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A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXAM TECHNIQUES AND GENDER OF THE LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN READING TESTS OF IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The present article probes into the range of students' reaction towards the different test tasks based on the gender of these EFL students. The research was conducted on three male and female classes. As for the qualitative module of the research questionnaires were given away to the instructors who participated in the test. Once the research was conducted the researcher along with the help of a statistician started studying the accumulated results. A variety of behaviors were observed on the part of the language learners in their respective classes. The results indicated that while distracting, abusive and activity-related misbehaviors were more common in male EFL classes, distracting, rule-related and assessment-related misbehaviors were more prevalent in female classes. A significant difference was also found in the amount of discipline problems between male and female learners regarding the misbehavior types of talking out of turn, distracting noise, cheeky or impertinent remarks, and Iranian EFL forgetting learning materials in which male EFL classes outnumbered female classes.

Keywords: *Exam Reaction, Gender Differences, Classroom Management, Classroom, Misbehavior, EFL Classes*

INTRODUCTION

The comportment of the students toward different aspects of the arena of language teaching and it has always been considered as one of the major challenges to the teaching profession and has never lost its importance in classroom settings. While this fact might have always been intuitionally acknowledged by most teachers and school administrators, the results of some authoritative investigations on the current educational issues have approved it. According to a highly-referenced Gallup Poll, discipline has been identified as the second major problem faced by American schools, after gang-related violence (Elam and Rose, 1995; Elam *et al.*, 1996). The Elton Report has also investigated the issue of student misbehavior in British schools and the results demonstrated that six out of ten teachers who participated in the study described one or more of their classes as difficult to deal with (DES, 1989).

The role of a "controlled classroom environment" is so significant that Walters and Frei (2007) consider it "essential for effective learning, good teacher-pupil relationships, and peer collaboration" (p.7). Despite the appreciation of the significance of dealing with student misbehavior by EFL teachers, it is quite surprising that EFL researchers are still reluctant to conduct studies on the issue. It seems that most of the current literature is too much concerned about studying the nature of language learning, and providing quantitative data to support the positive effects of some approaches that it has lost track of what EFL teachers are really facing in their classes on a daily basis.

This mutual misunderstanding between theorists and language teachers has been addressed by some scholars in the realm of language teaching (Brown, 2000). There is such a strong relationship between the two concepts of 'classroom management' and 'classroom discipline' that in many textbooks and related literature they are sometimes used interchangeably.

According to Doyle (1986), classroom management refers to then actions and strategies which teachers use to maintain order in the classroom. While classroom management refers to how things are generally organized and carried out in the class, classroom discipline is the specific treatment of student behavior. Burden (1995) defines classroom discipline as the procedure of responding to student misbehavior in order to restore classroom's order.

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Buck (1992) describes discipline as a system made up of preventive and intervention strategies designed to manage rather than control student behavior. There is also a variety of views with regard to student misbehavior. Chastain (1988) asserts “any study behavior that disrupts the learning process can be considered as a discipline problem” (p. 158). Burden (1995) argues that any student behavior which is recognized by teacher as a challenge or threat to the academic actions at a particular moment and involves disruption in the process of classroom activities can be categorized as misbehavior. Following the already-mentioned facts he asserts that teachers must first identify all kinds of misbehaviors they are facing in their classroom before they build effective and sufficient classroom management plans and strategies. Doyle (1986) asserts that there is some inconsistency in the way teachers react to quite similar actions which are performed by different students at different times and contexts which reminds us of the fact that any student behavior, no matter it is desired or not, must be considered in context.

Other scholars of the field Gage and Berliner (1975) divide behavioral problems into two categories: too much undesirable behaviors and too little desirable behaviors. The first category Too much undesirable behaviors include behaviors such as aggression, threatening teacher’s authority, and attention seeking.

On the other side of the pole, too little desirable behaviors including failure to do assignments on time, avoiding classroom activities, not following classroom or school rules, and refusing to be a part of the learning group may also pose a threat to classroom overall order and discipline.

This study attempts to provide a detailed picture of student misbehaviors in Iranian male and female EFL classes, and to help both practicing and prospective EFL teachers understand what kinds of behavioral problems they might face in their EFL classes, that in turn might help them to come up with a variety of effective measures to tackle such problems. The current study investigates these research questions:

Research Questions

- 1) Is there any difference in the types of reaction of the students toward the test and the behavior between male learners and female learners in EFL classes?
- 2) Is there any significant difference in the amount of misbehaviors between male and female pupils in EFL classes?

The Review of Previous Literature

Today, educational institutes and policy makers are showing a greater interest in classroom discipline and misbehavior as student behavior becomes more erratic and complicated in schools. A growing number of studies prove the fact that discipline problems and student misbehaviors are counted as a serious challenge which our teachers face in their career, and in many cases, it has contributed to the resignation of a significant proportion of teachers from their profession.

