Misbehavior in Moroccan EFL Classrooms: Exploring the Causes and Strategies for Prevention

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Abstract:- **Misbehavior is extremely vexatious for teachers in different educational settings. As it jeopardizes the smooth flow of learning and teaching, exploring the sources of this phenomenon and the ways to deal with them holds significant credibility. Based on a convenient sampling of 30 Moroccan high school teachers, this article explored the various causes of classroom misbehavior and the techniques Moroccan teachers use to prevent or solve it. The results obtained indicated that family problems, negative attitudes towards the school and the instructor's behavior bring about learners' misconduct. Equally, teachers recommended two major techniques (strategic and pedagogical) to manage this hazardous phenomenon inside the classroom.**

Keywords:- Causes of Misbehavior, Classroom Management, Teaching Strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Regarding the detrimental effects of misbehavior on the whole learning and teaching process, a big deal of research was devoted to investigate this area of classroom life. Indiscipline was viewed as one of the most abominable events teachers encounter in the classroom (Demir, 2009; Pane, 2010). For, Parsonson (2012, p16):

Behaviour problems in a classroom increase the stress levels for both the teacher and pupils, disrupt the flow of lessons and conflict with both learning objectives and the processes of learning. They also change the classroom dynamic as the focus of attention shifts from the academic tasks at hand to the distractions provided by disruptive behaviors.

II. A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Defining misbehavior

Misbehavior in the classroom refers to the indecent acts students do during a course. For Fontana (1981, p 317), this term refers to "behavior that proves unacceptable to the teacher". In other definitions, this inappropriate behavior is viewed, as a thorny situation that erodes the teacher's authority over the classroom. Kyriacou (1997, p.121), for example, has defined indiscipline as "any behaviour that undermines the teacher's ability to establish and maintain effective learning experience in the classroom". Further perspectives have transcended this physical and external portayal of misbehavior. McManus (1995) points out that

troublesome behavior cannot be understood without considering: the individual, the family, the classroom, the school, the community and the whole society.

1.2. Sources of misbehavior

Research in classroom management and behavior has demonstrated that many factors trigger disruptive conduct in the classroom. One main reason is the student's attempt to associate himself with a group as a way to search for acceptance and belonging. This process is mostly achieved through indecent acts or sporadic attention-seeking forms. For the misbehaved student, attention-seeking becomes the resort to obtain admiration and approval in the classroom community.

Another reason is attributed to the students' attitudes towards the school, namely to the teacher and the subject being taught (Harmer, 1991). Within this view, some studies explained how instructors can be responsible for the misconduct taking place in classrooms. for (Aliakbari and Bozorgmanesh, 2015), getting insufficient training in pre-service centers to manage the classroom, and the belief of novice teachers about teaching as a matter of transferring information increase the prospect of this problem to crop up.

In line with this, behavior problems may result from the lack of teacher's self-efficacy. According to Gordon (2001), the higher this trait in teachers is, the more self-confident to handle disruptive behavior they will be. This standpoint is shared by Dârjan, (2012) study which concludes that self-efficacy allows instructors to better teach and to lead adequate behavior at the same time.

Still, other studies linked learners' misbehavior to their surrounding environment, namely the family. These studies showed that learners transfer unconsciously the domestic violence they undergo to the classroom. This view-highly supported by social learning theory- argues that learners' conduct is shaped by what they see others doing, which helps understand the link between the social roles and identities students associate themselves with in the school setting (Long, 2000). Besides, in support of this view, a study of 113 at risk students in 25 secondary schools in Malaysia indicates that most of these participants' misconduct originate from family problems such as lack of parental monitoring, broken interactions in the family and problems associated with low-income families (Elias et al. 2009).

1.3. Techniques to deal with Misbehavior

As a response to the drastic effect of disruptive behavior in the classroom, different strategies have been put forward to put the brake on this phenomenon.

1.3.1. Ignoring

Being guided by an irresistible quest to assert oneself, some studies recommend what Rogers (1997) calls, tactical ignoring, to deal with misbehavior. Due to this technique, as Fontana (1981, p.323) observes, "Gradually, over a period of time, the child's behavior may come to be tuned round, with the desirable ones replacing the undesirable".

1.3.2. Addressing learner's expectations

There is less opportunities for disruptive behavior when learners find what they learn enjoyable and catering for their cognitive and emotional inclinations. This way allows the classroom to be an attractive space where students are not forced to do things but a place where they display what they can do.

