

## **Disruptive Behavior of Students in ELT Classroom**

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### **Synopsis**

*This is a research paper about disruptive behavior of students in ELT classroom. This paper strives to delve into the deep of the potential areas of disruptive behaviors of students. It has adopted case study approach in order to collect the information. In course of collecting information the researcher used observation checklist, questionnaire and interview schedule as well as research tools. Finally, this paper concludes with the conclusion that disruptive students are not disruptive by nature. The main determinant factor is the schooling climate.*

### **Introduction**

The act of language teaching is a complex phenomenon though it is an established profession. "Language teaching came into its own as a profession in the twentieth century. The whole foundation of contemporary language teaching was developed during the early part of twentieth century" (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p.1). The teacher is the main person who has a key role to foster language learning genuinely and naturally. It is intellectually challenging job to execute as the classroom situations demand. Stern (1983) says language teaching can be defined as "the activities which are intended to bring about language learning" (p.21). Similar view is presented by Holden (1984) "Teaching is about people learning" (p.17). Similarly, according to Sthapit (2001, p.1) "The objective of teaching a theme is to help the learner in learning it. Teaching, therefore, should be geared to facilitating learning on the part of the learner. This is true of language teaching as well".

English language has received great importance in the present context. It has become a lingua Franca. It has become a lingua-franca to the people of different nationalities. It is, no doubt, that it is and will remain a vital linguistic tool for many business people, academics, tourists and citizens of the world who wish to communicate easily across nationalities. Kachru (1983, p.3) wrote "One might hazard a linguistic guess here. If the spread of English continues at the current rate, by the 2000 its non- native speakers will out number its native speakers" (as cited in Harmer 2001, p.2). So, teaching English has become compulsory today. In the context of Nepal also, English is being taught and learnt English as a foreign language (EFL) for the sake of wider communication among people of different linguistic communities. Bhattarai (2006, p.11) says about this "There is no mention of the English language in the constitution of Nepal and the number of its speakers is, as in the latest census 1,037 persons. However, it is found in all the syllabuses from primary to graduate levels".

Truly speaking, in our Nepalese context, we have taught and learned English language as a foreign language because of its global spread. Day-by-day, this language has received greater significance but some of our learners in school levels are not receiving this

language as an important tool of communication. They seemed to be too much disruptive and problematic in English classes. It is, therefore, this research study has strived to explore some reasons of their being disruptive and problematic in English language classroom.

### **Disruptive Behavior of students**

Behaviour that persistently or grossly impairs or interferes with the mission or academic atmosphere is considered disruptive behaviour. A disruptive student is one who disturbs the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Harmer (1991) says:

Disruptive behaviour is not confined to one age group. Eleven- year- olds can become incredibly unruly and noisy, and adolescents may become completely unresponsive and unco-operative. Adult students are disruptive in different ways. They may publicly disagree with the teacher or try to become the class character to the detriment of their peers (p. 249).

He further says there are lots of ways of disrupting a class.

Teachers, especially novice, feel insecure in forestalling disruptive behaviours of students, and they spend many sleepless nights worrying about this. Similarly Ur (1996, p.290) says:

For inexperienced teachers, classes of adolescents are perhaps the most daunting challenge. Their learning potential is greater than that of young children, but they may be considerably more difficult to motivate and manage, and it takes longer to build up trusting relationships.

"It is strange that, despite their relative success as language learner, adolescents are often seen as problem students" (Harmer, 2008, p.83). Puchta and Schratz (1993) see problems with teenagers as resulting from "...the teacher's failure to build bridges between what they want and have to teach and their students' worlds of thought and experience" (as cited in Harmer, 2008, p.84). Arends (2001, p. 173) says "As in other social settings, every classroom will have a few students who will choose not to involve themselves in classroom activities and, instead, be disruptive forces". Disruptive behaviour can range from students talking when they are supposed to be listening to the teacher or refusing to go along with a small group activity to yelling at the teacher and stomping out of the classroom (ibid, 173). He further says that managing disruptive behaviour calls for a special set of understandings and special repertoire of skills.

