

Session 3 Rules and enforcing them

(60 min session)

Aims: To develop awareness of the need for rules / boundaries and to give ideas for dealing with inappropriate behaviour

Materials: Laminated copies of 'The Maze' from IATEFL CATs magazine, Spring 2000, Question cards for activity 2.

Handouts: The Maze and the rest of the CATs article, peer observation task

1. The Maze

Aims: To introduce the topic through a task, to generate ideas for follow-up discussion

Write 'Happy Honeymoon' on the whiteboard. Elicit what it is, how long it lasts and what happens when it ends (It is a time at the start of a new period of time where everything appears attractive and there is no criticism, it can last a few weeks or lessons, all those involved can feel disappointed or frustrated when this period ends). Tell trainees they are going to do a maze activity to see if they can solve the problem. You could give out the first part of the article for them to read at this stage.

Get trainees into groups and tell them to find part A of the maze. Get one of the trainees to read it aloud. Tell them they have to decide as a group what route to take. Set a time limit of 10 mins.

If any group finishes early, tell them to go back and see if they could have taken an alternative route.

15 mins

2. Discussion of issues

Aims: To develop awareness of the need for rules, also of the fact that there are options not 'sure fire' answers

Give out question cards to the trainees:

1. Which responses were more effective for dealing with unwanted behaviour?
2. What did you learn from doing this maze activity?
3. Which responses were not very effective for dealing with the unwanted behaviour?
4. What could you do to stop the students reacting the way they did here?
5. How would you feel if this happened to you?
6. Why do teachers and schools have rules?
7. What rules did you try to break at school?
8. Why do children try to break rules?

The trainees can either mill and ask and answer questions or do this in small groups. Issues that are likely to come up are referred to on the handout.

3. Options

Aims: To enable trainees to explore the various options for dealing with inappropriate behaviour

(This idea comes from Tessa Woodward's book *Ways of Training: Recipes for Teacher Training*, Pilgrims Longman Resource Books, 1992).

Select a situation from the maze e.g. 'Two bright but talkative pupils are talking through the language presentation. Draw the following on the whiteboard:

Show how there are various courses of action. Follow two of these through with trainees. Tell trainees to think of a situation that has happened in their class. Give them a grid like the one above to write their different options on. Get into groups and show the others, who listen and comment on the options or suggest others.

45 mins

Feedback – get some of the trainees to talk about what they have written, picking up on some successful strategies. Outline that there is no one way of “How to do it”. Some options will work better with certain classes. On some days, you will think of different responses according to your mood, experience or instinct. Lack of experience doesn’t mean you can’t deal with disruptive or inappropriate behaviour.

55 mins

4. Peer observation task

Aims: To give trainees a framework for observation

Give out task and roughly work out which trainees will go to see who teaching and when. 60

60 mins

Handout 1

1. Which responses were more effective for dealing with unwanted behaviour?

2. What did you learn from doing this maze?

3. Which responses were not very effective for dealing with the unwanted behaviour?

4. What could you do to stop the children reacting the way they did?

5. How would you feel if this had happened to you?

6. Why do teachers and schools have rules?

7. What rules did you try to break when you were at school?

8. Why do children try to break rules?

Options grid

<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

Peer observation task

Arrange to watch a colleague's class. Make notes on the following areas:

1. What rules and routines are already in place?
2. How does the teacher gain and maintain control?
3. How motivated are the children? How do they show this?
4. What do the children do to test the teacher's authority? Who does this? How?
5. When do the children test the teacher's authority? Is this public or private?
6. How does the teacher respond? Write examples of:

Verbal response

e.g. Tom, stop that!

• • • • •

Non-verbal response

• • • •

7. What alternative courses of action could the teacher have used?

The Maze – some considerations

A

They are probably talking because they know it (or think they do). Bright children need lots of challenge. The language presentation probably needs to be more learner or YL focused – children switch off more easily if the teacher is talking at the board, whereas adults know it's rude to talk then. A more learner-centred approach is needed e.g. test – teach – test, task-based learning, guided discovery.

B

Nip it in the bud. If you let things go, it will be harder to regain control later. A lot of teachers are reluctant to be the hated 'authority figure'. You don't have to be an ogre, but you do have to be firm and mean business.