In a study conducted in England with 198 teachers from 32 elementary schools, Wheldall and Merrett (1988) found out that talking without permission and disturbing others were among the 10 most frequently observed misbehaviors. Another striking finding of this study was the fact that the rest of the ten misbehaviors were not even considered as misbehavior by 10 % of the teachers.

One of the most significant research conducted related to student misbehavior was conducted by Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office to obtain a better picture of different kinds of classroom misbehaviors in England, and the findings were published in one of the most highly referenced works on discipline called ‘The Elton Report’ (DES, 1989). The study was done in two related ways. The first was to conduct a national survey in which questionnaires were sent to 3500 teachers in 220 primary schools and 250 elementary schools. In the questionnaires, teachers were asked to report on different student misbehaviors which they had observed in their classroom during the previous week. Meanwhile, 100 teachers in 10 secondary schools who had not participated in the questionnaire were interviewed.

Based on the teachers’ reports, in the vast majority of primary and secondary classrooms, the flow of teaching was disrupted by minor discipline problems such as students ‘talking out of turn’, ‘hindering other pupils’, ‘idleness or work avoidance’, and ‘making unnecessary noise’. Lasley *et al.*, (1989), in another study on classroom discipline, observed six secondary school teachers, and investigated how much they were able to control student misbehavior. It was found out those teachers who were known as effective classroom managers encountered less discipline problems in their classrooms than poor

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classroom managers, and proved to be most successful at controlling misbehavior once it emerged in their classes.

Some studies also have looked into the perception of the students of the concept of misbehavior and student reaction. Bru *et al.*, (2002) conducted a study on the relationship between students' self-reported misbehavior and their perceptions of classroom management. The results showed that student misbehavior and reaction seemed to be only fairly related to general differences in the perception of classroom management. Another striking finding of this study was that only low level misbehaviors were generally observed including talking without permission, bothering the other students, making noise, and other disruptive behaviors such as fighting, stealing, and destroying objects were rarely encountered.

Research on appropriate treatment of discipline problems has also been of interest for experts in recent decades. Although Wlodkowski (1982) and some other authorities give serious warnings about inappropriate application of disciplinary techniques and the overreliance on punishment, research does not categorically reject the use of disciplinary techniques. On the contrary, the research strongly advocates a balanced approach to disciplinary intervention which employs various techniques of controlling student misbehavior. Scott Stage and David Quiroz (1997) conducted a meta-analysis including 99 studies, 200 experimental comparisons, and around 5,000 students. The results demonstrated that, generally speaking, disciplinary interventions caused a decline in disruptive behavior of around 80% of the participants in the analyzed studies. In a study on student misbehavior in EFL classes, Altinel (2006) investigated English teachers' and other teachers' perceptions about misbehaviors, their types and causes in seventh grade classes.

Moreover, the study tried to find out what is the students' perception and interpretation about misbehaviors, their causes, and their teacher's disciplinary intervention. According to the results, misbehaving students' perceptions and interpretations of misbehavior were not quite different from teachers' perceptions of the same topic. While teachers' perceptions of student misbehaviors consisted of such behaviors as 'disturbing the flow of lesson', 'dealing with other things', and 'talking to friends', misbehaving students' perceptions of misbehavior included such behaviors such as 'fighting', 'talking to friends', and 'disturbing the flow of lesson'.

As for the Iranian context, in another study on discipline problems in EFL settings, Rahimi and Hosseini (2012) investigated Iranian EFL teachers' classroom discipline strategies from their students' point of view.

The participants were one thousand and four hundred ninety seven students. They responded to a classroom discipline strategy questionnaire which examined their perceptions of the strategies used by their EFL teachers in order to deal with student misbehaviors in their classrooms. According to the results of this study, Iranian EFL teachers turned out to use recognition/rewarding strategies more often than disciplining their classes. On the other hand, using aggression and punishment were the least common classroom discipline strategies. This study also showed that Iranian female EFL teachers applied strategies such as punishment, discussion, and aggression more frequently than their male counterparts, and public school English teachers were more aggressive than their private school colleagues.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology

The present study was conducted in Shiraz city and most of the patterns used in the study were taken from the status of art research and based on the classification of the Elton Report (DES,1989), an initial list of different types of student misbehaviors was developed. Although most of these various types of disruptive behaviors were extracted from the Elton Report, they were modified and redefined to accommodate the specific characteristics of Iranian high school students. For instance, misuse of cell-phones was intentionally selected as a separate category because of its supposed prevalence among Iranian high school students. Additionally, two school counselors one from a female high school and one from a male one in Shiraz reviewed the initial list of misbehavior types and their comments were also taken into consideration.