According to Harmer (1991, p. 235) "The most effective activities can be made almost useless if the teacher does not organize them properly, and disruptive behaviour can spoil the best classes if it is not checked." Beginning teachers should jostle for to mitigate the tangible misbehavior, but it is very difficulty for them. They may even loose their confidence and storehouse of knowledge will be vacuum.

All these expressions intend to make aware to the beginning teachers in their English language classroom. So, Wragg (1981, p. 26) says “Handling very difficult children is a special problem and young teacher should not be left entirely on their own.”

Disruptive behaviour from students can take many forms. Wadden and Mc-Govern (1991 as cited in Harmer, 2008, p. 153) list disruptive behaviours as follow;

- Inaudible responses
- Sleeping in class
- Tardiness and poor attendance
- Failure to do homework
- Cheating in tests, and
- Unwillingness to speak in the target language

Harmer (2001) also lists the different forms of disruptive behaviours.

- Arriving late
- Interrupting other students when they speak
- Bringing drinks and food into the classroom
- Forgetting to do homework
- Not paying attention
- Insolence to the teacher
- Insulting or bullying to other students
- Damaging school property
- Refusing to accept sanctions or punishment

Similarly, Arends (2001, p.159) provides some types of disruptions.

- Students frequently talking
- Student not working on a class work the teacher has given
- Students getting out of their seats at inappropriate times

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- a. To find out the reasons of disruptive behaviours of higher secondary students in English language classrooms.
- b. To suggest some pedagogical implications.

### **Significance of the study**

Basically my research study is qualitative in nature; however, I have used quantitative analysis as well. It is an attempt to study on disruptive behaviour of students in language classrooms. All language teachers, undoubtedly, believe that disruptive students disturb successful language classroom’s atmosphere. It is a burning problem of present days where teenage students are greatly influenced from various media and technological advancement of the world. It exerts deleterious effect in teaching and learning activity.

The teacher's role is considered dominant to mitigate such disruption. This study aims to study disruptive behaviour of higher secondary (+2) students of both government-aided and private schools. It strives to reflect a clear picture of English language classrooms with reference to the disruptive behaviour of students. It also seeks to see to what extent disruptive behaviour influences to teaching and learning process. So, the outcomes of the study could be helpful to overcome disciplinary problems of the students by taking corrective measures in time to prevent such problems in future. It will be much beneficial to the beginning teachers who do not have much experience in controlling classroom as situation demands and to experienced teachers to conduct classroom activities smoothly as well. They can get meaningful insights for better solutions of such disruptive moments in the classroom. It is equally important to the curriculum designer, textbook writer, institutions, parents and students to know the reasons and the effect of disruptive behaviour and for those who are interested in child development, child psychology and educational research, especially for qualitative research.

### **Methodology**

This research study will follow the qualitative approach to data collection and in course of data analysis process.

### **Case study approach**

The main approach governing my research study is case study approach. It is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied (Stake, 2005, p.443). Merriam (1988) defines the term case study as:

The qualitative case study can be defined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a singly entity, phenomenon or social limit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and rely heavily on inductive reasoning a handling multiple data sources (as cited in Nunan, 1992, p.77).

I chose case study approach to study the disruptive behaviour (one aspect of case) of selected students (cases) of higher secondary (+2) in natural settings through repeated classroom observations. In this study, Stake (2005) says "case study optimizes understanding by pursuing scholarly research questions. It gains credibility by thoroughly triangulating the descriptive and interpretation, not just in a single step but continuously throughout the period of study" (p.443).Stake further adds we could study any case analytically or holistically, entirely by repeated measures or hermeneutically, organically or culturally, and by mixed methods (p.443) due to which case study is methodologically called hybrid (Nunan, 1992, p.74).

### **Population of the study**

For this study purpose, I selected four higher secondary schools. Out of them, two schools namely Mangal Higher Secondary School and Janasewa Higher Secondary are government -aided and remaining two namely Hill Town International Higher Secondary and Shahid Smarak are private schools. I focused my research on disruptive behaviour of

students in English language classrooms. I did my field research in Kirtipur municipality of Kathmandu district.

