

# CREATING A WELCOMING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUNG LEARNERS AT MERLION SCHOOL, SURABAYA

Hertiki<sup>1</sup>

*h3rt1k1@gmail.com*

## **Abstract**

*One of the biggest obstacles facing teachers of young learners is classroom management. Classroom management is needed to control students' behavior, movement and interaction during a lesson in class. A good teacher is someone who is kind, patience, and loves the students. Creating a caring classroom environment for young learners is not an easy task for any teacher. Young learners are full of energy and eachchild is totally different. Maintaining discipline and setting up activities are needed in creating a good atmosphere for the children. Classroom environment for young learners should be fun and also create a safe learning environment where students feel comfortable. This paper briefly explains about classroom management at Merlion School (MS) Surabaya, Indonesia. Here, the teacher uses some classroom managementstrategies to facilitate a conducive environment in class such as: setting up the classroom rules, the proper seating arrangement, giving rewards, creating students' birthday cards, providing book corner, assigning weekly leaders, and providing the cubby holes for students.*

*Keywords: classroom management, teacher, young learners*

## **INTRODUCTION**

According to Fred Jones (2003), "A good classroom seating arrangement is the cheapest form of classroom management". In other word, classroom management is necessary for any teacher if he/she wants the teaching learning activities run smoothly in class. Teaching young learners is totally different from teaching adults. It may be surprising, challenging, or even frustrating to some teachers. Young learners sometimes have poor discipline, lack of motivation, short attention and bad behavior. Thus, how does the teacher solve these particular problems? Without an effective classroom management, teachers have no chance to transform students' behavior in class.

To implement classroom management to young learners is not a piece of cake. Teacher needs to plan classroom management which is suitable for children. This study presents only on the classroom

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<sup>1</sup> Hertiki *adalah* Pengajar di Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya

management strategies used by the teacher at Merlion School (MS). The researcher is interested to find out whether the classroom management is beneficial for the children. Furthermore, the research is also proposed to provide information to other researchers who are interested in conducting similar research.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Richards in British Council (1990:10) stated that classroom management refers to the ways in which student behavior; movement and interaction during a lesson are organized and controlled by the teacher. Another point of view from Moir in Oxford University Press (2010), she believes that without good classroom management, a teacher has no chance of teaching English successfully.

### **Classroom Management Strategies**

Teachers play an important role in the classroom management and they are in charge of forming a well-prepared classroom in which children can succeed. Nevertheless, a successful classroom environment does not come out of nowhere. Teachers have to provide a great deal of time and effort in creating it. To support this point of view, Evertson (2007) stated that the development of a quality relationship between teachers and their students, good communication, and keeping children on task are the key components that affect success in classroom management, and if teachers are able to run the classroom in an effective way, it helps children to be successful in their learning.

It is essential that teachers set up effective classroom management strategies to use in their classrooms, so that children are keen on learning (Evertson, 2007). A clear description of common classroom management areas is given by Scrivener (2005):

**Grouping and seating:** It includes forming groupings; arranging and rearranging seating; deciding where students will stand or sit; and reforming class as a whole group after activities.

**Activities:** The following activities are sequencing activities; setting up activities; giving instructions; monitoring activities; timing activities; and bringing activities to an end.

**Authority:** Teacher's authority focuses on gathering and holding attention; deciding who does what; establishing or relinquishing authority as appropriate; and getting someone to do something.

**Critical moments:** starting the lesson; dealing with unexpected problems; maintaining appropriate discipline; and finishing the lesson.

**Tools and techniques:** Teacher provides tools and techniques used in class such as: using the board and other classroom equipment or aids; using gestures to help clarity of instructions and explanations;

speaking clearly at an appropriate volume and speed; use of silence; and grading complexity of language. Grading quantity of language.

Working with people: spreading your attention evenly and appropriately; using intuition to determine what students are feeling; eliciting honest feedback from students and really listening to students.

## **THE METHODOLOGY**

This study focused on the classroom management strategies used by the teacher. The research was carried out at Merlion School (MS) Surabaya, Indonesia. MS is located on Jl. H.R. Muhammad 371 Surabaya. MS is a National Plus School that uses three languages (English, Chinese, and Indonesian) as its medium of instruction. The vision of MS is to become “A premier school which produces responsible citizens and globally life-long learners”. While its vision of MS is to uphold high academy standards and develops well-rounded individuals. The school values of MS are responsibility, integrity, confidence, compassion and hard work. The subject of this research is one of the teachers at Merlion School. She is a female teacher (Mrs. MP) who comes from the Philippines. She has been teaching for six years in this school. The researcher chose her as participant because she was a senior teacher and applied a good classroom management in class.

### **The Research Instrument**

Observation was used in this study for collecting and analyzing the data. For data collection, the teacher was observed during teaching and learning activities in class to get the information about how she applied the classroom management. Besides that, the researcher also interviewed the teacher for more information about her thoughts and her opinions on classroom management. The researcher interviewed the teacher by using general interview guide approach because she already prepared some questions to be asked to the teacher in this study. The researcher used field notes and camera during the observation and interview.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher asked permission from the Principal in order to carry out the research. She then observed the teacher during teaching and learning activities in class. In collecting the data, she applied two research instruments as follows:

### **Observation**

The researcher did the observation in Primary 1 Class. The researcher also did the observation for three times in order to get

familiarized with the teacher and the students. The researcher took field notes during the observation. In class, the researcher wrote all the activities done by the teacher and the students.