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Categories and Types of Discipline Problems in this Study

Once all of the commencing necessary elements were analyzed, sixteen types of discipline problems were defined with adequate examples as a basis for developing the instruments for the study, and they were organized in five general categories of EFL classroom misbehaviors. These categories of discipline problems accompanied with their respective types of student misbehavior are as follows:

A. Distracting Misbehaviors

1. **Talking out of turn:** In class, EFL learners talk out of turn, interrupt teacher or other learners' speaking. Examples:

- a) Answering a question which was asked from another student without teacher's permission.
- b) Speaking in the middle of teachers' talks.

2. **Distracting noise:** In class, EFL learners make noises either by talking to other learners or by using the objects around them which hinders lesson progress. Examples: a) talking to another learner about an irrelevant subject during classroom discussion b) dropping a book on the floor deliberately

3. **Cheeky or impertinent remarks:** In class, EFL learners make statements or raise topics which are either not appropriate to be discussed in the class or unrelated to the topic of lesson.

Examples: a) asking a question about teacher's personal life b) asking a question regarding sports while the class is discussing healthcare.

4. **Silent distraction:** In class, EFL learners silently distract teacher and other learners without making any noise and through facial expression or body language. Examples:

- a) Showing a picture to another learner that is not related to the lesson b) making a rude gesture at another student.

B. Activity-related Misbehaviors

1. **Idleness or individual work avoidance:** In class, EFL learners do not take part or show interest in individual activities. Examples:

- a) Daydreaming while other learners are doing a true-false exercise. b) being quiet while teacher raises a question.

2. **Pair work or group work avoidance:** In class, EFL learners are not involved during pair work or group work. Examples: a) being quiet while other group members are discussing a topic b) frequently talking in mother tongue during a pair-work.

3. **Forgetting learning materials:** EFL Learners do not bring their textbooks, notebooks or other materials and objects they need to practice English in the class. Examples: a) A learner is sharing a textbook with another learner b) A learner borrows a pencil from another student during an exercise.

C. Abusive Misbehaviors

1. **Verbal abuse of other students:** In class, EFL learners verbally abuse other learners.

Examples: a) imitating a learner's accent b) expressing a swearword at another student

2. **Verbal abuse of teacher:** In class, EFL learners verbally abuse the teacher. Examples: a) imitating teacher's accent b) expressing a swearword at teacher c

3. **Physical abuse of other students:** In class, EFL learners physically abuse other learners.

Examples: a) mimicking a learner's movements b) hitting another learner.

4. **Physical abuse of teacher:** In class, learners physically abuse the teacher. Examples: a) mimicking teacher's movements b) hitting the teacher.

D. Rule-related Misbehaviors

1. **Misuse of cell-phones:** In class, learners distract other learners and teacher by using their cell-phones. Examples: a) talking or texting on their cell-phone b) using the Bluetooth to send a picture to another learner during class time

2. **Unpunctuality:** EFL learners do not attend the classes on time, or do not hand in their assignments on time. Examples: a) arriving late at the class b) handing in a writing while it was due last week.

3. **Breaking class or school rules:** In class learners break classroom or school rules.

Examples: a) breaking school's dress code b) drawing on the classroom's wall or seats.

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E. Assessment-related Misbehaviors

1. *Being unprepared for classroom assessment:* EFL learners do not take their classroom assessment seriously or are not prepared for it. Examples: a) expressing an excuse for not being ready for a quiz and asking the teacher to postpone it until next class. b) answering an oral quiz in an amusing way.

2. *Cheating in exams:* Students cheat during their quizzes and exams. Examples:

a) Providing the answer to an oral quiz for another learner either orally or using body language. b) Exchanging pieces of paper during a written exam.

Participants

For the observation part of the study, six Iranian English classes including three male classes and three female classes were selected and observed for one session. The total number of participants during the observations amounted to 151 EFL students, and all of them were studying in the first grade of six different high schools. These high schools were selected based on convenience sampling strategy from the first district of Rasht. All of the participants were high school 1st graders within the age group of 15-16 years and came from a range of different social and language proficiency backgrounds. In order to minimize the effect of observers' presence in the class, teachers were advised not to change their lesson plans during that session.

With regard to the questionnaire part of the study, participants were 40 Iranian English teachers from Shiraz city. Twenty out of these 40 teachers were male EFL teachers experienced in teaching male classes, and the other 20 teachers were female EFL teachers experienced at teaching female classes. All of these English teachers were teaching their respective classes of boys or girls at high schools in Shiraz, and were selected based on convenience sampling strategy from high schools in Shiraz. In order to obtain a more inclusive picture of discipline problems in EFL classes, teachers who participated in the questionnaire were selected from both private and public high schools.

