Conflict Prevention and Management in Language Education

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Abstract The text analyses selected issues of conflict prevention and management, such as mediation attempts and coping strategies, in the everyday functioning of foreign language teachers. The notion of conflict will be examined as well as typical conflict-provoking situations and behaviours on the part of teachers, students, parents, members of the staff and school administration. Ways of avoiding misunderstandings and types of behaviour leading to the reduction of tensions will also be discussed. Implications will be sought for pre- and in-service language teacher education.

Keywords Discipline · Classroom management · Conflict prevention · Conflict management · Teacher education

1 Introduction

The social and financial status of the teaching profession has declined in many countries, and in national and international surveys teachers more and more often declare growing stress levels, mostly due to classroom management problems (TALIS, 2009, 2013, 2019). Research demonstrates that novice teachers tend to leave the profession after 5 years of work added to the fact that in many countries this professional group constitutes one fifth of the educational work force, the much feared meltdown scenario materialises (Department of Education, 2018; Koffeman & Snoek, 2019; Okeke & Mtyuda, 2017). Encouraging novice teachers to stay in the profession is one of the main concerns of educational administration. At the same time, migration between schools grows among highly qualified teachers, who choose better schools and thus contribute to the increased achievement gaps between students from various districts (Feng & Sass, 2017).

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Attracting teachers to the profession and retaining effective professionals in schools become burning issues in all educational contexts (OECD, 2002a, b.) As teachers ascribe most of their frustrations to conflicts resulting from discipline problems, and consider student misbehaviour a powerful factor affecting their well-being (Bao et al., 2016), conflict prevention and management becomes a major concern of both researchers and administrators and an indispensable skill to be developed by teacher trainees to protect their future psychological well-being (Spilt et al., 2013; Stankiewicz, 2005).

Language teachers perceive conflicts involved in classroom management, alongside work overload, as problems most difficult to cope with and the main factors responsible for professional burnout (Barmby, 2006). Reflection on ways of helping teachers to develop appropriate strategies during their initial language teacher training seems, therefore, indispensable. Drawing on research results obtained in the fields of pedagogy, social psychology and sociology of education, this article aims to address these crucial issues.

2 The Nature of Conflict Definition and Typology

Conflict is defined as the 'perception of different interests…. the idea that involves the beliefs of different social entities (i.e., individual, group, organisation, etc.) who perceive incompatible goals and interference from others in achieving those goals (Bao et al., 2016, p. 542). The nature of conflict is explained in the morphology of the term itself. The word *conflict* comes from the Latin *fligere* – to strike and *con* – together, meaning 'striking one another', which implies intensity of negative emotions and open hostility (Griffin, 2002).

Conflicts are studied in multiple disciplines. Political conflicts between states are analysed by historians, philosophers and political scientists. Social, cultural and ethnic conflicts are the subject of study in ethnology, cultural anthropology and sociology. Interpersonal conflicts are examined by psychologists, legal mediators and therapists. Research on school and classroom conflicts is usually undertaken in at least three fields: education, social psychology and sociology of education. Although in every discipline causative thinking prevails and roots of conflicts are sought, considerable differences can be noted between approaches in particular areas.

For a long time, philosophers and historians analysing conflicts considered them disruptive and disintegrating societies. In the twentieth century, sociologists researching intracommunity frictions introduced a new perspective demonstrating that conflict is an essential element in group formation (Coser, 1957), but focused on power as a permanent feature of social relations (Dahrendorf, 1959) as well as on the role of emotions and values in potential and actual disagreements (Collins, 1975). Psychologists and educators, without ignoring causes of discord, concentrated mainly on strategies of conflict resolution.

