which students were participating actively, but there showed-up overstimulation on them, it caused disorder in the classroom. [...] I noticed that students are motivated to participate in some activities, but their usual misbehavior appears, and they

constantly scream to say any opinion. (Journal entry #2, August 9th, 2023); [...] When I raised my voice to request order, students followed instructions for a brief period of time. It is evident they do not like being hushed or told-off. (Journal entry 2, August 10th, 2023)

Additionally, when students were asked about their thoughts about classroom agreements working or not and the possible reasons why, students commented in the focus group their reflections about how they continued misbehaving even though they were receiving a reward. The following excerpts exemplify this issue. Macarena: Más o menos, porque no nos portamos bien, no callamos la jeta; Teo: Si. No, usted nos dice que silencio y seguimos hablando. Ángel: Profe, yo digo que más o menos. Es que usted nos baja puntos (Focus group, October 18th, 2023).

Additionally, to the question related to how their behavior improved or not in class and the possible reasons why, students commented in the focus group.

Macarena: No tanto, pero si he mejorado un poquito, prestando más atención para que no nos bajen los puntos.

Bieber: Si, un poquito, portándonos bien, mejor, haciendo silencio, dejar hablar la profesora. (Focus group, October 18th, 2023)

These excerpts show that students demonstrated a high level of consciousness of their misbehavior, such as shouting out, off-topic conversations, learning-obstructing activities, disengagement, talking during instruction, provocations, attention diversion, and unauthorized seat changes; and what they exactly did wrong, but in the same way, their behavior did not have a noticeable improvement and what is more, some students were

indifferent to any type of reward. Based on what Porter (2000), Silva and Neves (2007), and Dobmeier and Moran (2008) proposed about disruptive behavior, it was evident in this group of students that their actions negatively hindered the teaching-learning process.

Furthermore, the analysis of the data showed that students in the follow-up focus group sessions were engaged in reflective discussions that delved into the challenges associated with recognizing and adhering to classroom agreements. It emerged that some students struggled with consistently abiding by these agreements, leading to disruptive behavior. The discussions illuminated a pattern exhibiting self-awareness primarily in response to external motivators, particularly rewards. Students openly acknowledged that the introduction of rewards, such as additional points in their final grade, played a crucial role in triggering self-regulation. The focus group conversations highlighted the significance of external incentives in prompting reflective practices among students, shedding light on the relationship between recognition of classroom agreements and the impact of positive reinforcement on fostering self-discipline within the educational setting.

Based on what Newbould (2018) proposed, sheds light on challenges in implementing classroom agreements. Despite collaborative efforts, some students struggled to consistently adhere to these agreements, resulting in ongoing disruptive behavior. The discussions corroborated students facing adherence challenges, showed heightened self-awareness triggered by external motivators, particularly rewards. While some acknowledged the role of incentives in promoting self-regulation, others remained indifferent. These insights underscore the intricate dynamics between recognizing

classroom agreements and external motivators, providing nuanced understanding within the educational setting.

Conclusions and Implications

This action research had the purpose of analyzing opportunities and challenges that the creation of class agreements could bring to lowering fifth graders' disruptive behavior. From the data analysis, I could conclude one opportunity related to how creating classroom agreements helped some students become aware of their own behavior to self-regulate and encourage other classmates to regulate themselves; and a challenge dealing with how the recognition of classroom agreements represented an issue for some students who continued misbehaving and they only self-regulated after receiving a reward.

In addition, this research project entailed one major implication for teachers' practice in this context. This implication is that teachers should promote a safe learning environment, where students have a sense of respect for the teacher as for their partners to make a meaningful and reflective classroom. In that sense, when promoting a respectful classroom atmosphere, attention must be paid to establishing a consistent framework for behavior, acknowledging and rewarding positive actions, and addressing disruptive conduct with fair consequences are essential. Recognizing the individual needs of each student, incorporating inclusive classroom practices, and collaborating with parents are crucial elements. Additionally, integrating social-emotional learning into the curriculum can enhance students' self-regulation and interpersonal skills, contributing to a more harmonious and meaningful classroom experience.

This project provided a better understanding of the effects of creating classroom agreements in an EFL classroom and how it contributes to identifying relevant factors related to students' disruptive behavior. It also fostered a positive and respectful learning environment by establishing clear behavioral norms collaboratively. It empowered students, encouraged open communication, and addressed disruptive behavior effectively. These agreements contributed to a sense of community, enhanced teacher-student relationships, and promoted continuous improvement in the classroom atmosphere. Nevertheless, further research on these issues needs to be conducted involving different settings to elucidate to what extent classroom agreements can improve students' awareness concerning their behavior and what to do to have a better classroom environment.

Reflection

My practicum, focused on behavioral engagement, provided a profound insight into the intricate dynamics of classroom management. Initially grounded in theoretical foundations, the practical application exposed the limitations of prescribed solutions. I quickly learned that the classroom is a dynamic environment, often deviating from anticipated norms. Unforeseen challenges necessitated adaptability and a pragmatic approach, moving beyond idealized scenarios. Despite the hurdles, there were moments of triumph, witnessing groups seamlessly collaborate and contribute positively to the classroom dynamic.

One of the key takeaways from my experience is the crucial role of communication and conflict resolution in fostering a conducive learning environment. While students exhibited a natural inclination to form connections, the lack of problem-solving skills

within groups highlighted a significant gap. This underscored the necessity for educators and students alike to possess a toolkit of conflict resolution strategies, ensuring a harmonious learning environment. As I reflect on my practicum, I am equipped with valuable insights that transcend theoretical constructs, emphasizing the importance of bridging theory with the dynamic realities of the classroom.

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