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**TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF DISRUPTIVE STUDENT  
BEHAVIORS IN UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY CLASSES**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to identify the disruptive student behaviours observed by teachers of English in university preparatory classrooms. The teachers' perceptions on students' behaviours described as "disruptive" and common disruptive student behaviours in the classrooms were investigated. This study seeks answers for the following questions: How do teachers of English in university preparatory classrooms perceive disruptive student behaviours? What types of disruptive student behaviour do the teachers of English encounter in their classrooms? What are common disruptive behaviours observed by teachers of English in university preparatory classrooms? Is there any significant relationship between the teachers' gender, age, experience, the department they graduated from, the number of classes they teach and the number of students they have in their classrooms and their perceptions to disruptive student behaviour? This research was a descriptive study. 40 teachers of English in preparatory classes of Çukurova University School of Foreign Languages participated in this study. The data was collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In the first part, there were questions about the participants' gender, age, experience, the department they graduated from, the number of classes they teach and the number of students they have in their classrooms. In the second part, the perceptions of English language teachers in university preparatory classrooms of the disruptive student behaviours were investigated. The results indicated that "Using a mobile telephone during the lesson", Arguing or disagreeing with the teacher or other pupils", "Cheeky or rude remarks or replies to the teacher" "Cheating", "Not studying regularly" were common disruptive student behaviours. Besides, "Goofing off" was the most commonly encountered misbehaviour type. Lastly, there was a significant relationship between the teachers' gender, age, teaching experience, the number of classes they teach and the number of students they have in their classrooms and their perceptions of disruptive student behaviour. However, there was no significant relationship between the department the teachers graduated from and their perceptions of misbehaviour.

**Keywords:** Classroom Management, Disruptive Student Behaviour

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**ÖĞRETMENLERİN ÜNİVERSİTE HAZIRLIK SINIFLARINDAKİ İSTENMEYEN  
ÖĞRENCİ DAVRANIŞLARINI ALGILARI**

**ÖZET**

Bu çalışmanın amacı, üniversite hazırlık sınıflarındaki İngilizce öğretmenleri tarafından gözlenen istenmeyen öğrenci davranışlarını belirlemektir. Öğretmenlerin, “istenmeyen” olarak tanımlanan öğrenci davranışlarını algıları ve sınıflarındaki yaygın istenmeyen öğrenci davranışları araştırılmıştır. Bu çalışma şu sorulara cevap aramaktadır: Üniversite hazırlık sınıflarındaki İngilizce öğretmenleri istenmeyen öğrenci davranışlarını nasıl algılamaktadır? İngilizce öğretmenleri sınıflarında ne tür istenmeyen öğrenci davranışlarıyla karşılaşmaktadır? Üniversite hazırlık sınıflarındaki İngilizce öğretmenleri tarafından yaygın olarak gözlenen istenmeyen öğrenci davranışları nelerdir? Öğretmenlerin cinsiyeti, yaşı, deneyimi, mezun oldukları bölüm, ders verdikleri sınıf sayısı ve sınıflardaki öğrenci sayısı ile sınıf içi istenmeyen davranışları algıları arasında anlamlı bir ilişki var mıdır? Bu araştırma, tanımlayıcı bir çalışmadır. Bu çalışmaya, Çukurova Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksek Okulu Hazırlık sınıflarında görev yapan 40 adet İngilizce öğretmeni katılmıştır. Veriler bir anket yoluyla toplanmıştır. Anket iki bölümden oluşmaktadır. Birinci kısımda, katılımcıların cinsiyeti, yaşı, deneyimi, mezun oldukları bölüm, ders verdikleri sınıf sayısı ve sınıflardaki öğrenci sayısı hakkında sorular vardı. İkinci kısımda ise üniversite hazırlık sınıflarındaki İngilizce öğretmenlerinin sınıflarındaki istenmeyen davranışlar hakkındaki algıları araştırıldı. Sonuçlara göre, “ders esnasında cep telefonu kullanmak”, “sınıftaki diğer öğrencilerle ya da öğretmenle fikir ayrılığı yaşamak ya da tartışmak”, “öğrenmene karşı arsızca ya da kaba sözler ya da cevaplar söylemek”, “kopya çekmek”, “düzenli olarak ders çalışmamak” yaygın olarak meydana gelen sınıf içi istenmeyen davranışlardı. Ayrıca, “derslerden kaytarma” en yaygın olarak karşılaşılan istenmeyen davranış türüydü. Son olarak, öğretmenlerin cinsiyeti, yaşı, deneyimi, ders verdikleri sınıf sayısı, sınıflardaki öğrenci sayısı ile sınıf içi istenmeyen davranışları algıları arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulundu. Buna rağmen, öğretmenlerin mezun oldukları bölüm ile sınıf içi istenmeyen davranışları algıları arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunamadı.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sınıf Yönetimi, İstenmeyen Öğrenci Davranışı