### **Selection of cases**

A case is a broad term which entails a person, group, episode, process, community, society or any other unit of social life (Kumar, 2007, p.113). A case can be typical or unique. It is one among others; as it is concerned with my research study which focused on disruptive behaviour of students of higher secondary school (12). That student who exhibits such behaviour is called a case. I have selected four higher secondary schools for my study purpose, and of course there will be more than one student who exhibits such behaviour. It is, therefore, I spent three days as a part of preliminary observation in each school to identify the students (cases). In the process of selecting cases, I also consulted with the level co-coordinators and concerned English teachers. For the sake of selecting real cases, all-together from four schools, I selected 12 students as cases of my study.

### **Sources of data**

According to Kumar (2007, p.118) “there are two approaches to gathering information about a situation, person, problem or phenomenon. Sometimes, information required is already available and needs only to be extracted. However, there are times when the information must be collected”. Information gathered using the first approach is said to be secondary sources, whereas the sources used in the second approach are called primary sources (ibid.p.118).

### **Primary Sources of Data**

As the primary sources I used twelve students of Kirtipur-based four higher secondary schools (+2), Four English teachers of those classes and four principals of the respective schools. They were the sources of first-hand-data where I observed and met them in their natural settings.

### **Secondary Sources of Data**

As the secondary sources of my data, I consulted many books like, Wragg (1981), Harmer (1991), Koirala (1996), Arrends (2001), Patton (2002), Denzin and Lincoln (2005), Hurlock (2005), Neupane (2007), etc. journals, net-based articles and many other references.

### **Tools for Data Collection**

In addition to the available data gathered from books, journals, net-based articles and theses, I collected field information using three data-gathering instruments, participant observation, interview schedule and questionnaire.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

In accordance with my accessibility, I selected four higher secondary schools and introduced myself to them, in turn, shared my proposal with principals and teachers, and asked for their help if I needed it, in course of data gathering process. I found all of them were kind, co-operative and helpful to me. During this visit and for all succeeding visits, I

maintained a daily diary, reflected on what I observed and asked myself questions for further observations until I saw a repetitive pattern in what I was seeing and what people were saying to me (Koirala, 1996, p.37).

### **Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

In order to ascertain the nature of reality of disruptive behaviors, I have cross-checked the information obtained through sources like, observation, questionnaire and interview schedule. Studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method (Patton, 2002, P.248). Every method has its limitations and multiple methods are usually needed to test for consistency. In order to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation, various procedures are employed (Stake, 2005, p.453), this is generally considered triangulation process. Triangulation strengthens a study by combining different methods.

After analyzing and interpreting the information obtained through observation, interview and questionnaire, I found the following are the reasons of disruptive behaviours in English language classrooms.

- A desire to be noticed among others
- Nature of the lesson like sex, love, beautiful girl, etc
- Students being poor in English
- Due to boring classes
- Inadequate knowledge of child psychology of teachers
- Influence of post-modern technologies
- Loose supervision of principals
- Bad friends-circle
- Age factor
- Lack of parents' education and awareness
- Communication gap between parents and children

### **Key findings**

From the study it was found that due to the influence of communicative approach, students are left free in the classroom whenever and whoever they like to sit. Teachers do not care about the arrangement of students which reveals misunderstanding about the communicative approach. Disruptive students very often found to be seated at the back benches and with their close company. Two students being disruptive are far more effective than one. If they are separated and make them sit at the front, there is less likelihood of the occurrence of disruptive behaviours. So, teachers should pay their due attention in students' arrangement in classroom management. Similarly, Students were found to reveal disruptive behaviours by ignoring to the college code of conduct. So, they should frequently be informed about college code of conduct, if not followed, principal should bring them into action immediately. Students with disruptive behaviours have many deep rooted causes which require in-depth study. In order to minimize the problems related to disruptive students, every subject teacher teaching them should frequently carry out case study of problematic students. Disruptive students should frequently be provided

awareness programs by demonstrating the negative consequences caused by disruptive behavior. Some other findings were due to boring classes of teacher, students seemed to reveal disruptive behavior. So, variety and flexibility should be maintained where the gap between 'skill-getting' in the classroom situation and 'skill-using' in real life situation will be bridged. Principal of a college is a key personality. He has all the responsibilities to do in a college. So, he has the active role to play to enhance the academic scenario. He should have incessant care and strict supervision.