According to Deutsch (2000), the main theoretician of interpersonal conflict, each case can be classified as either destructive or constructive. As a criterion of classification, the author uses functional consequences of conflict based on the assessment of post-conflict relations between parties of the initial controversy. When emotions and arguments get petrified on both sides, a conflict is classified as destructive. If interlocutors manage to start listening to each other and arrive at a point when agreement can be reached, a form of a *compromise* may be worked out (a common promise: *com-* together, *promessum* – promise) or a *consensus* as an agreed perspective on the problem (*con* – together, *sensus* – a mode of thinking or perception), the relationship can then rise to a higher level and a conflict proves constructive. Wilmot and Hocker (2011) list five possible results of a conflict situation, i.e., avoidance, competition, accommodation, compromise and collaboration. Avoidance is a form of escape which does not solve the conflict, while competition will only aggravate it. Accommodation takes place when one party to the conflict is not highly assertive, while the other one is in the situation of power; initial controversy results in the stabilisation of unbalanced relationship (Puppel & Krawczak, 2015). Compromise means consensus which may lead to peaceful separation or to future collaboration. Each result takes different forms and brings different side-effects.

In educational contexts destructive or unresolved conflicts, but also those quelled by means of power and domination strategies, such as blaming, insulting, humiliating, often lead to peer victimization initiated by students who could not manage to win the teacher-student power struggle and felt publicly castigated (Archambault et al., 2016; Ciuladiene & Kairiene, 2017; Özgan, 2016). Learner's avoidance materialises itself in passivity or truancy and, therefore, is socially unacceptable, while teacher's avoidance reflected in ignoring misdemeanours that may have serious consequences, is likely to encourage bullying and endanger safety. Competition among learners often brings about temporary increases in motivation, but later motivates winners only, at the same time demotivating other participants. Competition between the student and the teacher is in fact a power struggle, which occurs when the roles are not clearly defined. Accommodation has no obvious value. It may be desirable when learners and teachers assume roles prescribed in the given context, when one of the parties of the conflict apologises or compensates, but it may also prove dangerous when the learner engages in pretending and fakes good behaviour, at the same time cherishing resentment and planning revenge. Compromise is the best option, although a decision on each side to take a step back is never easy, especially in classroom conflicts in which the teacher tends to stress duties, the learner emphasizes fairness, and both fear a loss of face.

Success is achieved when conflict resolution leads to teacher-student collaboration, though when this goal proves too ambitious, collaboration within a group of students may be considered a satisfactory result. The road to success may lead from anger, through rejection, reflection, reconciliation to collaboration, referred to as a rule of 5Rs taking its name from Italian *Rabbia, Rifiuto, Ripensamento, Riconciliazione, Ripartenza* (Stańkowski, 2009).

3 Etiology of Classroom Conflict

Conflicts on the teacher-learner front tend to spring mainly from learners' classroom behaviour which the teacher considers disruptive or simply unacceptable. The first official definition of disruptive behaviour was provided by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in the late 1970s and listed the following: aggression to other pupils and staff, rudeness and insolence, behaviour designed to disrupt the work of others and not allowing a lesson to continue, refusal to obey school rules and hostility to authority (DES, 1977 quoted in Mongon et al., 1989; Olsen & Cooper, 2001). Later researchers identified main types of disobedience listed as troublesome by primary and secondary school teachers, i.e., idleness, making unnecessary noise, talking out of turn and aggression (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). For teachers a distinction between a student psychologically disturbed and badly behaved is very difficult to make. On the other hand, bad behaviour is rarely clearly defined by school authorities, which makes learners dependent on inferring teacher's expectations from criticism and blame. Although it is common knowledge that undesirable behaviour is that which either hinders students' learning, or may risk safety, cause harm, or else result in damaging school equipment, it may also include behaviour that a particular teacher perceives as subjectively unpleasant, a reaction often incomprehensible for their learners.

Causes of unwanted learner behaviour vary and include negative attitudes toward the teacher, apathy, boredom, lack of motivation, personality and communication difficulties (Haynes, 2012). One of the most important is attention seeking, which often results from low self-concept, underdeveloped social skills and covert anger turning students into saboteurs. It should not be forgotten, however, that negative learner reactions underlying teacher-student conflict can be traced back to a pupil's constant experiences of failure, lack of tangible results of their efforts, too high competition or too strong pressure of extrinsic motivation (Fontana, 1991).

