

LESSON 6. CRITICAL INCIDENTS IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION

The lesson familiarizes with critical incidents' cases which can be faced by teachers in the classrooms and with the strategies of their avoiding. By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- identify "critical incidents" (unexpected conflict, misunderstanding, emotional reactions) in pedagogical interaction;
- analyze teachers' linguistic and paralinguistic strategies in managing conflict;
- interpret how identity, tone, posture and word choice influence the outcome of an interaction;
- reconstruct alternative teacher responses using discourse-analysis principles.

CONTENT OF THE LESSON:

☆ SPARK:

Trigger Questions (whole class):

1. In your school/university life, did you witness a moment where *one sentence* of the teacher changed the whole atmosphere?
2. What do we call such moments? (→ critical incidents)
3. Watch this 30-second Edpuzzle clip (teacher loses calm; student reacts emotionally).
→ Edpuzzle link (teacher provides): "*The Ron Clark Story – hallway scene*"

Answer embedded questions on Edpuzzle:

- What triggered the incident?
- How did the teacher react verbally?
- What nonverbal signals strengthened/weakened the message?

Short discussion.

☆ INPUT:

1. Read the text "Critical Incidents in Classroom Discourse".

A critical incident is a moment in pedagogical interaction where the emotional, psychological or social dynamic of the classroom shifts suddenly. According to **Tripp (1993)** and **Farrell (2008)**, critical incidents are not always dramatic events; they can be small moments that reveal underlying beliefs, expectations and identities. For future teachers, analysing these moments is essential because they demonstrate how subtle linguistic choices—tone, word selection, pause length, stance—may change the trajectory of a lesson.

Critical incidents often arise when:

- there is a mismatch between teacher expectations and student behaviour;
- the teacher's tone is interpreted emotionally;
- feedback is misunderstood as criticism;
- cultural norms of communication differ;
- students feel challenged or embarrassed.

Inspirational teacher films such as *Mona Lisa Smile*, *The Ron Clark Story*, and *The Great Debaters* show how teachers navigate these incidents. Their responses typically include:

1. **Affective moves** (empathy, reassurance, emotional alignment)
2. **Reframing** (changing negative perception into constructive meaning)
3. **Boundary setting** (firm but respectful tone)

4. **Identity positioning** (“You are more than this behaviour”)
5. **Strategic silence or pause**, which allows emotional de-escalation.

Try to interpret these strategies Transform emotionally tense episodes into opportunities for learning, growth and connection.

2. Reading Comprehension (individual, text-based)

Answer in the written form:

1. What is a critical incident?
2. Why do they matter for teacher education?
3. Which linguistic choices may cause escalation or de-escalation?
4. What strategies do inspirational film teachers use?

3. Watch Critical Incident Scenes (curated extracts) taken from different films and think what strategies are used by communicants and their efficacy for conflicts avoiding.

Scene A — *The Ron Clark Story*

Student (angry): “Why should I listen to you? You don’t know anything about us!”

Ron Clark (calm, low tone): “You’re right. I don’t know everything. But I’m here to learn. And I’m here to help you learn too. We don’t have to fight—we can start again.” (↓ pause)

Scene B — *Mona Lisa Smile*

Student: “Miss Watson, why do you always expect more from us? Isn’t what we do enough?”

Katherine Watson: “Enough for whom? For society? Your parents? Or for *you*? If you feel challenged, it means you are growing. (.) And I will stand with you while you grow.”

Scene C — *To Sir, with Love*

Student: “We don’t need your lectures!”

Thackeray (firm but soft): “Then let’s talk, not lecture. If something bothers you, say it. Respect goes both ways.”

(teacher steps back → gives space)

Scene D — *The Great Debaters*

Student: “Sir, people like us never win. What’s the point?”

Tolson: “We win by speaking. By refusing silence. (↑) And today, right now, you will speak.”

4. Annotation in Google Docs.

Students highlight:

- **Red** → the moment where the incident escalates
- **Green** → the teacher’s de-escalation strategy
- **Blue** → paralinguistic markers (tone, pause, gesture)

Then comment:

- What exactly reduced the tension?
- What might have happened with a different tone?

★FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:

1. Text-Based Comparison (Padlet)

Padlet columns:

1. Escalated incident
2. Teacher's linguistic strategy
3. Teacher's paralinguistic strategy
4. Student's reaction
5. Alternative response students propose

Students add 1–2 posts per film scene.

2. Examine the strategies are important for avoiding critical incident. Write instructions concerning your communicative behavior in the critical incidents.

Teacher identity is constructed in interaction:

- through the voice we use,
- through how we respond to challenge,
- through the stance we take toward students.

In critical moments, teachers choose between:

- becoming authoritarian
- becoming passive
- becoming relational and dialogic.

Inspirational teachers in films typically adopt a *dialogic identity*, characterized by:

- open questions,
- gentle firmness,
- strategic silence,
- acknowledgment of student emotions,
- focus on growth rather than control.

This identity invites students to “return” to dialogue rather than retreat into resistance.

3. Reading → Rewriting Task.

Choose one film scene. Rewrite the teacher's response in **two alternative ways**:

1. **Authoritarian version**
2. **Dialogic version** (more effective)

Reflection (5–6 sentences):

“Which interactional identity works better and why?”

