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**Classroom Management and Assertiveness in
the English Subject: Learning Effectively from
Innovative and Dynamic Activities**

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Abstract: Working with games, doing debates or listening to music are some activities that are usually practiced in the English class. These dynamic exercises, which differ from the more traditional book-centered ones, are believed to be motivating for students, while also bringing great educational benefits. However, it is true that for some students, dynamic activities provide the perfect context for misbehaving or disrupting the lessons' flow, as the tone shifts towards a more energetic and interactive one. Then, the role of the teacher is to manage the class according to the activity that is taking place, which can result to be a difficult, tiring task.

This paper aims to determine which elements can affect the pacing of an English lesson when doing a game or another type of interactive activity. The two main concepts that this research has focussed on are classroom management techniques and the role of assertivity. Classroom management and its recent history will be analysed in order to understand how being well informed about them can influence the pacing of a lesson. Similarly, the importance of acting in an assertive way and of how applying assertiveness techniques can improve communication between teachers and students will be explained. Finally, the paper presents a study which aims to understand how teachers can be effective and efficient when doing dynamic activities in the English class.

Resum: Treballar a través de jocs, fent debats o escoltant música són activitats que un pot trobar a l'aula d'anglès. Aquests exercicis, que presenten més dinamisme que aquells més tradicionals centrats a fer activitats del llibre, són motivadors pels estudiants i aporten gran valor educatiu. Així i tot, és cert que per alguns estudiants aquestes activitats es converteixen en l'excusa perfecta per no parar atenció o pertorbar l'ambient de classe, ja que són conscients que el clima a l'aula és més dinàmic i interactiu. El rol del professor, en aquests casos, és de gestionar el grup tenint en compte l'activitat que s'està portant a terme, que pot resultar una tasca difícil i cansada.

Aquest treball pretén determinar quins elements poden afectar el ritme d'una lliçó d'anglès quan es fa un joc o un altre tipus d'activitat interactiva. Els dos conceptes principals en què s'ha centrat aquesta investigació són les tècniques de gestió de l'aula i el paper que hi té l'assertivitat. S'analitzarà la gestió de les aules, fent un incís en la seva història recent, per tal d'entendre com les tècniques de gestió d'aula poden influir en el ritme d'una lliçó. Així mateix, s'explicarà la importància d'actuar de manera assertiva i d'aplicar tècniques d'assertivitat per poder millorar la comunicació entre professors i estudiants. Finalment, el treball presenta un estudi que pretén entendre com els professors poden ser eficaços i eficients quan presenten activitats dinàmiques a l'aula d'anglès.

Resumen: Trabajar mediante juegos, debates, o escuchando música son actividades comunes en el aula de inglés. Estos ejercicios dinámicos, que difieren de los más tradicionales centrados en el libro,

son motivadores para los estudiantes, a la vez que brindan grandes beneficios educativos. Sin embargo, es cierto que para algunos estudiantes las actividades dinámicas proporcionan el contexto perfecto para portarse mal o interrumpir el flujo de las lecciones, ya que el tono cambia hacia uno más enérgico e interactivo. Así, el rol del maestro es administrar la clase de acuerdo con la actividad que se está llevando a cabo, lo que puede resultar ser una tarea difícil y agotadora.

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo determinar qué elementos pueden afectar el ritmo de una lección de inglés al hacer un juego u otro tipo de actividad interactiva. Los dos conceptos principales en los que se ha centrado esta investigación son las técnicas de gestión del aula y el papel de la asertividad. Se analizará la gestión del aula y su historia reciente para comprender cómo estar bien informado sobre técnicas de gestión de aula puede afectar el ritmo de una lección. Así mismo, se explicará la importancia de actuar de forma asertiva y de cómo la aplicación de técnicas de asertividad puede mejorar la comunicación entre profesores y alumnos. Finalmente, el artículo presenta un estudio que tiene como objetivo comprender cómo los maestros pueden ser efectivos y eficientes al realizar actividades dinámicas en el aula de inglés.

1. Introduction

During my years being in high school and with my experience as an internship teacher, I realised that the English class was the one in which dynamic, student-centered activities took place more often. From watching videos to listening to songs or doing role-play games, English lessons were the ones in which students could enjoy from a huge variety of situations. Moreover, as technology has advanced, more digital tools have appeared that can add dynamism, variety and excitement to the lessons. Relevant philosophers and theorists such as Plato, Vygotsky, Piaget or Rousseau have expressed the positive effects of playing games in a child's development and education, such as raising intrinsic motivation or giving students a sense of autonomy (Acquah et al., 2020, 2). However, it is also very common to find that during activities like these some students would misbehave or not take them seriously. Then, the class seemed to lose its meaning and instead it became a playground in which students were walking around, talking to their peers or simply not participating in the activity. These situations really caught my interest, because it would seem logical that students would prefer to do these entertaining, less-conventional activities rather than the more traditional, teacher-centered lessons. As a result, some questions arose: How can teachers present dynamic or creative activities so students take them seriously? What

classroom management techniques do teachers need in order to carry out activities like these?
Does the school environment have an effect on those situations?

The aim of this paper is to understand how can teachers implement dynamic, interactive or game-based activities in the classroom in an effective and efficient way, because it is understood that many educators “do not receive enough (if any)” training in classroom-management practices that would facilitate the implementation of these type of activities (Simonsen et al., 2014, 180). To fulfill this gap, this study aims to analyse students’ and teacher’s behaviour during dynamic activities in order to understand how can teachers avoid off-task and disruptive behaviour, while also creating a positive learning environment and improve the relationships with students.

I decided to approach all these issues from a classroom management perspective, because authors like Brophy (1999; in P. Allen 2010) defend that “the most successful teachers approach management as a process of establishing and maintaining effective learning environments” (p.2). Similarly, studies such as the one presented by Hilary (1991) defend that classroom management is necessary in order to obtain a positive and productive learning environment. Then, it is much more engaging to look at what it is that teachers can do in order to create these effective learning environments instead of blaming students when they do not take those activities seriously. Furthermore, scholars like Kathleen P. Allen (2010) state that classroom management is not only about “managing behaviors”, but also about “the academic program and how it is delivered” (p.9). That way one can understand that by looking at the pacing of a lesson, at the classroom structure or at how activities are created one will be able to extract a lot of information that will be really helpful to understand why certain behaviours can occur.