Identifying causes without understanding learners' aims is insufficient to explain undesirable behaviour and does not help the teacher to solve ethical dilemmas springing from classroom situations (Werbińska, 2009). Student behaviour deemed unacceptable usually has a function: learners receive important payoffs, such as finding oneself centre stage, gaining status among peers, stirring excitement, taking revenge on an enemy or simply avoiding effort. Those, so-called *mistaken goals*, to use a term introduced by Dreikurs (1964), give rise to a variety of student roles, such as a class clown, obnoxious student, lazy pupil, helpless learner, rebellious or stubborn student, destructive or defiant pupil, contemptuous student or socially inept learner (Nakamura, 2000).

Undesirable behaviour is particularly difficult to cope with when it comes from a group rather than an individual student, a phenomenon obstructing project work and group work, i.e., forms of activity frequently used during language lessons. Usually, the group is influenced by a leader or a social star, sometimes referred to as a *gamekeeper,* but also by the teacher's style of building rapport, which may either alleviate or aggravate behaviour problems.

The school context may exacerbate behaviour problems when rules are inconsistently applied and are perceived as unfair by students, especially when decisions are taken arbitrarily. This particular aspect was one of the first variables examined when empirical research started in the fields of social psychology and sociology of education. Results demonstrated that lack of fairness often results from the teacher's behaviour linked to the *halo effect*, the phenomenon when 'we are already impressed by someone's behaviour in one context, we will be favourably predisposed towards their efforts in another' and the *demon effect* under which 'if we already have a bad impression of an individual, we are predisposed to interpret their future actions negatively' (Fontana, 1986, p. 106). A similar categorisation of teacher classroom behaviours had been presented earlier by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) as two sets of predictions, positive and negative, formulated about learners, which lead to teachers' acting on their own attributions, thus producing expected reactions on the part of their students, i.e., phenomena referred to as the Pygmalion and the Golem effects. Acting on attributions is usually perceived by learners as unfair teacher behaviour and, as such, may block communication crucial for the achievement of language teaching objectives.

What exacerbates the problem is the fact that learners fall victim to the lack of uniformity in reactions by teachers in the same school. Disagreements among staff members are unavoidable, as opinions often differ, interests of individual teachers or their groups frequently run counter to one another and other commitments of individuals may conflict with their school responsibilities (Pollard, 1985). It is not very often that a strong, unifying culture of collaboration develops among school staff. Such a desirable pattern of interaction tends to evolve in new educational institutions established as an opposition to norms contested by those who are ready to create a learning environment more conducive to autonomous teaching and learning. Much more frequently, due to diverse milieus in which teachers were brought up and educated, multiple norms and values can be noticed. As a consequence, subgroups and cliques are formed, truces are silently made and intergroup tensions felt. Consensus is difficult to achieve as individuals defend their values and fight to preserve their self-image. The situation can be amended if group leaders and school administration take steps toward valuing individuals, their openness, sense of security and contribution to others, but also promote interdependence during teamwork (Nias et al., 1989). If this does not happen, learners cannot count on predictable teacher reactions to their behaviour, which has a demoralising effect on school population and renders acceptable behaviour difficult to shape.

If a school has managed to implement a consistent policy, conflict resolution is usually easier, although success depends on the behaviour of both parties. Research by Ciuladiene and Kairiene (2017) demonstrates that conflicts in which a student takes a passive approach tend to remain unresolved, while those in which a student takes an active approach 'opportunities to resolve a conflict increase significantly; however, a crucial factor, which determines the further course of the conflict, is the teacher's actions which either respond or fail to respond to the student's needs' (Ciuladiene & Kairiene, 2017, p. 117). A teacher's reactions, however, depend on the classroom management model he or she decides to follow.

