

NOVICE TEACHERS' POWER STRATEGIES.

Coercion, bribery and intimidation?

Candidate's thesis

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Tämän kandidaatintutkielman aiheena on aloittelevien opettajien valtastrategiat luokassa. Valta on olennainen osa kaikkea sosiaalista kanssakäymistä ja näin on luokkaympäristössä, jossa valtasuhteet ovat melko ilmeisiä ja voimakkaita. Tämän valtasuhteen ja sen ilmenemismuotojen tutkiminen on aiheellista, koska se kuuluu osana opettajan ammattitaitoon. Yksi syy tämän tutkielman tekemiseen onkin juuri auttaa tulevia opettajia tämän monisyisen ja vaikean aiheen kanssa, sillä on mahdollista että on olemassa eroja siinä, minkälaista valtaa opettajat sanovat käyttävänsä luokassa ja mitä he todellisuudessa käyttävät.

Tämän tutkielman päämetodina olivat opetusharjoittelijoiden haastattelut ja heidän tuntiensa seuraaminen, sekä näiden kahden materiaalin vertailu keskenään. Materiaali tutkimukseen kerättiin syksyllä 2009 Jyväskylän Normaalikoulussa jossa myös haastattelut suoritettiin opetusharjoittelijoiden konferenssitilassa. Valitsin tutkielman kohteeksi harjoittelijat, koska heidän käyttämiä mahdollisia eri yleisiä strategioita oli useita. Joko heidän valtastrategiansa ovat monimuotoisia ja harjoittelija todennäköisemmin kokeilee useamman laisia keinoja koska hänen toimintatapansa eivät ole vielä vakiintuneet, tai sitten hän keskittyy vain yhden toimintatavan täyteen hallintaan aluksi. Tämä johtui osittain myös siitä, että itsekin opetusharjoittelijana tuntien seuraaminen ja haastatteluajkojen sopiminen toisten harjoittelijoiden kanssa oli helpompaa kuin ulkopuolisena.

Tutkimuksen päällimmäinen löytö oli se, että opetusharjoittelijoilla oli jo käytössä suuri määrä eri metodeja luokan hallintaan. Sen lisäksi he olivat tietoisia muistakin metodeista, joita he itse eivät uskoneet vielä pystyvänsä käyttämään. Kuitenkin samalla heidän käsityksensä valtastrategioista oli vielä jokseenkin pintapuolista ja sitä voidaan enemmän kuvailla ulkoisina metodeina kuin kokonaisvaltaisena strategiana, vaikkakin jotkin haastateltavat osoittivat jo syvällisempää ymmärrystä valtasuhteista.

Avainsanat: beginner, teacher, power, institutional, strategy

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1 Introduction

In the present paper I will look into the power relations between novice teachers and the students they teach and try to identify any specific strategies that are used to exercise control and power over the class. By novice or beginner I mean teachers who have only little or no teaching experience. I have chosen novice teachers because it is where my own progress is at the moment. According to Salo (2009:125) beginner teachers have two options on how they use different power strategies. They can either try many different strategies to find out which of them work or first focus on mastering one strategy completely before trying to learn more. Another goal of the present study is to find out how aware novice teachers are of the strategies they use. How open novice teachers are to trying new ways is something the present study will try to answer as well.

The main reason for the present study is to make the power strategies explicit for the benefit of novice teachers. As Fairclough (1989) states, invisible power relations appear as commonsensical and the only way to free oneself from them is to become conscious of their ideological nature. Therefore, I will attempt to show that all power strategies used in a classroom have some ideological or other kind of background, and by making those background assumptions visible I hope to give greater freedom of choice to teachers-in-learning.

The main methods of the present study are interviews and observation, and also analyzing any connections or possible discrepancies between the two. For example Book and Putnam (1992:20) believe that there is a difference between what values teachers profess and what they actually practice in the classroom. The main objective of the present study is to identify and describe the different strategies used in a classroom and secondarily to look into the values and ideologies of novice teachers through them.

2 Classroom as an institutional environment

Teachers have power in a classroom, or at least it is generally taken for granted that they do. A classroom is a specific speaking environment that has unique features according to Dörnyei (2007) and it is a complex environment according to Cazden (2001), who has performed research in her own class while teaching. In addition, this power is dynamic by nature, that is, it is constantly being negotiated and contested.

2.1 Defining power

First of all, it is necessary to define power as a social concept. According to Thornborrow (2002:5), power is "a conceptual can of worms" and also that its meaning depends on each person's views. However, it is also a thing that is quantifiable in some way, because some people have more of it than others. Furthermore, power can be both "power in discourse, and power *behind* discourse" according to Fairclough (1989:43), meaning both what and how you say things can show power, but also that power affects the ideas and ideologies that restrain and mould speech and other discourse. Nor is power simply an attribute of any person, but instead it is always located in the relationship between parties according to Kanter and Stein (1979), quoted by Barraclough and Stewart (1992:8): "One of the great insights of classical social and political theory was that power always involves a relationship, it always consists of interaction and, therefore, can never be one-sided or unilateral". This shows that power cannot exist by itself, but instead is always situated in the relationship between different parties. This idea has been incorporated into a more recent teaching manual by Rex and Schiller (2009), where the optimal power relationship is such that power "circulates" freely among participants. They claim that allowing power to move freely does not diminish the teacher's authority but instead strengthens it.

Another way to look at power is to look at it through conflict instead of cooperation. The work of Foucault (1994) was central in broadening the definition of power and especially on questioning the methods of power that had been previously considered neutral and not ideological. He considered terms of war and fighting much more appropriate than terms of cooperation normally associated

with discourse analysis in describing the power relations in speech and writing. The fact that his work was also political does not decrease its value in other fields, because ultimately politics affects everything else as well, including the school.

