

## DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOURS IN THE CLASS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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### **Abstract**

Learning of foreign languages aims the linguistic, intellectual and cultural development of the pupils. It offers them the opportunity to get to know and understand the way of thinking and the behaviours of other peoples, and it facilitates communication between people in a diverse world of many cultures. Apart from the importance already given to the learning of a foreign language, there are no studies in Albania on the possible disruptive behaviours happening as result of the attitude towards the learning a foreign language. This study aims to find out whether there are more or less occurrences of disruptive behaviour in the classes of English languages compared to the classes of the Albanian languages. More specifically, it compares the average disruptive behaviours in the classes of English and Albanian language; it also compares the types of disruptive behaviours encountered in both classes. It observes thirty-two students of the third grade who studied English, aged 9-10 years old. The general mean of the disruptive behaviours in the classes of English was higher than in the classes of the Albanian language. The types of the most encountered disruptive behaviours in both classes were the same. To reduce the level of disruptive behaviours in the class of a english language, the teaching should involve greater use of audio-visual didactic aids, gestures, mimic, demonstrations and projects. In equal and personalised ways, teachers should encourage the linguistic experimenting, creative and critical thinking, group work, the effective use of technology, the awareness of the relation of the English language to other subjects, the use of ICT.

**Keywords:** *Albanian language, English language, disruptive behaviour, types of disruptive behaviour.*

## **Introduction**

Learning of foreign languages aims the linguistic, intellectual and cultural development of the pupils, so that they become able to face daily situations and the learning process during their whole life. It offers them the opportunity to know and understand the way of thinking and behaving of the other people; facilitates communication between people in a diverse and multi-cultural world. English is taught from the third to the ninth grades in the course of basic education. It is a requirement and an indispensability to have a competitive, modern and dynamic society, whose interests include the encouragement and facilitation of linguistic and cultural communication between Europeans, the promotion of the European integration and the ethnic, racial and gender equality. The dominating philosophy is based on the standards of the foreign languages teaching in the basic education, and on the belief that learning English is a means of communication between different cultures, which ensures that teaching complies with the cognitive, psychological and emotional development of the pupils, focusing on their attitude towards English.

Apart from the importance already given to the learning of a foreign language, there are no studies in Albania on the possible disruptive behaviours happening as result of the attitude towards the learning a foreign language. Disruptive behaviours affect the teaching/learning process for both the teachers and the students. This “leakage” reduces the class-work time of the students, which seems to affect their results. Researchers report that students have less time available for class-work, and their results are lower.

Kingdon (1995) confirms that disruptive behaviours in the class of foreign language are problematic for the teachers. Thirteen of the teachers involved in the study made known their concerns about students’ behaviours. The most frequent forms of disruptive behaviours were “Continuous refusal to work”, “Aggressive behaviour towards the others” and “Refusal to follow teacher’s instructions”. Although of a narrative nature, Kingdon’s article points to the behavioural problems that exist in the foreign language class.

Researchers Jung and Boman (2003) compared the frequencies of students’ disruptive behaviours in the classes of the German language to the behaviours encountered in the generic classes of the foreign languages school. They observed four types of disruptive behaviours among forty-nine students aged nine to twelve, from grade four to grade seven. The percentages of disruptive behaviours were 25.38% in the classes of German language and 17.9% ( $t(43) = 12.78, p=0.001$ ) in the generic classes. It was noted that students who displayed disruptive behaviours in the classes of the German language had the tendency to display the same behaviours in the generic classes.

## **Aim of study**

This study aims to find out whether there are more or less occurrences of disruptive behaviour in the classes of English languages compared to the classes of the Albanian languages.

## **Research topics**

More specifically, it compares the mean disruptive behaviours in the classes of English and Albanian language; it also compares the types of disruptive behaviours encountered in both classes.

## **Research questions**

The questions raised in this study are:

Are there more occurrences of disruptive behaviours in the class of the English or in the class of Albanian?

Do pupils display the same disruptive behaviour in both classes?

Are disruptive behaviours of the same ranking in both classes?

## **Scientific methods**

### **Participants**

32 students of a third grade of the “Jeronim de Rada” school in Elbasan, Albania – aged 09-10 years old, 20 girls and 12 boys. English is being taught this year for the first time, and Albanian has been taught since the first grade.

