

SUPUESTO PRÁCTICO

Oposiciones de Primaria / Especialidad Inglés

Which are your favourite measures to establish discipline in class?

Both, Decree 230/2007 and the Order of August 10, put special emphasis on adjusting the curriculum to the different paces of our students. It means that when choosing methodology, the teacher has to take into account not only students' cognitive capacities but also other characteristics of their personality. Additionally, we can read in the Introduction to Annex I of the Order of August 10 (area of Castilian and Foreignlanguages) that our work in the classroom must contribute to the strengthening of the respect for human rights and basic liberties and for all the values which prepare the students to play a responsible role in a free and democratic society.

These seem to be the best general guidelines to follow when we want to maintain discipline in class. Concrete solutions are given below from this point of view.

Many discipline problems are due to the teacher's failure to recognise the influence of students' psychological characteristics. English as a foreign language is presently taught in the second and third cycles of Primary Education, which encompasses age ranges from 9 to 12. In this period, students are characterized by longer attention span than in the previous period, so activities can be of the type which requires longer concentration periods than before but games should still constitute the main part of activities which students get involved in. Another relevant characteristic of this age is student's physical agility visible in a newly gained full control of their movements and a great interest in activities which require physical exercise. Therefore, it would be preferable to look for activities which enable students to combine movement with English practice. Finally, children in the last two cycles of Primary Education usually integrate themselves willingly in group activities. At the same time, however, they begin to show signs of confrontation with children of the opposite sex, as they realize that they do not know how to treat them.

On the other hand, numerous methodological choices are directly involved in keeping students disciplined. Firstly, the type of activity which students have to be involved in keeps their attention if the choice of activities has been made with students' interests and experience in mind. Once the right choice has been made, the way in which activities are ordered also influences their success. The recommended procedure in this case is to alternate activities of different types. For instance, two written tasks should not follow each other but instead a written task should follow an oral one. In the same way, an activity which requires students to produce messages can follow one in which receptive skills prevail.

Another possibility to provide a change in the atmosphere of a class is to offer group activities in which students can reorganize themselves in groups they wish or following teacher's instructions and changing their seats to perform them.

Finally, some students who finish their activities earlier or for whom they are too difficult often also end up being involved in conflictive situations. It is very likely that in a group of students there will be differences of level of proficiency in English, even at the beginner stage in Primary Education. Besides, general learning capacity of some of our students can differ from the rest of the group. There is no one simple solution to this problem but viewed from the perspective of our practical case, the situation can be handled in three possible ways: differentiating activities on individual basis, introducing peer monitoring, or dividing classes into smaller groups, according to their proficiency level. Each of these strategies can be applied avoiding restlessness in students by keeping them busy with meaningfully tasks. One important point to remember with differentiated instruction is that the teacher is also obliged to ensure comprehensiveness of the whole process in order to avoid any kind of discrimination.

In conclusion, the problem which is included in this practical case belongs to the more general area of motivation and attitude in teaching foreign languages. Its different aspects presented in the diagnosis and the resolution requires a significant effort from the teacher in order to handle them in an efficient way. The only way to achieve it is by adopting a flexible approach in the application of methodological expertise, in the way which characterizes the interventions proposed in this essay.