4 Twentieth Century Approaches to Shaping Learner Behaviour: Classroom Management Models

All main classroom management models were designed in the second half of the twentieth century and all offered strategies aimed to shape learner behaviour. Two trends were dominant in line with psychological approaches of the time. Typically the *behavioural approach*, based on shaping by means of positive and negative reinforcement, is frequently used in primary classrooms. Teenagers react more positively to the *cognitive approach* which attempts at eliciting situational interest and possibly also sustained motivation regulated by long-term objectives. There are, however, other approaches which are not easily categorised, e.g., those oriented toward human communication.

The teacher's reaction depends on their emotional predispositions and the ability to self-regulate in coping with one's own anger or anxiety. When it comes to strategic classroom management, a variety of models have been designed, all of which are adaptable to foreign language teaching.

Three of these models, i.e. *the Redl and Wattenberg Model, the Kounin Model and the (neo)Skinnerian Model* follow the lines of the behavioural approach.

The Redl and Wattenberg Model is based on the conviction that groups of people influence individual behaviour and, as a consequence, members of a given group behave differently than they would act individually (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Redl & Wattenberg, 1959). Teachers may mitigate undesirable behaviour before it turns into aggressive and destructive action against other students or the teacher by using light supportive techniques, such as humour, eye contact, or proximity control, i.e., shortening physical distance. If they decide that bad behaviour is caused by learning difficulties, situational assistance may be offered in the form of an extra explanation or change in the lesson scenario. Appraising reality, i.e., setting limits, encouragement, but also listing possible consequences of bad behaviour, may also help as well as the so-called 'pleasure-pain' techniques which involve rewards or punishment, the latter considered here as the last resort. In language teaching classroom, contracts are usually suggested for the purpose of ensuring early communication of expectations and consequences of bad behaviour.

The Kounin Model is founded on the observation that the behaviour of a pupil immediately influences the behaviour of the nearby student and produces a 'ripple effect' in the classroom, leading to potential conflicts with the teacher (Kounin, 1977). By the same token, reacting to misbehaviour of one individual positively, influences the behaviour of neighbouring students. The reaction should, however, be immediate, before misbehaviour spreads and escalates. In this model teacher's 'withitness', i.e., the ability to attend to several issues at a time and awareness of what is going on in the classroom, becomes crucial (Mackenzie & Stanzione, 2010). Clarity of messages, firmness of insistence on appropriate behaviour and smooth transitions between classroom activities during the presentation, controlled practice and free practice phases of a typical language lesson contribute to healthy classroom management.

The (neo)Skinnerian Model, as its name makes it clear, is based on the behaviourist principle of operant conditioning, whereby behaviour is shaped by reinforcement. If the teacher's reaction carries a reward, the behaviour is likely to be repeated, if not, or if the teacher's reaction carries punishment, the behaviour is weakened (Skinner, 1971). Shaping learners' behaviour to avoid or counteract conflicts is a gradual process of successive approximations, more effective if it is achieved by verbal and non-verbal rewards rather than by punishment. The reason for the difference in effectiveness of the teacher's reactions lies in the fact that punishment may cause withdrawal, student's loss of face and loss of motivation and even revenge and aggression. Yet, reward also creates some dangers as it may lead to external motivation and conformism. For that reason, in language learning using a considerably larger number of praises than critical remarks is recommended as well as the use of non-verbal signals instead of lengthy verbal feedback.

Three models presented below, i.e., *the Dreikurs Model, the Jones Model* and *the Glasser Model,* follow the cognitive approach.

