

An In-depth Exploration of Comparative Management Strategies:
Analyzing Student Responses and Behavioral Dynamics in the
Classroom Setting

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I. Intro

Many educators publicly declare the "top-performing student" in a given class, eliciting applause from adults when children surpass their peers. Similarly, sports tournaments actively acknowledge and celebrate individuals who outshine their competitors. Parents may also compare their child's accomplishments in sports, music, or other supplementary activities. A parent could ask, "Who was cast as the lead character in the school play?" Since they occur so often, these social comparisons, which are an integral part of everyday living, are frequently overlooked.

The underlying intention of social comparisons is typically to serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for children, fostering success and self-confidence. Achieving the title of the best in class or emerging victorious in a game instills a positive self-perception in children, fostering pride and a sense of accomplishment. This positive reinforcement, in turn, motivates them to strive for even more outstanding achievements. However, it is crucial to recognize that social comparisons can have unintended consequences. Constantly measuring oneself against others may lead to developing a habit that traps children in an unhealthy competition cycle, potentially undermining their well-being and self-esteem.

In the paper *Social Comparison and Education*, John Levine indicates that "the classroom environment is ideally suited to elicit social comparison behavior. One reason for this is that the classroom venerates cognitive uncertainty in students. New instructional materials produce this uncertainty, alterations in the normal routine of the classroom, activities, and other novel or ambiguous aspects of classroom life. To reduce uncertainty, students need information about how to adapt to their changing environment. Moreover, the typical classroom has a strongly evaluative atmosphere because of a reward system based on academic performance, perceived

teacher concern with achievement, and parental pressure to perform well.” (Levine, 1983, p.29) Classrooms provide a wide range of chances for these social comparisons. Due to the presences of a reward system based on academic performance, the belief that teachers are concerned with achievement, and the pressure from parents on their kids to succeed, the typical classroom creates an environment that encourages children to compare themselves.

I.A Setting

Throughout my fieldwork in the West County Mandarin School, I conducted extensive observations of the interactions and comparisons in the classroom. Based on the class schedule, the students would be in the English or Mandarin classroom. I was assisting the English teacher, so I observed the kindergarten class one week and the first-grade class the next. The classes switched weekly, but the classroom and teacher remained the same. My observation mainly focused on the teacher-student relationship, precisely how the instructor used different customized educational techniques to meet each student's particular needs. Many pedagogical approaches created an engaging and interactive academic setting, including interactive learning and collaborative discourse.

I observed comparisons among students in their interactions with the teacher and each other. The teacher's influence on students' behavior and learning strategies was evident, with students closely observing and adapting to the teacher's cues. Peer interactions during station activities highlighted how students compared their approaches to tasks, collaborated, and shared insights. These comparisons were not limited to academic activities but extended to broader aspects of classroom behavior, creating a sense of community and cooperation.

The consistent involvement in kindergarten and first-grade classes allowed me to witness

the progression of these comparisons over time. The teacher's role as a model and student interactions contributed to a dynamic social and learning environment. The names of the teacher and the students are changed due to privacy concerns.

I.B Keywords

Comparison, Behavior Management, Comparative Management, Showcasing Comparison, Inherent Comparison

I.B.I Behavior Management

Behavior management is a term that will be primarily used in the classroom context to refer to the use of strategies by educators methodically and proactively to create an environment that is beneficial to learning and encouraging. This process includes creating clear expectations for student behavior, rewarding good behavior, and applying appropriate interventions to address and correct disruptive behaviors. The goal of behavior management in the classroom is to provide a space in which students can participate in educational activities, work together with their classmates, and communicate with the teacher in a way that is both respectful and productive. Creating a supportive and structured learning environment that allows students' overall academic and social development is one of the many techniques included in this approach.

I.B.II Comparative Management Strategies

In this paper, the term “comparative management strategies” will be used to describe the behavior of the subjects in the class, including any type of comparison. Comparative management strategies happen under **behavior management** in the classroom setting. Comparative management strategies have two major components: external and internal. External

comparison is having the teacher compare student to student, which will be expressed as “teacher to student.” Internal comparison is having a student compare another student, either themselves or another student, which will be expressed as “student to student.” In the classroom I was observing, the teacher's strategies also led to students internalizing the strategy. It was evident that the dynamics in the class were affected significantly by these comparison behaviors.

I.B.III Gamification

Gamification is another behavior management strategy term used in this paper. This innovative strategy transforms the learning experience by infusing elements of competition into specific activities. In a gamified classroom environment, students shift from a traditional focus on learning to acquiring knowledge to a dynamic scenario where the goal becomes not just learning but winning. Here, students transcend their roles as mere students, assuming the dynamic identities of winners and losers within specially designed games crafted by either the teacher or fellow students.

II. Research Question

Over ten weeks, I closely observed the dynamic interplay between students and the teacher, seeking to unravel insights into the effectiveness and impact of comparative management strategies on student engagement and behavior. In this case study, the primary objective is to explore the research question: "How do students respond to comparative management strategies in the classroom?" This investigation involves an analysis of students' verbal and facial reactions, specifically in response to the various comparative management strategies implemented by the teacher within the classroom setting.

III. Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) offers a significant theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding the observed dynamics throughout the ten-week observation process in the classroom. Vygotsky's concepts, as expressed in "Interaction between learning and development" from "Mind in Society," provide an understanding of how different management practices might affect students' cognitive and socioemotional growth.

As conceptualized by Vygotsky, the Zone of Proximal Development is the spectrum of activities that a learner can do with the guidance and expertise of a more knowledgeable person, such as an instructor. The most effective learning occurs when students are presented with more difficult activities than their current level of ability but can still be accomplished with the proper supervision and assistance. Within my study, comparable management tactics will be examined by considering the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), specifically how these strategies might support students' involvement and conduct in the classroom.