### **Procedures**

The study observed the disruptive behaviours of pupils in the classes of English and Albanian, and their averages were compared to find any substantial differences. It was expected that the average of disruptive behaviours would be greater in the English class, given the fact that students started learning English in the third grade. The students’ disruptive behaviours were recorded by direct observation during the classes of Albanian and English languages. Efforts were made to create an environment as realistic as possible in class, so that the data obtained could reflect behaviours as real as possible.

For the purpose of this study, disruptive behaviour was considered a behaviour that prevents or obstructs the teaching/learning process (De Martini-Scully et al, 2000). Six types of disruptive behaviours were observed: non-immediate obedience to instructions; speaking without permission (without waiting for his/her turn); being noisy; looking around; touching the others; leaving the seat without permission. These behaviours were the most frequently encountered ones in both classes. This categorisation has been used by Sentelle (2003) and Yang & George (1995).

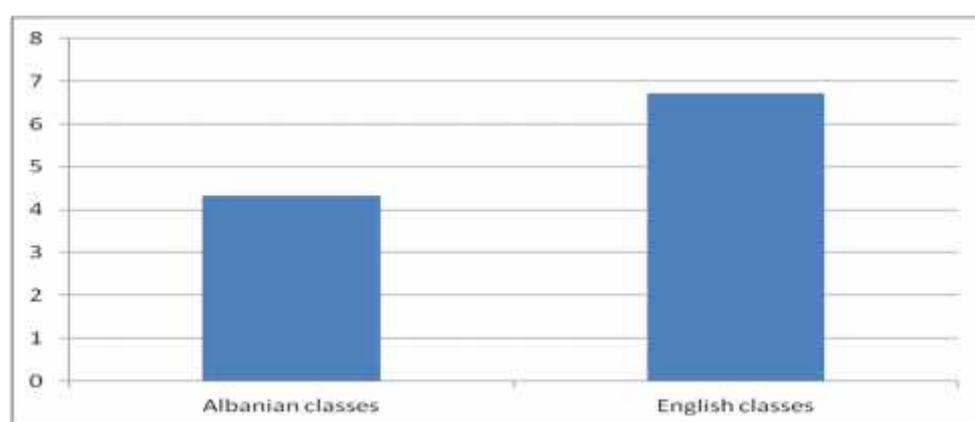
The research team consisted of the researcher and his six assistants, who were chosen in an open procedure and trained in a two-step process. They attended classes of Albanian and English languages, and each of them observed the behaviours of five students, keeping notes only of disruptive behaviours, if any. The observers were coded from 1-6 in each observation session, code they kept until the end of the research. They had disruptive behaviours recording cards, which contained the codes of the behaviours and the codes of the students. The data from the cards were entered into a summary table. The observation intervals were conducted during 16 classes of each language, lasting 5 minutes each, twice a week, during a period of eight weeks. The observations in the class of the English language were conducted on the days it was scheduled (Wednesdays and Fridays), and the observations of the Albanian language classes were conducted in the same days.

The subjects were taught by two teachers. The teacher of the Albanian language was graduated as a Teacher of Elementary Classes 1-4, has been awarded the first degree of qualification with the “Very well” result, and has a working experience of twenty-three years. The teacher of the English language was graduated as a Teacher of the English Language, has been working for nine years, and has been awarded the third degree of qualification with the “Very Well” result.

Both classes were conducted in the same classroom, which is the room where pupils of third grade always conduct classes.

## Data analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS. After 16 observations on each pupil in both classes, more disruptive behaviours were recorded in the class of the English language than in the class of the Albanian language. There was an mean of 6.71 from each subject in the English classes (see graph 1), compared to 4.32 in the Albanian classes. The difference between the means for the total, obtained by the Paired Differences, is 2.39 (sig .000, 2-tailed).



Graph 1: Total of disruptive behaviours in the English and Albanian classes

Regarding the types of the disruptive behaviours, the following were less frequently displayed during the classes of the Albanian language compared to the English classes: “Failure to immediately follow instructions” (mean difference .91; sig .000, 2-tailed), “Answering out of turn” (mean difference .84; sig .003, 2-tailed), and “Making noise” (mean difference .35; sig .051, 2-tailed). The differences between the means are not valid for statistics in the instances of “Touching others” (mean difference .10; sig .291, 2-tailed), and “Leaving one’s seat without permission” (mean difference .24; sig .107, 2-tailed), because in both cases .sig is greater than .05. The only behaviour encountered more often during the Albanian language classes is “Looking around” (mean difference .05; sig .750, 2-tailed), but it is not valid statistically because the sig. is greater than .05.