**1. Introduction**

Classroom management is the process of handling the business of the classroom. In teaching and learning process at school, it stands at a position of great importance. So, it will be essential to underline some definitions of classroom management to understand it profoundly.

The term classroom management refers to the actions and strategies teachers use to maintain order in classrooms (Doyle, 1986). Similarly, Brophy and Evertson (1976, cited in Atıcı, 1999) describe classroom management as “planning and conducting activities in an orderly fashion: keeping students actively engaged in lessons and seatwork activities; and minimizing disruptions and discipline problems” (p. 51). “Classroom management constitutes the provisions and procedures necessary to establish and maintain an environment in which instruction and learning can occur.” (Duke, cited in Wolfgang & Glickman, 1986, p. 300). And, it also involves the establishment and maintenance of the classroom environment so that educational objectives can be achieved (Savage & Savage, 2010).

One of the greatest difficulties for any teacher is to keep effective classroom management but this is a challenging job because there are misbehaving students in every classroom and dealing with these disruptive students is not easy. Moreover, disruptive behaviour is a problem in many of today’s English classrooms and sometimes teaching English to our students can be a frustrating and stressful experience. Levin and Nolan (1991) describe

disruptive behaviours as behaviours that interfere with teaching, interfere with the rights of others to learn and are psychologically or physically unsafe. Burden (1995) defines misbehaviour as any pupil behaviour that is perceived by the teacher to compete with or threaten the academic actions at a particular moment and creates disruptions in the flow of classroom activities.

Misbehaviour, as Doyle (1986) defines, “is any action by one or more students that threatens to disrupt the activity flow or pull the class toward a program of action that threatens the safety of the group or violates norm of appropriate classroom behaviour held by the teacher, the students, or the school's staff” (p. 396).

For instructors, lecturers and teachers, it is important to start with some clarification of what types of behaviour are likely to be disruptive; and to understand what can cause such behaviour, next to create solutions to the problem. The research show disruption can be variable from annoying behaviours such as coming late for class or chatting with another pupil within the lesson to serious behaviours like stealing or swearing. Any student interfering with the learning process of others is being disruptive and it is the responsibility of the teacher to cope with this.

To develop and maintain an effective learning atmosphere, it is vital to set the rules for the classroom. But some students ignore the rules and reflect misbehaviour. There are lots of reasons for these misbehaviours. Educators argue that most of the disruptive behaviours result from the students' family and social environment. Some students arrive at the school with family problems and this causes misbehaviour; and some students misbehave on account of school experiences and circumstances (Başar, 1997; Edwards, 1993).

In this respect, there are certain factors outside and inside the school, which cause disruptive behaviour. The things the teachers are expected to do are to analyse these factors, try to understand the reasons of disruptive behaviours find solutions for these kinds of behaviours and lastly keep an effective classroom management.