Comparative management tactics, which focus on contrasting or aligning students' performance or behavior, may be modified to correspond with the students' present stages of development. Using these approaches, the teacher may provide a learning atmosphere that stimulates students within their Zone of Proximal Development, promoting cognitive development and increased involvement.

Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" complements Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development by offering a critical perspective on the teacher-student connection. This enhances the analysis of different management strategies in the classroom. Freire's questioning of traditional educational methodologies presents a concept of the "narrative character" of the teacher-student dynamic. The quote, "A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any

level, inside or outside the school, reveals its fundamentally narrative character. This relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). "(Freire 1971, p.71) encapsulates Freire's critique of the conventional educational model. The quote highlights the narrative nature of the teacher-student interaction, with the instructor serving as the narrator and the students being passive listeners. According to Freire, this narrative dynamic reveals a power imbalance that could inhibit students' critical thinking and creativity. When evaluating teachers' influence on students' lives, Freire's viewpoint implies that the traditional teacher-student connection may perpetuate a banking model of education in which information is deposited into students rather than co-constructed in a dynamic and active way. This may have a significant impact on students' growth and comprehension of the world. A teacher who believes in Freire's theories may establish a learning atmosphere in which students are encouraged to question, reflect, and participate in the building of knowledge. Furthermore, given the narrative nature of the teacher-student interaction, teachers may become significant individuals in students' lives outside of the classroom. Teachers who use Freire's pedagogy can empower students, establish a feeling of agency, and promote a passion for lifelong learning. The link between teachers and students extends beyond the classroom, influencing students' attitudes, values, and worldviews.

When considering the research problem, this viewpoint fosters an analysis of how different management practices in education might either maintain or question the narrative nature of the teacher-student interaction. It prompts a reflection on whether these strategies enable students to become active participants in their learning or instead lead to the solidifying of information and disinterest.

John M. Levine's "Social Comparison and Education" work enhances students' responses to comparative management tactics. Even in kindergarten, children eagerly desired class rank, showing an inbuilt urge for comparison, according to Levine. Despite measures to reduce competition, children counted page counts in workbooks, showing the durability of the urge for comparison knowledge.

He states ““When still in kindergarten, our sons were zealously protected from any knowledge about their relative standing in the class; yet they regularly came home with detailed information about who was where in the workbooks. When the teachers, in disapproval of such rampant competitiveness, cut the page numbers off the workbooks, the children simply started to count the pages and continued to issue their own communiques.’ Finally, it is important to note that the desire for comparison information is not restricted to young children: older children and even college students display strong motivation to compare their performance with that of their peers. The foregoing discussion suggests that acquisition of social comparison information for self-assessment purposes is a pervasive phenomenon in schools. But what are the consequences of this acquisition for students' responses (affective, cognitive, and behavioral) to themselves and others?”(Levine, 1983, p.30)

Levine's observation that older kids, especially college students, seek comparative information shows how this tendency is common. His findings help examine how comparative management tactics affect student engagement and behavior and how they may affect intrinsic social comparison motivation. How do comparisons affect students self-esteem and motivation? How does comparing information affect students self and peer perceptions? Finally, how do students use comparative insights to change their classroom behavior?

The integration of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Levine's and Freire's ideas offers a framework for understanding the dynamics inside the classroom. This framework helps to understand how various management methods may either enhance or hinder the possibility of a better learning environment.

IV. Study Background & Methods (4 points; 1-2 pages)

This case study is based on observations and interactions conducted at the West County Mandarin School in Oakland, a bilingual institution offering classes in both Mandarin and English. The West County Mandarin School is a bilingual educational institution where students are exposed to Mandarin and English instruction. The school's unique approach integrates both languages seamlessly, offering a diverse and enriching learning environment. The study primarily centers around the morning sessions conducted in English. The data for this study is derived from field notes collected during ten weeks, with a total time commitment of 30 hours. The study focused on understanding the dynamics and interactions within two distinct classes, alternating weekly between kindergarten and first-grade classes.

The student population consists of young learners engaged in early childhood education, ranging from kindergarten to first grade. The alternating schedule between kindergarten and first-grade classes provided a comprehensive view of the educational dynamics within the school. Both classes consisted of 22 students.

I, as a participant observer, actively engaged with the students and became an integral part of the classroom environment. This approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of the classes' interactions, relationships, and structural elements. By immersing myself in the students' daily activities, I had the opportunity to capture authentic observations. I focused on observing

various aspects, including but not limited to classroom activities, teacher-student interactions, peer relationships, language use, and overall classroom structure. I took detailed observational notes of these observances during each fieldwork day and then wrote seven field notes for each observation (data set=7 ethnographic field notes). The field notes were focused on recurring themes, patterns, and unique observations.

An inductive coding strategy was used as the basis for the data analysis procedure for the field notes. In this approach, categories and themes were created directly from the data, which enabled patterns and insights to develop naturally. The selected codes were related to addressing the research question, which centered on understanding the dynamics of the classroom and social interactions. The inductive coding procedure enabled the development of codes that included multiple aspects of the observed activities. Some of the relevant codes are: Student Responses (upset, embarrassed, proud...), Components of Comparison (Student Compare Student, Teacher Compare Student), Strategies/Ways (Showcasing Comparison, Gamification, Inherent Comparison), Purpose (Learning, Winning).

V. Findings

V.A Motivation through Golden Tickets - Gamification Strategy

In the classroom, during the station activity, Mrs. Amelia implemented a reward system using golden tickets to motivate students. She distributed tickets for tasks like completing work early and putting names on homework but asked for tickets in cases of misbehavior. When the station timer signaled the end, the first group to tidy up received tickets. Students placed their golden tickets on a poster with assigned spots based on their numbers.