Some researchers have also studied language use and power relations in a classroom as an example of broader social power relations. For example in the National Core Curriculum For Basic Education (2004:12) in Finland, one of the primary goals in basic education is to train "good citizens", that is, to give students the skills and values of a democratic society. On the other hand, Fairclough (1989:233) argues that language use in a classroom can also be a tool for enforcing the views of the "dominant bloc" onto the rest of society and that awareness of this is the only way to emancipation.

2.2 Power in the classroom

In my study I focus more on utilitarian applications of classroom talk from the teacher's perspective. Thornborrow (2002: 108-132) has analyzed teacher talk in more detail, and she has focused especially on how turn allocation and topic selection display the underlying power relations in classrooms. According to her one can analyze the power relations in a classroom based on how the speech turns and topics are allocated in the classroom.

After all, teachers have many different bases of power in classroom. The teachers control vital resources [grades] that can greatly influence the students' future, they have a traditional role that carries authority and they even have their power supported by the law. Richmond and Roach (1992:57-64) compare the position of a teacher to that of a supervisor in a company, because in both cases there is a clear power structure inherent in the system and the way teachers use similar power strategies to accomplish their goals is the same. In short, the power relations in a classroom can be described first and foremost as institutional. By institutional I mean the relations are strongly hierarchical, with clearly defined roles and tasks for each participant and generally quite resistant to change coming from the low levels in the hierarchy.

As a foundation on analyzing power and authority in the classroom I have used Webers (1947) division of authority into three main components. However, there was some conflict in how different sources used these definitions. Saloviita (2009:71) divided them into expert, traditional

and charismatic authority. Expert authority was defined as based on the teacher's greater knowledge of the matters taught at school, traditional authority comes from observing and maintaining the rules of the classroom, and charismatic authority from how the students feel about the teacher's personality and also from the personal connection to the students. All of them are useful and complement each other, but he puts charismatic authority as most important of the three. On the other hand Pace and Hemmings (2006:3) divided authority into traditional, charismatic and legal-rational. Their traditional authority was based on the longstanding role of the teacher, their legal-rational authority was similar to what Saloviita used as traditional authority, and their charismatic authority rested more on the illustrious personality of the teacher. They also maintained that expert or professional authority was a later invention made by other sociologists. The original division by Weber (1947:328) is:

1. rational grounds – resting on a belief in the 'legality' of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority).
2. Traditional grounds – resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority).
3. Charismatic grounds – resting on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority).

Richmond and Roach (1992:57-64) also found out that on all levels of instruction the use of authoritative or negative social strategies such as threats, punishment or appeals to formal rank had a negative effect on the students' emotions to learning, while power strategies based on expert status or the emotional or affective relationship had in general positive effects. This is important because these factors can have an effect on learning. According to Friedrich (1978), quoted by Sorenson and Christophel (1992:39), the way the students feel towards the teacher influences their performance and learning. Similar division between prosocial [personal, expert] and antisocial [formal, authoritative] power methods was used by Horan and Myers (2009) and they got similar results concerning how the use of antisocial methods makes the students dislike the teacher. Therefore, it can be said that part of classroom power for the teacher is managing the image the students have of him or her, that there is an interpersonal aspect of power. While it is not reasonable to demand that all teachers should try to be loved by their students, they should at least be made aware that the image is a factor in the students' learning.

Of course it would be too simple to assume that students are completely powerless in a classroom setting, for example Saikko (2007) came to the conclusion that students are active participants in creating the power relations in a classroom. Instead the power relationship in a classroom is constantly negotiated between the students and the teacher, especially when the interests of the two collide. An example used by Salo (2009:115-116) where students refuse to do the things during class shows that teachers can be placed between conflicting desires of the students and the curriculum they are obliged to teach, and how the teacher resolves this conflict will have an effect on his or her authority. According Perumal (2008) one of the main methods of student resistance is non-participation, and that is especially powerful if the teaching relies on high level of student participation. For example discussions, debates and other activities that require a lot of student participation. On the other hand the curriculum and laws that bind the teachers don't really have any meaning for the students, so simply invoking them will not work according to Salo (ibid.).

Therefore, Foucault's (1994: 116) idea that power becomes visible through conflict would fit quite well in a classroom environment. Whenever the desires of the students and the teacher, who is at the same time under pressure from above in the hierarchy, are opposite the result will be decided by the difference in power. For example if the students would want to do meaningful tasks, but the teacher insists on endless mechanical exercise there will be a power struggle, and just as in war the teacher and students can use different tactics to accomplish their ends. Defining these tactics is the aim of the present study.

All of this illustrates, that the power relations in a class are complex. But what specific methods did the teacher manuals usually suggest in order for the teacher to gain power? Most of the sources agreed that the teacher should:

1. Establish personal relationships with the students that allow the teacher to influence them. Each student should be treated as an individual.
2. Create a positive learning environment where students feel they are taught meaningful subject matter and the tasks are suitably difficult to them.
3. Show that the teacher cares about the students' good performance and encourage them to believe in their possibilities.
4. Give clear instructions and keep the power relations fair and transparent.

3 Methods and organization of the study

3.1 Methods of analysis

I have mainly used the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA as described by Thornborrow (2002: 13-21) and Rogers (2004:2), because it focuses on the social power relations between the participants. CDA differs from the more mainstream discourse analysis in that it focuses less on the linguistic features of conversations, and more on the underlying power relations that are normally taken for granted or invisible. I found the attitude where the researcher can question even the most basic social conventions useful when looking into teachers and classrooms. I have also used some tools of Critical Language Study (Fairclough, 1989:1-5), especially when attempting to look closer into power structures that are generally invisible. These methods share a common source, because CDA researchers recognise the earlier works of Fairclough as part of the foundations of their method, who in turn was influenced by the work of Foucault on power. All in all, I have decided to aim my study more into explanations and reasons and less into the study of the forms of language. That is why the critical methods are better suited than for example the usual methods of Conversation Analysis used by Markee (2000).

