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Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Perceptions of and Strategies in Dealing with Misbehavior

(İngilizce Öğretmeni Adaylarının İstenmeyen Öğrenci Davranışlarına Yönelik Algısı ve Bunlarla Baş Etme Stratejileri)

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Abstract

It is a fact that the role of classroom management is crucial in teaching English. Therefore, it is important to know the perceptions of teachers on student misbehavior and the strategies they develop to cope with them. This study aims to explore pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of and strategies in dealing with misbehavior. Participants consist of 20 students studying in the last year of a four year foreign language teacher education program in Turkey. In this qualitative study, the data were obtained from written responses to open-ended questions and follow-up interviews. The participants were asked questions to identify their perceptions of misbehavior, strategies they develop to deal with them and factors affecting the ways they deal with misbehavior. In this study, findings will be discussed in the light of related literature.

Key Words: Pre-service teachers, EFL, misbehavior, strategy, perception.

Özet

Sınıf yönetimi İngilizce öğretiminde önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu yüzden istenmeyen öğrenci davranışlarına yönelik öğretmenlerin algılarını ve bunlarla baş etmek için geliştirdikleri stratejileri bilmek önem taşır. Bu çalışma aday İngilizce öğretmenlerinin istenmeyen öğrenci davranışlarına yönelik algılarını ve bunlarla baş etmede kullandıkları stratejilerin neler olduğunu ortaya koymayı amaçlamıştır. Katılımcı grubu 20 İngilizce öğretmeni adayından oluşmaktadır. Bu nitel çalışmada veriler açık uçlu sorular ve birebir görüşmeler ile elde edilmiştir. Katılımcılara istenmeyen öğrenci davranışı üzerine kendi algılarının neler olduğu, bu davranışları ortadan kaldırmak için ne tür stratejiler geliştirdikleri ve onları bu stratejileri kullanmada etkileyen unsurların neler olduğu sorulmuştur. Bulgular ilgili literatür ışığında incelenmiş ve yorumlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: aday öğretmenler, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce, istenmeyen davranış, strateji, algı.

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Introduction

In today's world, student misbehavior is one of the most challenging aspects of classroom management. According to Cotton (1990), effective classroom administrators are defined as instructors whose classrooms are organized, who have least student misbehavior and have a large amount of time on assignment. As all teachers know, student misbehavior lessens the effectiveness of teaching and it is very time-consuming for teachers to deal with these problematic behaviors. Hoover and Patton (2005) state that even the most experienced teachers have difficulty in finding the best solution to cope with constant problematic behaviors of students.

There are different definitions of student misbehavior in the literature. Houghton, Wheldall and Merrett (1988) define misbehavior in the classroom as 'activity which (a) annoys, upsets or distresses teachers (b) is disruptive of good order in the classroom and causes trouble, and (c) leads teachers to comment continually' (p. 299). According to Levin and Nolan (1991), misbehavior is a kind of psychologically and physically dangerous behavior that hinders other people's rights to learn. Turnuklu & Galton (2001) define it as a type of behavior that hampers the flow of the academic performance. In the most general sense, Kyriacou (1997:121) defines student misbehavior as "any behavior that undermines the teachers' ability to establish and maintain effective learning experience in the classroom."

Teachers can encounter lots of different types of problematic behaviors in a classroom setting from students' distraction of attention to hitting other students. Evertson, Emmer, and Worshan (2006) classified misbehavior in the classroom in four dimensions. The first one is *no issue*: these practices were truly not issues in light of the fact that they were of short length of time and did not intrude on learning or direction. It can be exemplified as short distractedness and a brief time of daydreaming. Second, *minor issue*: these are practices that run counter to class principles or methods. If these practices don't happen frequently they don't genuinely meddle with learning such as getting out, eating something, or passing notes. Third, *significant issue yet restricted in degree and impacts*: for example, a student might seldom finish an errand, may neglect to take after the principle for development around the classroom, or may hit other students. Lastly, *a raising or spreading issue*: this is where a minor issue gets to be typical, bringing about a risk to arrange the learning environment. Case in point, numerous students may get out inconsequential remarks or meander around the classroom.