Using golden tickets as a motivational tool was a repetitive theme in the observed

classroom dynamics. Mrs. Amelia created a reward system where students earned golden tickets for positive behaviors such as completing tasks early, following instructions, or maintaining a neat workspace, and losing tickets for unapproved behavior that was not a part of the class discourse. These tickets served as tangible symbols of accomplishment and status within the classroom. Students conversations about their tickets as its their biggest accomplishment and the statements they make like, "I got a lot of tickets today! I got seven of them!"(Fieldwork 1) exemplifies how students perceived the tickets as a measure of success and something to be proud of. The golden ticket system demonstrates the potential of extrinsic motivators in shaping student behavior. However, it raises questions about the long-term impact on intrinsic motivation and whether students are engaging in tasks for the love of learning or simply to earn rewards.

Sofia, returning from the bathroom, was reminded by Mrs. Amelia about seeking permission before leaving the class and was asked to return a golden ticket. Sofia did not respond or defend herself. She quietly handed the golden ticket and went quiet for the rest of the class. (Fieldnote 1) Although the tickets might be a good strategy to reinforce good behavior, some examples like this show that losing tickets might be affecting students negatively inside the classroom.

This connects to the idea of using gamification as a behavior management strategy of comparison the teacher uses in the classroom. This strategy of turning learning into a game where the students can win or lose tickets can potentially cause their learning purpose to become a winner in the competition instead of gaining knowledge. While integrating game design aspects into the learning environment to enhance interactivity and enjoyment, it is crucial to keep a careful equilibrium, particularly with the notions of winning and losing, as they may unintentionally foster student comparisons, and affect the students idea of self worth on the long

run. Teachers must be cautious to prevent detrimental effects on students' self-esteem and the development of an unhealthy competitive environment in the classroom when winning and losing become significant components of the learning process.

Referring to the article "What is literacy?" by Gee, one notable aspect that is evident in the use of the tickets is the creation of a system for motivation and discipline. The act of awarding a golden ticket for completing tasks or following rules carries a profound significance. These tickets have transformed into tangible tokens of power within the classroom. They are more than just rewards; they symbolize agency and status. As Gee indicates, "...discourses are intimately related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in society. Control over certain discourses can lead to the acquisition of social goods (money, power, status) in a society" (Gee, 1998). "(Fieldnote 1) In the classroom, Mrs. Amelia is trying to teach the secondary discourses to her students by using gamification strategies.

Many researchers have studied the use of gamification as a learning strategy in class. The use of gamification may serve as an encouragement for students to engage actively in courses, fulfill tasks, and push themselves for success to get rewards and acknowledgment. Games often need the use of problem-solving, critical thinking, and strategic planning, therefore helping students in their development of essential skills in an enjoyable and engaging way. Numerous gamification strategies promote cooperation and collaboration, generating a feeling of cooperation between students. On the other hand, the incorporation of an excessive amount of gamification features may result in students being distracted, as their attention is directed more towards the rewards rather than the instructional material. Gamification may not cause equal responses from all students, thereby resulting in inconsistencies in both performance and involvement. The early excitement for gamification may decrease, and students may get

disinterested over time, so it might just cause a short-time engagement. The introduction of a competitive aspect may lead to increased anxiety and stress, negatively affecting the mental well-being of students.

The 2020 paper “The impact of gamification on students’ learning, engagement and behavior based on their personality traits” by Smiderle et.al, investigates the impact of gamification in education, particularly focusing on how students' personality traits influence their engagement and learning in a gamified environment. The article aims to explore how gamification impacts individuals differently based on their characteristics, particularly focusing on points, ranking, and badges in the context of engagement, learning, and programming behavior. The empirical experiment involved 40 undergraduate programming students using both gamified and non-gamified learning environments. Key findings indicate a positive shift in behavior among the gamified group, with significant accuracy improvement noted in students with low agreeableness, low openness, and introverted traits. Additionally, the gamified group showed no reduction in accuracy over the semester for students with low conscientious traits, suggesting gamification's potential benefits for these groups. Introverted students using the gamified version demonstrated higher engagement than their extroverted counterparts. The study also identified a strong negative correlation between extroversion and ranking views, suggesting that gamification, especially the ranking element, may be more beneficial for introverted individuals.(Smiderle et.al, 2020)

While gamification emerges as a promising strategy in the educational landscape, particularly evident in the positive shifts observed in engagement and learning behaviors among certain groups of students, it is not a one-size-fits-all solution. The study highlights that the impact of gamification varies based on individual characteristics, specifically personality traits.

While introverted students demonstrated increased engagement and benefit from the gamified environment, those with certain personality traits, such as low agreeableness or low conscientiousness, experienced contrasting outcomes. The findings underscore the importance of a nuanced approach to implementing gamification in the classroom, recognizing that its effectiveness may differ among diverse student populations. Educators should consider tailoring gamification strategies to accommodate varying student preferences and characteristics to avoid potential discouragement among certain individuals.

Upon analyzing the incident where Sofia returned one of her golden tickets for forgetting to ask for permission before going to the bathroom, a more in-depth analysis revealed distinct signs of discomfort associated with this public acknowledgment. Observing Sofia's actions while handing back the ticket, it became evident that she kept her head down, avoiding direct eye contact with the teacher and the rest of the class. Despite occasional glances in my direction, her reluctance to raise her head and her quiet voice during the apology hinted at a sense of embarrassment. This behavior suggests that Sofia's unease extended beyond merely returning a ticket; the public nature of being called out and the act of giving back the ticket in front of her peers amplified her feelings of embarrassment and possibly social discomfort. This observation sheds light on the emotional nuances involved in classroom dynamics and underscores the importance of gamification and comparisons in the classroom.