Instruments

Two major data collection instruments were applied in this study in order to investigate the types and amount of misbehaviors in male and female EFL classes:

- 1) Observation
- 2) Questionnaire

Observation

Most of our observational materials used in the study were taken from the works of two well-known researchers Mackey and Gass (2005) in their work. Based on the classification of different kinds of observations by Mackey and Gass (2005), a highly structured type of observation was chosen because of the highly diversified range of classroom misbehaviors and the comparative method of analysis aimed for this investigation. An initial checklist of student misbehaviors was prepared by the researchers after a thorough review of the related literature, especially based on the classification of student misbehaviors in the Elton Report. The primary observation checklist was then revised and modified by two high school student counselors, one for male classes and one for female classes, who had direct contact with the contemporary generation of Iranian high school students and therefore provided the checklist with some more up-to-date behavioral problems.

The final checklist for observation consisted of sixteen types of discipline problems as explained and defined in section 3.1 and can be found in appendix 1. The misbehavior types on both observation checklists were the same because of comparative nature of this study. Two observers both of whom were English language teaching majors were assigned for conducting the observations. One of the observers observed three male classes and the other observer just observed three female classes during the winter semester of 2012 in Rasht high schools, and the observers held two orientation sessions beforehand in order to gain an insight of the different categories on the checklist and the purpose of the observations.

Questionnaire

Once the primary results of the observation were observed, an initial questionnaire of the 16 types of discipline problems was prepared for piloting. The results of the pilot study, which involved 6 Iranian male teachers and 6 Iranian female teachers from Rasht, revealed that 15 types of misbehavior out of the

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initial 16 ones were appropriate to be included in the final questionnaire of this investigation. The misbehavior type labeled as ‘pair work or group work avoidance’, initially available on the checklist, was excluded from the questionnaire because according to the observations and the pilot study, there was almost no pair work or group work activities in the EFL high school classes and it was revealed that such activities are not supported by both EFL teachers and textbooks in Iranian high school classes.

According to classification of questionnaires by Brown and Rodgers (2002), and due to the comparative purposes of this investigation, 15 Likerts scale items corresponding to the 15 target student misbehaviors were written for both male and female classes. In order to find any other type of student misbehavior which might have been overlooked, one more item in the form of an open-response item was added to the questionnaire asking the participants to mention any other type of discipline problem which they might face in their EFL classes aside from the existing types on the questionnaire. The final questionnaire used for male classes is available in appendix 2 (The items on the questionnaire for female classes were the same as the ones used for male classes).

Data Analysis

With regard to the observation section of this study, which was meant to be analyzed through qualitative techniques, descriptive statistics in the form of tables and charts were applied to indicate the amount of discipline problems in each category on the observation checklist in male and female EFL classes, and to figure out the most common types of EFL learner misbehaviors. In addition, for the questionnaire section of this research, more quantitative techniques of inferential statistics were used to compare discipline problems in EFL male and female classes from EFL teachers’ perspective.

After collecting the results of the questionnaire, a Mann-Whitney U test was run to find out whether there is a significant difference between boys’ and girls’ discipline problems in each type of misbehavior. The reason for this choice of inferential statistics was that the data gathered through the questionnaire were of ordinal type, and the two groups of raters were independent. Therefore, non-parametric statistics were selected for data analysis. SPSS software was used for running the test for each of the fifteen types of discipline problems on the questionnaire in order to find any significant difference between male and female EFL learners with regard to that type of misbehavior. All of the data collected through questionnaires were precisely checked in terms of any irregularity or atypical behavior, and no single response was spotted as outlier within the 40 questionnaires rated by the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this paper will be presented in two sections for observations and questionnaires separately.

Observation Results

Distracting Misbehaviors

As figure 4.1 shows, as far as distracting misbehaviors are concerned, male EFL classes were obviously more dominated by misbehavior types of ‘Talking out of turn’ and ‘Cheeky or impertinent remarks’ than female classes.