Misbehaviour emerges because the students find ‘acting out’ more interesting than an ordinary lesson or more rewarding than another failure experience. The students also misbehave when they do not take part in the learning activity, do not understand the task or cannot get assistance when needed. To prevent disruptive behaviours, teachers are supposed to know how to deal with classroom disruptions.

Nilson (1998) indicates that, “disruptive students are in every classroom so teachers are supposed to omit these behaviours from the classroom in order to maintain an effective classroom management” (p. 4). In this context, Başar (1997) points out that the key for handling disruptive behaviour is to know its reasons. If reasons are known, effective solutions can be found for managing these disruptive behaviours.

In Başar's opinion, we cannot find solutions to the disruptive behaviours if we do not know the reasons. In accordance with Başar's (1997) opinions concerning the relationship between the disruptive behaviours and their reasons, Curwin and Mendler (1998) state that the teachers can find solutions to the disruptive behaviours if they know the reasons of these

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behaviours. Therefore, analysing the reasons of the disruptive behaviours is very important for heading them off.

## **2. Method**

This study aimed to identify the English language teachers' perceptions of disruptive student behaviours in their classrooms and to determine common disruptive student behaviours in these classrooms. And it also investigated the relationship between teachers' gender, age, experience, the number of classes they teach, the number of students in their classrooms, the department that the teachers graduated from and their perceptions to disruptive student behaviours.

## **3. Participants**

The participants were 40 EFL instructors working in School of Foreign Languages (SFL) preparatory classrooms at Çukurova University, Adana in the 2012 -2013 Academic Year. The convenience sampling method, a group of individuals who (conveniently) are available for study' (Fraenkal & Wallen, 2012, p.99), was used to select the participants.

### **3.1. Data Collection Instruments**

#### **3.1.1. Questionnaire**

The data was collected from SFL preparatory classrooms in Çukurova University Adana through a questionnaire adapted from Kyriacou et al. (2007) and Sevgen (2010).

### **3.2. Data analysis**

Mann Whitney U Test and Kruskal Wallis were applied to find out the relationships between gender, age, and the department the participants graduated from, experience, the number of classes participants teach, the number of students they have in their classes and perceptions of disruptive student behaviours. The results of demographic information were given in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number</b>
Female	35
Male	5
<b>Age</b>	
20-24	0
25-29	9
30-34	7
35-39	12
40+	12

<b>Teaching Experience</b>	
0-4 years	2
5-9 years	10
10-14 years	11
15-19 years	7
20+ years	10
<b>The Number of Classes Teachers Teach</b>	
1 class	5
2 classes	19
3 classes	12
4+ classes	4
<b>The Number of Students Teachers Have in Their Classrooms</b>	
24 or less	13
25-35	27
35-44	0
45-54	0
55-64	0
<b>The Department Teachers Graduated From</b>	
ELT (English Language Teaching)	22
English Language and Literature	6
Missing	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

The first 18 disruptive student behaviours in the questionnaire were classified as class disruptions. Table 2 indicates the frequencies, the percentages and mean scores of these disruptive student behaviours.

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**Table 2. Teachers' Perception of Class Disruptions**

No	Disruptive Student Behaviour	Never		Sometimes		Often		Always		Mean
		<i>f</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>P</i>	
4	Using a mobile telephone during the lesson.	1	2,5	11	27,5	7	17,5	21	52,5	3,20
7	Talking about something apart from the lesson.	0	0	15	37,5	22	55	3	7,5	2,70
12	Joking during the lesson.	1	2,5	19	47,5	13	32,5	7	17,5	2,65
1	Talking out of turn (e.g. calling out, interrupting, inappropriate remarks or distracting chatter during the lesson).	1	2,5	18	45	17	42,5	4	10	2,60
3	Making unnecessary noise (e.g. by scraping the chair, banging objects or other noisy behaviour).	2	5	20	50	13	32,5	5	12,5	2,53
2	Interrupting other pupils (e.g. by distracting them from work).	3	7,5	20	50	17	42,5	0	0	2,35
5	Calling names of other pupils during the lesson.	3	7,5	22	55	14	35	1	2,5	2,33
8	Disrupting the on going instruction in the class.	3	7,5	24	60	13	32,5	0	0	2,25
10	Laughing disorderly during the lesson.	6	15	24	60	6	15	4	10	2,20
6	Complaining of other pupils.	5	12,5	22	55	1	2,5	12	30	2,18
18	Listening to music during the lesson.	9	22,5	19	47,5	9	22,5	3	7,5	2,15
15	Eating or drinking something during the lesson.	10	25	20	50	5	12,5	5	12,5	2,13
9	Sending a note to other pupils.	15	37,5	20	50	4	10	1	2,5	1,78
17	Whistling.	23	57,5	7	17,5	8	20	2	5	1,73
11	Touching other pupils during the lesson.	20	50	1	2,5	14	35	5	12,5	1,67