V.B Calling out Students - Showcasing Comparison Strategy

Showcasing comparison is when a teacher makes a comparison between a student and other students by calling out that student and differentiating them based on their actions inside the classroom. The showcasing comparison in Mrs. Amelia's classroom provides a nuanced perspective on how students respond to comparative management strategies.

Being separated into different stations, completing different activities for a certain amount of time and then switching stations was the go-to activity in Mrs. Amelia's class. In the "Meet My Family" booklet crafting station, Mrs. Amelia utilized showcasing comparison by addressing specific students whose behavior deviated from the expected norm. For instance, when a student was sitting with feet up on the chair, Mrs. Amelia immediately intervened, stating, "Check your body and how you are sitting." This direct comparison to the expected behavior prompted an instant correction of the student's sitting position. The repetition of this approach for multiple students underscored its consistent use within the classroom. (Fieldnote 1)

In Fieldnote 4, an incident involving Kevin hitting Maddie led to showcasing comparison and the use of a disciplinary strategy. Mrs. Amelia intervened, stating, "Kevin, you need to apologize to her." This direct comparison singled out Kevin's behavior, making it a visible example for the entire class. Mrs. Amelia further highlighted the comparison by asking Kevin, "Is it okay to run and slam your body into Maddie?" Kevin, just like Sofia, went quiet and during the whole activity, did not talk to any of his classmates. This public address and comparison served as a disciplinary measure and also illustrated the teacher's comparative management strategy while maintaining a respectful environment. Besides the teachers use of the strategy, it also showed a common response from the students to the being singled out or being compared in any given method. They go silent and keep their heads down, minimizing interaction with their teacher and classmates.

In Fieldnote 6, Oliver's disruptive behavior during the reading activity prompted Mrs. Amelia to address him in front of the entire class, showing a public use of showcasing comparison. Mrs. Amelia's firm instruction, "Oliver, go to station one table and put your face down," singled out Oliver's behavior for the class to witness. This public correction was aimed at

maintaining a focused learning environment, aligning with Mrs. Amelia's priority for a peaceful reading atmosphere.

The reflections emphasize Mrs. Amelia's motive of protecting the learning environment by addressing disruptive behavior publicly. This strategy is analyzed through the lens of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the social mediation of learning. By addressing disruptive behavior in public, Mrs. Amelia aims to create a conducive learning environment for the entire class. This public correction is seen as an opportunity for social interaction and learning about behavioral expectations, as named as “secondary discourses”.

The reflections also raise questions about the potential impact of public correction on Oliver's feelings. While Mrs. Amelia's actions align with behavior management and discipline, the public nature of the correction might have implications for Oliver's emotional well-being. The scenario underscored the delicate balance educators must strike between maintaining order and considering the emotional experiences of individual students.

Similarly, during the crafting activity, Mrs. Amelia presented two types of worksheets, differentiating them by complexity. Notably, when a student sought guidance on choosing the easier worksheet, Mrs. Amelia didn't explicitly label one as easier. Instead, she empowered the student to make his own decision, emphasizing personalized learning. The interactions among students during the worksheet selection process revealed the social dynamics influenced by showcasing comparison, from **student to student**. Peer conversations about which worksheet to choose demonstrated the impact of comparing choices.

“The girl in the skirt asked the boy in the white t-shirt next to her, “Which one are you going to choose?” They both got the preschool version.”(Fielnote 2)

The exchange between the girl in the skirt and the boy in the white t-shirt highlighted the influence of peer decisions on individual choices, aligning with the principles of social constructivism.

However, Mrs. Amelia's unintentional comparison of classes raises critical considerations. The immediate response from students asking each other which worksheet they got and showing off that they got the first grade worksheet while being in the kindergarten class reflects how such comparisons can permeate the classroom culture. This can cause potential negative consequences, issues of self-esteem, self-worth, and the creation of perceived hierarchies among students.

Although using comparison as a management tool could be useful as a means of shaping behavior and promoting positive responses like motivating students to challenge themselves and get the harder worksheet, or on the contrary, know their performance and level and get the easier worksheet with a self-awareness, educators must be cautious of its possible disadvantages. The conversations the students had with each other about which worksheet they got might be changing the classroom dynamics and affecting the complex aspects of successful teaching, including differentiation, social relationships, inclusion, and the establishment of an efficient learning environment. Although differentiated education is primarily intended to address the varying needs of students while encouraging personalized learning, there are times when it may unintentionally result in some students feeling inferior to their classmates. Providing students with varying tasks or materials depending on their perceived skill levels might lead to feelings of stigmatization. Individuals who are assigned tasks that are potentially considered less challenging may have a sense of being less than their peers and may interpret this as a reflection of their perceived lower ability by others. Students have an inherent tendency to evaluate

themselves in relation to their classmates. Ineffective communication of distinction might result in social comparison. Students that receive different worksheets or class material may have a reduced sense of self-worth, as they may perceive themselves to be less intelligent than their classmates.

Another way showcasing comparison was evident in the classroom is when Mrs. Amelia corrected the students actions by calling out their names out loud in class. In fieldnote 4,

“While the students were walking to their assigned tables for the first station session, Kevin ran and hit Maddie with his body. Mrs. Amelia saw this and said, “Kevin, you need to apologize to her”, and she called him over. Kevin walked over with a droopy look on his face. “Is it okay to run and slam your body to Maddie?” asked Mrs. Amelia. Kevin shook his head and then apologized.”