C

This is probably a deliberate attempt to gain your attention or push you to see how far you will go. If you over-react they will have won, but if you let it go, it makes you look weak.

D

Be careful not to penalise well-behaved pupils for the behaviour of others. It sends out a very negative message that being disruptive is good because you get noticed or the teacher gives in and that behaving well is bad, as you get no recognition for it. Work on noticing and rewarding positive behaviour.

E

This is probably a case of testing your limits or shows that what you have planned is not motivating.

F

Group mentality can be a difficult thing. Avoid responding to 'We think x is boring' type statements – ascertain what individuals think and want as this is more objective information.

G

It is easy to feel personally affronted when it appears that the children reject all your lovingly-prepared materials. Develop ways to stretch your learners cognitively and that way you can stretch your materials too. Don't spend hours making things that won't last for long.

H

Make sure all the pupils are finished before starting something new. The children are quite settled now, so this could be a good time to do the language – but in a more learner-centred, personalised way.

I

Sending a child out is often perceived as a reward; the pupil gets the attention of the class and gets to do 'nothing' – far more fun than grammar. Make sure you have something for them to do, out of sight of the group if you use 'time out'.

J

Similar to F. **You** are the teacher, **you** make decisions, **you** negotiate or tell the individual concerned what the core is, not their mates. This doesn't mean that you can't negotiate

rules with the group, but you should not be pressurised. You are a part of the class and you have to be comfortable with the set up.

K

It is important to be neither too 'hard' nor 'soft'. If you are too strict, the pupils will not respect your rules and will push at your boundaries, but if you are too soft they will think you are a pushover and also lose respect. You are there to be their teacher, not to be their friend or disciplinarian.

L

If it gets to you, you need to get firm. If you are doing the presentation the same way as before, they know it isn't what they want and will react negatively. However, this behaviour isn't on. Be firm and get back up from your Director of Studies or head teacher if needs be.

M & N

It is very useful to reflect on your teaching and alternatives. Don't think all is lost and you have failed. With careful planning you can gain control and enjoy teaching this age group more.

Below is a copy of the article from IATEFL YL SIG magazine CATs

The Classroom Maze

David Spencer & David Vaughan

'Happy Honeymoon' is the name often given to the first term of a new academic year with young learners. Why? Because at the start of the year there is frequently a relatively calm period when teacher and students start getting to know each other and everyone is on their best behaviour. Unfortunately, the 'honeymoon' period might not last forever and the students start to take advantage of any 'weaknesses' spotted in the teacher! As from that moment we need to think hard not only about what we are teaching but also how to actually manage the group of students in our classroom in order to create a positive working environment. Any teacher of adolescents knows that this is not an easy thing to do, but it is clearly part and parcel of our job, whether we teach Geography, Mathematics or English. In fact, as teachers of English we may suffer more classroom management problems than teachers of other subjects since we actively encourage (sometimes very noisy!) interaction between our students.

Here is an activity for you to try out with colleagues at the start of a new academic year. This is a Maze activity, the objective of which is simply to encourage you to think about and discuss typical discipline problems and ways of responding to them.

How to follow the Classroom Maze

Photocopy and cut out the cards. Write the letter of each card and lay them face down on the table. Pick up and read the situation on card A and then, individually or with one or two colleagues, choose one of the two options given and follow the instructions.

A

You are presenting a new structure to a class of thirteen-year olds. Two very bright but talkative children are chattering very loudly in their own language and laughing. They do this more and more frequently in your lessons.

Do you ...

- 1) continue your presentation, thinking it is not worth stopping the class again for the same two students? Go to **B**
- 2) separate the students to stop them talking for a while? Go to **C**

B

You continue your presentation but the chattering soon spreads to four or five other students.

Do you...

- 1) decide to abandon the presentation and tell the students to do the reading exercise in the text book and write out the answers? Go to **D**
- 2) ask the original two students to tell the whole class what they are talking about? Go to **C**

C

One of the students is very resentful and says in a loud voice: 'Why are English lessons always so boring?'

Do you ...

- 1) ignore the comment? Go to **E**
- 2) tell the student to see you at the end of class? Go to **F**

D

The whole class is now restless and unhappy since the students who were paying attention before do not understand why they have to do the reading exercise.

Do you ...