The role of assertiveness will also be examined and taken into account, as studies such as the one done by Sullivan, Cleary, and Sullivan (2004) defended that the assertive teacher “is demonstrably in control of the classroom environment, and has a clear agenda and purpose” (p.72). Moreover, attention will be put in authors such as Lee Canter or Dr. Pau López, who state that the key to dealing effectively with student behavior is not negative -but positive- consequences (Canter, 1989, 58) and that assertiveness training will improve communication with students and reduce negative emotions which will greatly improve the pacing of the lessons (López, 2006).

I am focussing my research in secondary education, because it is the stage of education that I have been observing and teaching in during my teachers internship. However, it is also true that this study designed to understand classroom management and the role of assertivity during dynamic activities in the English subject could not be implemented due to Covid-19, as it made it impossible to be in a classroom context observing both teachers and students or handing in questionnaires to a great number of students. Nevertheless, comments on the relevance of this study or possible improvements for my research will be made during the conclusion of this text.

2. Research Questions and Objectives

In this dissertation, the main research question that will be answered are:

1. What classroom management techniques can help teachers present dynamic activities in class?
2. Can assertiveness make a difference in the way students respond during activities?
3. Can teachers be trained in assertivity?
4. What are the best techniques for acting assertively in class?

The main objectives of this essay and the designed study are:

1. To observe and understand the teacher's actions and how they affect the pacing of an activity.
2. To explore if student's behaviour varies according to the type of activity done in class.
3. To understand how the context (day of the week, time, tiredness, how other students behave...) can affect an activity or lesson.
4. To discover if the level of English that students have makes a difference when doing dynamic activities.

In addition, it is assumed that observing teachers by focussing on their classroom management techniques will help to discover other management tools or techniques that were not considered in this essay or identify other components that were not taken into

consideration in this study which influence how an activity is carried out. Moreover, the study aims to discover if factors such as the years of experience of a teacher has or their level of tiredness or burnout can affect the outcome of a lesson.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present theoretical framework has been divided into two main parts: First, there will be a focus on classroom management, as research (Simonsen et al., 2014) has shown that classroom management practices are associated with having positive effects on student behavior, as they facilitate the pacing of lessons and students' opportunities "to respond during instruction" (p. 179). Moreover, it is believed (Aliakbari et al., 2015) that, often, teachers "do not comprehend the significance of classroom management strategies and their effect on students' social and academic behavior" (p.2), so it will be useful to illustrate the importance that it can have. Secondly, attention will be placed on assertiveness, because assertive and non-assertive teachers have been "the main subjects of the literature on classroom management" (Aliakbari et al., 2015, p.3) and authors such as Lee and Marlene Canter defend that assertive teachers, who use "a firm, positive and respectful tone" but apply the necessary consequences when needed are modeled and respected by students, while teachers who "reward inconsistently or use an indecisive tone" are less likely to be modeled (in Aliakbari et al., 2015, p.4).

3.1. Classroom Management

Classroom management can be defined as "the actions taken by the teacher to establish order, engage students, or elicit their cooperation" (Emmer and Stough 2001, 103). Moreover, Allen (2010) claims that classroom management has been primarily seen as "a discipline and management of student misbehavior", but the truth is that successful teaching calls for "more than controlling student behavior" (p.2). First, this suggests that before focussing on what the students are allegedly doing wrong, the role of the teacher would be to carefully pay attention to their own behaviour. Secondly, it indicates that instead of trying to avoid misbehaviour, classroom management should first and foremost focus on trying to engage and motivate students, which will surely be advantageous to forestall any possible disruptions of the lessons' flow. Some authors defend this last idea by considering that the

vast majority of management research “has been concerned with identifying how teachers bring about student engagement and limit disruption”, which clearly are two essential aspects when working with games or other dynamic activities in class (Emmer and Stough 2001, 104). Then, from paying attention to how instructions are delivered, to being aware of the teachers’ voice tone or to organizing and timing a lesson carefully, classroom management will be key to having effective teaching in the classroom while avoiding having the lesson disrupted.

Looking into the topic of classroom management opens other doors to other issues, such as the number of students per class, the language level of students or even the social environments in which the school is located. Teachers have to be aware that these and other aforementioned circumstances can, in fact, determine how a certain activity might carry on, but it is also true that by looking into classroom management and being aware of what a teacher should do in a given circumstance one can prevent certain situations to happen. In fact, Emmer and Stough quote a study by Good and Grouws (1977) who found that teachers “whose classes had greater achievement gains had better management skills (...) and spent less time in transitions and dealing with discipline problems” (2001, 105). Then, by practicing classroom management, teachers will become much more competent in dealing with the uncertainty of having contexts that are constantly changing and with being able to present a huge variety of activities such as games without having the class disrupted.

One of the most relevant authors that pushed the study of classroom management was Jacob Kounin, who focused on understanding how environmental conditions affected learning. Kounin defends that the way in which individuals act is affected by the context in which they are (Kounin et al., 1979, 145). For example, the listener that goes to a classical concert will act like the other listeners in that same context, which will be completely different from the way in which football fans in a stadium act. Similarly, Kounin observed that if one student started misbehaving, other students would join him or her; while if he or she improved his or her behaviour, the rest of the class would also follow. This concept is known as the “Ripple Effect” and, interestingly, it can be used to the advantage or disadvantage of the teacher “depending on the type of behaviour being promoted” (Pratt, 2016). Rather than focusing on attention-seekers who are off-task, if the teacher puts attention into rewarding positive behaviour, those who are not participate in the activity are much more likely to join in (Pratt, 2016).