Kevin's verbal and visual expressions had a noticeable change, indicating his guilt, which could be recognized through his choice of words. Upon receiving a call from Mrs. Amelia, he displayed an unhappy expression and says, “I know what I did I’m sorry” while walking to the teacher. This reflects his emotional reaction to being called out for his bad behavior. He demonstrated a behavioral reaction by approaching Mrs. Amelia and nodding his head in admitting his wrongdoing. This reaction responds to the public warning and shows that the student agrees with the teacher's request. The fact that the correction was made public likely influenced his reaction. The issue raises concerns regarding Kevin's emotional reaction when confronted publicly for his actions. While we do not know clearly Kevin's emotions, his drooping expression, verbal expression to apologize indicate that he may be feeling embarrassed or under social pressure. After he went back and sat down, it was observably evident that he

became more quiet compared to the start of the class and had minimal interactions with people.

Likewise, in fieldnote 5, Mrs. Amekia tried to solve a conflict three students had another day by calling them out loud in class and talking about the problem in the middle of the class. Meanwhile, the other students were in the class, watching what was happening while doing their work on their stations.

Max and Toby were playing a fake fight, acting like they were hitting each other. They were not getting physical. Axel, who sees this, thinks Max is hitting Toby, so he goes over and pushes Max and gets physical.

Mrs. Amelia called Toby and said, "Did you do anything back to him?" asking if he hit Axel back. Toby told his teacher that he pushed him. Mrs. Amelia, instead of getting mad about it, asked what he could do differently next time. Toby answered, "I could tell an adult". Mrs. Amelia confirmed and said, "I appreciate you for your honesty."

Then, she called Axel over and asked him to confirm what Toby said. Axel nodded, meaning that he was confirming.

Now, the third student, Max, was called over. Opposing to Axel and Toby, Max acted like he didn't remember what happened and stayed

silent. Mrs. Amelia said, "I'll let you apologize when you are ready; now you can go sit."

For the last time, she called Axel's name. "Now that I heard other people's stories, you didn't tell me the truth the first time I asked it. Usually, there are consequences when you don't tell the truth. Now give me one of your tickets". While Axel was listening to Mrs. Amelia, he had a straight face, and he kept quiet.

[Mrs.Amelia] told me that Axel was always lying. Axel was sitting at the table right in front of Mrs. Amelia, so he heard the conversation while doing his writing worksheet. Mrs. Amelia said they are working on honesty with Axel and that honesty is a value on the values poster...She said, "I don't understand why he wouldn't give in the first time; it would have been easier for him and me."

Mrs. Amelia's frustration with Axel's habitual lying and her persistence in seeking the truth in various situations reflect the difficulties of teaching and reinforcing these values, which frequently require consistent efforts to connect individual behaviors to the broader discourse of honesty and integrity". However, although she encourages the students to be honest, doing this in front of the whole class is not an efficient and healthy method, since it can change how their classmates act upon the three boys later on during the next playtime or in class, or it can hurt their sense of self-worth.

During the same class, when Calton was pulling his knees to himself while sitting, Mrs. Amelia warned him by calling his name out loud. Then, she warned two other students for talking, again, by calling their names out loud in class:

According to the class rules, Calton was not sitting as he should, so Mrs. Amelia warned him. "Calton, on your bottom."

After recess...the kids sat on the carpet in their designated squares without crossing any lines. Toby and Max were talking to each other, which made Mrs. Amelia stop reading.

Mrs Amelia: "Do we need to cancel next week's recess?"

Jack: "What am I doing?"

Mrs.Amelia: "You are doing perfectly. It is the person behind you and next to you".

She meant Toby and Max. They stopped talking, with a facial expression that seemed like they were embarrassed."(F#5)

Toby and Max, just like the other students who were singled out in class before, went quiet and had an evident decrease in their overall energy.. This shift in their expressions and behavior signaled that they were embarrassed or self-conscious about being picked out by their teacher, and announced in the class for their unapproved behavior. They came to a stop as Mrs. Amelia called them out. This change in behavior suggested a response to the public warning about their actions. It demonstrated how public corrections can impact students' actions and responses in the classroom. Although Toby and Max's emotions cannot be known exactly by

their facial and behavioral responses, going quiet and looking down hints at a possible emotional experience.

Mrs. Amelia's "methods appear to be consistent with the concept of "secondary discourses" outlined in James Paul Gee's essay on literacy, "What is Literacy?". Teaching the secondary discourse values is essential, but if it is done by correcting wrong behavior, it should not be done in public in terms of warnings and corrections.

V.C Unintended Comparing - Inherent Comparison Strategy

Inherent comparison refers to the subtle moments in an educational setting when a teacher unintentionally draws comparisons between students or classes through their words and actions. These instances may not be deliberate or meant to establish hierarchies, but they can significantly affect the students involved. Such comparisons may impact students' self-esteem, fostering a sense of inferiority or superiority that could influence their motivation and confidence. The term highlights the unintentional nature of these comparisons. It underscores the ethical responsibility of educators to be mindful of the potential consequences of their language and behavior in shaping the classroom environment.

An example of this from the classroom is when Mrs. Amelia compared her two classes:

While telling the class it was time to tidy up, Mrs. Amelia accidentally said Elephant class instead of Eagles class. All the students started screaming, "You said Elephant," and other sentences meaning the same thing. Mrs. Amelia responded, "You guys are loud as the elephant class; I got confused," as a joke while laughing. (Fieldnote 2)

Inherent comparisons, such as the one made by Mrs. Amelia between the "Elephant class" and

the "Eagles class," can have significant implications for students in the classroom. While seemingly harmless, these comparisons can inadvertently establish a hierarchy among students, impacting their self-esteem and overall sense of worth. Mrs. Amelia's comment, made in jest, may have unintentionally conveyed the idea that one class is superior to another, potentially affecting students' perceptions of themselves and their classmates. Furthermore, such comparisons can disrupt the ideal classroom culture of unity and inclusivity, as emphasized by Dr. Kris Gutiérrez in the video "Overcoming Deficit-Oriented Approaches to Teaching." It is crucial for educators to foster an environment where all students feel valued and equal, avoiding inadvertent comparisons that may inadvertently create divisions among them. The significance of these interactions extends beyond the classroom, influencing students' personal and educational development during this critical phase of their lives.