Table 1: The mean of pupils’ disruptive behaviours in the English and Albanian classes

Disruptive Behaviour	Failure to immediately follow instructions	Answering out of turn	Making noise	Looking around	Touching others	Leaving one’s seat without permission
English classes	2.05	2.44	1.42	.34	.15	.31
Albanian classes	1.14	1.60	1.07	.39	.05	.07

An interesting find was that pupils who displayed disruptive behaviours in the English classes, had the tendency to display the same behaviour in the Albanian classes. The ranking of the means of disruptive behaviours (see Table 2) shows that the most encountered behaviour in the English classes is “Answering out of turn” (mean = 2.44). The least encountered is “Touching others” (mean = .15). The ranking of the means of the disruptive behaviours during the Albanian classes (See Table 2) also shows that the most encountered

behaviour in this class is “Answering out of turn” (mean = 1.60). The last listed is “Touching others” (mean = .05). The ranking is the same for both classes for behaviours listed.

Table 2: Ranking of the means of the disruptive behaviours during English and Albanian classes

No.	Type of behaviour	Means of disruptive behaviour in English classes	Means of disruptive behaviour in Albanian classes
1	Answering out of turn	2.44	1.60
2	Failure to immediately follow instructions	2.05	1.14
3	Making noise	1.42	1.07
4	Looking around	.34	.39
5	Leaving one’s seat without permission	.31	.07
6	Touching others	.15	.05

## Findings

This study found out that the average of disruptive behaviours displayed by students in the classes of English language was higher than in the classes of the Albanian language. Data also showed that students who had a high average of disruptive behaviours in the classes of English language, had a high average in the classes of Albanian. The ranking of types of behaviours in both classes is equal: Speaking without permission, Non-immediate obedience to instructions, Being noisy, Looking around, Leaving the seat without permission, Touching the others.

## Conclusions

These findings match the findings of Miller’s research (1996) in the classes of German language. Her research showed that disruptive behaviours included “Speaking”, “Not being on task”, and “Walking around”. Kingdon (1995) further supported these results. The types of disruptive behaviours most often encountered by teachers were “Repeated interjections”, “Strong and continuous refusal to work” and “Frequent refusal to follow basic teacher directions”.

The frequencies of students’ disruptive behaviours during classes of main subject were investigated in the researches of Alley et al (1990), Department of Education and Science and the Wales Office (1989), Jones et al (1995), Jones et al (1996), Lawrence and Steed (1986), Merret and Wheldall (1984), Wheldall and Merret (1988). The most frequently reported behaviours were “Speaking out of turn”, “Avoiding work”, “Idleness”, “Disobedience”, “Standing up”. The Australian research has mainly supported the findings of this study (Burke and Jarman 1994; Johnson et al (1993), Oswald et al (1997). These studies listed “Speaking out of turn”, “Idleness and avoiding work” and “Leaving the seat” as the most frequently encountered behaviours.

“Speaking out of turn” is the most encountered behaviour in both classes. Haroun and O’Hanlon (1997) also identified “Speaking without permission” as the most encountered

disruptive behaviour displayed by pupils of elementary and secondary schools. But they noted that there is great gap in the percentage of elementary and secondary schools teachers who find this behaviour disruptive (57% and 35% respectively). Kounin (1970) reported that more than half of teachers thought that pupils' "bad behaviours" can be categorised as behaviours of talking or of the noise.

The results of this research have shown that although the types of disruptive behaviours were almost the same in the classes of English and Albanian, they appeared more often in the English class. The disruptive behaviours in class use up from the time allocated to the work of students and this has a negative effect in their learning and results.

Teachers may think that disruptive behaviours are discipline issues, but this is not always the case. It can often be a by-product of inappropriate learning activities (Smyth 1985). It also has to be noted that the most disruptive students in the classes of Albanian were the same ones that were the most disruptive in classes of English. With the increase of the disruptive behaviours from these pupils, it can be said that their behaviour caused more problems for the teachers in the classes of the foreign language, than in those of Albanian.