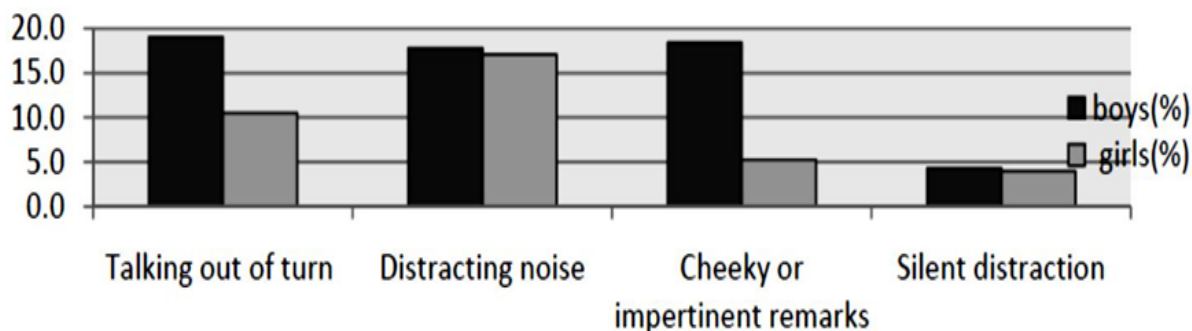


Figure 4.1: Percentage of ‘distracting misbehaviors’ in the observed classes

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However, with regard to two other misbehaviors of ‘Distracting noise’ and ‘Silent distraction’ in this category, the percentages of occurrence are very close to each other in both gender types.

Activity-related Misbehaviors

According to figure 4.2, forgetting learning materials comprises a higher proportion of misbehaviors in male classes compared to female ones. Due to the lack of any pair or group work during observations, the frequency of this misbehavior type was zero in both gender types and therefore, it cannot be seen in the chart.

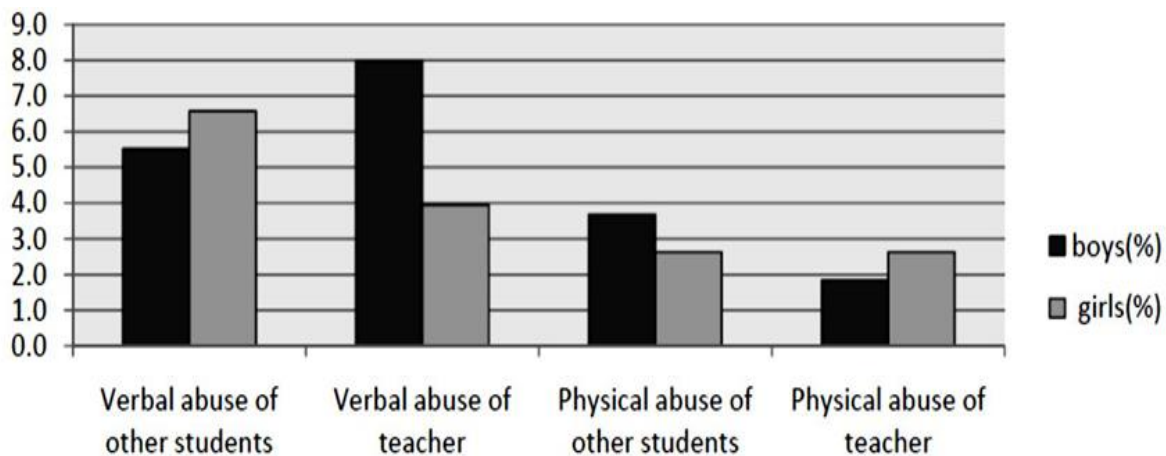


Figure 4.2: Percentage of ‘activity-related misbehaviors’ in the observed classes

Abusive Misbehaviors

As we can see in figure 4.3, while ‘verbal abuse of teacher’ (8%) and ‘Physical abuse of other students’(3.7 %) form a higher proportion of misbehaviors in male classes, it is not the case for misbehavior types of ‘verbal abuse of other students’ and ‘Physical abuse of teacher’ where the higher percentages of these misbehaviors belong to female classes.