- 1) promise the students that if they finish the exercise quickly then can play a game afterwards? Go to **G**
- 2) remain serious, telling the students to work individually and to write their answers on paper, which you will take in later to correct? Go to **H**

E

The student simply continues chatting to his / her neighbours as soon as you are not looking at him / her.

Do you...

- 1) send the student out of the class? Go to **I**
- 2) tell the student to come and see you at the end of class? Go to **F**

F

At the end of the class the student stays to see you and so does a small group of his / her friends.

Do you ...

- 1) start to talk to the student with the other students there? Go to **J**
- 2) tell the group of friends to go away? Go to **K**

G

After the reading exercise you set up the game. You had spent hours last night preparing the activity which you expect to take at least twenty minutes of class-time and which you expect the students to enjoy. After just four minutes you hear the uninspired cries of 'Finished'.

Do you ...

- 1) tell the students to do the activity again? Go to **C**
- 2) start the presentation again, warning the class that if there is any misbehaviour they will have to do more written work instead? Go to **L**

H

When nearly all the students have finished they are much quieter and seem to have calmed down.

Do you ...

- 1) start the presentation again, warning the class that if they misbehave they will have

to do more written work instead? Go to **L**

2) decide to let them play a game you have prepared, to compensate for the last activity? Go to **G**

I

The student has gone out of the classroom but the door has a window in it and he/she keeps making faces at the other students. They naturally find this very amusing!

Do you ...

1) decide it is easier to let the student back in as he/she is just as disruptive outside of class as inside? Go to **M**

2) tell the student to see you at the end of class? Go to **F**

J

The student's friends defend him/her, saying that he/she didn't do anything and that you, the teacher, can't take any action against the student.

Do you ...

1) tell them all to go, because you are unsure what disciplinary action can normally be taken in your school? Go to **M**

2) tell the group of friends to go away? Go to **K**

K

You are not sure whether to take a 'hard' or 'soft' approach.

Do you ...

1) ask why the student finds English boring and what you, the teacher, could do make it more interesting? Go to **N**

2) tell the student that if his/her behaviour doesn't improve immediately you will take important disciplinary action? Go to **M**

L

You start the presentation again and the same student continues chatting to his/her neighbours as soon as you are not looking directly at him/her.

Do you ...

1) send the student out of class? Go to **I**

2) tell the student to come and see you at the end of the class? Go to **F**

M

You decide to find out about the disciplinary system in your school. Look back at the steps you have taken and consider how effective you think they have been. How could some of these situations have been avoided in the first place? What might you do next?

N

You decide to re-think your lesson planning in response to some of the students' comments. Look back at the steps you have taken and consider how effective you think they have been. How could some of these situations have been avoided in the first place? What might you do

next?

In conclusion, of course there are no right or wrong answers in an activity of this type. Clearly we will become more efficient at managing our classes both by knowing more about disciplinary procedures within the school/English department and by making our lesson plans more relevant and challenging for our classes. Obviously, when planning lessons we need to bear in mind variety and relevance of activity-type, skills work and interaction. It is also useful to consider whether our activities are 'settling' the students or 'stirring' them. For example, a traditional dictation will normally settle a class whereas an activity involving movement, such as a mingle activity, will usually stir and excite the class. Needless to say, too much of either can end up being a bad thing. Having extra tasks prepared for fast-finishers so that their attention is held before they start disturbing others is another useful classroom management strategy.

Of course, the idea of 'hard' versus 'soft' approaches to discipline problems suggested in the Maze is clearly a massive simplification. However, an interesting final point is that whenever we have done 'The Classroom Maze' with our own teenage students they have inevitably ended up choosing the same approach – the 'hard' one. It can be comforting to know that, whatever our opinion is and how they actually behave at times, students tend to expect their teachers to be in control!

David Spencer is a teacher, teacher-trainer and writer. He is currently Director of Studies of the English Department at Colegio Europea Aristos in Getafe, Madrid he has worked on UCLES COTE and DOTE courses since 1990 and is co-author of the Macmillan Heinemann ELT secondary courses Teamwork and Top Team.

Please see also on page 52 A Tribute to David Vaughan the co-author of this article, who died in Madrid in August 1999.

Taken from the Spring 2000 issue of the IATEFL YL SIG magazine, CATs. © David Spencer and David Vaughan, 2000