The teaching methods of the English language might need to be modified in order to improve students' behaviours. Use of inappropriate teaching activities may be reflected in the fact that students in general find it boring to learn a language (Holzknecht 1995; Jones 1995). In order to be successful, learning needs an obvious relation with primary knowledge and the real world. (Eggen & Kauchak, 1994).

So, a re-evaluation of the teaching methods might be necessary. Some researches suggested that group work and use of technology, such as CD-ROM may be useful in the classes of foreign languages (Magee 1999; Walker 1998). Magee found out that by using work group with language CD-ROMs, there were very few occurrences of computer and behaviour problems in class. She believed that the use of such programs kept alive the interest of students who were almost bored and inclined to display bad behaviour. But it is important that language programs are user friendly. The use of the programs may have a positive effect not only on the students' behaviour, but also on the attitude towards learning another foreign language. It has to be noted that not all language teachers have access to the technology.

In general students need to be in an encouraging environment that includes appropriate activities such as work group, in order to achieve success in teaching another foreign language. The study was limited because of some conditions which were out of the control of the researcher. The main restriction was the limited sample. For the results to be more acceptable, a sample from classes 4-9 of the basic education was needed. The small sample does not allow the generalisation the findings for all pupils. Another restriction was the fact that English and Albanian classes were conducted by different teachers.

Above all this study has shown that the averages of disruptive behaviours in the classes of English and Albanian languages differ significantly.

English language teaching should involve greater use of audio-visual didactic aids, gestures, mimic, demonstrations and projects, which generate certain meanings. In equal and personalised ways, teachers should encourage the linguistic experimenting, creative and critical thinking, group work, the effective use of technology, the awareness of the relation of the English language to other subjects, the use of ICT.

A distinctive feature of english language teaching should be the communicative teaching through practical activities, by using authentic listening and visual materials (CD, DVD and text), which are considered as main sources of knowledge acquisition and the developing of

linguistic, socio-cultural and pragmatic skills. Special care should be shown for the developing of pupils' intellectual and social skills, such as the exchange of linguistic and cultural information in pairs, work group etc, thus encouraging pupils' independence in class and out of it.

In order to have less disruptive behaviours, english language teaching should help pupils in simple interactions for themselves and the place they live, people they know, their possessions; develop interactive socio-cultural skills; form features of group interaction and independent work skills.

English teaching in the basic education should be built on the essential principle of equal opportunities and chances, and that every pupil desires success and can achieve it with the help of the teacher, friend and parents. This should give teachers more professional liberty and practicality, though which they can search for and apply a variety of teaching and learning methodologies, including group work, project work and individual work.

English teaching methods should place the pupils in the centre of the teaching, involving all the pupils in the teaching/learning process. This implies that a wide range of teaching methods should be used, because different pupils learn in different ways and come from different social contexts.

## **Recommendations**

Recommendations for further studies:

Further research should focus on the investigation of disruptive behaviours in the classes of foreign languages in the basic education (grades 3-9), and on all; foreign languages studied in Albania. This will help clarify if the foreign language is particularly difficult for the students, or if studying of any subject in general causes disruptive behaviours.

Recommendations for teachers of English language:

English teaching should rely on:

### *Creation of a real environment of the English learning*

Pupils of this age learn better in real environments. Depending on the topic, teachers should create a playing atmosphere and feeling; allow pupils to talk, recite short poems, and sing. So play, songs, poems, stories and physical activity should characterise the whole teaching/learning process. Methods and techniques should be simple so that the pupils understand what is required from them.

### *Variety of activities*

In every class the teacher should encourage pupils' imagination and creative thinking, creating opportunities for them to actively take part in the teaching/learning process. Tasks should be realistic and encouraging. The teacher should use different techniques and appropriate didactic aids.

### *The importance of listening*

Teachers facilitate the development of listening through activities like authentic listening situations using CDs and DVDs, and stories based on paintings, photographs, and other visual aids.

### *Knowing grammar*

This age is characterised by grammar acquisition through language games. Teachers should not try to teach pupils the grammar rules, but raise their awareness by providing language models as close as possible to the real communication.

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