1.3.3. Boosting success and positive thinking

This can take different forms. First, it is important to engage students with learning zones where they develop an incentive to excel and succeed. Accordingly, raising issues through debates and presentations to discuss the reasons behind the success of certain individuals in their surrounding would encourage students to compete with their peers. Likewise, it is pertinent to raise in students the ability to link success with hard work and good behavior. Bearing this in mind, this technique helps to integrate low achievers by seizing any learning moment to make them experience success.

1.3.4. Limiting the misbehavior zone

In classes, namely crowded ones, some students can embark in side-talks or be off task. Talking to disrupting students at the end of the session and making urgent plans to address indecent conduct before it gets uncontrollable are vital. Warning students of the imminent consequences of misbehavior would be beneficial too.

1.3.5. Being alert to misbehavior transfer

In settings where students have many school subjects, it becomes necessary to know that learners can transfer different types of behavior from one class to another. In this case, it is important to make learners realize that each instructor has specific expectations of the disciplinary routine to reign in their own classrooms. One way to do that is to engage them in brief discussion about the previous session. While this procedure makes students reflect on what they have just learnt, it contributes to offer a smooth transition to the instructor's own session and to absorb the intention to reproduce misconduct tolerated in other classes.

1.3.6. Controlling humor use

Many studies supported the use of humor in different learning settings in general and foreign language learning contexts in particular (Ornstein & Levine 1981, Price 2005, Miller B. 2008). In the latter, for instance, it was concluded that the use of fun leads to high degrees of engagement among learners. Yet, as I deduced from my seventeen years' experience, I observed that humor must be used with caution and only when needed. In relation to its utility for misbehavior prevention, fun is used to dissolve violent tendencies or as a break after many demanding class assignments.

1.3.7. Considering learners' proficiency level

Some students may show indifference to the teacher and reluctance to engage in classroom tasks because they do not have the ability to grasp explanations and lessons. Though it takes time to exert a big challenge for students is realized through time. it

1.3.8. Being sensitive to students' affective side

Misbehavior may happen usually when learners feel that they are humiliated in one way or another. Consciously or unconsciously, teachers tend to behave unfairly to students, or rebuke them. They may also underestimate their ability to do things and criticize their choices and views. These are some aspects of behavior that would trigger misconduct among students (see Marsh et al. 1978, Kyriacou 1997). While the majority of teachers are aware of this, still, some of them are provoked by the unpredictable and irritating nature of misbehavior. In such cases, as recommended by Shelly and Walters (2015, p15), teachers need to control agitation by breathing deeply and reflecting on is happening for some seconds. They also advise teachers "to assign a few minutes of individual work and take some time to sift through papers at [one's] desk"

1.3.9. Giving appropriate feedback

Feedback plays a strong role in learning. Teachers' constructive reactions to students' output pave the way to provide a learning space in which students4 efforts are dignified. Citing Hitz and Driscoll (1989), shelly and Walters (2015) argue that rather than using praise, teachers should encourage their students. According to them, encouragement differs from praise as teachers offer specific honest and private feedback on improvement and effort, rather than using evaluative words publicly to manage and manipulate the work of all the children in the classroom.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the main causes of indiscipline in five Moroccan high schools and the techniques teachers adopted to deal with it. Using a convenience sampling, a questionnaire was administered to 20 English high school teachers belonging to five Moroccan cities. The obtained results of this mix-designed study were processed with the help of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and manually. The purpose was to identify the factors that trigger misbehavior in the Moroccan English class, to explore the various ways teachers use to handle misbehavior, and to explore their perception of the effective ways to solve this intricate phenomenon. Hence, the study was guided by three main research questions:

1. What are the causes of misbehavior in Moroccan high schools?

2. What are Moroccan teachers' techniques to deal with misbehavior?
3. What is Moroccan teachers' perception of the effective ways to handle misbehavior?