As Emmer and Stough (2001, 104) explain, after analysing student's behaviour for five years, Kounin changed the focus of management research as it went from reactive strategies to preventive strategies. This focus on preventing rather than reacting can uphold the idea that preparing a good lesson plan is crucial in order to ensure a good development of the lesson. By taking into account the timing of the activities, the materials needed, the grouping of students or the sequencing of activities, one might anticipate which issues could appear during the lesson. Moreover, if the lesson is thoroughly planned and carefully designed, every game or non-traditional activity done in class should have a clear didactic purpose which students can deduce. That way, students can understand that a game of *Kahoot!* or a running dictation is also part of the learning process and not a hiatus that gives them the opportunity to stop paying attention or disconnect.

What is more, Kounin "highlighted the influence of classroom activities as a source of important variations in student and teacher behavior" (Emmer and Stough, 2001, 104), which is extremely relevant to the English class, because student's behaviour can vary depending on the activity that is taking place. It is not the same to explain to them some grammatical rules that they have to copy than having a game in which they need to stand up, walk around the class and talk to their colleagues, as an example. Dealing with these variations, then, is something that becomes a key element in the English class, which can turn into a hassle if not managed appropriately. As a result, the teacher will be forced to have "various bundles of techniques" that will have to be applied according to "the different activity niches" (Kounin and Lawrence 1979, 150).

Then, if it is clear that classroom management is an "essential condition for student learning" which helps to "establish and maintain order" and "design effective instruction", both when dealing with the whole group and while trying to respond to the needs of individual students (Emmer and Stough 2001, 104), which is the best way to learn these classroom management techniques? How do teachers encounter, face and learn these fundamental teaching tools and strategies? Four of the main ways in which classroom management techniques can be learnt are, firstly, by reflecting on our experience as student; secondly, during the internships in schools that teachers have to participate in; third, during college lessons or at a specialized master's degree; and finally, through being in constant contact with the teaching community (Allen, 2010).

Allen (2010) states that, largely, teachers start learning classroom management techniques “in the very classrooms that they inhabited for thirteen or more years as students”, because they “develop perceptions about classroom management from their own experiences as students” (p.3). It is true that, as students, we are sometimes aware of why certain individuals are acting in a particular manner or why suddenly the whole group started battling the teacher. For example, picture an activity in which students need to introduce themselves and then pass a ball to the other students who they want to introduce themselves. Surely, the teacher will put emphasis in the fact that the ball has to be passed around carefully by hand, and not thrown to other students as if it was a game of rugby. Then, some will surely follow the rules and do as told, but other students may use that situation to start playing around with the ball and throwing it to their friends, thus disrupting the progress of the activity. Students may be surprised when something like this happens for the first time, but they become aware that every time that the teacher brings the ball to class, this situation will presumably repeat itself. In this case, it is clear that the first approach to classroom management is to pay attention to how students manifest their behaviour taking into consideration a given, specific, context. It is not that teenagers have the tools or knowledge to tackle classroom managing, but they become aware of the tendencies, the dynamics or routines that develop between teachers and students. As Allen (2010) states, “the relationships of students to one another and the teacher within classrooms are reciprocal and interconnected”. To put it differently, the behaviors of each member of the class can alter, disturb and influence the attitudes of every other member of the classroom environment, thus creating a “dynamic context and culture” (p.2).

The second situation in which classroom management is learnt is during the internships in schools that teachers have to participate in (Allen, 2010). The quality of the models that apprentice teachers observe will shape the novice teachers views on classroom management. Having, for example, a tutor who always screams at students or is constantly complaining about them will give novice teachers the idea that the classroom is a place of conflict and contention. It is also believed that “in-service teachers continue to learn about classroom management, but usually in far less formal ways” (Allen, 2010, p. 3). Other possibilities for learning classroom management techniques can be through the enrolment in professional seminars, meetings or conferences specialized in classroom management; or by sharing knowledge and information with other teachers (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder,

2002, quoted in Allen, 2010, 3), which indicates that “teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, ideas, and practices with regard to classroom management are affected by the social context of the school and by teachers’ contact with one another” (Allen, 2010, 3).

3.2. Assertiveness in the teaching and learning process

Assertiveness has been defined as “the capacity of being able to communicate in a self-assured and confident way without being aggressive”, which implies the need of listening to and negotiating with others (Comstock, 2020). To be assertive means having the capacity for standing up for one's preferences, ideas or decisions, even if it signifies confronting others. Assertiveness is also linked to leadership, because it is related to the ability to negotiate and influence others, and it can contribute to having a better physical health as it can rise self esteem and lower stress (Comstock, 2020). Being assertive as a teacher is key when it comes to managing a group of students, both when transitioning to some dynamic exercise and also when that activity is taking place, as different authors defend that “the management style that teachers employ should be congruent to the teachers’ instructional goals for their students” and to the “types of activities used in the classroom” (Emmer and Stough 2001, 104). Comstock (2020) also defends that assertivity allows individuals to “present their own beliefs using facts and logic”, which is helpful for not falling into peer pressure or not “resorting to aggression to manipulate people”, which will be essential in a classroom context.

In 1976, Lee Canter created The Assertive Discipline program, which analysed how teachers dealt with student behaviour effectively. With the aim of assisting teachers to have “an organized, teacher-in-charge classroom environment which prevents discipline problems” (Aliakbari et al., 2015, 2), this program has greatly impacted the world of classroom management. Canter defines an assertive teacher as someone who teaches students “how to behave” by establishing “clear rules for the classroom”, communicating those to students and teaching how to follow them (1989, 58). He continues by claiming that the assertive teachers he observed had “mastered skills in positive reinforcement” and, when students broke the rules, the teachers used “firm and consistent negative consequences” as a last resort. The answer to assertive discipline, he defends, is not to punish students but to recognize and support them when they behave correctly and letting them know “you like it” (Canter, 1989,

58). Canter continues explaining that for this approach to work, it is crucial to have a “systematic discipline plan” that tells students how to behave and what it is expected from them. For example, by telling students at the beginning of the year which will be the consequences for misbehaving, teachers will assure that students know what will be expected from them (Canter, 1989, 59).