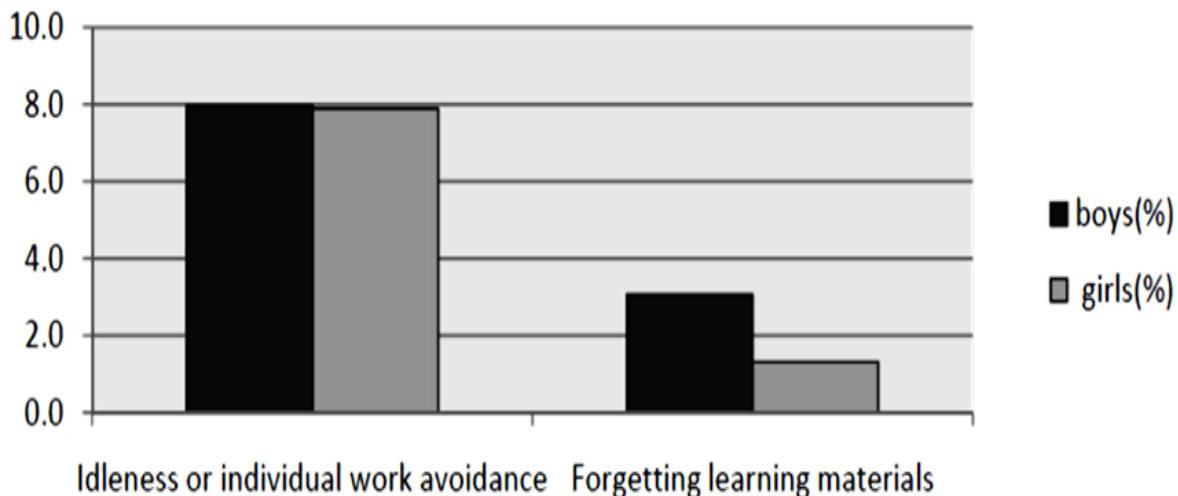


Figure 4.3: Percentage of ‘abusive misbehaviors’ in the observed classes

Rule-related Misbehaviors

From figure 4.4 we can discern the overwhelming superiority of female classes in terms of the breaking classroom or school rules during observations.

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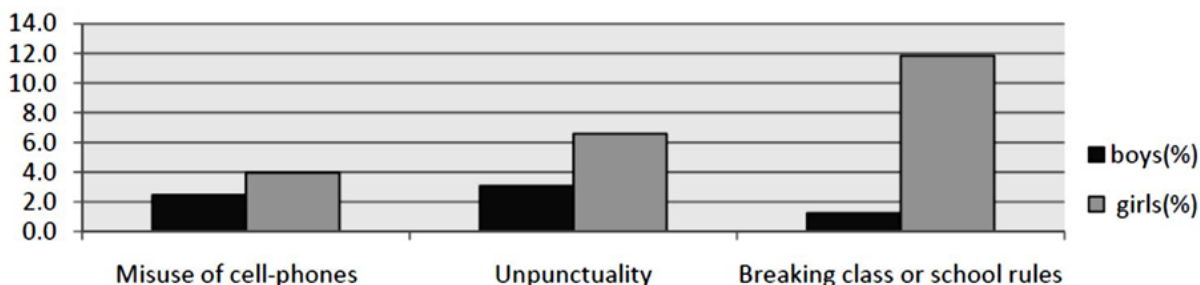


Figure 4.4: Percentage of 'rule-related misbehaviors' in the observed classes

Assessment - related Misbehaviors

According to figure 4.5, being unprepared for classroom assessment comprises 9.2% of total observed misbehaviors in female classes which is much more than its counterpart in male classes (1.8%). Additionally, cheating in exams seems to be a more dominant misbehavior type in female EFL learners compared to male ones with a proportion of 6.6 % to 1.8%.

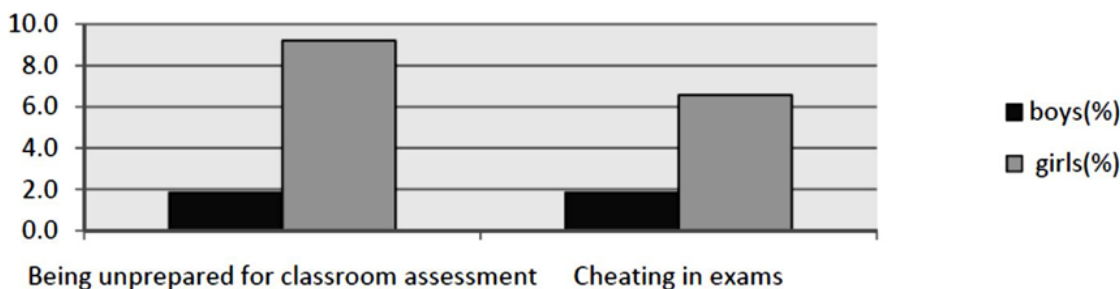


Figure 4.5: Percentage of 'assessment - related misbehaviors' in the observed classes

Questionnaire Results

Distracting Misbehaviors

As Tables 4.1 demonstrates, while all types of distracting misbehaviors were ranked as being more common in male classes by EFL teachers, the only misbehavior type in which Mann-Whitney U test did not show a significant difference (Asymp. Sig. =0.815) was silent distraction where teachers experienced in both male and female classes seemed to demonstrate almost the same mean rank for the misbehavior type in their respective classes.

Table 4.1: Mann-Whitney U statistics of distracting misbehaviors

	Idleness or individual work avoidance	Forgetting learning materials
Mann-Whitney U	164.000	104.500
Z	-.988	-2.617
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.323	.009

Activity-related Misbehaviors

Table 4.2 depicts the results of Mann-Whitney U test for activity-related misbehaviors for male and female classes as rated by teachers participating in the questionnaire part of the study. Regarding both misbehavior types of 'idleness or individual work avoidance' and 'forgetting learning materials' male

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classes were rated by teachers as demonstrating more such misbehaviors than their female counterparts. However, Mann-Whitney U test demonstrated that just for the second misbehavior type this dominance was significant.