VI. Discussion

The exploration of comparative management strategies in the classroom setting has revealed nuanced dynamics, shedding light on the ways in which these strategies influence student engagement and behavior. This discussion section will delve into the key findings, drawing connections between the observed strategies and the theoretical frameworks, and offering insights into the potential implications for educational practice.

The theoretical framework, anchored in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Paulo Freire's critical perspective on teacher-student relationships, and John M. Levine's insights on social comparison, provided a lens through which to understand the observed dynamics. The integration of these theories offered a comprehensive view of the impact of comparative management strategies on students in the West County Mandarin School.

Vygotsky's ZPD, emphasizing the importance of challenging tasks within a learner's reach with guidance, illuminated how comparative management strategies could be aligned with students' current stages of development. The use of gamification, as observed in the Golden Tickets strategy, exemplified the potential to create a learning atmosphere that stimulates students within their ZPD. However, the discussion also raised questions about the long-term impact on intrinsic motivation and the unintended consequences of turning learning into a competition.

Freire's critique of the traditional teacher-student relationship added a critical dimension to the analysis. The examination of showcasing comparison strategies highlighted potential pitfalls in reinforcing a narrative where students are passive recipients of information. The public addressing of students' behaviors, while serving disciplinary purposes, raises concerns about the emotional well-being of individual students and the potential impact on their self-esteem.

Levine's exploration of social comparison in education underscored the pervasive nature of students' desire for comparison information. The discussion on gamification revealed its potential benefits, but the study also emphasized the need for a nuanced approach, recognizing that its effectiveness varies based on individual characteristics.

One of the metaphors used in Sylvia Scribner's study on literacy is "Literacy as a State of Grace." This metaphor underlines the unique attributes given to educated people in different countries. Scribner delves into the metaphor's historical and theological origins, noting how numerous cultures, both Western and non-Western, give power and respect to the written word. Literacy is seen as a special position, frequently connected with intellectual, artistic, and spiritual involvement in people's acquired knowledge.

When used as an educational approach, gamification incorporates a competitive aspect into the learning process. The emphasis switches from the inner enjoyment and beauty of learning to the external satisfaction of winning or scoring better. Instead of perceiving literacy as a condition of grace, students may begin to consider it as a tool for competitiveness and validation.

The power of literacy, according to the literacy-as-a-state-of-grace concept, exceeds political and economic bounds, finding value in intellectual and spiritual engagement. When learning is gamified, however, there is a danger of reducing literacy to a technique for getting points or surpassing classmates. The intrinsic motive of winning may overshadow the self-enhancing features of reading, such as cognitive growth and critical thinking.

If students are primarily engaged in a competitive atmosphere through gamified learning, the focus on winning could outweigh the development of critical thinking skills and a better comprehension of the subject matter. The teacher plays an important role in shaping the educational experience, and if the focus is exclusively on obtaining success in a competitive framework, a chance to teach a sense of critical awareness may be lost.

As students continue through their schooling, they may find courses that are simple to pass and targeted for easy A grades, which may reinforce the habit of studying to win rather than learning to learn. This educational style may mistakenly encourage students to pursue the route of easiest, choosing shortcuts such as cheating or copying rather than investing time and effort in true comprehension and personal growth. This contrast between learning and growth is critical because genuine development entails not just winning or attaining excellent marks, but also maturing as a person. Students may miss out on the chance to develop their full potential and critical awareness if the educational system encourages a competitive culture rather than

cultivating a real joy for studying. In the long term, this may limit their capacity to negotiate complicated issues and make important contributions to society.

VII. Implications, Limitations, Future Research

VII.A Implications

The results provide useful information for instructors looking for successful classroom management practices. While the gamification method has shown potential for engaging students, it must be used with caution to prevent unexpected outcomes. Educators should be aware of possible negative consequences, such as increased anxiety, and the danger of creating an unhealthy competitive atmosphere. It is critical to adapt gamification strategies correctly without causing unhealthy competition between students to meet varying student preferences and traits in order to achieve successful outcomes.

While the showcasing comparison technique is efficient at keeping order, it requires a careful mix of discipline and sensitivity for students' emotional reactions. Students' self-esteem and emotional well-being may be impacted by public consequences, demanding a careful strategy that emphasizes both behavior control and individual student needs. Showcasing somebody automatically means comparison, although it is not meant to be obvious. Singling out students either by their faults or successes causes the other students to compare themselves to the singled out student, which potentially causes them to feel inferior or superior and can lead to unhealthy class dynamics.

The inherent comparison, as seen in casual comments, emphasizes educators' responsibility to be careful when talking to students to not unintentionally cause comparisons between students. Even apparently innocent comparisons might accidentally form student

divisions. Educators should acknowledge and recognize these comparative management strategies, and by implementing them correctly or eliminating them from their methods, they must establish an atmosphere in which all children feel respected and equal.

VII.B Limitations and Future Research

The research focused on a specific bilingual educational institution with a unique context, limiting the generalizability of findings. Future research could explore comparative management strategies across diverse educational settings to enhance the external validity of the study. It was a short-duration study, with only one site, which resulted in a limited data collection.

Furthermore, although qualitative observations gave significant insights into classroom dynamics, using quantitative metrics might give a more thorough knowledge of the influence of comparative management styles on student results.

