

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND STUDENT'S PROBLEMS  
IN *FREEDOM WRITERS* THE MOVIE

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ABSTRACT

Teachers need to observe and control the behaviour of their students in the classroom in order to create an effective and comfortable learning environment for their students. This research aimed to find out teachers' strategies to manage the classroom to overcome student problems. This study used qualitative and descriptive methods. The data in this research came from the script of *Freedom Writers the Movie* and Erin Gruwell's utterances as the main character in the film. As the result of this study, the writer found five main student problems such as racism and racial discrimination, gang violence, bullying, disrespect, and lack of motivation. To overcome student problems, the writer found five kinds of classroom management strategies that use by the teacher such as organize and decorate the classroom, get to know about student's problems, respect each other, provide relevant material to students, motivates the student, and found four effective classroom management strategies for students in this film such as get to know about student's problem, respect each other, provide relevant material for students, and motivates the student.

Keywords: classroom management, student problem, movie

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, there are many cases of violence that occurs between teachers and students in the classroom. It is not uncommon for teachers to encounter students who ignore their instructions, disturb other classmates, or even fight with their classmates, sleep, or purposely skip class hours. This problem makes teachers work harder to educate their students. Teachers need to find the right methods and strategies to control their students in the classroom and solve the problems that they face in the classroom.

Teachers should have multiple roles, responsibilities, and skills in teaching and learning activities to create conditions for active, creative, successful, and enjoyable learning. Classroom management is one of the skills that must be mastered and applied by a teacher to create an effective learning atmosphere for students in the classroom. Brophy (2006; 17) argued that classroom management refers to actions taken to create and maintain a learning environment conducive to successful instruction comprised of many factors, such as arranging the physical environment, establishing rules and procedures, maintaining students' attention to lessons and engagement in activities. So, in general, classroom management can be defined as teacher's skills to organize their classrooms and manage their classes to achieve learning goals, not only asking students to follow the rules in class but also find out what their students need and motivate their students in learning.

From the matter above, there is a film based on the true story of a teacher who succeeded in educating students who were involved in gang disputes and racial conflict in America, entitled *Freedom Writers*. The story was adapted from Erin Gruwell and her students' book *The Freedom Writers Diary* and directed by Richard LaGravenese. The challenges in educational institutions, racial discrimination, juvenile delinquents, and poor students are all addressed in this film. It also provides some classroom management strategies which can be a good reference to broaden teachers' insights in overcoming student problems or managing their class and also can be reference to describe the adverse effects of racism and juvenile delinquency to their student. Therefore, this research is made to study the *Classroom Management and Student's Problems In "Freedom Writer's" The Movie*.

This research is concerns classroom management and student problems in *Freedom Writers Movie* and aimed to explain and discuss how teachers' classroom management strategy been successful in overcoming student problems in that movie. The data for the study was taken from the *movie Freedom Writers*, directed by Richard LaGravenese.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study is descriptive qualitative method and apply an objective approach to analyze data that focus on the topic being studied. The writer is going to analyse and describe classroom management used by Erin Gruwell as a teacher in the film *Freedom Writers* and focus on the way the teacher overcomes problems with her students in the classroom. Script of the movie and picture of the movie scenes from *Freedom Writers Movie* will be primary data of this research. Meanwhile, any books and website that related to the film, for instance, the review of the film on the internet, analysis of the film on the internet that are related to this film will be the secondary data of this research.

The writer used documentation method in collecting the data. Thus, the writer will use the techniques as follows: (1) The writer will download *Freedom Writers the Movie* from the internet; (2) The writer will watch the *Freedom Writers movie* to get related information that can be used as data; (3) The writer will download the movie script of *Freedom Writers movie* from the internet; (4) The writer will create a note from dialogues, text, and pictures shown in the film such especially about the classroom management

presented by the main character and problem between students in the movie; (5) The writer underlining the dialogues in the script that contain classroom management strategies and problem between student as the data. This stage includes masking and shorting the data; (6) The writer will start to paraphrase the data then make points from the selected data and applies the theories to answer the questions about the classroom management.