The Dreikurs Model, unlike all behavioural approaches, focuses on needs and intentions underlying unacceptable behaviour rather than on details of behaviour itself. The model views conflicts as resulting from mistaken beliefs about social acceptance and, as a consequence, mistaken measures taken to achieve goals. Four basic needs identified by Dreikurs help to understand disruptive behaviour, i.e., attention getting, seeking power or revenge and displaying inadequacy (Dreikurs, 1964). Learners' mistaken beliefs about best ways to satisfy these needs lead to unaccepted off-task behaviour designed to attract teachers' attention, struggles of will and attempts to take revenge on adults, but also to learned helplessness when attempts fail. To prevent conflicts or their escalation the teachers should be able to identify mistaken goals and confront students with them. Future language teachers need to be sensitized to a learner's attention-seeking and taught to ignore a student's off-task behaviour unless it becomes destructive, and pay attention when the student is on-task.

The Jones Model concentrates on conflict prevention by focusing on time management in the classroom and claiming that mismanagement encourages bad behaviour and generates conflicts. The solution is seen in placing responsibility on the teacher for preventing the loss of teaching time and students' boredom which results in unwanted behaviour. As, according to Jones, about half of the lesson time is wasted by learners on talking, daydreaming and making noise, the teacher should be able to encourage on-task and discourage off-task behaviour by learning to employ body language as a set of signals carrying information on what should and what should not be done, who is being addressed by the teacher and/or what kind of mistake has been made. Eye-contact, body posture, mime and gesture, as well as operating physical proximity provide not only warning signals for learners, but also – together with verbal messages – offer incentive systems motivating them to remain on task. Recommendations of this sort are usually found easier to follow when language teachers receive a solid knowledge-base in the area of communication types. Conflicts may, however, spring from the concept of group work and group responsibility; in this approach 'the group is rewarded together and punished

together regardless of who might transgress…' which 'brings to bear strong peer pressure against misbehaviour' (Charles, 1989, p. 97).

The Glasser Model, like other models following the cognitive approach, explores into needs and motivations of students who engage in activities deemed unacceptable without analysing types of disruptive behaviour. According to the model's author, conflicts arise from the fact that students do what gives them satisfaction and meets their need to belong, to gain power, to feel free and to have fun. Therefore, as good behaviour comes from motivation, meeting needs and positive reinforcement, the teacher can prevent conflicts by organising groupwork which will satisfy the students' need for affiliation, to encourage them to help other students to satisfy their need for power and status, to offer choices to satisfy the need for freedom and to avoid boredom to elicit motivation and satisfy the need for pleasure (Glasser, 1985). As motivation has become a central problems of language education in this century, training in language teaching methods will facilitate teachers' implementation of this model during their early stages of functioning in the profession.

The last model to be presented here, *the Ginott Model,* does not belong to either of the two main groups of models. Although it is closer to the cognitive group, its emphasis on affective factors makes it difficult to be unequivocally categorised as representing the cognitive approach. *The Ginott Model* originates from its author's Theory of Congruent Communication (Ginott, 1971), according to which good interpersonal relations depend on direct and clear communication based on so called 'sane messages'. Out of the three types of messages, i.e. 'I-messages', 'You-messages' and 'It-messages', Ginott insists on using 'I-messages' which allow for appropriate expressions of anger and 'It-messages' which address the situation, but also on avoiding 'You-messages' as they label the student's character instead of referring to the instance of unacceptable behaviour, according to the motto 'labeling is disabling'. The model focuses on active listening (Bolstad & Hamblett, 2007) and appropriate feedback (Hattie & Timberley, 2007), as well as on the language used in classroom communication in order to show the teacher's acceptance of students' feelings and thus invite cooperation. Future language teachers are likely to find the reformulation of 'You-messages' easier, if offering feedback becomes integrated with developing of strategies for error correction (OECD, 2015).