Table 4.2: Mann-Whitney U statistics of activity-related misbehaviors

	Talking out of turn	Distracting noise	Cheeky remarks	Silent distraction
Mann-Whitney U	109.500	114.000	86.500	191.500
Z	-2.486	-2.362	-3.120	-.234
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.018	.002	.815

Abusive Misbehaviors

As table 4.3 displays, Mann-Whitney U test results for all misbehavior types within this category failed to indicate a significant difference between male and female classes.

Table 4.3: Mann-Whitney U statistics of abusive misbehaviors

	Verbal abuse of other students	Verbal abuse of teacher	Physical abuse of other students	Physical abuse of teacher
Mann-Whitney U	198.000	158.500	139.000	154.000
Z	-.055	-1.186	-1.705	-1.382
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.956	.236	.088	.167

Rule-related Misbehaviors

The following table shows the statistics for rule-related misbehaviors.

Table 4.4: Mann-Whitney U statistics of rule-related misbehaviors

	Misuse of cell-phones	Unpunctuality	Breaking class or school rules
Mann-Whitney U	166.000	157.500	144.500
Z	-.948	-1.174	-1.540
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.343	.240	.124

Although based on the questionnaires all rule-related misbehaviors turned out to be more common in female classes from teachers’ perspective, however, table 4.4 indicates that as far as rule-related misbehaviors are concerned, this dominance was not significant.

Assessment - related Misbehaviors

As table 4.5 indicates, the difference between male and female classes was only significant for the misbehavior type of ‘cheating in exams’ (Asymp. Sig. =0.033), and we can confidently discern from this piece of data that this misbehavior type is more common in female classes compared to male classes from teachers’ perspective.

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Table 4.5: Mann-Whitney U statistics of assessment-related misbehaviors

	Being unprepared for classroom assessment	Cheating in exams
Mann-Whitney U	157.000	122.500
Z	-1.181	-2.134
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.237	.033

In addition to the results of closed-response items on the questionnaire, the answers that participants provided for the only open-response item provided some helpful insights for the purpose of this study, and some teachers mentioned misbehaviors such as unreasonable excuses to avoid classroom assessments or activities, and the use of first language on purpose within the classroom.

Discussion

Most of the ambiguities and the problematic nuances discussed a priori are addressed based on the results of the observations in this section. It is tried by the researchers to covered most of the demanded areas:

Types of Discipline Problems in Male vs. female EFL Classes

The results show that the male EFL classes are dominated by distracting, abusive and activity-related misbehaviors more than any other category of discipline problems. Among all misbehavior types within this category, talking out of turn and cheeky or impertinent remarks were the most frequent misbehaviors based on both observation and questionnaire results.

After that, the second most common discipline problem in male classes was abusive misbehavior. While observations showed that verbal abuse of teacher was the most frequent abusive misbehavior in this category, EFL teachers believed that physical abuse of other students is the predominant misbehavior in their male classes. Activity-related category of misbehaviors also seems to be quite prevalent in male EFL classes with eleven percentage points. Among the misbehavior types within this category, Idleness or individual work avoidance was identified to be more common in male classes during observations, but EFL teachers rated the misbehavior type of ‘forgetting learning materials’ as more dominant in their classes. However, female classes seem to be more occupied with distracting, rule-related and assessment-related misbehaviors. Among distracting misbehaviors, distracting noise seems to be more prominent in female classes according to observations, but teachers believed that silent distraction was the number one misbehavior within this category. Meanwhile, breaking class or school rules proved to be the most frequent rule-related misbehavior in female classes based on both observation and questionnaire results. Regarding assessment-related misbehaviors, again there was a disagreement between observations and teachers’ point of view. While observations revealed that being unprepared for classroom assessment was the most common discipline problem in this category, teachers rated cheating in exams as the most frequent one.

Amount of Discipline Problems in Male vs. Female EFL Classes

The results show that distracting misbehaviors were more common among male EFL learners than female ones. This higher frequency in male classes was the case for all four misbehavior types within this category, however, ‘talking out of turn’, ‘distracting noise’ and ‘cheeky or impertinent remarks’ were significantly more prominent inside male classes according to the results of the questionnaire. Therefore, we can be quite sure that male learners more frequently talk out of their speaking turn, and make more distracting noises and impertinent remarks than female learners do during class time. According to the observations, activity-related misbehaviors are also more prevalent among male learners than their female counterparts. EFL teachers who participated in the questionnaire also approved this observation. Although, male learners turned out to be much more forgetful about their learning materials, as far as the activity-related misbehavior of ‘Idleness or individual work avoidance’ is concerned, this male superiority was not significant.