For the data analysis in this research, the writer taking the following steps, such as: (1) Identifying the classroom management and problem between student in *Freedom Writers* the movie; (2) Classifying the type of problem between student and classroom management; (3) Describing the types of problem between student and classroom management strategies employed in the movie scenes; (4) Explaining the effectiveness of the classroom management strategies in overcoming student problems in the movie and refer to the theory from Evertson and Weinstein.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Finding

The writer found 5 kinds of student problem in *Freedom Writers* the movie. Those problem were racism and racial discrimination, gang violence, bullying, disrespect, and also lack of motivation. The writer found 5 kinds of classroom management strategies that teacher used to overcome student problems in this movie such as organize and decorate the classroom, get to know about student's problem, respect each other, provide relevant material to students, motivates the student. The author also finds 4 classroom management strategies in the film that are effective in solving student problems referring to the theory of Evertson and Weinstein such as, get to know about student's problem, respect each other, provide relevant material to students and motivates the student.

### Students Problems that Teacher Face in the Class

#### Racism and Racial Discrimination

Racism is often seen as an act of violence that one can commit against another individual of another race and racial discrimination is discrimination against a person or group of people on the basis of their race.



Picture 1

Eva is running away from an Asian gang attack.

Racism makes these children learn to survive in their environment. They need to join their gangs based on their race and fight for their territory. The children bring this war into the classroom. They sit in their racial groups, talk to their race only, mock other classmates of other races, and fight with other gangs in the class. This context is classified as racism because it is based on considerations of situations faced by Eva and other students that make them hate each other, and also Ms. Gruwell because she is white.



Picture 2

Victoria felt uncomfortable because she felt discriminated against by her teacher

The teacher in the class asked Victoria's opinion about *The Color Purple* book based on the perspective of black people, and the situation made Victoria feel uncomfortable. Victoria also often gets discrimination from other teachers because she is black. Her teacher said she was lucky because she belongs to the honor class. Her teacher also said they refuse to use more black literature because it is considered inappropriate as a source of literacy. The writer classified this context as racial discrimination because it is based on the teacher's statement that made Victoria upset.

### Gang violence

A gang is a group of people belonging to an internal organization that claims control over territory in a community and engages in illegal behavior that sometimes uses violence. Gang violence is one of the juvenile delinquencies that often occurs among teenagers.



Picture 3

### Gang fight in school lawn and hall

Eva left her classroom and calls her gang and helps them get into school to beat up a black boy at her school. Erin and her students heard noise outside the classroom and it made them panic and start to run out. Ms. G ran to the outside to see the situation then she found that her student fighting with the other student. This context is classified as a gang fight because it is based on the consideration of the fight that occurred between Eva's gang and students from other gangs.

### Bullying

Bullying is bad behavior towards others such as insulting, disturbing and even using violence, coercion, threats, harassing and intimidating others which is usually carried out by a person or group continuously.

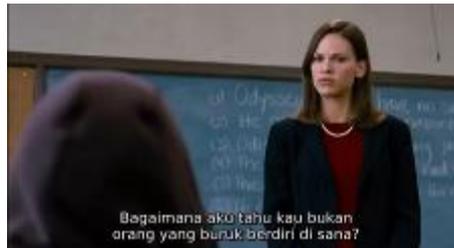


Picture 4

Tito draws Jamal's face as a joke in class

When Ms. G is explaining lessons in front of the class. Tito drew a face of Jamal with thick lips on the paper and showed it to other classmates. The other classmates were giggled and laughed. This made Jamal feel embarrassed and sad. Ms. G took the paper and told her students by doing so, they could lead to racial discrimination like what happened in the Holocaust tragedy. This context is classified as bullying because it is based on what Tito did to Jamal that makes him feel sad and intimidated.

### Disrespect



picture 6

Andre and the other students argue with Miss G. about their perception of white people.

The student didn't give their respect to Ms. Gruwell because they hate white people and they can't trust her. The writer classified this context as disrespect because it is based on the other student's statement about Ms. G that they don't want to give their respect for her because they don't know her and they can't trust her.