One of Canter’s key ideas is that he wanted to “eliminate the need to stop the lesson” (p. 58). In order to assure that, he suggests that teachers plan 4 or 5 consequences for misbehavior, such as a warning, a 10-minute timeout, the teacher calling the student’s parents or sending students to the principal. The first warning will be something brief and moderate that will not affect the flow of the lesson, while putting the student on a 10-minute timeout will assure that others can continue doing the activity. The other two consequences can be done after the lesson is finished, and the teacher can devote time to talking to the student’s parents or the principal. As the author states, “no teacher should have a plan that is not appropriate for his or her needs”, and that is not “in the best interests” of students (p. 58), which indicates the importance of having an effective and concise plan that provides the right to having “a learning environment that is free from disruption”, which every student deserves (Canter, 1989, 59).

The Assertive Discipline program defends that the key to dealing and managing students is positive reinforcement, and that teachers who cannot be positive “should not be teaching” (Canter, 1989, 59). For his 3-step cycle of behavior management, he starts by saying that “teachers too often assume that students know how they are expected to behave” (p. 59). He continues defending that teachers need to first establish directions for each activity that will take place during that session, which means that they need to articulate the exact behavior that it is expected from them. For example, if the teacher wants to focus on teaching grammar or some vocabulary rules, he or she may ask students to put their books away and simply have a sheet of paper and their pens and ask them to be silent while taking notes. On the contrary, when doing pair work activities that require creativity, allowing students to talk, share materials or look for information on their laptops can be allowed. Then, teachers should use positive reinforcement by “rephrasing the original directions as a positive comment” (p. 59) instead of directing their attention to those students that are misbehaving, as he defends that “focusing on negative behavior teaches students that negative behavior

gets attention” (p. 59). Finally, negative consequences should be applied if a student is still misbehaving after having established clear rules and using positive reinforcement.

3.2.1. Assertiveness Training

Assertiveness can be trained, because even if it is a natural trait for some people to have “outgoing personalities and high self-esteem”, others who may want to reduce their passiveness, control their emotions or learn how to “advocate for oneself” (Comstock, 2020) will benefit from assertiveness training. Some steps in assertive training involve, first, learning the differences between passive, assertive, and aggressive behavior; then looking into different situations in which assertiveness is needed; developing a plan for every different situation by looking into “what to say”, “how to use body language” or “how to compromise without being manipulated”; and finally practicing through role-playing (Comstock, 2020). These steps, if applied by teachers, will be important to create a positive environment “in which students know to behave”, because teachers “will never get to [teaching] content” unless there is a optimal atmosphere for the learning process to occur (Canter, 1989, 60). In the class, the teacher needs to avoid expressing feelings of culpability, ignorance or anguish; and rather focus on having a respectful tone when dealing with misbehaving students (López, 2006). The difference between addressing a student in a menacing, enraged tone or having a neutral, calmed expression is that in the second situation the student is less likely to feel attacked or embarrassed, and he or she will be much more willing to respond positively to the teacher’s words (López, 2006). Moreover, during dynamic activities such as games or pair work, wanting to reduce negative interactions is key to mark the difference between succeeding in reaching the objectives of the task -that is, learning in a more dynamic and interactive way- and “merely survive in a class” (Sánchez Solarte, 2019, 178).

3.2.2. Assertiveness Techniques in Class

Dr. López (2006) defends using a 4-step sequence for acting assertively, which consists in describing the situation -which in a classroom context would be the activity that it is taking place-, identifying the exact moment in which someone’s behaviour affected

negatively the other person -for example, a student using their phone to message friends when they should be doing a game of *Kahoot!*-, communicating the feeling that the situation provoked -telling the student how it makes you feel that they are not participating in the activity-, and asking students to act differently during a similar situation next time. That way, the student-teacher relationship will not be affected negatively, and instead it will generate a feeling of proximity and trust that will probably enhance it, while also helping to establish the classroom rules (López, 2006).

Other assertiveness techniques that can be implemented in class are the “*I*” message technique, *fogging* or using repetition. In the first one, the teacher learns how to express their feelings after having been disappointed or attacked. Similarly to the second step that Dr. López explains, it helps to get the message across “without making accusations” or “calling names”, because using the pronoun “I” reduces “the likelihood of an aggressive response as it does not attack the opponent's point of view” (Comstock, 2020). *Fogging* is a thought-provoking technique that consists in using a sarcastic comment in order to agree with the accuser, who is expecting an argument and “is left with little to say” (Comstock, 2020). This technique is used when no further communication is expected between the two agents of the conversation and the teacher wants to carry on with the activity and ignore negative or distracting comments by the disrupting student -the accuser-. However, applying this technique can be delicate as Allen defends that in a study done by Spitally (2005) called *The DON'T'S of student discipline*, “the author sees deliberate humiliation and sarcasm as forms of bullying”, which can create that students and teachers get caught up in “a reciprocal exchange that destroys the professionalism of the relationship and encourages mutual aggression” (Allen, 2010, 4). Finally, using repetition, also known as the *drilling* or *broken record* technique can be used “to keep aggressive individuals from imposing on others”, while also helping to deal with students who will not take a “no” for an answer, as it consists in calmly repeating a statement until the message is effective (Comstock, 2020).

4. Methodology

4.1. The School

The school chosen for this study is the Salesians school in Barcelona. Located in the Sarrià-Sant Gervasi district, this private high school coexists with more than 7 primary schools, 3 public secondary schools and 35 private secondary centres in the same district.

Sarrià is a moderately wealthy neighbourhood, which does not generally have the socio-economic problems of other areas in the city of Barcelona. The school hosts 130 staff people and more than 1800 alumni who can enrol in post-compulsory educational programs like Spanish Baccalaureate, International Baccalaureate (IB) and Vocational Training Courses. One of the distinctive features of this school is that it aims to be an international school of reference thanks to its participation in international projects, language-teaching methods or exchanges with other countries, and by allowing students to enrol in the Diploma Programme (DP), which is the main curricular program for students participating in International Baccalaureate aged between 16-19.