I have analyzed two kinds of material, observations from classes held by novice teacher trainees in the Normal School in Jyväskylä during the fall of 2009 and interviews of the trainees conducted as soon as possible after the lessons. The location and time were chosen because as a fellow-trainee I had easy access to observe both classes and the timetables of other trainees. The interviews were semi-structured as I had prepared a set of questions that were consistent for each interview but also allowed the interviewees to discuss anything else that they had in mind if they so wished. In total I observed six lessons taking notes of them and conducted seven interviews which were all recorded on a tape-recorder and transcribed. Because the content of the answers was more important than the linguistic features, the interviews were held in Finnish and I have transcribed them in a very simple way. This way I hoped I could get authentic material on the issues I had planned on analyzing, and if the interviewees would bring up something I had overlooked it could be included as well.

This interview data was first analyzed simply as a dialogue and then I looked into possible connections and also differences between my own classroom observations and how the teacher trainees experienced and recalled it themselves. This way of organizing the study was chosen

because I wanted to first get the view the interviewees had of the situation, and then to be able to have a second perspective in case there is something I wish to contradict or look into more deeply.

3.2 Organization of the study

The present study was organized mainly around the interviews. To make the interviews easy to follow I have divided the material around the main questions, and included a question that I used in the interviews in *italics* and question marks. When using material from the interviews I used smaller print, first the original Finnish answer in *italics* and then my translation in single quotes. In the English translations I have removed some of the hesitation markers and other elements of spoken language that were not relevant. I hope this way the reader can easily follow my deductions and see what data I have used to support my arguments, and possibly make their own conclusions from the same data. Since power is such a controversial subject, differences of opinion should be only natural and thus room must be made for them. All the names of the interviewees have been changed to protect their privacy.

3.3 Beginner teachers

Throughout the study I have used the terms beginner and novice teacher interchangeably to refer to teachers with little work experience. When I refer to the specific people who took part in my study I have referred to them either as interviewees or trainees, because the material I used was taken during the practical part of the teacher training program in Jyväskylä and all the people interviewed were trainees in that program.

4 Data analysis

4.1 Previous teaching experience

”Please state any previous teaching experience?”

I started every interview with a few questions that were meant to open up the dialogue and also to find out how much teaching experience each interviewee had. After starting up the dialogue with a question that primarily was intended to put the interviewee at ease with the situation, I asked if they had any previous teaching experience. Since the present study was limited to beginner teachers I was expecting from very little to no previous teaching experience, both in schools and in any hobbies they might have. This question was meant to find out the amount of their experience and to limit the study material. If any had answered that they had much previous experience, those answers would have been discarded. However, this was not necessary, since all interviewees had little experience of actual teaching and only one had worked as a substitute teacher for one week. Some had a little experience from hobbies or work which was on some level similar to teaching, such as being a scout leader, kindergarten assistant, special needs assistant or a church camp senior. Although these jobs demand some of the same skills as teaching, the interviewees usually stated that these jobs did not include a lot of actual teaching so it did not count as teaching experience for them.

Example 1:

Paavo: Joo onkos sulla ollu aikasempaa kokemusta sitten opettamisesta mistään muualta ennen tätä harjoittelua

'Alright, have you had any earlier experience of teaching outside this teacher training?'

Irmeli: No ei oo kyllä hirveesti että on sitten niinkun pienempien lasten kanssa ollu enemmän semmosta niinku hyvin vähäistä sellasta päiväkotia ... semmosta niinkun perushuoltamista ehkä enemmän ei mitään opetustehtävää tai sellasta

'Well not much really, I've just been with smaller children in the kindergarten ... it was more like basic daycare than teaching or such'

4.2 The teacher's most important function

”What is the most important task of the teacher in the classroom”

After starting up the interview with asking how the latest lesson had been and asking about possible previous teaching experience, I asked what the interviewee saw as the most important task of the teacher in a classroom. This question was meant to give insights into how the interviewees saw the teacher's role and what aspect of it was the most important to them. The answers could also give me some hints about what their teaching philosophy was like. All of the interviewees were unanimous about that the teacher's most important task was to be there for the students and to help them learn. In general their answers showed that they had a very student-orientated view of teaching. Some of them also said that they still had problems with being too concentrated on their own performance. I have underlined the relevant parts of the answers below, which relate to the same.

Example 2:

Eemeli: ... että se (opettaja) ois siellä vähän oppimista ohjaamassa minulle se on vielä vähän vaiheessa koska tää kaikki mulle on vielä niin uutta niin minä menen ehkä vähän välillä vähän liikaakin sinne tiukemmalle puolelle että minä olen niinku se opetuksen suorittaja enkä se oppimisen ohjaaja

' ... that the (teacher) is there to guide the learning process. For me I think I'm still just learning, because all this is still so new to me that I think I'm still too strict about my teaching in a way that I'm still just performing the teaching process instead of guiding the actual learning'

Another interviewee made quite similar statements.