### Lack of Motivation.



Picture 5

Andre gave his test score an F because he felt he deserved it.

Ms. G tries to talk to Andre about his evaluation assignment because Andre gave himself an F. Andre was disappointed with the prosecutor's decision for his brother. His situation made him feel hopeless for his future. Andre decides to go back to selling drugs and skipping his class. In conclusion, this context is classified as lack of motivation because it is based on what Andre did to his evaluation assignment and it can be seen from his dialog, *"It's what I feel I deserve. That's all"*.

### Teacher's Classroom Management Strategies.

#### Organize and Decorate the Classroom



Picture 7

Ms. G rearranged the seating position of students

Ms. G changes the seating position of all of the students to limit student's bad behavior and make it easier to control the behavior of students in classroom in order to create a better situation in the classroom.



Figure 8

Miss G. decorated classrooms to be more comfortable for her students

Ms. G wants to make her students feel comfortable in their classroom and change the situation of the class. In conclusion, organize and decorate the classroom is one of Ms. G classroom management strategy to make her student have more interaction with their classmates and remove the boundaries that exist between them.

#### Get to Know About Students Problem



Picture 9

Ms. G uses the line game to find out students Problem

Ms. G choose line game because she wanted to invite their students to play together in order to get rid of students' grudges against each other and tries to find out more about the problems faced by his students. In conclusion, line game is Ms. G strategies to look for student problem and background. This is considered as classroom management strategy because by finding out the student's problem and background, the teacher can determine the appropriate teaching method and prevent student bad behavior.



Picture 10

Ms. G gives daily journals to her students

Understanding student's problem and backgrounds is an important thing for teachers to know what their students need. By distributing journals to student, the teacher can find the right way to deal with students and educate their students. In conclusion, journal and line game are strategies to look for student problem. This is considered as classroom management strategy because by finding out the student's

problem, the teacher can determine the appropriate teaching method and material to teach them.

### Respect Each Other



Picture 11

Ms. G apologizes to his student for asking such tricky questions in a line game.

Ms. G using polite language to apologize and showing her respect to her student. The writer interprets Erin's apology as an act to teach her students to always apologize if they make mistakes and show that she respects her students. Besides that, implicitly she also showed that her students' bad thoughts about her were wrong. In conclusion, Respecting Each Other is classroom management strategy that is used by Ms. G to build up respect for each other in the classroom.

### Provide Relevant Material for Students



Picture 12

Miss G. gives a new book about gang violence to her student

Ms. G was giving books to her students about gang violence. Ms. G choosed the book because she wanted to improve students' interest in reading through books that are relevant to their lives such as human right, gangs violence, etc . In conclusion, looking for material that is relevant to students is one of the class management used by Ms. G to increase students' interest in reading and meet student learning needs.

### Motivate the student



Picture 13

Ms. G held a toast for change for her student

Ms. G was prepared a small event which called “toast for change” for her students in her class to motivate her students to become better person in the future, increase student self-esteem and self-confidence. So, based on the consideration of what Ms. G did to her student, motivated the students is considered a classroom management strategy

because by providing motivation and support to students, teachers can increase students' enthusiasm for learning and become better individuals than before.

### **The Effectiveness of Teachers Classroom Management Strategies to Overcome Students' Problems in The Movie.**

The following is the discussion on how teacher's classroom management strategy been successful in overcoming student problems in that movie referring to Evertson and Weinstein theories:

#### **Organize and Decorate the Classroom**

At scene 00:21:18 until 00:22:36, Erin rearranged the sitting position of the students to controlling student activity in the classroom and minimize the possibility of students doing bad things. Her student doesn't like it because they have to sit beside their enemy. After that day, one by one of her students didn't come to her class. But the school guard helps her to force the student to come to her class. In order to make their student feel more comfortable in the classroom, she collected the picture of their student in the classroom and pasting it on the bulletin board, she also put some flower in the window. This strategy is often used by teachers to control students' bad habits in class or limit student activities that can ruin the learning process. In this movie, this classroom management strategy is not effective enough because in the beginning, the student refused to do it. The student hated the teacher but they have to go back to the class because they were forced by the security. After the teacher tried to get closer with their student, they accept their new seat position. This classroom management relate to the Evertson and Weinstein (2006) theory that state teacher need to organize and implement instruction in ways that optimize student access to learning.