4.2. Participants

In this study, 5 groups of students were chosen to participate: Second of Baccalaureate E (B2E), Second of Baccalaureate F (B2F), First of International Baccalaureate A (IB1A), Second of International Baccalaureate A (IB2A), and Second of International Baccalaureate B (IB2B). It was decided that it would be useful to have both Baccalaureate and International Baccalaureate in the study firstly because IB has less students per class (n=21 in IB1A, n=19 in IB2B and n=17 in IB2A compared to n=28 in B2F and n=24 in B2E), which is useful for taking into account the classroom context and analyse the Ripple Effect. Secondly, it is believed that IB students are likely to perform better and have a more proficient level of English than students in other programmes thanks to them being “more culturally aware through the development of a second language” (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2020).

The study was designed to also take into account 3 teachers for the English subject in that school. One of them was in charge of all the International Baccalaureate courses and B2E; a second one was the teacher for B2F and a third one was a teacher for B1B. Being able to observe a teacher that was both in charge of IB and B2E seemed promising in order to understand how -or if- her classroom management techniques varied in accordance to the two different contexts. Moreover, it could also help to reflect on the possible particularities that each group in IB presented. The second teacher was chosen because she had to deal with Baccalaureate groups that were larger, which would be a great way to analyse if her level of burnout or tiredness varied from the first teacher’s one. Finally, the third teacher was chosen

because she was comparatively younger than the other two, which could be useful to understand how having experience as a teacher can impact the classroom environment.

4.3. Data collection, instruments and procedure

The instruments used to collect information for this study are one questionnaire for students, one for teachers, and an observation grid; and the data collection period was designed to last for the whole month of April, 2020. For the questionnaires, different questions that include the topics of assertiveness, teaching using games or how students respond to them are included. Emphasis has been put on understanding how teachers manage misbehaviour or interruptions when presenting dynamic activities such as games, role plays or working with music. Secondly, the observation grid is to be used in order to understand the teacher's actions and how they affect the pacing of an activity; to see if students' behaviour varies depending on the activity; to analyse how the context affects the pacing of the activity or lesson or to observe whether the student's level in English affects the lesson or not.

4.3.1. Questionnaire for Students

It was decided that the questionnaire handed to students would only have 5 questions in order to adjust to the sample number, which was quite big (n=92). The questionnaires were designed to be handed in to two groups in Baccalaureate -B2F and B2E-, and two groups in International Baccalaureate -IB1A and IB2B-. In addition, the questions were open-ended to allow students to express their thoughts freely using their own vocabulary. Moreover, open-ended questions are more suitable for a qualitative research, as they help to gain insights, understanding in detail and possibly opening the doors to other issues or ideas that were not previously considered. The questionnaire that was designed for the students in Salesians was the following one:

1. Which activities do you enjoy the most in class? Do you play any games, work with music or use technological devices?
2. Do you think that it is possible to learn by doing dynamic or interactive activities?
3. Do you or your colleagues tend to act differently when doing these activities in class?
In which ways?
4. If a classmate is misbehaving or disrupting the flow of the activity, do you talk to them and ask them to stop?

5. Do you think that one student's behavior can affect others? Is this positive or negative?

The first question will help establish which are the activities that students enjoy doing and discover a wide range of dynamic or interactive exercises that teachers use in class. Moreover, it can help students reflect on what they do on a weekly basis in English sessions and understand that there are many ways of interacting with the teacher, with students or with the materials. The second question is useful in order to understand the student's perception of game-based or interactive activities, and figure out whether they are aware of their didactic value or if they perceive them as treats or ways of spending time until the bell rings. Then, student's behaviour will be analysed through questions 3, 4 and 5: First, the aim is to establish how students behave during these activities -do they become more relaxed? Do they talk more? Do they lose interest?-. Secondly, the questionnaire will draw attention to The Ripple Effect, as students will be asked whether they try to influence their peers when they are misbehaving. The last question is also related to the concept of influencing others, as it will help to discover whether pupils are aware of the consequences of their actions in a classroom context. Lastly, they will have to reflect on whether that influence is positive or negative, aiming to discover if there are positive consequences of this Ripple Effect that teachers might not perceive during lessons.

4.3.2. Questionnaire for Teachers

Similarly, 10 open-ended questions were designed for teachers to answer. The sample of teachers selected for the study was much less important (n=3), because as stated before, one of them was teaching four of the groups. The open nature of this questions would also allow teachers to reflect on them in detail, and tutors who teach in different groups would be able to explain if there were any key differences between them.

The questions that teachers had to answer were the following:

1. How often do you present dynamic activities in class? (games, debates, working with music...)
2. Do you use ICT tools (technologies) in class? Which ones?
3. Do you think they are satisfactory learning tools?
4. In general, do your students take dynamic activities seriously?

5. Do you sometimes use dynamic activities as a treat for students?
6. Do you apply different management techniques when doing these activities? (do you become more strict, more relaxed?...)
7. Do you research new classroom management techniques to apply in class?
8. According to your own experience, what is the best timing for carrying out dynamic activities? (mornings, evenings, day of the week...)
9. Do you get more tired when having to manage these activities?
10. Have you ever considered leaving the profession? Why?

I decided to ask both teachers and students an initial question that helped understand what they perceived as dynamic activities and see the frequency in which they are used in class. Zarzycka-Piskorz (2016) explains that the use of games in class can be motivating for students because they like to have an element of fun included into their learning (p. 18). Similarly, Emmer and Stough (2001) note that “it makes sense that students must be engaged in order for learning to occur” (p.104). However, how many activities do teachers prepare for the class that can motivate and engage students? What is the balance between traditional, book-focused activities and using games, ICT tools or music in class?

