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Behavior Contract and Class Routine for Primary Students: A Case Study in Non-Formal English Institution

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Abstract

The objective of the study is to expound the importance of behavior contract and class routine activity as the first initiative step to reduce students' misbehavior and improve their interaction among peers. The researcher conducted mini experiment of "behavior contract" and "class routine" in teaching primary students as a part of learning process in Intensive English Course (IEC) as one of non-formal English institutions. 16 students between 10 to 12 years old participated in the research. For data collection, this paper relies on participant observation, checklist, interviews and literature reviews. The researcher acted as a key instrument to observe, take note and check the lists of behavior contract agreed and signed between teacher and students with parents' prior notice. The research has revealed that the students have shown better improvement in term of behavior and attitudes. They also exhibit better interaction and improve their English-speaking skill since all students study English. To infer, the role of teachers who become ultimate keys to quality learning and education in disseminating the idea of respect, character building for others has a profound effect on students' behavior and attitudes so as to have mutual understanding.

Keywords: behavior contract, class routine, mutual understanding, primary school

Kontrak Perilaku dan Rutinitas Kelas untuk Peserta didik Sekolah Dasar: Studi Kasus di Lembaga Bahasa Inggris Non-Formal

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menguraikan pentingnya kontrak perilaku dan aktivitas rutin kelas sebagai langkah inisiatif pertama untuk mengurangi perilaku buruk peserta didik dan meningkatkan interaksi mereka di antara teman sebaya. Peneliti melakukan percobaan mini "kontrak perilaku" dan "rutinitas kelas" dalam mengajar peserta didik sekolah dasar sebagai bagian dari proses pembelajaran di Intensive English Course (IEC) sebagai salah satu lembaga bahasa Inggris non formal. 16 peserta didik berusia antara 10 hingga 12 tahun berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Untuk pengumpulan data, penelitian ini bergantung pada observasi partisipan, daftar periksa, wawancara dan tinjauan literatur. Peneliti bertindak sebagai instrumen kunci untuk mengamati, mencatat, dan memeriksa daftar kontrak perilaku yang disepakati dan ditandatangani antara guru dan peserta didik dengan pemberitahuan sebelumnya ke orang tua. Penelitian telah mengungkapkan bahwa peserta didik telah menunjukkan peningkatan yang lebih baik dalam hal perilaku dan sikap. Mereka juga menunjukkan interaksi yang lebih baik dan meningkatkan keterampilan berbahasa Inggris mereka karena semua peserta didik belajar bahasa Inggris. Kesimpulannya, peran guru yang menjadi kunci utama untuk pembelajaran dan pendidikan yang berkualitas dalam menyebarluaskan gagasan penghormatan, pembentukan karakter untuk orang lain memiliki efek mendalam pada perilaku dan sikap peserta didik sehingga mereka dapat saling pengertian.

Kata kunci: kontrak perilaku, rutinitas kelas, saling pengertian, sekolah dasar

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INTRODUCTION

Research about students' behaviors has been conducted for ages and the topic has not been out of date until now. Hester, et al (2004) pointed out that majority of behavior issues are derived from behavior pattern established during the children early childhood. In addition, some likely causes of behavior problems include the quality of home-life (Curwin and Mendler, 1999), environment (Curwin & Mendler, 1999, Peled, Jaffe, and Edleson, 1995), socioeconomic, such as today's changing society, poverty and ethnic background (Pachter, Auinger, Palmer and Weitzman, 2006, Dearing, McCartney and Taylor, 2005), pregnancy (Ham, 2004), the use of alcohol during pregnancy (March of Dimes, 2010), and wrong choice of food and diet (Gislason, 2006) contribute somewhat significantly to children's behavior and attitude at school settings. Negative exposure, such as violence on television, video games or other media makes children vulnerable to act irresponsibly in the classroom as well.