#### **Get to Know About Student's Problem**

To overcome student problem, teacher need to know what is the problem that student faced. That is what Erin did to her student at scene 00:41:11 until 00:41:34. Since Erin saw there is border between her students and they hate each other. She playing line game and give journal for her student to find out more about student life. This classroom management is effective because Erin made her student joined the game. taking their journal in Erin desk, and they wrote their life story in that journal, they also allowed Erin to read their journal. This classroom management relate to the Evertson and Weinstein (2006) theory that state teacher should use appropriate intervention to assist student with behavior problem.

#### **Respect Each Other**

In scene 00:32:28 until 00:33:17 showed that Erin's student didn't like her because they hated white people and they think white people always waiting their respect like they deserve it for free. But Erin tried to teach her student that to have respect from the others they have to give it first. So, she tried to show her respect for her students by apologizing if she made a mistake, teach her student about tolerance and also teach them about human right. This classroom management strategy is effective for her student because the student finally accepted Erin as their teacher and called her "Ma" as a sign of respect for her and showing their respect, build up their friendship to the other classmate and stop being intolerant. This classroom management strategy is related to the classroom management strategy by Evertson and Weinstein (2006) which states that teachers need to promote the development of students' social skills and self-regulation.

### **Provide Relevant Material for Students**

In scene 00:37:29 the principle didn't allow Erin to give her student some of book from library because the student will damage those books. But Erin though those student damage that books because they know they get those books because no one thinks they're smart enough for real book. So, Erin tried to looking for the other books that relevant and appropriate for her students. She raised money to buy some books about gangs and when the student got that book, they were surprised because it was a new book and excited to read that book. Besides giving material on the impact of gang violence, Erin also teaches her students about human rights and gender equality by holding presentations by her students and also holding debates. This classroom management are effective because we can see it from the scene that the students read the book without destroying it and student grades that were initially bad became better. This classroom management related to the classroom management strategy by Evertson and Weinstein (2006) which states that the teacher needs to Encourage students' engagement in academic tasks, which can be done by using group management methods.

### **Motivated the Student**

Teachers motivate their students to increase their enthusiasm for learning or face difficulties in life. In scene 01:10:29 - 01:11:21, Erin knew her student have a lot of problem in their life, and to make them keep strong to face it, she gave them motivation, and held toast for change to make her student feel that they are can be better than before. This classroom management are effective to overcome student problem because from the scenes, we can see that her students slowly turned into better individuals. They become someone who can accept their differences and become tolerant, they believe that they still have hope for happiness. This classroom management strategy is related to the classroom management strategy by Evertson and Weinstein (2006) which states that teachers must develop caring and supportive relationships between teachers and students and between students and other students.

### **Discussions**

#### **Student Problem**

From the findings, it can be seen that racism and racial discrimination, gang fights, bullying, disrespect, and lack of motivation are major problems faced by teachers in their classrooms. In this film, the most common problems in class are racial discrimination and gang fights. This is due to social problems such as racism that occur in society and affect the lives of these students. As described by Peterson and Morgan (in Belle:2017), a student's disorganized social community such as poverty, a lack of employment and educational possibilities, gang activities, drug activities, and crimes can affect their emotions and also their behaviour. This condition has the potential to alter their perspective on the environment, making them more emotional and sensitive to differences in their surroundings.

### **Classroom Management**

In order to overcome student problem, as a teacher Erin Gruwell applied some classroom management strategy such as organizing and decorating the classroom to make the student feel comfortable in the classroom, try to know the student's problems to find out the right teaching method, Respecting Each Other to teach her student about peace and get rid all of the problem between them, providing relevant materials for students to

improve student interest in reading and learning, and motivating the student to increase student self-confidence.