The second question designed for this questionnaire revolves around the topic of using electronic resources, games or educational apps to carry out dynamic activities. Nur Aflah (2019) defends that if the school does not have adequate computers, tablets and good internet connection, “the application of technology in education will be difficult to realize” (p. 198). Having a computer that does not work or a slow internet connection can sometimes be the perfect excuse for students to stop paying attention, which again reinforces the idea that having the lesson accordingly planned by considering how every activity will be carried out is key to avoid disruptions and off-task behaviour. Moreover, it is important that teachers understand the didactic value that some ICT tools can provide and select them accordingly. Indeed, in a study by Nur Aflah about the integration of technology in language teaching the author states that having “clear learning designs in integrating technology in the classroom can make the teaching and learning process more effective”, which implies thinking thoughtfully about the ICT tools being used in class. Integrating technology in an efficient way, she continues, will bring students “great opportunities to improve their language skills” (Nur Aflah 2019, 200).

The third and fourth questions aim to determine if learning through games is seen as a useful learning tool and to dig into the perception that teachers have about students participating in them, while the fifth one aims to discover if games or interactive exercises can also work as rewards for students after having done more traditional activities. Questions 6 and 7 are designed to figure out the awareness that teachers have about classroom management techniques, and to see if classroom management is part their continuing professional development; while question 8 will be used to learn how the external context can affect the flow of a lesson. Question 9 and 10 will help to shed some light into the concept of teacher burnout, which can have a negative impact on classroom management (Aloe et al., 2013, 102). Freudenberger (1974, 1975) referred to a “stage of fatigue or frustration resulting from professional relationships that did not produce the expected reward or benefit”, like in the case of a teacher trying to carry out a game in class while students are misbehaving (Aloe et al., 2013, 102). Similarly, it is believed that teachers “with higher levels of burnout” (Goddard and Goddard 2006; Leung and Lee 2006), as well as teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy, are more likely to leave the profession (Aloe et al., 2013, 102), which would indicate that classroom management is not only essential to have a positive and effective classroom atmosphere, but can also have a positive impact on one’s physical and mental health.

4.3.3. Observation Grid

The observation grid (see annexes) has been designed for an observer to be completing it as the lesson is carried out. It consists of two columns, one for the teacher’s behaviour and one for the students’ reactions to it. Aloe et al (p.105) quote from Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson (1980) that “the goal of classroom management is to maintain a learning environment that allows for positive interaction, access to learning, and enhanced student achievement”. Then, this observation grid aims to evaluate the teacher’s management tools and pretends to establish a pathway for analysing teachers’ effectiveness, leadership, instruction delivery and communication skills with students. At the same time, focus is put on students in order to determine how these two elements of a class, teachers and students, interact and affect each other. Moreover, a final section is dedicated to other comments that

might be relevant for that class like noticing whether the lesson is happening in the morning at first hour, during last hour or before a holiday.

A series of questions that can be answered by paying attention to the situation in class have been designed for this grid: For example, it starts by asking what the teachers' tone or attitude is when doing more traditional activities -provided that they are doing them-, and by putting attention to the student's behavior, which can be helpful to contrast possible later moments in which a game might be happening. The emphasis will also be put on noticing how transition to activities occur, which is useful to analyze from a classroom management perspective. Then, because classroom management "embodies establishing rules to organize the class, to plan materials and activities, and to explain instructions and consequences of acting up" (Aliakbari et al., 2015, 2), this grid also focuses on whether the teacher has explained those rules for the activity or stated the consequences for misbehaving, and whether students have understood them or not. Similarly, Allen (2010) states that "rules should be stated positively, posted and reviewed routinely, and role-played and practiced so that students know what to do to follow them" (p. 9). I find this quote of great interest, because it raises a couple of questions: First, as a teacher, is it possible to always stick to your own rules? Should the consequences of not following those rules be always the same? It could be possible to have an approximate answer to these questions thanks to observing different classrooms consistently during a month, which this study aims at achieving. Moreover, it would be interesting and valuable to see if teachers who participate in this research reflect on their long term classroom management techniques in order to constantly try to improve them.

Finally, the observation grid has a section dedicated to whether the classroom layout has been changed or not during the dynamic activity. Allen quotes from Evertson and Neal (2006) that "learner-centered classrooms are characterized by flexible room arrangements", which is something that we can clearly observe during English lessons in which listening to a song individually, doing pair-work or working in small groups can happen during a single hour. It is usual for teachers to ask students to arrange the tables in a different way -for example, creating a circle so they can face each other- or to move the chairs to another part of the classroom during these exercises, which can create moments of chaos or disorganization. Moreover, when students are organised in pairs or small groups, "varied social forums" -that is, different groups of students who interact with their peers within the group and with

external ones- are created, which makes classroom managing more problematic because it is more complicated to pay attention to students and it can easily lead to burnout.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Due to the Covid-19 sanitary emergency, which forced all schools and university centres to close in Catalonia on March 13, 2020, only one of the instruments -being the interviews to teachers- could be partially implemented. The questionnaires for students, which were planned to be handed to 92 of them and gradually recollected while being present in the school or the observation grid that had to be completed by observing presential lessons during a period of a month could not be completed.

However, one of the teacher's interviews was conducted through a telephone call. This interview turned out to be quite valuable because that teacher was the one in charge of both Baccalaureate and International Baccalaureate groups. The results obtained from that interview will be commented on below, but it is important to take into account that having this small quantity of data and not having implemented all the instruments designed for this study does not make the results entirely accurate.

5.1. Teacher's Interview, discussion and further research

The educator who was able to answer the questionnaire (see annexes) was the teacher in charge of IB1A, IB2A, IB2B and B2E. She teaches the English subject exclusively and has been doing it for more than 20 years. From the information that she stated, some interesting ideas can be extracted:

First, she explained that she tends to do dynamic activities very often, especially in the International Baccalaureate lessons. Her reasonings are that because their level of English is better, it is much more probable that they will participate in those activities and that having a smaller number of students per class facilitates the realization of games or debates. Moreover, debating is regularly used in IB as a tool to improve communication skills and critical thinking. It is true that students that do not have a good level of English might feel anxious to answer in a big group for fear of being mistaken, which is why this teacher explains that students from Baccalaureate with a lesser level of English are much more

willing to participate during the sessions where the group is split in half, as there are 12 students in the room instead of 24. This information is really useful in order to understand that elements such as the number of students or their level of English seem to affect the classroom climate when doing interactive activities, and that teachers are more willing to teach using fun, motivating exercises when they feel that they can manage easily that particular group.