Example 3:

Valdemar: Niin siis tätähän mä yritän mut tätähän mä tietenkin yritän mutta eihän sitä koskaan tiedä et miten se toimii koska se on kuitenkin niin kovin helppoa aina sitten tunnilla lipsahtaa siihen vetämiseen

' Yes well this is what I try to do of course, but you never know how it is going to work because it is so easy to slip into just concentrating on my own performance alone during class

The answers reflect how the trainees have already been taught a more professional view of teaching and how they are comparing it to the old more simplified view of teaching. It also shows that teacher trainees regarded the more teacher-centered approach as more ”natural” even though they view it as less effective, since it is the one they revert back to when they could not maintain a more student-orientated method.

4.3 Specific power methods

”What specific method did you use to control the class?”

Next, I asked a question that was one of the main questions in the interview, i.e., what specific methods the teachers used to bring the the class back under control when the students were acting restlessly. The aim of the question was to give concrete answers to actual classroom practises used by the trainees. More specifically, interviewees usually understood this as a question about which methods they use when a student disturbs the peace of the classroom. This was due to the way the question was formed by the interviewer. The interviewees gave many different practical applications to this question, but most of them had a few similar principles. The trainees usually utilized either the focusing of attention of the teacher and the other students at the disruptive action with varying degrees of subtlety, with the assumption that once the perpetrators notice they are being watched they will cease the offensive action. This assumption also shows that trainees did not think much about the reasons the students would act disruptively. Of course this attention included the more strong threat of punishment if necessary.

4.3.1 Eye contact, distance and use of voice

One of the subtlest methods seemed to be simple eye-contact and physical closeness that signals to the students that they were being observed. One interviewee put it this way:

Example 4:

Paavo: Ni olik sulla sitten jotain erityistä keinoa millä sinä oisit niinku millä sinä hommaat sen huomion sillon kun sinä haluat sanoo jotain

'So do you have any specific method you use to get the students' attention when you want to say something?'

Tanja: ... ja just se ettei tuijota vaan sitä elmoa sillon kun puhuu vaan niinku pitä s katsekin olla suunnattuna sille luokalle

'... and just that you don't look at the projector when you are speaking but instead keep your gaze directed at the class you are addressing'

Eye-contact here was not only to observe the class but also a very strong nonverbal message to show the class that the teacher is speaking **to** or **with** them. It is common knowledge that when verbal and nonverbal messages are in conflict, people will more likely believe the nonverbal message. So here the eye-contact is not only to observe and control the class, but also a sign to show interest in the students. Another interviewee was more specific about the use of gaze and distance:

Example 5:

Eemeli: Mulla on joskus semmoinen että minä menen siihen viereen silleen puhumaan niille rauhallisesti... ja minun silmistä varmasti näkee ne oppilaat että minä en ehkä viitsaile nytte että jos minä tulen siihen seisomaan siihen metrin päähän ja ojentaudun vähän alaspäin

'I have this way that I go near the student and speak to them calmly... and the students can see from my eyes that I am not joking when I come within a meter of them and lean a little downwards to the student'

Especially in the second quote we can see how the body gestures and distance are used to increase the power of the teacher and to display that the teacher has noticed the activity. This is in line with what McCroskey and Richmond (1992:106) found out: "What the teacher uses as a verbal strategy has a differential impact based on her or his nonverbal immediacy". However, in their article McCroskey and Richmond define immediacy much more broadly than just physical closeness. Here it is possible to assume that breaching the student's personal space and getting close to them could be seen as employing physical intimidation, especially if the teacher is larger than the student as it was in this case when he leaned downwards to the student; the difference in postures between the seated student and the standing teacher conveys a strong physical message that the teacher is more powerful. Even if that is not the case the close proximity of the teacher at least removes any illusion that the student can do things unobserved.

Another method that was reported or at least touched on by many interviewees was how they use their voice as teachers. While many said that screaming in front of the class was a sure way to lose authority, they also emphasized that the teacher has to have a powerful voice. It is common knowledge that teachers are regarded as being professional speakers and a voice that carries well is a useful tool. One interviewee expressed it in the following way.

Example 6:

Tanja: Mutta se mitä mä käytän ni on se että no ensinnäkin ei siis nyt huuda mutta selkeesti puhuu kovempaan ääneen...

'One thing that I do is that firstly I don't yell but I clearly speak much more loudly than usual'

Another answer to the same question was as follows.

Example 7:

Valdemar: Heti itsest tai no en mä tiedä itsestänselvä mut sellanen ihan perus et äänenkäyttö sieltä luokan edestä että et siinä pitää pystyä tavallaan tarvittaessa nostamaan oman äänensä sen luokan melun ulkopuolelle ... joka muuten huomasi jo että käy aika paljon äänen päälle

'Firstly I don't know if this is obvious but the basic use of voice from the front, that you have to be able to raise your voice above the regular noise in the class ... which by the way I noticed is very hard on your throat'

Here the answer shows that the use of voice is physiologically taxing on the vocal cords and requires conscious effort from the teacher. The answer also shows that the interviewee sees the use of voice as a basic skill and an obvious answer, which would indicate that it is also effective.

4.3.2 Using names

Another common method used by most interviewees was to call the disruptive student by name as in example 8 below. Most of them stated that using names was much more effective than addressing the whole class, maybe because that way the attention of the teacher is directed much more accurately.