5 Twenty-First Century Agreement on Conflict Prevention and Management

The twenty-first century search for a common denominator started with a comparison of the ten models presented above. Whatever the differences between particular models, both their authors and other researchers agree that the teacher's definition of accepted vs. unaccepted behaviour needs to be presented very precisely at the beginning of the course as a *sine qua non* for classroom discipline (Brophy, 2011; Charles, 2008; Haynes, 2012; Korb, 2012; Linsin, 2013). In all models teachers are

encouraged to specify types of behaviour which will be required and actions which will not be tolerated. They are also reminded that reasons for rules should be explained and consequences of unwanted behaviour clearly communicated. Expectations made explicit are unequivocally considered to be the core of proactive strategies valued higher than the reactive ones in managing behaviour, as the latter increase off-task student behaviour (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008).

There is also no controversy over the issue of reacting to unwanted behaviour. Focusing on misbehaviour and spending considerable time in attempts to correct it by reprimands and threats is viewed as having an opposite effect, since students get the attention they are seeking and ensure their rebellion to be noticed and publicized. Reprimands often exacerbate the problem as they are usually accompanied by nonverbal behaviour which pupils perceive as highly unpleasant, such as shortening physical distance, and invading a student's personal space. These additional factors may unnecessarily cause pupils' anger and result in new outbursts of uncontrollable behaviour. That is why all models value rewarding desired behaviour and regulating learners' conduct by bringing to their mind logical consequences of undesired behaviour rather than by threats and punishment (Cangelosi, 1993; Evertson & Weinstein, 2011; Laslett & Smith, 2002).

In contrast, minimizing the time spent on unwanted behaviour, offering praise, alleviating tension through humour and focusing on desired and appropriate behaviour may bring positive results by strengthening it, especially because praise carries information not only for the individual being praised, but also for other students about what is appreciated by the teacher. The function of praise is, therefore, not only motivational, but also informative, hence the need to acknowledge 'the ordinary' and emphasise its value. Ignoring undesirable behaviour rather than minimizing time spent on it is recommended when a given instance of off-task behaviour does not seriously threaten classroom discipline and, especially, when it results from attention-seeking. Attention, however, should be given often enough when the attention-seeking student is on-task (Edwards & Wiley, 2010). In teachers' guides the psychological process underlying the work toward satisfactory classroom discipline is often presented as 'gain attention, show approval, say why you are pleased, say what progress there has been' (Bull & Solity, 1992, pp. 118–119). Psychology, however, offers convincing arguments that reinforcement, here discussed as praise, should be intermittent or else it has an adverse effect on motivation (Deci et al., 2001).

All the recommendations formulated above as common denominators of the ten models are useful not only for future language teachers, but also for teachers of all subject areas. Positive suggestions specifically valuable for language teachers include providing a clear lesson structure with short, attractive and varied tasks, smooth transitions between activities to avoid long pauses, reducing competition, allowing sufficient time for learners to formulate their answers and providing opportunities for students' sense of success.

Maintaining students' concentration is agreed to be the most effective preventive strategy. It can be achieved by creating suspense instead of employing counterproductive techniques, such as using predictable patterns of classroom response to

teacher's questions or naming a student before asking a question. Positive forms of group dynamics also have an important preventive function. Cohesiveness and group productivity are crucial for harmonious collaboration during project work (Crum, 1997), while the ability of active listening (Bolstad & Hamblett, 2007) is particularly important during activities aimed at developing interactive skills. If group work during language lessons is task- and process-oriented, expressive and interactive, no space is left for disruptive behaviour (Gałajda, 2012).

A considerable degree of teachers' success in conflict management lies in the ability to develop awareness of their own emotions, especially those of anger and fear. Anger is more easily understandable vis-à-vis learners' disruptive behaviour in the classroom, yet, displaying emotions may encourage learners to further negative action and, what is more, increases the probability of swift, inadequate response on the part of the teacher. As impulsive responses are usually formulated in L1, they are not only educationally inappropriate, but also methodologically counterproductive. What is more, anger enhances the probability of conflict escalation and may be damaging to the teacher's own wellbeing when awareness of their inability to resolve the conflict gives rise to shame and guilt. Anxiety and fear of being unable to maintain discipline is often more difficult to interpret, as it may spring both from the lack of certainty as to possible conflict growth and also from the vision of publicly losing face. Teachers aware of the fact that negative affect narrows the field of perception and impairs the ability to act swiftly and efficiently as well as to take justified decisions, are more likely to self-regulate and control their emotions concentrating on the coherence of the language lesson scenario.