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The results also indicate that abusive misbehaviors are more frequently observed in male EFL classes than female classes. However, when it comes to the misbehavior types classified in this category, the supremacy fluctuated between male and female classes in observation and questionnaire results. While female EFL learners more frequently abused other students verbally during observations, teachers believed that verbal abuse of other students was more common in male classes. Meanwhile, although observations show that physical abuse of teacher was more frequent in female classes, the questionnaire turned out to indicate that this abusive misbehavior is more prevalent in male EFL classes. The interesting fact is that despite the correspondence between observation and questionnaire results with regard to the other two abusive misbehaviors of ‘verbal abuse of teacher’ and ‘physical abuse of other students’, we cannot be quite sure that these misbehavior types are more common in male classes due to insignificant figures gained by Mann-Whitney U test. In other terms, the difference between male and female learners is not significant enough in order to generalize any statement to male and female EFL learners regarding abusive misbehaviors. However, the high frequency of verbal abuses of the teacher and other students in some of the observed EFL classes require a separate investigation of the possible causes behind these kinds of misbehaviors.

As far as rule - related misbehaviors are concerned; female learners demonstrated more instances of such misbehaviors than male ones. The results of observations and the questionnaire demonstrate that female EFL learners more frequently misuse their cell-phones during class time, they are not as punctual as male EFL learners, and they break classroom or school rules more frequently than their male counterparts, but the difference between male and female learners regarding these misbehavior types does not mount to significant for any generalization according to Mann-Whitney U test. Although, the effect of factors such as the nature and the mismatch of rules and regulations between Iranian male and female high schools, and the diversity of school policies regarding the issue of cell-phone usage must not be overlooked while we are interpreting the results. Another fact that we should especially take into account concerning rule-related misbehaviors, especially misuse of cell-phones, is that these misbehavior types usually remain concealed from teacher’s eyes, and therefore, it is fairly expectable to see some degree of disagreement between teacher’s perception of discipline problems and the extent to which these problems really exist in the EFL classes.

The results also reveal that assessment-related misbehaviors are by far more frequent in female classes than in male classes. According to the data gathered by direct observations and the questionnaire, female learners are less prepared for their classroom assessments than male ones, and they cheat more frequently during their exams. The difference between male and female learners was only significant regarding the misbehavior type of ‘cheating in exams’. But before rushing into any conclusions, we should bear in mind some cautions regarding assessment-related misbehaviors. First, cheating in exams is practiced hidden from the eyes of teachers by nature, and therefore it is quite normal to expect that teachers’ judgment about the intensity of this problem in their EFL classes become affected by their ignorance.

Secondly, there is always a stereotypical tendency to associate some misbehavior types such as cheating in exams with a specific gender type, in this case with boys, which should not be allowed to affect our interpretation of the results in this study.

Conclusion

The cumulative result of all the discussions and analyses went on so far was the purpose behind this study which is defined as identifying the difference between male and female EFL classes regarding the types of discipline problems. Also, it investigated the difference between male and female EFL classes in terms of the amount of misbehaviors based on direct observations and teachers’ point of view through questionnaires. The findings showed that while male EFL classes were marked by distracting, abusive and activity-related discipline problems, female classes demonstrated more instances of distracting, rule-related and assessment-related misbehaviors. Additionally, a significant difference was found between the amount of discipline problems in male and female learners regarding the misbehavior types of ‘talking out of turn’, ‘distracting noise’, ‘cheeky or impertinent remarks’, and ‘forgetting learning materials’ in which male EFL classes outnumbered female classes. On the other hand, female EFL classes significantly

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surpassed male classes with regard to the misbehavior type of ‘cheating in exams’ according to both observations and teachers’ point of view.

Beside the fact that identifying different kinds of student misbehaviors is essential, understanding EFL teachers’ management and procedures to tackle them requires more investigation because as Marzano *et al.*, (2003) express it eloquently, “chaos becomes the norm” if there are no clear procedures that can guide student behavior in the class (p.1). A striking feature that was revealed during this study was the lack of any pair or group activities in Iranian high school English classes during observations despite the initial expectations about observing misbehaviors associated with these activities. Therefore, we were not able to evaluate the intensity of the misbehavior type of ‘pair work or group work avoidance’ in male and female classes during this study, and further investigation on the issue remains to be done in other EFL learning settings.

The other source of the invaluable information for us were the teachers during this study including unreasonable excuses by EFL learners to avoid classroom assessments, the frequent intentional use of learners’ first language during class time and lack of motivation and interest in language learning by both male and female EFL learners at Iranian high schools due to an intensive curriculum, outdated textbooks, and inappropriate teaching methods. Some of these quite unexplored grounds seem to be justified and need to be further investigated to verify their truthfulness. Additionally, since we investigated the issue of discipline problems in EFL classes just through direct observations and teachers’ perspective in this paper, studying the same issue through EFL learners’ point of view and its possible differences with teachers’ perspective remains to be conducted in further researches

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