Teachers as change agent and the front liner who have a day-to-day direct contact with students must take this issue into consideration. Shaping students' responsibility with their actions and building their characters are also a part of teachers' compulsory as a goal of teaching is to help students recognize the good things, yearn the good and eventually act the good ones. Ellenburg (2001) asserted that the schools are the places where basic principles of responsibility should be learned by the students and guided by the teachers since at a certain age or reaching a specific milestone in their lives, they do not become responsible of their actions. As good imitator, students need to see responsible behaviors and its implications modeled by the people in their daily environment (Bulach, 2002). Individual teachers must perform as caregiver, model, and mentor. They also need to treat students with love and respect, and set a good model by reinforcing positive social behavior. Teachers and school should also address and model the fundamental values of responsibility within the classroom and exemplify the values as well (Jones, 2004, Grater, 2002). When students see the good examples of the school staff and teachers' behavior, the improvement of school climate and culture is likely to happen (Bulach, 2002). According to Marzano and Marzano (2003) there are two ways of establishing clear expectations for student behaviors, i.e. establishing clear rules and procedures and providing consequences for their behaviors. Thus, the need of modeling real life examples and rules and the consequences of students' action is essential to show them responsibility and appropriate behaviors. Edgington (2002) acknowledged that teachers are obliged to find ways to accomplish an end that is authentic, meaningful, and relevant for students.

Behavior contract is a beneficial tool applied by many schools and teaching staff for over a few decades and successfully controls and modifies student's behavior and attitude (Glasser, 1969) and its effectiveness has been well established across a variety of pupils (Landrum and Kauffman, 2006). Copper, Heron and Heward (2007) defined a behavior contract as a document, which specifies a contingent bond between the accomplishment of a particular behavior (such as writing an essay) and access to a specified reward (such as access to the playground for five minutes or access to the computer for ten minutes). There are three major parts in most contracts: a description of the task, a description of the reward, and the task record. Landrum & Kauffman (2006) emphasized that a behavior contract extends the principles of positive reinforcement from a simplistic token economy based system to a more sophisticated system incorporating features of self-monitoring and self-management. The practice of behavior contracts to address various behavior issues is well established and recognized so far (Evertson and C. S. Weinstein, 2006). For instance, Houseman and Mitchell (1989) used behavior contracts to reduce the number of repeat offenders. Some considered behavior contract as an important and beneficial tool to promote a home school cooperative effort (Stitely, 1978), to promote health behavior change (Petosa, 1984), and to decrease Antisocial Behavior

(Hawkins, et al 2011, Landrum & Kauffman, 2006). Mruzek, Cohen and Smith (2007) applied behavior contracts to increase rule- following of two children diagnosed with Anti-Social Disorder.

Under these circumstances, the study focuses not only the practice of behavior contract as to increase student's behavior and attitude, which is proven successfully implemented at school settings but also how the combination of behavior contract and class routine enable students to build up their confidence, to create better interaction as well as to promote character building and mutual understanding among students. It is still highly important to conduct the research in this area, particularly in the era of digital or disruption era, which everyone is exposed to bad or good information from all around the world easily.

METHODS

This study falls under the qualitative research approach by employing descriptive analysis of review literatures, and participant observation, check list as well as face-to-face interviews with students' parents. In addition, this study used mini experiment of personal practice in class by creating a rule, which is called "behavior contract" when teaching primary students. Researcher firstly proposed the idea of behavior contract to students. All students agreed and made it together. Each student signed a behavior contract agreeing to its terms. In addition, the task of class routine was employed to make students have better interactions and at the same time improve students' English speaking skill and confidence. Class routine is an activity of small talk or warm up to break the gaps among students and to make students accustomed to get along well each other. The students studied twice a week for three months, every Tuesday and Thursday in Intensive English course. So, the total number of attendance is 24 times including midterm test and final test. 16 students participated in the study, which consisted of seven boys and nine girls.

Intensive English Course is one of English Institutions belongs to non-formal education, which has more than 60 branches around Indonesia. The classes that the researcher taught located in Jatinegara, East Jakarta, which is the biggest branch and had many students from many different ethnics, and different economic and social background. The researcher conducted this experiment where the class is heterogeneous. Their ages ranged between 10 to 12 years old that come from some indigenous places in Indonesia. One of boys is a Chinese descent whose both of parents are Indonesian Chinese. The other one is an Arabian descent boy whose parents live in Jakarta since they were born. The rest are students born in Jakarta whose parents are Sundanese, Javanese, Minangnese, and Jakartan. Most of students are Muslim; two of them are Catholics and Christian, one is Buddhist. The researcher became the key instrument and participant observer who observed the process of behavior changing of students directly for one semester (three months). The approach is used to obtain overall depiction about the social dynamic along with its structure, its impact on the students' personality development, behaviors and attitudes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The practice of behavior contract and class routine during the class.