All this does not mean that every conflict can be prevented and every difficulty easily overcome. Conflict resolution is never fully guaranteed. Not infrequently escalations occur during teacher-student confrontations; in such cases seeking help from school authorities or referring students to psychological counsellors can prove unavoidable. Here again clear definitions of behaviour calling for these measures are needed.

6 Conclusions

Considering the fact that reactive strategies following student misbehaviour, such as reprimands, threats and punishment correlate highly with teacher stress (Cluniess-Ross et al., 2008) and that novice teachers point to discipline problems as the main reason for leaving the profession alongside excessive workload (Perryman & Clavert, 2019), training in proactive strategies seems indispensable to effective initial language teacher education. The knowledge of the type of conflicts the teacher is likely to face in the everyday professional context, and the skills to deal with conflict leading to its successful resolution should form an integral part of pre-service language teacher education.

As proactive strategies have been found to be more effective than the reactive ones, training student teachers should focus on ways of forestalling anticipated

conflicts and types of advance action. Conflict prevention depends on ensuring mutual respect, which can be ensured by a classroom contract and thus grounded in explicitly stated principles rather than dependent on fleeting emotions. Mutual respect calls for the careful use of language. If a controversy has already surfaced, the right tone of any conversation is necessary, especially at the very beginning of a difference of opinion. Attempts at blocking a conflict before it has time to develop seems to be the best option when it is still feasible. If not, active listening is a *sine qua non* for moving the controversy from a destructive to a constructive route as it enables a change of perspective which makes it possible to understand the other side's needs and aims (Bao et al., 2016; Deutsch, 2000).

The main question is how to fit the content into the existing language teacher education programmes. In most countries initial teacher training includes four basic curricular components, i.e.: (a) practical language teaching, (b) background studies (linguistics, literature, history, culture), (c) introduction to psychology and pedagogy and (d) language teaching skills. Logically, conflict prevention and management might be expected to form part of the third component, i.e., introduction to psychology and pedagogy. Yet, in most cases this component carries content related to developmental and learning psychology focused on cognitive processes (IQ, memory, etc.), as well as to general educational issues, such as educational objectives, curriculum construction, summative and formative assessment, the functioning of school administration and digital skills (Kelly et al., 2002, 2003; Krajka, 2012).

Both theoretical foundations of conflict management and practical training should be recommended as both contribute, alongside many other factors, to the formation of teacher identity (Werbińska, 2017). Psychological and pedagogical content of initial teacher training is unquestionably the area which allows for the inclusion of topics connected with conflict prevention and management. Psychology courses can include causes of conflicts and types of interaction as well as of the emotional load involved therein, while pedagogy can deal with classroom situations which are not specific for language teaching, but tend to take place across subject areas. Role-pays and simulations can be used as practical forms of training to prepare future teachers for difficult classroom cases.

There is no need, however, to restrict this content to psychology and pedagogy. Practical English classes invite solutions in the form of interactive and communicative activities which would prepare trainees for using classroom language appropriate for a variety of interaction types taking place when conflicts arise. The didactic component aimed at developing language teaching skills can, therefore, link topics connected with error prevention and therapy with the set of problems related to conflicts, as most problems during foreign language lessons result from assessment difficulties (Black, 2010; Laveault & Allal, 2016). Analyses of critical incidents and case studies seem to be more suitable for in-service teacher education programmes. Equipping trainees with strategies of conflict prevention, management and resolution is likely to contribute to their well-being in their future profession, helping them to remain in it and draw satisfaction from their contacts with students and colleagues.

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