Example 8:

Irmeli: No mä mainitsin niiden nimiä pari kertaa niin se sitten niinkun kohdensin sen silleen henkilökohtaisesti ehkä just sinne mistä se ongelma sit lähti. Tai näin että et jos yleisesti vaan koko ryhmälle sanoo että olkaa hiljaa niin se ei välttämättä toimi mitenkään et et sillä tavalla että vähän kiinnittää koko ryhmän huomion siihen yhteen niin sit se voi olla vähän painostavaa

'Well I mentioned the names of the students a couple of times so that I sort of targeted it personally to where the problem was instead of just generally telling the whole class to be quiet because that doesn't necessarily work at all, instead I kind of focused the attention of the entire group on the one to make possibly a little oppressive'

Not only is using names more accurate than addressing the whole class, it also shows the teacher cares about the students, at least enough to learn their names and use them. Of course it also removes any possibility of anonymity from the student and possibly deters disruptive behavior, because they know they have been identified. Another interviewee combined this with the previous distance method:

Example 9:

Maija: Siinä yhdessä vaiheessa mä sit kävin ku siel oli puhu muutama ihminen nii kävin niille sanomassa ihan siinä vieressä että voisitteko olla vähän hiljempaa koska se toimii paremmin kun se et sieltä eestä vaan huutelis koko luokalle yhteisesti

'At that one point I went to where a couple of students were speaking so I went there to tell them from close up, that could they please be a little more quiet. Because it works much better than if you just shout at the whole class from the front'

In this case the way order was being restored in a much less assertive in style, but it still worked equally as well. This could be because it was in line with the style the whole lesson was being held: in this class the amount of power the students had was much greater than in others. For example only in this class the students themselves requested a task to be checked out in the blackboard, which was quite a remarkable event in itself. From this it could be deduced that the methods of

control can be used in different ways, but it must be consistent with the general style and personality of the teacher. This is supported by Barraclough and Stewart (1992:13): "Individual differences in personality and demographics have been shown by interpersonal communication researchers to produce reliable effects on speakers' choices about compliance-gaining attempts." I assume that incompatibility in nonverbal and verbal messages would lead to the teacher being perceived as he or she is trying to play a role in front of the class and not be themselves. This issue is, however, outside the scope of the present study.

4.3.3 Agreed messages as social artifacts

Some trainees reported that their mentors had instructed them to use specific and more sophisticated ways that had been previously agreed with the class as ways of signaling the request to calm down. These could be called social artifacts, because they have to have been built with the class before they can be applied in practice. This could also be seen as the mentor lending some of his or her own authority to the trainee, because part of the power of these signals is that they are also used by the mentor who teaches the same class regularly. These include for example the teacher raising his or her hand and remaining quiet until the class is calmed down.

Example 10:

Helena: Niin siinä se meidän ohjaava opettaja oli niinku tai sano meille että kannattaa jos niinku luokassa on kauheesti meteliä niin kannattaa nostaa käsi pystyyn tai molemmat kädet pystyyn ... silleen että mä nostin kädet ilmaan ja sit ne kyllä hiljeni siitä aika nopeaan

'Yes well there our tutoring teacher had said to us that we should try raising our hand or both hands if there is a lot of noise in the classroom ... I did raise both of my hands in the air and then the class settled down pretty quickly after that'

In this case the trainee had been instructed to use exactly this method to gain control of the class, and she testifies to the power of it. Part of the effectiveness of this particular method might be from the familiarity with the commonly used practise of students raising their hands when asking for a speech turn in the class. However these artifacts can be virtually anything as the next excerpt from the same trainee shows.

Example 11:

Helena: Yhessä noista moduuleista missä olin niin oli kans tällanen että niinku jossain ala-asteella ollu käytössä silleen että niinku aina jos luokassa meno villiinty liikaa niin opettaja piirtää semmosen surullisen naaman taululle ja sit se oli kuulemma ollu silleen että siitä oli tullu sen luokan sisänen et jos niinku opettaja vaikka ollukaan paikalla ja sit siellä meno villiinty nii sit joku oppilaista saatto käydä piirtämässä sen surunaaman ja sit ne kaikki hiljeni

'In one of the modules I attended we were told about this thing that was used in some basic grade school,

where whenever things got too wild in the class the teacher would draw a sad face on the blackboard. I heard that it had become an internal habit in the class and even if the teacher was not present some student might also go and draw the sad face on the blackboard and all the students would go quiet.'

Here is displayed another important requirement for these commonly agreed messages or artifacts to work, which is that they must be accepted by the class. The way that students too can use it shows that this class has adopted and accepted the message. The other requirement was that the message needs to be taught to the class before it can be used, so this method cannot be used in reaction to disorder.

4.3.4 Conveying personal feelings

One of the few things that most trainees reported that they had been taught in teacher training before teaching classes was to use sentences that start with "I" to convey their feelings. For example, if a student was disrupting the class, they should say "I feel sad because you are not listening to me". This method was taught during the teacher training previous to actual teaching as an effective method to control the class. However, most of the interviewees were not so optimistic about the effectiveness of this method and some even regarded it ironically.

Example 12:

Eemeli: Lähinnä mikä tulee mieleen lähinnä on tämmönen minäviestien käyttö mutta se minusta tuntu välillä vähän no tuota kyseenalaistan hieman sen toimivuutta se saattaa välillä antaa vähän kummallisen vaikutelman jos käyttää sitä liikaa

'Only thing that comes to mind is these personal messages which I found a little bit, well, lets say I question its effectiveness a little. It may give the students an odd impression if it is used too much'

Example 13:

Irmeli: No meillä on käyty enemmänkin nyt tähän asti kun meillä on ollu siellä intensiiviviikolla sitä vuorovaikutusta ... ja sit välillä se tuntuu vähän semmoselta nii tai just itellä on vielä toistaiseks varmaan teennäiseltä kun ei osaa vielä käyttää niitä.

'Well so far we had had lessons about interaction during the intensive training week ... and it felt a little awkward from time to time for now, I think it must sound fake because I don't know how to use them yet.'

Most of the critique towards this method seemed to come from the way using it in normal speech sounded a little forced and unnatural. But another interviewee captured the essence of the method and adapted it to her own personal discourse:

Example 14:

Kaija: Ja sitte tommosia just että pitää olla niille tavallaan vihanen ja sanoo niille että ne usko...