By exploring the subtle interaction between students and teachers, this research adds to the continuing debate on effective classroom management. Educators may modify their methods by revealing the complexities of comparative management strategies, producing a learning environment that encourages both academic accomplishment and socio-emotional development.

VIII. References and Appendices

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IX. Coded Fieldnote Example

CODEBOOK	
Student Responses	The different ways the students react to different stimuli and occurrences in class
Upset (Verbal Expression)	Moments when the students express being upset with words
Upset (Facial Expression)	Moments when the students express being upset with their facial expressions
Embarrassed (Verbal Expression)	Moments when the students express being embarrassed with words
Embarrassed (Facial Expression)	Moments when the students express being embarrassed with their facial expressions
Proud (Verbal Expression)	Moments when the students express being proud with words
Proud (Facial Expression)	Moments when the students express being

	proud with their facial expressions
Showing off (Verbal Expression)	Moments when the students show off with words
Showing off (Facial Expression)	Moments when the students show off with their facial expressions
Seeking Validation(Verbal Expression)	Moments when the students express that they are seeking validation with their verbal expressions
Seeking Validation (Facial Expression)	Moments when the students express that they are seeking validation with their facial expressions
Components of Comparison	The different comparison dynamics in class
Student Compare Student	Moments when the students compare themselves or each other to other students
Teacher Compare Student	Moments when the teacher compare students
Strategies/Ways	The strategies and ways of comparison the students and the teacher use in the classroom
Showcasing Comparison	Moments when the teacher compares a student to other students by singling them out and distinguishing them by their actions.
Gamification	The in-class strategies that create a winning&losing mindset
Inherently Comparison	Moments when the teacher compares a student to others through her words and actions but is not purposely “comparing.”
Purpose	The motivation and reasoning of the students to learn
Learning	Moments when students learn to learn
Winning	Moments when students learn to win

Fieldnote#5: Fifth Observations at West County Mandarin School

Name: Ece Tabag
Email: ecetabag@berkeley.edu
Date: 10/12/2023
Place: West County Mandarin School

Main Activities that Took Place on the Field:

Observing the class, station activities, in-class conversations, snack time, and recess

Mostly Interacted People:

Mrs. Amelia, Axel, Sofia, Cooper, Aida, Calton, Otis

General Observations:

When I walked in the class at 8:30, the students were already done reading the class values on the poster. They were just starting their stations, and everyone was in a little rush, going around and getting their station boxes.

Mrs. Amelia called over three students one by one to her desk and talked to them about a disagreement they had yesterday during recess. This event is explained more in the focused observations.

During the stations, the students started to chat with each other. Mrs. Amelia warned the class by saying, "Uh-oh, it's getting very loud," which resulted in silence in the class.

Mrs. Amelia told me it was her son's birthday. The students who heard this conversation from their station tables joined the dialogue by talking about the birthdays of their loved ones. "My grandma is 110, and she hasn't died yet", said Axel to the other students on his table. Sitting next to Axel and doing her writing worksheet on her station, Sofia said, "My grandma is 114, and my aunty is 50".

While the first session of the stations continued, Mrs. Amelia called every student one by one and gave them a little card with circle stickers on it. After getting their card, the students would go to the library corner in the class and pick a book with the same colored circles on it. They would then bring it to the teacher, the teacher would write down the book's name in case it got lost at home, and the kids would take that book home during the weekend for their homework. Circles had different colors depending on the level. For example, if a student had blue, green, and orange stickers, they could only get books that had those colored stickers on them.

According to the class rules, Calton was not sitting as he should, so Mrs. Amelia warned him. "Calton, on your bottom."

When it was Axel's time to pick a book, he also brought the drawing he did during his station time to show me. Then, he proceeded to ask me about my weekend. When I asked back, he replied, "I pooped".

It was carpet time, where Mrs. Amelia read books to the kids for 10-15 minutes. The kids wanted to read more, but Mrs. Amelia was running late in class activities, so she said, "We are really behind; we have time for only one more chapter."

After the book time, Mrs. Amelia counted from 1 to 22, and gave tickets to each student one by one as they came up to her desk after hearing their number. Getting their tickets, the students were now ready for snack time and, right after that, recess.

Coming back from recess, Axel came up to me and said, “Where have you been my whole life?” while he was entering the class.

After recess, it was time for another book chapter. The kids sat on the carpet in their designated squares without crossing any lines. Toby and Max were talking to each other, which made Mrs. Amelia stop reading.

Mrs Amelia: “Do we need to cancel next week’s recess?”

Jack: “What am I doing?”

Mrs. Amelia: “You are doing perfectly. It is the person behind you and next to you”.

She meant Toby and Max. They stopped talking, with a facial expression that seemed like they were embarrassed.

The book time was over, so the second session of the stations started.

Otis was wearing big headphones, so I asked Mrs. Amelia why it was. Mrs. Amelia told Otis to put his headphones in his lockers, and then she explained the story. Otis wears his headphones for recess since loud sounds make him uncomfortable because he has autism.

After the stations were over, the teacher counted from one to three, and all the students were sitting on the carpet. They went through some sentences and word questions, like “What word rhymes with play?”.

Before ending the class, Mrs. Amelia gave each student another ticket.

It was time for me to go, so they gave me a silent hug with their fingers and asked me why I had to leave, and they weren’t convinced when I told them I had classes just like they did.

Focused Observations:

During the first session of the stations, Mrs. Amelia was dealing with an argument that three kids -Toby, Axel, and Max- had during recess the previous day. Mrs. Amelia told me about what happened, according to what the kids told her. Max and Toby were playing a fake fight, acting like they were hitting each other. They were not getting physical. Axel, who sees this, thinks Max is hitting Toby, so he goes over and pushes Max and gets physical.