The dominant classroom management used by Erin are organizing and decorating the classroom and getting to know about student problems. This is important for teachers to do because there are many factors that can disrupt the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Watkins & Wagner (2000) stated that Space, time, activities, supplies, labour, social interactions, and student conduct are all parts of classroom management, this concept is related to a variety of activities carried out by the teacher in the classroom, including arranging physical space, defining and practicing classroom procedures, analysing students' behavior, dealing with undisciplined behavior, encouraging students' responsibility for learning, and teaching lessons in a way that encourages students' task orientation. As a form of anticipation and finding solutions, teachers must know the character of students and find the main problems that make students difficult to follow in class. Then, they must find the appropriate strategy to teach the students. Furthermore, Bru, Stephens, and Torsheim (in Djigic & Stojiljković, 2011) consider the following as core elements of classroom management skills such as academic support, emotional support, attentive and simultaneous monitoring of the whole class, and conflict management. In other words, class management can be more effective if the teacher can understand the character of students, provide appropriate teaching material, and build mutual respect in the classroom.

### **How Those Classroom Management Strategy Became Successful**

Racism and gang fights are the main factors behind the negative behaviour of the students in this film. When Erin Gruwell became aware of the issue, she set out to find a solution to the problem of misbehaving in the classroom. She tried to change and modify the students' seating positions. She also decorates the classroom to provide her children a supportive environment. That is a common method employed by educators to make the classroom environment more pleasant and manageable. Janelle (in Slameto, 2019:07) stated that a well-designed classroom, based on recent study from Salford University, can increase student performance by 25%. However, in Erin Gruwell's application of classroom management as a teacher, the research found that Erin's class management strategy, such as changing her students' sitting positions, was less effective because students in the class did not like sitting next to students of a different race or gang. This triggers discomfort and fights between students in the classroom. This is reflected in the film, where some students leave the class one by one and there is always a commotion in the class, so Erin needs the help of the school guard to intervene or call her students who are skipping classes to return to the class and follow their lessons. The classroom situation is getting under control when Erin tries to find out why her students don't like her and straighten out the students' thoughts about the impact of racism. She also tries to develop a sense of tolerance and solidarity among her students, with the aim of erasing gang hatred and developing trust among them as described by Miller & Pedro (2006) that mutual respect and understanding are also important components of a positive learning environment in the classroom. Providing appropriate subject matter for students and motivating students also has a positive impact on building student interest in learning. Erin's classroom management method was successful because students' behaviors in the classroom began to improve, and the classroom environment became more conducive than previously. Furthermore, the pupils' grades have improved from the last one. She succeeded in changing the mindset of students for the better.

## CONCLUSION

From the observation in *Freedom Writers* the movie, it can be concluded that there are five student problems that occur in the film such as; racism and racial discrimination, gang violence, bullying, disrespect, and also lack of motivation. The most dominant student problems in this movie are racial discrimination and gang fights and those are caused by social problems that occur in the student environment and affect their social environment especially at school such as their classmates, parents, and teachers at the school. There are also five kinds of classroom management strategies that teacher used to overcome student problems in *Freedom Writers* the movie such as organize and decorate the classroom, get to know about student's problem, respect each other, provide relevant material to students, motivates the student with the most dominant classroom management strategy used by the teacher are organize and decorating the classroom and getting to know about student problems. The author also finds four classroom management strategies in the film that are effective in solving student problems referring to the theory of Evertson and Weinstein such as, get to know about student's problem, respect each other, provide relevant material to students and motivates the student.

To suggest, it is important to increase the sensitivity of teachers in understanding the conditions of students in the classroom and meeting the needs of students during the learning process in the classroom. Conducting an evaluation after the lesson ends is also important for teachers to do in order to improve the quality of teaching and understand classroom conditions. The appropriate Furthermore, creativity in teaching becomes an important point for teachers to attract students' interest in learning. For Students, they must increase their sense of caring and respect for one another to create positive vibes in social life. In addition, it is important for student being optimistic and never give up to achieve their desires and goals and change their bad habits to become a better person.

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