'And then that you have to be angry at them in a way and tell them that so they believe...

Paavo: Nii et osottaa niinku se selvästi...

'Like show it clearly that...'

Kaija: Nii nii että mä oon tosissani nii

'Yeah that I am serious'

Here with only a little prompting from me the interviewee makes her views explicit and states that she believes emotions should be displayed by the teacher to show he or she is serious and thus can gain power over the students..

4.3.5 Threats

Actually uttering and carrying out threats was much rarer than I had expected; it happened only during one class out of seven. The class where this happened could be described in short as wild and unmotivated to learn the subject matter. The interviewee said to me off-the-record that the class had been even more difficult during the previous lesson, so she had prepared to take more drastic measures. Another unusual aspect of this lesson was that there were two trainees teaching the class.

Example 15:

Kaija: No olihan meillä se tuhmien pulpetti siinä (luokan edessä) mut sitä ei sitten käytetty mut sillä uhkailtiin sitte se että ois heitetty luokasta ulos jos joku ollu tosi mahoton ja sitten että ois takavarikoitu puhelin tai mp3-soitin jos ois ollu tarve

'Yes well we had the special desk for naughty students there (in front of class) but we didn't use it. But we did threaten them with expulsion from the classroom if someone had been completely out of hand. And we did say we would confiscate their phones or mp3-players if we had to.

In this statement the interviewee lists all the punishments they had prepared to give out to keep the class in order. Interestingly, this statement differs from what I observed during the class in one aspect, because in her statement she claims they decided not to use any of these methods, but I recall that the trainees attempted both to confiscate a phone and to move a student to the "naughty desk" but they were resisted by the students, even the observing teacher attempted but was not able to confiscate the phone. I think that failing to apply power was such a negative experience that the trainee did not wish to recall it exactly as it happened but instead modified the memory so that she appears the one making all the decisions. This shows that for threats to work effectively it is necessary to display to the pupil that they are powerless. Of course, administering punishments is one of the institutional rights that a teacher has in a school environment and the trainees would have been within their rights to insist on carrying out their punishments.

4.3.6 Creating a positive learning environment

Most of the answers were quite practical and clearly defined methods, focusing only on external order, but one interviewee had a more comprehensive answer as well. It shows that a much more

personal and longer relationship is assumed between both the teacher and the students, and between the students themselves.

Example 16:

Eemeli: Minä oon keskittynyt siihen että annetaan niitä työkaluja ja yritetään saada semmosta niinku hyvää henkeä sinne minä oon paljon pyrkinyt kannustamaan.

'I have concentrated on giving the students tools they can use and tried to create a good spirit in the class. I have tried to encourage the students a lot.'

Here the interviewee talks about creating a positive learning environment in the classroom, which he sees as both beneficial to students and to maintaining order in class. How this is done cannot be described in detail like the other methods, but it is more time-consuming and varies every time. In this case one of the ways mentioned is encouraging the students.

4.4 Challenges to teacher power

”Did you have any situations where you felt your authority was challenged?”

This question was about how the interviewees reacted to challenges on their authority. The purpose of the question was to find out how the trainees reacted to conflict situations, because conflict is an essential part of any discussion of power according to Fairclough (1992). The power relationship is never one-sided, and the answers to this question might also show how acutely the trainees viewed the students' input and how they felt about being challenged. In the interviews all the interviewees reported they remembered some challenges, which would indicate that it is very common and that the power relationship is indeed being negotiated all the time.

Example 17:

Paavo: Tuntuuko sinulta siinä tunnin aikana oisko tullu sellasta tilannetta että joku ois yrittäny kaivaa maata jalkojen alta tai silleesti niinku haastanu sinun sitä sinun auktoriteettia

'During the class did you feel that you had a situation where somebody was trying to sort of pull the rug from under you or challenge your authority?'

Helena: Niinku jollain noista neljästä kahen tunnin opetuskerrasta kyllä oli silleen että siellä oli just näitä vähän tälleen että noh mitäs sää nyt tästä tiedät tai vähän silleen eräs oppilas suhtautu

'In one of the four two-hour lessons there were some students who questioned the teachers knowledge or more like one student who had this kind of attitude'

Here the interviewee reports an incident that has happened in an earlier class, but one which she easily recalls either because it has happened recently or because of the significance of the event. The student is questioning the skill of the trainee in the subject matter, which is after all a basic

requirement for teaching. Those sorts of challenges to the professionalism of the trainee were most common in the present study; at least three interviewees reported that the students tested or questioned their ability in the subject matter. This is at the same time understandable from the students' perspective because they wish to make a bid for power by trying to shake or unnerve the teacher, or because they are concerned about receiving correct knowledge. It is a very severe challenge to the trainee, because skill in the subject matter is a fundamental building block of their power base as experts.

Example 18:

Valdemar: Hei kertokaas ketä ja mitä teidän harrastuksia on ni eka yritti derailata aina mut puhumaan koko ajan ... Niinku nimellisesti järkeviä kysymyksiä mut niistä kyllä tajus et ne oli tarkotettu että katotaas nyt kuinka ton saa derailattua

'I asked them about themselves and their hobbies, but the first one tried to derail me to talk all the time ... They were nominally reasonable questions but I realized that they were meant to test out how far they can derail me off the subject'

This example shows the second most common challenge the interviewees experienced. Here he reports that a student tried to steer the conversation away from what the trainee had planned it to be about. It is interesting that the trainee viewed any attempts at the students directing the conversation as a challenge, when in fact it might also be seen as genuine interest in the personality of the teacher, although the challenge is not seen as severe as in example 18. This can be interpreted to show that the trainees in fact still have a very teacher-centered view of how the lesson should go, and any student interaction is seen as a challenge, even if only a mild one. In one interview we discussed this in more detail, as can be seen from the next example

Example 19:

Paavo: Jotkut niistä ni kuitenkin samalla tavalla yritti kuitenkin niinku sitten ohjailla vähän sinunkin tekemisiä just sillä tehtäviä vaihtamalla et mitenäs se miltäs se niinku sitten tuntu

'At the same time some of them tried to sort of control your actions as well, for example by changing tasks, so how did you feel about that?'