14	Leaving the classroom during the lesson.	21	52,5	17	42,5	1	2,5	1	2,5	1,55
13	Asking permission continuously for the toilet.	21	52,5	18	45	1	2,5	0	0	1,50
16	Singing a song.	29	72,5	7	17,5	4	10	0	0	1,38
<b>Total Average Mean</b>										<b>2,16</b>

Note:  $f$ = frequency;  $P$ = percentage.

In the questionnaire results of the disruptive student behaviours classified as class disruptions, disruptive behaviour 4, *using a mobile telephone during the lesson* was the most frequently faced behaviour with a mean score of 3.20. For this misbehaviour, 21 of the teachers believed that their students always used a mobile phone during the lesson. 7 of the teachers stated that their students often used a mobile phone, 11 teachers thought that their students sometimes used a mobile phone during the lesson. Only one of the teachers thought that her students never used a mobile phone during the lesson. As it is seen in the Table 2, *using a mobile phone during the lesson* was the most frequently encountered disruptive student behaviour in the university preparatory classrooms. According to previous studies, the item *using a mobile phone during the lesson* has become an increasing problem in many countries. In a similar study by Roland (2002), *mobile phone usage in the classroom* was reported as a common misbehaviour seen in Norwegian schools. In some other studies, the use of mobile phones had been related to concerns about pupils sending abusive text-messages as a rising form of bullying (Stephens, Kyriacou, and Tonnessen 2005).

The teachers reported that disruptive student behaviour *talking about something apart from the lesson* was the second problem behaviour among class disruptions (mean score=2.70). 55% of the teachers thought that problem behaviour *talking about something apart from the lesson* often took place, 37.5% of the teachers believed that their students sometimes talked about something not related to the lesson, 3% of the teachers believed that this disruptive behaviour always took place, none of the teachers believed that misbehaviour never took place in their classroom.

Misbehaviour 12 *joking during the lesson* was the third frequently encountered misbehaviour with a mean score of 2.65. 19 teachers thought that their students sometimes joked during the lesson, 13 teachers thought that their students often joked and 7 teachers believed that their students always joked during the lesson. Only one teacher reported that their students never joked during the lesson.

Then *talking out of turn (e.g. calling out, interrupting, inappropriate remarks or distracting chatter during the lesson)* comes with a mean score of 2.60. 45% of the teachers believed that this misbehaviour sometimes occurred, 42.5% of the teachers thought that their students often talked out of turn, 10% of the teachers believed this misbehaviour always occurred and again 2.5% of the teachers believed that this misbehaviour never occurred. In a similar manner, *talking out of turn* was determined as the most commonly faced disruptive student behaviour in Turkish Schools (Akkök, Askar, & Sucuoglu, 1995; Altinel, 2006).

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Moreover, McNamara (1987) found during a survey that *inappropriate talking* was the most frequent disruptive behaviour.