IV.   RESULTS OF THE STUDY

3.1. Causes of misbehavior

Analysis of the data showed that varied causes triggered indiscipline in the five investigated Moroccan high schools. Scrutiny of the sources of these behavior problems revealed that they were related to: 1) learners' age, their attitude toward the school and their level of language proficiency, 2) the teaching context, and 3) the family context. According to participants, the factors related to the student are attributed to adolescence. The majority explained that disruptive behavior among students was motivated by the attempt to attract the attention of the teacher and their peers. Some pointed to taking up bad habits, mainly drugs, which accompanied this critical period of age. Moreover, the majority of these teachers noted that lack of concentration, which was a direct outcome of the students' poor ability to cope with the lesson, pushed the student to engage in disruptive acts. According to them, this takes the form of side talks, phone use, and inability to respond to the teacher's questions. Furthermore, a big number of these participants pointed to the student's negative image about the school, teachers, and the school subject as significant impetus for misconduct. Some participants explained that most of the misbehaved students in their classes experienced failure or led bad relations with some teachers.

As far as the second factor-the teacher- is concerned, the majority of participants admitted that sticking to the textbook very often creates monotony and this in turn gave room for indiscipline to emerge. Other participants warned that students' feeling of neglect and teachers' unfairness were other causes of this problem.

As far as the third factor is concerned, many participants observed that the family had a strong impact on the misbehavior they exhibit in the class. They stated that family problems and absence of parents control fueled largely indiscipline among students.

3.2. Techniques to prevent misbehavior
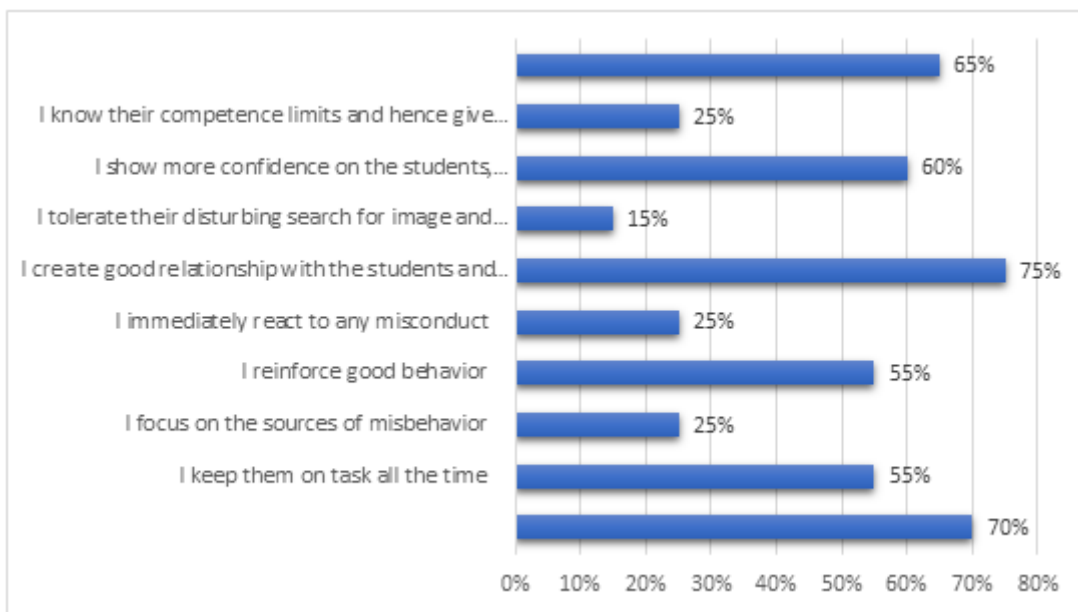
Figure 1: Moroccan teachers' techniques to address misbehavior

Moroccan teachers use different techniques to prevent misconduct. The most important of them are displayed in figure 1. As described in this latter, a big portion of responses of Moroccan teachers (75%) state that they create good relationship with the students and among the students themselves as a way to prevent misbehavior in their classrooms. Besides, 70% of these teachers inform the students beforehand of the rules they have to respect to maintain adequate discipline. Moreover, 65% of the participants explain that they make students responsible, too, for their learning while 60% of them tend to put confidence, empower and encourage students as techniques to prevent misconduct. In the meantime, reinforcing good behavior and keeping students busy are techniques chosen by 55% of these teachers.

3.3. Teachers' perception of the most effective techniques to handle misbehavior

Analysis of the answers has revealed that the majority of teachers in in these Moroccan high schools find establishing good relationship with students, negotiating with them at the end of the lesson, and keeping the student busy with activities as the most effective techniques to solve misbehavior in the classroom.