Maija: No toisaalta se oli ihan kiva että ne niinku yrittää jotain kontaktia ottaa ettei ne vaan niinku istu ihan sokkona tee kaikkea mitä mä sanon että nyt tällä tunnilla mä pääsin ekaa kertaa oikein kunnolla keskustelemaan niitten joittenkin oppilaitten kanssa justiinsa sen takia et ne yritti vähän väittää vastaan ja se oli ihan kivaa

'Well on one hand it was quite nice that they tried to make contact with me instead of just blindly sitting there and doing everything I told them to. In this lesson for the first time, I got to really discuss with some of the students because they were disagreeing with me and it was nice.'

Here we discuss the student challenging and trying to change the order of the lesson and how the

interviewee felt about it. It had not been on my list of questions but the matter was raised in the interview previously. This example and also my notes from the class show that this trainee had a much more deeply developed student-centered style than all the other trainees. In particular the interviewee stressed the genuine nature of the discussion as something that was nice.

These examples show the different ends of the spectrum between teacher and student-centered ways of giving a lesson. Based on the fact that only one interviewee had a clearly student-centered answer while all the other answers were similar to the one in example 15. The general trend among beginner teachers is strongly teacher-centered regardless of what they say when asked about it directly.

4.5 Justification of teacher power

”How do you justify your own power?”

Directly after the previous question, I asked the interviewees about on what grounds they justify their own power to themselves. This question was meant to further probe into their views on power and what they saw as their own power bases. By power base I mean what is the source on which the power is built or in other words what arguments the teacher uses to justify holding power. In some cases this question caused confusion which might be the result of either bad question-setting or that it was something the interviewees had not thought about consciously.

Example 20:

Paavo: Miten se niinku perustelisit sen että onku sulla niinku miltä pohjalta sulla on se valta siellä luokassa

'How would you justify your own power in the classroom?

Tanja: Onks tää nyt silleen et miten mä saan sen vallan itelleni miten mun pitää

'Is this about how do I gain the power to myself?'

Paavo: Et minkä takia sulla on oikeus olla vallassa siellä

'It's more like why do you have the right to exercise power in there.'

Tanja: No siis koska opettaja on kuitenkin se joka sitä luotsaa sitä luokkaa ja sitä tilannetta ja sitä opetusta että se se on siellä sellanen valvoja ... se että opettaja on roolimalli että en mä nyt tiedä et liittyyks se mitenkään siihen luokan hallintaan

'Well because the teacher is the one who directs the class and its situations and teaching. The teacher is a sort of supervisor of order in the class ... also that the teacher is a sort of a role model, but I don't know if it has anything to do with controlling the class '

After the initial confusion the interviewee gives an answer that is somewhat superficial, probably because of the unexpected and difficult nature of the question. At the end of the excerpt she also recognizes the inaccuracy of her answer, and later on in the interview she easily recognizes some more deeper power bases after being given examples. This would support the claim that teacher trainees are cognitively aware of many different power bases but may have not thought about them yet. The answer in example 19 about the power coming from the position as an enforcer of order in the classroom was repeated in a few other interviews, and it was actually the most common answer. This could be interpreted that many interviewees based their own power on the institutional position as a teacher. The next example gives a very striking answer that seems to support the assumption of unawareness as well.

Example 21:

Kaija: No et opettaja on aina ollut se ihan alusta saakka ku koulut on ollu se on ollut se valta siellä niihän se o aina ollu ja niin se tulee olemaan

' Well the teacher has always had the power since schools have existed, that's how it has always been and that is how it will always be.

Here the argument for holding power is simply invoking on the historical fact that teachers have held power in the past, and thus it should be the same now. However, most of the interviewees also found different less authoritative bases for their power.

Example 22:

Helena: No ainakin sillä että mä oon tosiaan näitä oppilaita tässä vaiheessa en vielä kauheen paljon mutta kuitenkin jonkun verran vanhempi mulla on paljon enemmän elämäkokemusta kun niillä ... mulla voi olla oikeesti hyödyllisiä vinkkejä niille

' Well for one I am, not much at this moment yet, but somewhat older than the students and I have more life experience than them ... I might have some really useful tips for them.'

In this answer the main base of power seems to be age and experience. Further on in the answer she goes on about how the students could benefit from her advice, not only in the school but in life as well. So this answer could be seen as describing the base of power coming from the respect for the elders, which is a very central part of collective and conservative cultures. Of course expertise in the subject matter and teaching was an integral part of this and other answers that displayed expert power, as it is emphasized in the next answer.

Example 23:

Maija: No se riip ainakin tulee osittain siitä et se opettaja on koulutettu siihen hommaan ja sillä on se ammattitaito tehdä sitä työtä

'Well it depends, at least a part of it comes from the fact that the teacher is trained for the job and has the expertise for it.'

The answers above showed the two main bases of power apparent in the answers of the trainees, institutional and expert power. What is interesting that for example no interviewee mentioned personal or emotional power as a possible base. Maybe this is because of the short duration the trainees have with a specific class or maybe they view it as something that is only for experienced teachers.