Student misbehavior occurs due to various reasons. To deal with misbehavior, it is necessary for teachers to understand the causes behind these problematic behaviors (Turanlı, 1999). The reasons of misbehavior are classified in three main categories: children, teachers and society. In student rooted reasons, attention seeking and learning difficulties are highlighted. It is stated that students try to get attention by showing anti-social behaviors and there is a link between low academic skills and problematic behaviors. It is easy to understand that students with learning difficulties portray much more misbehaviors. Lastly, it is expressed that students' misbehavior cannot be isolated from society, for example, family influence has important impact on children's behavior (Yuan and Che, 2012). Marsh et al. (1978, cited in Kyriacou, 1997) highlights four types of teachers leading to students'

misbehavior. These are teachers who are boring, who cannot teach, who make unfair comparisons and whose discipline is weak. It can be concluded that students are easily affected by teacher behavior.

To deal with student misbehavior, teachers need to make an effort and use different strategies. Poulou & Norwich (2000) point out that there are different strategies including positive and negative incentives to cope with classroom misbehavior. According to Weinstein's (1996) categorization, teachers' intervention strategies include two groups: verbal and nonverbal strategies. Verbal strategies involve ignoring, utilizing rewards and punishments, making some changes in lesson, talking with students, etc. Nonverbal strategies include interventions such as using eye-contact, using gestures, approaching to students etc. Altinel (2006) highlights the mostly used teacher intervention strategies, and ranks them as verbal warning, communicating with parents, threatening, talking with students, using eye contact, and giving responsibilities.

We know that dealing with student misbehavior is difficult even for experienced teachers. Therefore, it can be easily estimated that it is also a difficult task for pre-service teachers. Rickman & Hollowell (1981) state that student-teachers feel insufficient in managing classroom. Mau (1997) also mentions pre-service teachers report that they need to be more confident for good classroom management. In his observational study, Wragg (1993) concludes that pre-service teachers encounter much noisier chatting and inappropriate movement than experienced teachers. Atıcı (2007) puts forward that researches on classroom management in Turkey, mostly focus on experienced teachers. For example, Sayın (2001) analyses mostly encountered problems by primary school teachers and shows the most encountered problems as complaining about classmates, shouting at others, making noise and talking out of turn. Türnüklü (1999) compares British and Turkish primary school teachers in his study and asserts that both of the teachers encounter mostly making noise and talking out of turn as misbehavior. As Atıcı (2007) emphasizes that, studies on student-teachers' classroom management are limited, so more studies on this topic are needed. That's why this study aims to shed light on pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of student misbehavior and the strategies they develop to deal with such behaviors.

Method

This study has a qualitative approach to both data collection and analysis. As Dörnyei (2007, p. 38) points out, "qualitative research is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals and thus explicit goal of research is to explore the participants' point of view of the situation being studied." Our aim at this point is to reveal the pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of and strategies in dealing with misbehavior. Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of misbehavior?
2. What strategies they develop to deal with misbehavior?
3. What are the factors affecting the ways they deal with misbehavior?

Participants

This study is conducted with 20 pre-service teachers studying at an English Language Teaching program at Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University. All the participants are carrying out practicum at different public schools in Muğla and get involved in the study voluntarily.

Procedure

In order to explore student-teachers' perceptions of misbehavior and their strategies in coping with such behavior, they are asked to provide written responses to three questions. To have further information on the topic, follow-up interviews are conducted with three of them on a voluntary basis.

Data Analysis

In this study, data was collected from written responses of student-teachers and follow-up interviews. Content analysis technique has been employed to analyse the data. The results of this descriptive analysis have been examined according to three categories suitable to the research questions: types of misbehavior in pre-service teachers' perspective, pre-service teachers' strategies to deal with misbehavior, and factors affecting their ways of dealing with misbehavior.