Secondly, the teacher explains that the ICT tools that she uses in class are mainly computers -used to project videos, play songs or for using the electronic book-, and the application *Kahoot!*. Interestingly, she asserts that, to her, using *Kahoot!* in class does not really pay off, because a lot of time is devoted into creating questions that will be answered in less than 5 minutes. Moreover, she believes that a tool like *Kahoot!* does not bring a lot of educational value into the classroom, and that students constantly ask to participate in a game of *Kahoot!* in order to avoid doing other traditional activities and to have fun. She goes on expressing that when students ask to play in class, she sticks to the lesson plan. In other words, if she had not planned to play a game during that session, she does not comply with her students' wishes. It would have been very interesting to observe which assertiveness techniques -if any- the teacher uses in order to let her students know that they would stick to the original plan, and see how she dealt with conflictive students who insisted on playing.

To continue, this educator claimed that during dynamic activities, she tries to appear relaxed and composed, when in fact she is actually paying more attention to students than she would normally do. This is of great interest, because being -or appearing, in this case- self-assured and confident are traits of assertiveness. Assertiveness helps when dealing with students "who manipulate and take advantage of others for their own benefit", while "increasing cohesion among members of the class" (Villena et. al, 2016, 311) which would explain why the teacher tries to behave assertively. Furthermore, the fact that she pretends to be more relaxed raises a couple of interesting questions for further research: Can assertivity be faked? Are students aware when a teacher is forcing themselves to appear confident in front of the class?

In the questionnaire handed to this lecturer, there is a segment devoted to figure out whether teachers do further research on classroom management techniques or not. Interestingly, she stated that in order to be a teacher in International Baccalaureate it is compulsory to attend a series of courses, which agrees with Allen's (2010) ideas that joining

courses can be an effective way of learning classroom management techniques. However, the teacher clarifies that too much theory is presented during these sessions and that she would prefer to do more situational learning. This idea is in accordance with the importance of doing role-play activities when learning essential interpersonal skills such as assertivity, as explained by Comstock (2020).

The least recommended timing for doing games or group work in class, according to her, are during mornings and evenings. She states that at 8:00 in the morning students do not participate because they are sleepy and unmotivated, while during evenings they feel too excited and distracted as the school day is coming to an end. Then as well, on days that precede a bank holiday such as Christmas or summer vacations this teacher proposes activities based around working with music, watching movies or playing *Kahoot!*. Nonetheless, she explains that the aim of these activities is not didactic, but rather to entertain students after the evaluation period has occurred, which can also raise some questions for future research: should activities such as games have a clear didactic purpose for them to be useful? Should those activities be evaluated and taken into account when grading students? It can be also valuable to study and analyse if the elements of “competition, stimulation, cooperation and fun” (Zarzycka-Piskorz, 2016, 18) that games generate are reason enough to use them in class, whether or not there is didactic value in them. Indeed, they have been proven to raise intrinsic motivation and improve the group climate (Zarzycka-Piskorz, 2016).

Finally, teachers’ burnout was assessed through this questionnaire. The teacher defends that it is much more tiring to manage games or similar activities rather than presenting a more traditional, teacher-centered lesson in which the students are listening or doing activities in their books individually. She also puts emphasis on the fact that even if the activities are well planned, sometimes they do not work as expected, which is an element that was not taken into account for this study but is of extreme relevance, as the feelings of frustration or dissatisfaction generated from these situations can also add to the teacher’s burnout. Then, she states that in some instances she thought about stopping working as a teacher, especially when having to deal with big groups during days when she was not feeling well or had personal problems. In addition, she believes that having taught for more than 20 contributes to her tiredness.

5.2. Relevance of the study and general conclusions

Learning English through games or other dynamic activities can be motivating for students because they present an element of fun and interaction. However, it has been shown that in these contexts, managing the class can become complicated because students might not want to participate in these activities or use them to disrupt the lesson, to talk to their peers or to use technological resources incorrectly. Then, it is essential to look into the worlds of classroom management and assertivity in order to explore how teachers can improve these aforementioned situations, as well as paying attention to how students respond to them. It has been demonstrated that “without a plan, teachers tend to be inconsistent”, as one day they may ignore students who are talking or disrupting the lesson, while other days they may “severely discipline students for the same behavior” (Canter, 1989, 58). This inconsistency will end up negatively affecting the relationship between teachers and students, as well as making the teacher feel frustrated, which in some cases will lead to them leaving the profession. In addition, it is believed that a conflictive interaction between teacher and students “can sometimes trigger a chain of actions and reactions that spirals out of control, leading to coercion, chaos, and damage” (P. Allen, 2010, 8). If these situations are not mediated, there is the danger that they become a routine and students misbehave every time that a fun activity is done in class.

Authors like Stoughton (2007) assert that in order to avoid discipline problems, “teachers need to acquire and employ classroom management strategies” (in Aliakbari et al., 2015, 2), that is why this study focuses on how teachers apply classroom management during interactive and fun activities. Moreover, in order to analyse how instructions are delivered, how the teacher communicates with students or how he or she responds to disruptive behaviour, it has proved to be essential digging into the world of assertiveness, an interpersonal skill related to leadership, confidence and acting accordingly to one’s beliefs. Looking into assertiveness techniques and whether they are applied or not is relevant in order to understand why certain situations might happen: in a classroom context, the teacher might be too aggressive or might not be speaking up for his or her beliefs, generating feelings of violence or non-congruence that will confuse students and difficult the completion of the

activity. In addition, if the teacher is not being effective, he or she might feel coerced into doing a certain activity like playing a game of *Kahoot!* that was not planned for the lesson.