The teachers reported that disruptive student behaviour *making unnecessary noise (e.g. by scraping the chair, banging objects or other noisy behaviour)* was the sixth behaviour among class disruptions with a mean score of 2.53. 20 teachers reported that this misbehaviour sometimes took place in their classes, 13 teachers reported that their students often made unnecessary noise, 5 teachers reported that their students always exhibited this behaviour and 2 teachers reported that their students never made unnecessary noise in the classroom.

Then misbehaviour 2 comes with a mean score of 2.35 and it was about *interrupting other pupils (e.g. by distracting them from work)*. 50% of the teachers believed that their students sometimes interrupted other pupils. 42.5% of the teachers thought that their students often interrupted other pupils during the lesson, 7.5 % of the teachers thought that their students never interrupted other students and none of the teachers thought that this misbehaviour always occurred in their classroom.

*Calling names of his/her friends during the lesson* had a mean score of 2.33. 55% of the teachers thought that this disruptive behaviour occurred, 35% of the teachers believed that their students often called names of their friends during the lesson, 2.5% of the teachers believed that misbehaviour 5 always occurred, 7.5% of the teachers believed that misbehaviour 5 never occurred.

*Disrupting the on-going instruction in the class* has a mean score of 2.25. 24 of the teachers indicated that this problem behaviour sometimes took place, 13 of the teachers stated that their students often disrupted the on-going instruction in the class, 3 of teachers pointed out that this misbehaviour never took place and none of the teachers pointed out that misbehaviour *disrupting the on-going instruction in the class* always occurred. The students sometimes seek for fun during the lesson and they distort the peaceful atmosphere of the classroom activities. This kind of misbehaviour was seen in classrooms commonly and in line with the literature. Robertson (2003) state that the students can search for excitement by interfering with the progress of the lesson.

*Laughing disorderly during the lesson* is the problem behaviour with a mean score of 2.20. 60% of the teachers thought that their students sometimes laughed disorderly during the lesson, 15% of the teachers believed that their students often laughed, 6% of the teachers believed that their students never laughed disorderly. Only 4% of the teachers believed that their students always laughed disorderly during the lesson.

Then misbehaviour 6 comes with a mean score of 2.18 and it was about *complaining of other pupils*. 22 of the teachers thought that this misbehaviour sometimes occurred, 12 of the teachers thought that their students always complained, 5 of the teachers thought that their students never complained of their friends. Only one of the teachers thought that their students often complained in the classroom.

*Listening to music during the lesson* was another student misbehaviour and its' mean score was 2.15. According to the results, 19 of the teachers reported that their students sometimes listened to music during the lesson, 9 of the teachers reported that their students

often listened to music, again 9 of the teachers reported that their students never listened to music and 3 of the teachers thought that their students often listened to music during the lesson.

Misbehaviour 15 was *eating or drinking in the classroom* has with a mean score of 2.13. %50 of teachers believed that their students sometimes ate or drank something in the classroom, %12.5 of the teachers believed that their students often ate or drank. Again %12.5 of the teachers believed that their students always ate or drank. And, %10 of teachers thought that their students never ate or drank something in the classroom.

For misbehaviour 9 *sending a note to other pupils*, 20 of teachers determined that their students sometimes exhibited this misbehaviour, and 15 of the teachers determined that their students always sent a note, 4 of the teachers believed that their students often sent a note and only one of the teachers believed that their students always sent a note to other students.

Then misbehaviour 17, *whistling*, comes with a mean score of 1.73. According to the results, 57,5% of the teachers reported that their students always whistled, 20% of the teachers believed that their students often whistled, %17,5 of the teachers believed that their students sometimes whistled in the classroom and %5 of the teachers reported that their students always whistled.

*Touching other pupils during the lesson* has a mean score of 1.67. 20 of the teachers believed that this problem behaviour never took place, 14 of the teachers believed that their students often touched other pupils during the lesson, 5 of teachers stated that this misbehaviour always took place and only one teacher indicated that this misbehaviour sometimes occurred. In a study by Tate (2006), it was pointed out that pupils sometimes sat for long periods of time without any active engagement, they got bored, they did not know what to do or they would like to inject a little excitement into their day so they randomly hit a classmate.