Results

To make clear description of results, findings are summarized on tables reflecting the three categories mentioned above.

Table 1: *Types of misbehavior in pre-service teachers' perspective*

No	Type of misbehavior	f	%
1	Disrespectful behavior in class (towards the teacher and each other)	19	35
2	Disinterest in learning English	6	11
3	Making noise during class	6	11
4	Using mobile phones during class	5	9
5	Rejecting participating in class activities	4	8
6	Not bringing course materials	3	6
7	Resistance to the medium of instruction to be English	3	6
8	Spoiling the order of class	3	6
9	Studying other school subjects	2	4
10	Not doing homework	1	2
11	Being late to class	1	2
Total		53	100

Table 1 displays the types of misbehavior in pre-service teachers' perspective. As seen on the table, the most frequently encountered misbehavior is disrespectful behavior towards the teacher and each other. Disinterest in learning English and making noise during the class, and using mobile phones are other examples for misbehavior.

Table 2: *Pre-service teachers' strategies to deal with misbehavior*

No	ST Strategies	f	%
1	Attracting student attention by using different techniques	9	14
2	Warning students	8	13
3	Setting classroom rules	8	13
4	Giving responsibilities	6	10
5	Collaborating with school counselor and parents	6	10
6	Reordering seating arrangement	6	10
7	Making eye-contact with students	4	7
8	Giving positive feedback	4	7
9	Using reward & punishment	3	5
10	Using simple language & L1	3	5
11	Using teacher voice	2	3
12	Ignoring the misbehavior	2	3
Total		61	100

Table 2 shows the pre-service teachers' strategies to deal with misbehavior. Attracting student attention by using different techniques, warning students, and setting classroom rules are among the most chosen strategies.

Table 3: *Factors affecting pre-service teachers' ways of dealing with misbehavior*

No	Factors behind ST Strategies	f	%
1	The importance of mutual respect in class	8	33
2	The importance of student participation	7	29
3	The effectiveness of informing students in advance	4	17
4	The importance of establishing (social) proximity with students	3	13
5	Applying the theory into practice	2	8
Total		24	100

Table 3 presents factors behind strategies that are thought to be employed by pre-service teachers. It ranks from top down as the importance of mutual respect in class, the importance of student participation, the effectiveness of informing students in advance, the importance of establishing (social) proximity with students and applying the theory into practice.

Conclusion

In this study we investigated the pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of and strategies in dealing with misbehavior. Parallel to the literature, pre-service teachers in this study define misbehavior as behaviors which prevent the flow of lesson and bother the peace. The data indicated that pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of misbehavior mostly consist of disrespectful behaviors towards the teacher and each other. Behaviors such as impoliteness towards both the teacher and other students, making fun of and disturbing each other, debating with each other are encountered mostly in the category of disrespectful behaviors. It is also revealed that being late to class is the type of misbehavior that was observed in a minimum degree.

Strategies used by pre-service teachers showed that “ignoring” is the least frequently employed one while other studies show that teachers generally use this dealing strategy mostly. Attracting student attention by using different techniques is the most used strategy by pre-service teachers in this study to deal with misbehavior.

It can be concluded that most of the pre-service teachers believe mutual respect is a vital factor for effective classroom management. Therefore they say that they should first ensure a respectful classroom atmosphere. Student participation is considered another crucial factor for an effective language class, and they think that, as teachers, they should provide student participation as much as possible and develop different strategies to deal with the problem of student disinterest. Pre-service teachers also highlight the importance of informing students in advance as a prevention strategy for misbehavior.

This study is limited to a cohort of pre-service EFL teachers in one university context. Another limitation is that this study addresses on the perceptions of informant pre-service teachers. Therefore, further studies can be carried out with a larger number of pre-service EFL teachers in different university contexts, and practices of pre-service EFL teachers in actual classrooms i.e. what they do to deal with misbehavior in the classes they teach, can be examined.

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