## Interview

It was done at the last meeting in order to get the teacher's thoughts and opinions about classroom management. The purpose of doing interview was to gain more information about classroom management because the data from the observation was insufficient. The interview used was a general interview guide approach. In this study, the researcher used this type of interview because the researcher had some questions to be asked to the teacher.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *Classroom Rules*

Classroom rules can give a good impact to the students' behavior in class



Picture 1. Classroom Rules

Classroom rules that are applied at Merlion School are among others:

## **Speak English**

Since English is used as a major language at Merlion School, the primary students most of the time spoke in English for daily conversation.

## **Be quiet**

The second rule is asking the students to be quiet during the teacher's explanation and also while they are doing the workbook inside the class.

## **Sit properly**

Children like to play with chair and table. They shake the chairs and it makes noisy sounds. Thus, the teacher asks the students to sit properly and pays more attention to the lesson in class.

## **Carry the chair quietly**

In some lessons, the teacher appoints students to create different seating arrangement. Children must carry their own chair quietly. Mostly, children love to carry the chairs while talking to their classmates.

## **Obey and listen to the teacher**

Kids are always curious with everything. The rule of obeying and listening to the teacher is beneficial for children. They are taught to respect and maintain good behavior in class.

## **Raise your hand when you want to talk**

The students were asked to raise their hand every time when they want to ask questions.

## **Throw the trash**

The teacher teaches students to throw the trashes to the right place in the garbage bin.

## **Do not disturb others**

Young learners like to chit chat about anything. They love to joke with friends and sometimes they forget that they are not allowed to disturb their classmates in classroom.

## **Finish your work on time**

One child is different from one another. Some students finish their work on time because they have good skills and ability. However, there are some students who have difficulty in finishing their work. Thus, the teacher places those students to stay in school to do their work until it's done.

### **Do not shout and run**

Dealing with kids, they were likely to use a loud voice and screaming. Here, in this school, they were trained to use a very soft voice.

### **Be friendly with everyone**

Children are taught to smile and greet everyone in school, such as: janitors, teachers, staffs, classmates, and principals.

### ***Seating Arrangement***

The teacher uses three different styles of seating arrangement. During movie time, the teacher uses classroom seating arrangement or traditional rows. Sometimes, the children are requested to sit on the mat facing the white board if they want to see the movie. Once in a while, the seating arrangement is cluster seating for doing arts and craft work. The last one is u-shape seating when the teacher needs more space for example: to do the role play



Picture 2. Seating Arrangement

### Rewards

Rewards are given to students based on the children's behavior in class. The teacher prepares stickers of sad and smiling faces. Smiling face sticker is given when the student follows the rule or if he has a good behavior in class. On the other hand, sad face sticker is for the bad behavior. This reward encourages the students to behave nicely in school and for the children who have more smiling face stickers; they have the chance to be the leader of the week.



Picture 3. Rewards

### ***Birthday Chart***

In class there is a birthday chart. This birthday chart is used for reminding the students about who his/her friends who celebrate the birthday on that month. So the students create their own drawing by writing down the name and the date of the birthday. And then, they paste it on the birthday chart so everyone can see it clearly.



Picture 4. Birthday Chart



### ***Book Corner***

In every class at Merlion School, there is a book corner. The books have changed every week. The teacher borrows some books from the library and sometimes the children bring their own book from home. They have a silent reading every morning before the class begins. The following picture is the typical book corner in the School.



Picture 5. Book Corner

### **Weekly Leader**

The teacher has chosen weekly leaders from the students. To be the leaders, the students must collect rewards (smiling faces) as many as they can. The teacher counts the smiling faces and the students who get the most, automatically become the leaders. The leaders include the leader, assistant leader, and members.



Picture 6. Weekly Leaders

### ***Cubby Holes***

In every class at Merlion School, there are cubby holes. The function of these cubby holes is to put the students' bag and their belongings. Every student has his own cubby holes with the name inside. The teacher trains the students to be independent and responsible with their own things by placing inside the cubby holes.



Picture 7. Cubby holes

## CONCLUSION

The results from in this research was that the teacher used some various strategies in creating a welcoming classroom environment for young learners. Classroom management is required to create an optimum environment so that teaching learning activities can take place. The strategies of setting up the classroom rules, arranging the seating arrangement, giving rewards, creating students' birthday chart, providing book corner, assigning weekly leaders, and providing the cubby holes for students are very helpful to control students' behavior in class. All in all, good classroom management takes time, consistency and patience.

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## APPENDIX1. INTERVIEW LIST

The interview was done after doing the class observations. It was intended to gather brief information about the teacher's thoughts and opinions about classroom management.

How long have you been teaching for young learners?

Why is classroom management very important to the students?

What do you think of classroom rules to students?

What are the advantages and disadvantages when you give rewards to your students?

What are the difficulties that you faced when you teach young learners?

Why do you use different seating arrangement during the lesson?

How do you evaluate your students' ability?

## APPENDIX2. QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear children, I would like to ask you to fill in the following questionnaire. Read each question carefully and answer truthfully. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

1. Do you enjoy attending the English lesson?



2. Do you like the arrangement of tables and chairs in the classroom?



3. Do you like the decoration of our classroom (pictures, posters, flowers, etc.)?



4. Do you know the classroom rules? Circle the right ones.

Come to class prepared

Follow directions

Respect others people's property

Be a good friend

Listen while others talk

Respect the teacher and the others

Raise your hand before speaking

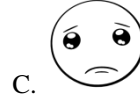
5. Does the teacher remember your name and your classmates' names and does she use them?



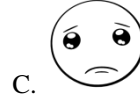
6. Is the teacher fair?



7. Does the teacher give clear instructions?



8. Can the teacher establish order in the classroom?



9. Does the teacher praise you?



10. Does the teacher treat you with anger?