## **Conclusion**

Disruptive students are not disruptive by nature. Disruptive behavior or behavioral problem is the consequence of the school's climate. Whatever the school climate students are brought they will be developed in the same manner. Therefore, the most important thing to be kept in mind by stakeholders is the schooling climate where students live and work. If we establish good schooling climate, then there is no such many chances of being disruptive in ELT classes. Finally, if ELT is supposed to be effective with special reference to students' achievement in English, the teachers should be passionate teachers who love and care their students, schools, parents and ultimately teaching profession.

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## Appendix I

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE TEACHER

Date:

Dear Teacher,

Most of the teachers find themselves facing tough time in creating proper classroom environment due to students' disruptive behavior. It interferes with the academic atmosphere and eventually gives detrimental effect in teaching and learning activity. Successful dealing with these behaviours is desired in language classroom. This questionnaire attempts to collect ideas, feelings and perceptions from teachers about disruptive behaviour.

Your kind co-operation in responding all the questions will be extremely valuable to ascertain the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions towards students with disruptive behavior and to provide supportive hands to the concerned institutions, people and to the students as well. So, your participation is encouraged because only a small sample of teachers has been selected and a high percent of returns is necessary for a successful study. Please, feel free to put your responses required by the questionnaire. I assure you that any information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Q. N. 1. What do you think teachers see as main priorities in the language classroom management?



Q. N. 2. How do you feel when problems arise in course of your teaching?



Q. N. 3. What is your opinion of students with disruptive behaviour in English language classroom?



Q. N. 4. Why do you think students demonstrate disruptive behaviour in the classroom?



Q. N. 5. Which behavior do you think has profound impact in academic atmosphere?



Q. N. 6. In your opinion, to what extent do the leadership skills of school principal affect in students' behaviour?



Q. N.7. Who do you think is the responsible person of such behaviour of students?  
➤

Q. N. 8. How important do you think is the role of teacher in controlling students' disruptive behaviour?  
➤

Q. N. 9. What do you think is the role of home environment in shaping students' behaviour?  
➤

Q. N. 10. What should be done to control such behaviour in a positive way?  
➤

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**Informant**

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**Researcher  
Raju Shrestha**

**Thanks for your kind co-operation**



**Appendix III**  
**FORMAT OF INTERVIEW**

Name of school:

Type of school:                      Public                       Private

Name of principal:

This is also an integral part of my research. I have selected standardized open ended interview to meet the objectives of my study. It focuses to the attitudes of concerned principals towards their students with disruptive behavior in English language classroom.

Q. N. 1. What are you currently working on your school?

Q. N. 2. What kind of student-related problems you are facing during your school hour?

Q. N. 3. How do you respond towards misbehaviour of your students?

Q. N. 4. What is your opinion of students with disruptive behaviour in English language classrooms?

Q. N. 5. How could you explain your experience on such behavior throughout your professional life?

Q. N. 6. What kind of impact do such behaviors have in teaching and learning activity?

Q. N. 7. What aspects do you think are responsible behind such behaviours?

Q. N. 8. As you are principal of your institution what is your attitude to maintain conducive environment for teaching and learning activity by overcoming disruptive behaviors of students?

**Thank you for your kind response.**

## Appendix IV

### Academic performance of selected students

| <b>Name of the students</b> | <b>Obtained mark in 2065 B.S.</b> | <b>Full Mark</b> | <b>Pass Mark</b> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Alisha                      | 40                                | 100              | 35               |
| Arjun                       | 35                                | 100              | 35               |
| Dev Prasad                  | 35                                | 100              | 35               |
| Haribabu                    | 22                                | 100              | 35               |
| Juna                        | 23                                | 100              | 35               |
| Mina                        | 38                                | 100              | 35               |
| Rasik                       | 35                                | 100              | 35               |
| Rojesh                      | 25                                | 100              | 35               |
| Roshan                      | 50                                | 100              | 35               |
| Sabina                      | 81                                | 100              | 35               |
| Shankar                     | 55                                | 100              | 35               |
| Sumitra                     | 66                                | 100              | 35               |