Example 24:

Valdemar: Kai siihen sitte kehittyy sellasia itselle sopivia tapoja mä muistan et meil on yks biologian opettaja joka niinku biologian maantiedon opettaja lukiossa joka niinku piti ihan puhtaalla persoonan voimallaan luokan hallussa

'I guess with time you develop your own style and habits. I remember we had a biology and geography teacher in upper secondary school that controlled the class purely with the power of personality.'

Valdemar: niin et siis ehkä mekin joskus pystymme siihen mutta

'Well I mean maybe some day we will be able to do it as well, but not at the moment.'

Here the interviewee recalls some previous memories from his own school days and describes a very good example of affective power. The assumption that this is something only experienced teachers can do is also given straightforwardly, and from that I can assume that he sees that just having any kind of personality is not enough to control the class, but it must include expert power as well.

Example 25:

Valdemar: Mutta eihän siitä koskaan pääse mihinkään että opettaja ainakin niinkun teoriassa on aina valta- asemassa yksinkertaisesti että jossain lukiossa sä aina siis aina sä arvostelet ... ja tajuaa että minkä numeron mä annan tässä ni voi vaikuttaa siihen mihin lukioon se pääsee

'But you can never escape that at least in theory you are always in a position of power simply, because for example in high school you are always assessing the students ... and you realize that what number you give might have an effect on what school they can attend in the future.'

Here is another base of power that the interviewee identified as something belonging only to real teachers, the power of assessment. As trainees have only a slight possibility to affect students' grades the interviewee sees that it is yet not in his grasp, but at the same time he sees how this will

probably add to the power of the teacher, in particular with students who have plans of an academic career. It is also interesting to note how the power of assessment is only seen here as an responsibility of the teacher to give justified grades, but it is not discussed at all how it could be used to exercise control of the class.

4.6 Sources of power strategies

”Where did you learn to control the class other than from teacher training?”

The purpose of the question was to find out how and where trainees had learned the skills they used in the classroom. The knowledge where a specific method was learned might give very good insights into the methods. The most common source the interviewees reported was unsurprisingly the long school background they had, where they had observed teachers at work.

Example 26:

Paavo: Elikkä mistä sinä oot sitten oppinut jos näitä ei hirveesti oo sinun mukaan ollu opetuksissa opetettu?

'So where have you learned the methods you use if they have not been taught much in teacher training?'

Eemeli: No kyllähän siinä on tietenkin omat muistot kun tietenkin jokainen meistä on käynyt peruskoulua sen yheksän vuotta ja siihen lukio päälle

'Well of course my own memories from school, all of us have had to go through 9 years of compulsory schooling and high school on top of that'

Of course during a long school experience everyone will have seen a lot of different styles of teaching. How much trainees actually try to imitate the good teachers they had during their time in school is left unclear in this answer. The next example shows how some interviewees had a completely different view of the matter.

Example 27:

Helena: Että se tulee jotenkin luontaisesti niiltä ihmisiltä jotka tälle alalle hakeutuu mutta en nyt tiidä tuleeks se multa kauheen luonnollisesti

'Well it kind of comes naturally to those people who get into this line of work, but I don't think it comes very naturally to me'

This answer shows how the interviewee sees using effective power strategies as a characteristic trait of the people who become teachers, but at the same time notes her own lack in the same area. This view would also imply that that is something that cannot be learned or taught. However, the next example shows another interpretation that was most common among the answers and, I think, is closest to the truth.

Example 28:

Valdermar: Kaikkia muita opettajia seuraamalla oon kattonu et mitä ne tekee ja sitten siitä tavallaan alitajuisesti omaksuu sen mikä itelle toimii kokeilee

'Just observing every other teacher I have looked at what they are doing and then you sort of subconsciously take whatever works for you and try that out'

The answers above show that learning from personal experience and assimilating that information into one's own teaching, is the most common method given by the interviewees. It shows both the need for examples to learn from and the need to process that information to suit oneself personally.

5 Conclusion

While some of the material for this study was somewhat old, dating back to the 90's, other more recent material showed that this area of study is still not exhausted. In the present study I have looked into specific power methods, bases of power and ideologies used by teachers-in-training at Jyväskylä University.

Firstly, I found out that even beginner teachers have a wide variety of different methods they used, and that they were aware of even more methods that they themselves could or would not use. It could be said that the trainees had a lot of options but have not yet developed their style or consciously explored their own philosophy on power. Secondly, the interviewees understood power strategies simply as methods or even just tricks; a deeper understanding and more holistic strategies were much less common among the study group, although some trainees showed broader awareness of power than others. Thirdly, trainees felt that their own inexperience and lack of good methods given through training was limiting the choices available to them, and the most common way they had learned was from the example of their own teachers. Experience in work was seen as the most decisive factor and reliable source of power. Although the present study is descriptive of the methods and strategies used by the seven interviewees, these few generalizations can be made of it as the sample size is quite small and its reliability may be questioned.

During this study several avenues of further research surfaced. The study could be expanded to cover experienced teachers and there could be comparisons made between them and beginner teachers. A chronologically longer study of the same subject would be necessary to assess if trainees test out different strategies. Research could also be directed to find out if power strategies can be taught, for example by making it an option in teacher training and comparing the lessons held by those who have been taught power strategies and those who have not. Another point of view could also be added by interviewing the students and trying to find out how they experienced different strategies, which would be particularly useful if the different strategies are to be compared. The material used in the study could also have been larger in order to better justify conclusions about beginner teachers in general, and the interview questions could be improved as well. At this

stage of their careers they focused on only a narrow part of power, namely on the methods, and also some of the questions may have led the interviewees to answer in a specific way in some cases. Questions like how the interviewees define power themselves might produce more interesting data.

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