Generally, these techniques which teachers put forward can be classified in three categories: affective, strategic and pedagogical.

3.3.1. Affective techniques

Participants found the following procedures effective:

1. Establishing good rapport and relationship with the learner
2. Giving them hope
3. Building trust
4. Involving learners and assigning them activities where they feel responsible for their learning too
5. Establishing a positive learning atmosphere

4.3.2. Strategic techniques

Teachers in this area suggested:

1. Negotiation. Teachers found that the effective way for them to deal with misbehavior is to negotiate the problem with the poorly behaved students at the end of the class.
2. Making and agreeing upon a code of conduct earlier at the beginning of the school year
3. Intervening. This means that teachers should react immediately to a situation which can reach a worse and complicated state if it is not settled immediately. This takes several forms such:
   - Stopping the lesson at once to discuss and solve the problem
   - Being severe occasionally
   - Warning
   - making the misbehaved student feel that he is given a chance to modify his behavior

4.3.3. Pedagogical procedures

In relation to this side, teachers found these procedures effective:

-using games
- using new teaching material, not only the textbook
-changing the arrangement of seats in the classroom from time to time
-using group work as much as possible
-using activities that encourage imagination and entertainment like drama, music, poetry and theatre

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article aimed at investigating the problem of misbehavior in some Moroccan high schools. In this regard, it was concluded that the major sources of behavior problem in the Moroccan EFL class are related to 1) the student's age, attitude and level of language proficiency, 2) the teaching context, and 3) the family context.

These findings match others in different contexts. Concerning the last source of misbehavior, Eshetu (2014, p. 23) 's study conclude that the "family background" and " low follow up by parents" lead to children's misconduct in classrooms . likewise, Masekoameng (2010) reported that violent behaviour is triggered by learners usually belonging to social backgrounds where the family does not satisfy children's needs. Similarly, other studies showed that children's feeling of rejection, alienation and disconnectedness at home contributed to disruptive behavior at school (Lewis,1991; Butchart, 1998).

Analysis of these facts indicate that, in one side, family-based misbehavior should be treated at a macro level. That is, problems such as these can be viewed within the broader perspective of eradicating all aspects of social precariousness. In parallel, the nature of these problems' dictates opening avenues for communication between the school and its social environment. That is, it becomes mandatory to provide dialogue and counseling channels at schools where teachers and experts reintegrate these students and allow them to see family problems as incentives for perseverance rather than excuse for rationalizing misconduct and accepting failure.

Regarding the second source of misbehavior, other studies have pointed that teaching practices are responsible for this problem. As cited in Shamnadh and Anzari (2019), Stephens and Crawley (1994) report that indiscipline is triggered by the teacher than by the student. In line with this, some studies have explained that boredom, for example, prevailing in some teaching contexts pushes students to behave badly (Fallis and Opotow 2003; McGiboney and Carter 1988). They also observe that misbehviour occurs when the teacher is not motivated and the classroom environment is not conducive to learning (Shamnadh and Anzari, 2019).

These problems have implications for both teachers and policy makers. The fact that teaching may be a cause for misbehviour in classes suggests that training in preservice centers should raise prospective teachers' awareness of this problem. Also, these behavior problems require that teachers are invited to offer attractive lessons by using varied material and teaching content that cater for the different learning styles of learners.

As far as the first behavior problem, the findings in this study support other studies in that the learner's age lurk behind the conduct they display in the classroom. Students at this age seek to gain attention via anti-social misbehviour (Fontana,1994). These studies also show that lack of interest in some subjects pushes learners to embark in disruptive behavior (Shamnadh and Anzari, 2019). In relation to this, having knowledge on how to handle students at the adolescent age as well as boosting student's motivation and love for the school and school subjects would make great difference in this sense.

Finally, a look at the techniques Moroccan teachers prioritize reveals that they are aware of the problem of indiscipline as a hazardous phenomenon. Teachers use affective techniques in the first place as well as pedagogical and strategic ones to handle this problem. these procedures have strong basis in theory. The humanistic approach for instance has highlighted the usefulness of considering both the cognitive and the affective side in dealing with the learner. Other theories have highlighted the place of the teacher as an agent responsible for the success of the learning process. Accordingly, the techniques put forward reflect that teaching practices, decisions and interventions are of paramount importance to ensure and promote an adequate environment for learning.

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