Mrs. Amelia called Toby and said, “Did you do anything back to him?” asking if he hit Axel back. Toby told his teacher that he pushed him. Mrs. Amelia, instead of getting mad about it, asked what he could do differently next time. Toby answered, “I could tell an adult”. Mrs. Amelia confirmed and said, “I appreciate you for your honesty.”

Then, she called Axel over and asked him to confirm what Toby said. Axel nodded, meaning that he was confirming.

Now, the third student, Max, was called over. Opposing to Axel and Toby, Max acted like he didn’t remember what happened and stayed silent. Mrs. Amelia said, “I’ll let you apologize when you are ready; now you can go sit.”

For the last time, she called Axel's name. "Now that I heard other people's stories, you didn't tell me the truth the first time I asked it. Usually, there are consequences when you don't tell the truth. Now give me one of your tickets". While Axel was listening to Mrs. Amelia, he had a straight face, and he kept quiet. While all these were happening, I was sitting at Mrs. Amelia's desk next to her. Occasionally, Axel would make eye contact with me, trying to read my face and figure out what I was thinking about the situation.

He went to the other side of the room to bring a ticket from the ticket poster, where everyone kept their tickets. Mrs. Amelia asked again, "Why did you have to give me the ticket?" and Axel answered, "Because I lied." Mrs. Amelia added, "Were you punished?". Axel nodded, meaning yes. Mrs. Amelia asked how he was punished and told him he was not and that he only had to get a ticket because tickets are for good behavior.

I had a short conversation about this occurrence with Mrs. Amelia after all the kids were back in their stations. She told me that Axel was always lying. Axel was sitting at the table right before Mrs. Amelia, so he heard the conversation while doing his writing worksheet. Mrs. Amelia said they are working on honesty with Axel and that honesty is a value on the values poster. In some classes, Axel would put Pokemon cards that belong to the class in his pockets, and when Mrs. Amelia asks for him to give them back, he would initially deny that he has it, then give one card and tell her that he doesn't have any. Mrs. Amelia, so sure he had it, would ask again and again until he returned all the cards. She said, "I don't understand why he wouldn't give in the first time; it would have been easier for him and me."

Reflections:

Mrs. Amelia uses various teaching approaches in her classroom to address issues of honesty and values. Mrs. Amelia is teaching her students the core discourse of honesty and how it fits into the wider discourse of school regulations and conduct standards. Her handling of the Toby, Axel, and Max issue is an ideal example of this. She emphasizes the importance of using words to overcome disagreements and emphasizes the significance of truth by asking Toby what he could do better next time and acknowledging his honesty. Similarly, when Axel lied and had to give up a ticket as a result, she links the act of lying with the larger discourse of integrity and the consequences of violating the rules. Mrs. Amelia's approach to teaching these values is not punitive; rather, it is intended to inspire self-reflection and the identification of honesty as a key value within the secondary discourse of the school. Mrs. Amelia's frustration with Axel's habitual lying and her persistence in seeking the truth in various situations reflect the difficulties of teaching and reinforcing these values, which frequently require consistent efforts to connect individual behaviors to the broader discourse of honesty and integrity.

In the previous classes, Axel and I spent more time during the station activities. We drew together, and he would not leave my side during the lockdown drill. While walking back to class from recess, he would ask to hold my hand, and he would ask me to sit with him during snack time. Axel's frequent glances at my face to gauge your reaction suggest that he may seek my validation or approval. He might want to understand if his behavior and actions are acceptable, especially in the context of the incident involving the argument between Max, Toby, and himself. His initial lie about the incident and subsequent admission of lying when confronted by Mrs. Amelia suggests that Axel may not fully grasp the consequences of his actions. He might be struggling with honesty and understanding the importance of telling the truth.

She chose not to react with anger but instead focused on constructive communication and problem-solving. By asking the children what they could do differently next time, she promotes self-reflection and encourages them

to make better choices. When Axel admitted to lying and was asked about punishment, Mrs. Amelia clarified that he wasn't being punished but was merely giving up one of his "good behavior" tickets. This approach aims to avoid making Axel feel like he's being punished while still addressing the issue of honesty. Mrs. Amelia's emphasis on the value of honesty and her patience in dealing with Axel's previous incidents (like taking Pokémon cards) suggest that she is working on building Axel's understanding of this value and encouraging him to be truthful. She appears to be trying to teach Axel the importance of being honest without being overly punitive.

Her methods appear to be consistent with the concept of "secondary discourses" outlined in James Paul Gee's essay on literacy, "WHAT IS LITERACY?". Gee argues that the many social and cultural settings in which individuals acquire and use language are examples of secondary discourses. As Gee explains, a discourse is "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network.'"(page 1) Discourses involve a set of values and points of view that must be expressed and acted upon. There are two types of discourses: primary and secondary discourses. The discourse we see here is the secondary discourse, the one that is beyond the family and requires a person to communicate with "non-intimates," as Gee expresses. These discourses range from accessing and practicing with secondary institutions, like schools, states, and workplaces. Mrs. Amelia's teaching the values of the class and teaching the right and accepted interactions between students are examples of her trying to pass down the secondary discourses of her class to her students. Her class has certain values and ways to act and speak. Behavior against her discourses is not accepted in her class.

Axel's behavior and Mrs. Amelia's strategies suggest that honesty and ethical behavior are important educational goals in this classroom. Mrs. Amelia uses a positive reinforcement approach to guide Axel towards more honest behavior and promote self-reflection and accountability. Axel, in turn, appears to be looking for guidance and approval from adults, including you, in his efforts to navigate social situations and develop a sense of right and wrong.

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