Everything started from the first day of the class to encourage and give enforcement to students' behavior. Teachers were change agents whose responsibilities not only transferred and transformed the knowledge to the students, but they had obligations to instill students' behavior and attitudes in practice by creating rules for students'

interaction, and creating positive school climate, which can affect students' achievement and learning. Having "Behavior Contract" was one of essential things and the first primary thing to do to create conducive atmosphere in the classroom. It was about the agreed rules and regulations of classroom behaviors between teachers and students, which must be signed by all people in the classroom. Parents were also encouraged to be informed about "this behavior contract" to avoid unpleasant situations that might be likely to come up some day. [Smith \(1994\)](#) and [James and Boivin \(1991\)](#) pointed out that it was necessary to include the component of parent involvement to the contract since the effective collaboration of school environment and home is the key of child success.

The researcher finally decided to conduct the experiment of this behavior contract after observing and seeing the students' attitudes during the class in previous semester. Yelling to call other friends, knocking the door without greeting, eating in the classroom, doing smack down among boys, calling others with inappropriate names in class, using bad words, impolite attitudes are some examples of wrong doings occurring in the class. Those things also occurred in other classes, which other teachers complained about and it mostly happened with male students. After reading some literature reviews, doing the reflection, discussing with branch manager and asking the consent to apply the behavior contract, the researcher conducted mini experiment to find out the effectiveness of using behavior contract dealing with the issues. The class was heterogeneous in terms of ages, religions and ethnic background. The students were Muslim, Catholic, Christian, and Buddhist and there are two students' religion organizations to accommodate their beliefs. To remind the students, a list of behavior conduct is displayed on the board with the sign of teacher and all students.

Based on the observation and checklist, the students demonstrated better behaviors and attitudes. For instance, most of them started to use more polite words, greeted their friends, became more discipline, did the assigned tasks, didn't yell a lot and didn't make a lot of noisy in the classroom. However, several male boys sometimes forgot to do homework, and disturbed other students or made a noisy during the class, specifically after they finished doing the task given by the teachers. The results of interviews with students' parents were somewhat satisfactory, particularly with female students. They exhibited better improvement in terms of the use of more polite words, homework completion and greetings when entering the house. Table 1 showed the checklist of rules implemented in the class in terms of responsibility and discipline.

Table 1. Check list of students' behavior

Rules	Students' Initial and Gender																The number of activity		
	A F	B F	C F	D F	F F	G F	H F	I F	J F	K M	L M	M M	N M	O M	P M	Q M			
Knock the door	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	100%
Greet teachers	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	100%
Greet friends	24	23	24	20	23	23	23	23	24	20	18	15	20	9	23	24			87.5%
Do homework	10	10	9	8	8	8	8	9	10	10	9	9	8	7	7	6			86.25%
Submit the task on time	10	10	9	8	8	8	9	10	10	10	9	9	8	7	7	6			86.25%
Come on time	24	24	24	24	24	23	24	24	24	24	23	23	20	23	23	21			96.87%

Table 2 showed the result of students' behavior checklist in terms of appropriate conducts and politeness by using the five categories of "always (AL) means 100%, usually (US) 90%, often (OF) 70%, sometimes (SO) 50% and never (NE) 0%. However, other students conducted the checklist to ensure that each of them understands the rules and pay attention to their classmate's attitude.

Table 2. The results of checklist of student's behavior based on the students' notice

Rules	Students' Initial and Gender															
	A	B	C	D	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Throw the trash on the bin	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	OF	OF	OF	SO	SO	SO	NE
Use polite gesture in the class	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	SO	SO	SO
Say "thank you" after borrowing something	AL	AL	AL	AL	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	US	US	US	US	US	SO	SO
Say "excuse me" when passing the people or interrupt.	AL	AL	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO
Ask permission to go out	US	US	US	US	US	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL
Ask politely	US	US	US	US	US	US	US	US	US	US	US	US	US	US	US	US
Use appropriate word	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF
Raise hand when asking the question	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	US	US	US	US	US	US	US
Follow directions	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	AL	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	SO	SO
Listen well to others	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	OF	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO	SO

Based on the results, it indicated that female students performed better behavior and attitude than male students. Despite students' perception as presented in table 2, the teacher as the key instrument also observed and did individual checklist, which its result was somewhat similar. It was notable that students were aware of their conducts and had more attention to their classmate. Nevertheless, compared to previous semester, the male students performed better, especially with the involvement of parents and mutual agreement among teacher, parents and students. The teacher always reminded students if they misbehave and its consequences. Since the class is non-formal education, the punishment was just about fun things. There were several kinds of punishments if they did not obey the regulation based on students' ideas, such as singing, dancing while other students playing music with their voice, acting out with other students' clues, writing some sentences in English.