Even if the study could not be implemented due to the sanitary crisis caused by Covid-19, some interesting conclusions were extracted from the interview to one of the teacher's in Salesians, such as the relevance of the context (time in which the lesson is taking place, if it is before a holiday...), the difference that the level of English can have on whether students participate or not or the huge contrast between doing dynamic activities in a small or big group. However, the answers to the questionnaires would have been useful to know what games are often used in class, how the teacher's age or experience relate to classroom management or the student's view in relation to the educational value that dynamic activities can have.

To conclude, it is believed that "time spent trying to control a class is time taken away from instruction" (Malone, Bonitz, and Rickett, 1998, Conclusion, 1) and that assertive discipline is not "a cure-all", but a very important "starting point" to improve the classroom climate (Canter, 1989, p. 60). Then, the author of this dissertation hopes that his work will shed some light on different techniques that can help limit disruption and allow students to learn in a motivating, exciting way, while teachers can also improve their management skills so they become encouraged to carry out more fun activities in class. This study also aims at improving teacher-student relationship because at the end of the day, as Dr. Pau López states, reflecting on the way we communicate with students is a professional duty that every teacher has (2006).

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7. Annexes

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Class:

1. Which activities do you enjoy the most in class? Do you play any games, work with music or use technological devices?

2. Do you think that it is possible to learn by doing dynamic or interactive activities?

3. Do you or your colleagues tend to act differently when doing these activities in class? In which ways?

4. If a colleague is misbehaving or disrupting the flow of the activity, do you talk to them and ask him to stop?

5. Do you think that one student's behavior can affect others? Is this positive or negative?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Class/classes:

Years of experience:

1. How often do you present dynamic activities in class? (games, debates, working with music...)

2. Do you use ICT tools (technologies) in class? Which ones?

3. Do you think they are satisfactory learning tools?

4. In general, do your students take dynamic activities seriously?

5. Do you sometimes use dynamic activities as a treat for students?

6. Do you apply different management techniques when doing these activities? (do you become more strict, more relaxed?...)

7. Do you research new classroom management techniques to apply in class?

8. According to your own experience, what is the best timing for carrying out dynamic activities?
(mornings, evenings, day of the week...)

9. Do you get more tired when having to manage these activities?

10. Have you ever considered leaving the profession? Why?

OBSERVATION GRID

Class:

Date:

| | | | |
|--|----------|--|--|
| Type of activities done during the session: | | | |
| Teacher | Students | | |
| What is the teachers' tone or attitude when doing traditional activities? | | How do students act during a more traditional activity? | |
| How has the teacher transitioned to the dynamic activity? (game, debate...) | | How have students responded to the transition to a more dynamic activity? | |
| Has the teacher explained the purpose of the activity? | | Do they seem to understand the purpose of the activity? | |
| Has the teacher explained the rules for this activity or consequences for misbehaviour? | | Do students seem to understand the rules and consequences for misbehavior? | |
| Is the teacher aware that some students are off-task? | | Are there any students off-task? | |
| How does the teacher manage disruptive students? | | How do students respond to the teacher's complains for their misbehaviour? | |
| Is the teacher aware that students might feel frustrated or non-participative because of their limited knowledge of English? | | Can students communicate in English without feeling frustrated? | |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Does the teacher use positive reinforcement? | | How do students respond to positive reinforcement? | |
| Is the teacher being aggressive, passive or assertive? | | How do students respond to the teacher's way of communicating with them? | |
| What assertive techniques has the teacher used? (" <i>I</i> " <i>subject, fogging, drilling...</i>) | | How have students responded to the assertive techniques? | |
| Has the classroom layout been changed for this activity? In which way? | | | |
| Other comments and observations | | | |

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Class/classes: B2E, IB1A, IB2B, IB2A.

Years of experience: more than 20.

1. How often do you present dynamic activities in class? (games, debates, working with music...)

Very often, especially in International Baccalaureate because their level is very good and they participate a lot in class. They also love to debate. It is much easier to do dynamic activities when the group is split (*desdoblament*) than in the bigger group.

2. Do you use ICT tools (technologies) in class? Which ones?

I basically use the computer to project videos or texts. Sometimes I do games of *Kahoot!* but not very often, as I think that it is a waste of time and students only want to do them for fun.

3. Do you think they are satisfactory learning tools?

Not really. A lot of time is needed to prepare them (for example, preparing questions for a game of *Kahoot!* which then is finished in 3 minutes)

4. In general, do your students take dynamic activities seriously?

No, students ask for playing games when they don't want to do more class.

5. Do you sometimes use dynamic activities as a treat for students?

No, I stick to the lesson plan. If there wasn't a dynamic activity planned for that day, I will not do it even if they ask for it.

6. Do you apply different management techniques when doing these activities? (do you become more strict, more relaxed?...)

I think I act the same, but I try to act more passive and appear relaxed when in fact I'm actually paying more attention to students.

7. Do you research new classroom management techniques to apply in class?

Every year I do courses which are compulsory for teachers in IB. However, a lot of theory is presented in these courses but I don't find them useful. I think it would be useful to do more practice.

8. According to your own experience, what is the best timing for carrying out dynamic activities? (mornings, evenings, day of the week...)

Not at 8 in the morning because they are sleepy. During the last hours of the day is not the best moment either because they are distracted. Before holidays we usually do dynamic activities, but the focus is not didactic (singing Christmas carols, for example, or watching a movie during the last school days when they have already been evaluated)

9. Do you get more tired when having to manage these activities?

Yes, much more. Students are more emotionally demanding during these activities. Also, sometimes the activities do not work as planned, which is frustrating. It does not matter if the activity is amazing, there needs to be a good teacher-student connection and trust for it to work

10. Have you ever considered leaving the profession? Why?

Yes, but at the same time I ask myself what would I be doing instead of teaching and I can't find an answer. Age has an impact, for sure, and health. Also, having personal problems does not help when having to deal with difficult groups.