4. Role-play Simulation (Zoom + GoReact)

In breakout rooms:

- Students reenact the film scenes
- Then record their own “teacher version” on GoReact
- Provide peer feedback based on:
 - ✓ tone
 - ✓ pauses
 - ✓ identity positioning
 - ✓ escalation control

☆ASSESSMENT ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Text-Based Critical Incident Analysis.

Teacher gives a NEW transcript of a classroom conflict (short).

Students must:

1. Identify the moment of escalation.
2. Identify teacher's or student's “trigger phrase.”

3. Provide 2 alternative teacher responses using theory.
4. Explain which one is better and why.
5. Describe one **nonverbal strategy** needed (gesture, distance, gaze).

Assessment criteria (1.5 points):

- Rationality (0.5)
- Clarity (0.5)
- Relevance to theory (0.5)

2. Fill in the SAC

No	Key Points	Know	Know not well	Don't know
1	Definition of critical incident			
2	Escalation triggers in discourse			
3	Teacher identity during incidents			
4	Strategies for de-escalation			

Glossary

critical incident – pedagogik muloqot jarayonida kutilmagan holda yuzaga keladigan va sinfdagi emotsiyonal, ijtimoiy yoki kommunikativ muvozanatni o‘zgartiradigan vaziyat.

incident analysis – muloqotdagi muammoli vaziyatni tahlil qilish jarayoni (til, ohang, harakatlar nuqtai nazaridan).

escalation – konflikt yoki keskinlikning kuchayishi, vaziyatning yomonlashuvi.

de-escalation – keskinlikni pasaytirish, muloqotni tinch va konstruktiv yo‘lga qaytarish.

trigger phrase – keskin vaziyatni qo‘zg‘atgan so‘z, ibora yoki nutqiy harakat.

emotional reaction – muloqot ishtirokchisining hissiy javobi (jahdorlik, ranjish, qo‘rquv).

affective move – o‘qituvchi tomonidan qo‘llaniladigan empatiya, qo‘llab-quvvatlash yoki hissiy moslashuvga qaratilgan nutqiy strategiya.

reframing – vaziyat yoki fikrni salbiy talqindan ijobiy yoki konstruktiv talqinga o‘tkazish strategiyasi.

boundary setting – o‘qituvchi tomonidan qat’iy, ammo hurmatga asoslangan chegaralarni belgilash.

identity positioning – muloqotda o‘qituvchi yoki talabaning o‘zini va boshqani qanday “rol”da ko‘rsatishi (masalan, “sen muammo emassan”).

dialogic identity – muloqotga ochiq, hamkorlikka asoslangan o‘qituvchi pozitsiyasi.

authoritarian identity – qat’iy nazorat va buyruqqa asoslangan o‘qituvchi pozitsiyasi.

paralinguistic features – nutqqa hamroh bo‘ladigan tovush xususiyatlari (ohang, balandlik, pauza, tezlik).

tone of voice – ovozning emotsiyonal ohangi (yumshoq, qat’iy, keskin va h.k.).

pause (.) – nutqdagi qisqa sukut, ko‘pincha keskinlikni pasaytirish yoki urg‘u berish uchun ishlataladi.

posture – tananing tutumi, o‘qituvchining jismoniy holati orqali uzatiladigan ma’no.

stance – muloqotdagi munosabat va pozitsiya (himoyalovchi, tanqidiy, qo‘llab-quvvatlovchi).

conflict management – nizoli vaziyatlarni boshqarish va hal qilish strategiyalari majmui.

emotional alignment – o‘qituvchining talabaning hissiy holatini tan olishi va unga moslashuvi.

interactional choice – o‘qituvchining muayyan vaziyatda tanlagan nutqiy yoki noverbal harakati.

learning opportunity – konfliktli vaziyatni o‘rganish va rivojlanish imkoniyatiga aylantirish.

For Reading / Viewing

1. **Tripp, D. (1993).** *Critical Incidents in Teaching: Developing Professional Judgement.* London: Routledge.
→ critical incident tushunchasining klassik manbasi.
2. **Farrell, T. S. C. (2008).** Reflective practice in language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 42(3), 513–522.
→ critical incidents va refleksiya bog‘liqligi.
3. **Farrell, T. S. C. (2019).** *Professional Development through Reflective Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
→ o‘qituvchi identifikatsiyasi va reflektiv tahlil.
4. **Walsh, S. (2011).** *Exploring Classroom Discourse: Language in Action.* London: Routledge.
→ pedagogik diskurs, konflikt va interaksional tanlovlari.
5. **Seedhouse, P. (2004).** *The Interactional Architecture of the Language Classroom.* Oxford: Blackwell.
→ muloqotdagi buzilishlar va ularning oqibatlari.

Film-based pedagogical interaction (analiz uchun)

8. **The Ron Clark Story** (2006). Directed by R. Johnson.
9. **Mona Lisa Smile** (2003). Directed by M. Newell.
10. **To Sir, with Love** (1967). Directed by J. Clavell.
11. **The Great Debaters** (2007). Directed by D. Washington.

Qo‘shimcha video resurslar

12. **Edutopia.** Managing Classroom Conflict with Empathy. (edutopia.org)
13. **TED Talk:** Brené Brown – *The Power of Vulnerability.* (ted.com)
14. **Teaching Channel:** Responding to Challenging Student Behaviour. (teachingchannel.com)