Using "class routine" was also a part of behavior contract, which its purpose is to help children settled down and concentrate. By doing the class routine, students had

better interaction each other, and improved their speaking skill and confidence. The class routine could also give students a sense of security and belonging, which was often a necessary precondition for successful learning (Paul, 2003). So, the relationships, communication and interactions within the classroom must be framed by a set of agreed rules of behaviors and attitudes, which is based on mutual respect. Table 3 showed the topics of class routine, which the students repeated continuously for around 10 minutes at the beginning of the class.

Table 3. The topics of class routine

No	Session	Topics	Examples
1.	The first week	Day 1: Greet and say their feeling in front of the class Day 2: Greet and say their feeling to one of their classmate	"Good afternoon friends, I am so happy today, because it is English time". "Good afternoon Dilla, I am so happy today, because it is English time, and how about you?"
2.	The second week	Day 3: Say the weather Day 4: See the calendar and tell the date and the weather.	"Today's weather is nice and I like it". "Today's weather is hot and I don't like it". Today is Tuesday, January 5, 2017. The weather is beautiful and I love it.
3.	The third week	Day 5 - 6: Repetition of the first and second week	
4.	The fourth week	Day 7: Say their favorite day Day 8: Greet friends and say their favorite day and ask their friend's opinion	I love Sunday because I can play video games I love Saturday because I can eat in restaurant and what about you?
5.	The fifth week	Day 9: all students take turns to shake hands in a chain around the class and say their feeling. Day 10: Repetition of the fourth and fifth week with longer conversation while standing up	It's nice to see you again. How are you?
6.	The six weeks	Day 11: The children throw a soft ball or toy animal around and ask and answer questions about their ability Day 12: teacher gives a prompt word to student quietly and ask him/ her to make a sentence or questions. Teacher asks students do the same thing to other classmates.	Hi, Linda, I can swim and can you swim too? T: Maria, butterfly M: I like butterfly M: Tommy, cat T: do you have a cat?
7.	The seven weeks	Day 13 – 14: Repetition of the first until the fifth week Day 14: one student speaks in front of the class and others ask the questions	

The objectives of the study were to find out the effectiveness of behavior contract to improve students' behavior and attitudes and to investigate students' enhancement in terms of their English skills, particularly in enriching their vocabulary. This research revealed that students have more confidants to speak up with their classmate and this activity enriches their vocabulary and speaking skill. In addition, the combination of contract behavior and class routine promotes students' interactions and have better understanding of rules. [Carty \(2018\)](#) ensured that establishing a regular routine and topics right from the beginning of the school year is very imperative which helps students become more prepared. Furthermore, [Mangrum and Strichart \(2018\)](#) emphasized the necessity of providing consistency by establishing class routine since students become more comfortable in finding out what to expect during the class. [Haughton \(2018\)](#) pinpointed that the start of new school year is the perfect opportunity to establish and adjust behavioral expectation in classroom, consequently classroom routine needs to be implemented as one of the most practical ways of ensuring the behavioral standards.

Some studies found that reward system contributes greatly to the implementation of behavior contract ([Blacburn, Semb and Semb, 1977](#), [Hishinuma, 1996](#), [Dogde et al, 2007](#)). [Dodge et al, \(2007\)](#) found out that a positive reward system and individual conference as a part of behavior contract bring significant improvement of student's responsibility and behavior. This approach also increases notably available learning time and educational environment. [Hishinuma \(1996\)](#) suggested forming an integrated system approach with a special focus on reward system and behavior contracts to address students with gifted underachievers. [Blacburn, Semb and Semb, \(1977\)](#) included the on-task behavior, daily assignment accomplishment, disruptive behavior, a list of good conduct and weekly grade as a part of behavior contract with a list of rewards and penalties. The results demonstrated the effectiveness of its contract within the restrains of the facilities and contingencies readily available in classroom setting. [Williams and Anandam \(1973\)](#) revealed that the grades of students under contract have higher achievement than a similar control group. [Ruth \(1996\)](#) showed that the combination of behavior contracts and goal setting contributes the optimal success with high and consistent attainment for students with emotional and behavioral difficulties.