Misbehaviour 14 was about *leaving the classroom during the lesson* and its mean score was 1.55. 52.5% of the teachers believed that their students never left the classroom during the lesson, 42.5% of the teachers believed that their students sometimes left the classroom, %2.5 of the teachers believed that their students often left the classroom and again %2.5 of the teachers thought that their students always left the classroom during the lesson.

*Asking permission continuously for the toilet* was the second least frequently encountered misbehaviour in the classroom and its mean score was 1.50. 21 of the teachers believed that their students never asked permission continuously for the toilet, 18 of the teachers believed that their students sometimes exhibited this misbehaviour and only one of the teachers thought that their students often asked permission continuously for the toilet. As it is seen in Table 2, this misbehaviour was not common among university preparatory students.

*Singing a song* was the least frequently encountered student misbehaviour (mean score=1.38). For this disruptive behaviour, %72.5 teachers thought that their students never sang a song during the lesson, %17,5 of the teachers thought that their students sometimes sang a song and %10 of teachers thought that their students often sang a song.

#### **4. Discussion**

This study was conducted to identify English language teachers' perceptions of disruptive student behaviours, common types of misbehaviours they encountered in order to determine common disruptive student behaviours in the classrooms. And this survey also aimed to investigate the relationship between teachers' gender, age, the department they graduated from, years of teaching experience, the number of classes they teach, the number of students in their classrooms, and the teachers' perceptions of disruptive student behaviours.

When the results were evaluated the following findings were gained:

Among *Class disruptions*, using a mobile telephone during the lesson was the most the most frequently encountered disruptive student behaviour. More than half of the participants reported that their students used a mobile phone during the lesson. *Talking about something apart from the lesson, joking during the lesson, talking out of turn (e.g. calling out, interrupting, inappropriate remarks or distracting chatter during the lesson), making unnecessary noise (e.g. by scraping the chair, banging objects or other noisy behaviour)* were the other misbehaviours which were seen frequently among *class disruptions*. *Singing a song* was the least common misbehaviour among *class disruptions*. *Asking for permission continuously for the toilet, leaving the classroom during the lesson and touching other pupils during the lesson* were the other disruptive behaviours faced least among *class disruptions* type.

#### **5. Implications**

Classroom management is a significant term in learning and teaching. It constitutes a major challenge for teachers who are expected to hinder or address students' disruptive behaviours and reduce misbehaviour in their classrooms.

Furthermore, misbehaviour problems appear as one of the most common classroom management issues for teachers and the present study was conducted to describe English language teachers' perceptions of disruptive student behaviours, common types of misbehaviours they encountered, determine common disruptive student behaviours in the classrooms. And this study also aimed to investigate the relationship between teachers' gender, age, the department they graduated from, experience, the number of classes they teach, the number of students in their classrooms, and the teachers' perceptions of disruptive student behaviours

By the help of the present study, English language teachers in university preparatory classes will be able to gain some insights into the situations concerning disruptive student behaviours. Moreover, they will be able to determine the disruptive behaviours, which are commonly observed in English language classrooms and might be able to overcome these kinds of misbehaviours as they will have the advantage of realizing the misbehaviours in advance while managing their classes.

#### **6. Suggestions**

The present study was carried out at SFL of Çukurova University, Adana and a total of 40 teachers of English participated in this study. In a similar study, the number of the participants may be increased for providing larger insights. Besides, the future studies may be

carried out in private universities for comparing the differences between state and private schools.

As for data collection tools, interviews with teachers and students may be conducted to triangulate the data. In addition, classroom observations may be helpful to gain a deeper understanding regarding the causes of the disruptive behaviours and the teachers' classroom management strategies.

The current study described the issue from the teachers' perspectives. In further studies, students' and parents' perceptions may also be investigated in order to reach a comprehensive understanding of the issues related to students' misbehaviour.

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