The use of the behavior contracts brought about a successful increase in the number of hours that the children spent during the school day engaged in following proper rules ([Mruzek, Cohen and Smith, 2007](#)). [Corder \(1999\)](#) found out that the student's positive attitude and behavior increased considerably in class, at home, and in school and become responsible after they signed the contract. In addition, [Hammond and Boivin \(1991\)](#) noted that there were some motivational and prevention strategies and curriculum based strategies to improve student behavior including counseling, parent and community involvement, alternative schools and programs, learning styles, sanctions, cooperative learning, behavior contracts, writing activities, student orientation program, and student codes of conduct.

In the research, researcher involved students to make rules of behavior contract and sanctions for those who disobey and rewards for those who obey the rules. By involving students, they would feel more responsible of their doing and learn how to take consequences. Children of between 9 and 15 years old were in the critical years, so it was an ideal and essential time to give an opportunity to take their ownership for their actions and accept responsibility by involving them in the process of understanding and questioning rules, guidelines, limits, and consequences ([Classroom organization, 2004](#)). It correspondingly will help them how to formulate the rules, and live with classroom and community rules that promote a sense of responsibility, respect, and self-discipline ([Curwin, 2003](#)). They will learn how to recognize the mistake and its consequences of their own behavior because learning is mainly effective when students have a sense of

ownership (Curran, 2003). Therefore, It was a challenge to educate all students, particularly for youth to be responsible members of a democratic society (Slater, 2004).

According to De Jong (2005), there were some characteristics of best practice in addressing to behavioral issues of students, which the Australian council proposes: 1) a clearly articulated and comprehensive behavior management policy; 2) a health-promotive culture; 3) a relevant, engaging and stimulating curriculum; 4) effective pedagogy; 5) a democratic, empowering and positive classroom management approach; 5) well established internal and external support structures and partnerships; and 6) an alternative flexible learning environment. Align with these characteristics, five predominant models of student behavior management allied to good practice in Australian schools are elaborated as follows:

1. William Glasser's Choice Theory, which is based on the belief that an individual has a control of his or her own behavior (Edwards and Watts, 2004).
2. Responsible Thinking Process (RTP), which is based on Powers' Perceptual Control Theory. Its aims are 'to educate students, whose behavior is troubling others within the school atmosphere, and how to think of ways to attain their goals without violating other students' rights (Edwards and Watts, 2004).
3. Rudolf Dreikurs's Democratic Discipline Model, which proclaims that all behavior is goal-oriented, and all misbehavior is as a result of students' faulty beliefs and reasoning. This model aims to: (i) understand why a student behaves in a particular way so that the teacher can be appropriately responsive to the student's behavior; (ii) give students some choice in how to manage their behavior and (iii) model for the students the kind of appropriate behavior that is expected of them (Edwards and Watts, 2004).
4. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) which is an applied science that uses educational methods to expand an individual's behavior repertoire and systems change methods to redesign an individual's living environment to first enhance the individual's quality of life and, second, to minimize his or her problem behavior (Carr, et al 2002).
5. Restorative Justice as an approach to harmful behavior and community conflict that sees wrongdoing as essentially a violation of people and/or property, which focuses on behavior's impact on relationships and what things to be needed to reestablish these relationship (Thorsborne and Vinegrad, 2004).

CONCLUSION

Shaping student behaviors and encouraging positive atmosphere in the classroom is highly needed to pre-learning condition for students. Behavior contract is an approach to school discipline, and communication instrument for teachers, parents and students which functions to improve students' morale, and set the standardized and desirable behavior. Therefore, the implementation of contract behavior and class routine should be considered as one of the ways to precisely articulate desirable behaviors for not only students but also teachers and parents. The involvement of parents and school staff will bring great impacts to students' life quality and character building. Students are also requested to take opportunity to set the rules and its consequences as to promote their understanding about the school rules and conducts. School principals, teacher and staff need to set more specific and structured guidance of behavior contracts along with the assessment. In order to do so, it is imperative that schools need to determine a set of plans for teacher training, parent training and professional development and investigate the best practice of behavior contract model which can be implemented at schools.

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