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EFL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES ON GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENTS

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Abstract
This work assesses the perspectives of teachers on genders' classroom performance. Its objective targets to discover the challenges faced in teaching foreign languages. English is a foreign language that instructors encounter difficulties to teach especially to a population whereby their linguistic background does not help in using the language properly. To this end, our research questions enquire about the obstacles that impede EFL teachers receiving a positive feedback from learners. As a research instrument, a questionnaire is handed to forty six teachers in Tissemsilt-Algeria. The results exhibit weaknesses in dealing with pupils especially in using the language in an oral or a written task, besides the violent behaviour of males in the classroom which is regarded as a hindering factor to manage the classroom, communicate with learners and teach effectively.

Keywords: Gender performance; foreign language; English; linguistic background; positive feedback.

Introduction
The English language, as a lingua Franca, year by year is becoming the most essential code in all fields. Individuals collapse with this language wherever they are. Teaching the language for learners who do not have a linguistic background in using it is intricate. Hence, our study investigates the attitudes of teachers towards pupils disinterest in English. Its objective inquires for the weaknesses that they face in teaching the foreign language. In an EFL context, many factors intervene in the mediocre level of genders; it could be psychological whereby they feel anxious to participate or ask questions; cultural in which males' participation will make their counterparts resemble them to females, or linguistic in which their level in languages is decreased. The aforementioned factors might arise discrepancy in achievement between pupils in the classroom which needs a professional intervention of teachers to reduce stereotypes, differentiation, fear, and so forth, and attempt to attract the learners' attention according to their different needs and

interests, particularly when it comes to discipline problems in the classroom which obstruct the learning process and create discomfort in class.

Goofing-off in The Classroom

First of all, Adam (2004), Jones and Jones (2007), in their work, discuss the different tools that would help educators in the classroom. They claim that pupils learn by doing; they like being active and interactive. The key towards pupils' success is when they enjoy what they are learning, teachers enjoy what they are teaching and an improvement in performance would be achieved. Right from the start, on the first day of school, the classroom will either belong to the teacher or it will belong to the pupils and become under their control (Willms, 2003; Varga, 2017). In fact, teachers attempt to adopt a learner centred approach in their classes; this approach focuses mainly on the pupil who is considered as a responsible pole for his/her learning as it enhances the learners' linguistic skills (Boudehane, 2015). The teacher, in this context, is considered as a facilitator or a guide in the learning process and emphasizes that learning takes place outside the classroom without his/her interference. This entails the active involvement of learners in their own learning, be autonomous, responsible and self-regulated. (Mizell, 2010; Tavallali & Marzban, 2015)

Actually, as long as classroom management is concerned, 'goof-off' is a term which represents the careless category of learners in the classroom; that is to say, if the teacher checks on one group, the other groups are goofing off (Brady, 2003). A '*goofer'* is a person who evades work or responsibility. Pupils, who talk to each other in the classroom while the teacher is explaining, are considered as goof-offs. Passing notes, sharpening a pencil, gazing out of the window, scrawling in a paper, exaggerated laughing in class, and so forth, are all forms of goofing-off (Jones & Jones, 2007) these attitudes are purposeful to avoid paying attention or prevent doing an exercise in the classroom. An attentive teacher can recognize this category, though this phenomenon is highly noticed at the back of classrooms mainly by male pupils. Jones and Jones believe that *"a typical classroom is simply inefficient due to dawdling, passivity and goofing- off. Goofing off kills more learning time and generates more teacher stress then all of the "serious" disruptions that are the subject of the school discipline code"* (p. 7) The pupils' behaviour in the classroom reflects their learning achievement and the extent to which teachers, especially novice ones, are capable to diminish disruptive behaviours and engage them in the classroom is questionable (Goss, Sonnemann & Griffiths, 2017). Notably, goofers' behaviours have an impact on teachers and learners whereby their attitudes distract their counterparts from paying attention and impede, as well, their teachers from explaining the lecture and waste time in punishment, which most of the time is inefficient. (Brady, 2003)

Evidently, the typical way for a novice or an experienced teacher to avoid goofing off is 'location'; that is to say, if teachers maintain a close distance to pupils, their behaviour will be amended and vice versa. Teachers have to walk around the classroom, among pupils, as they supervise; being passive in one place for so long, or in the front is not appropriate. The rearrangement of tables is very important; the appropriate organization of the furniture in the classroom enables the

instructor to reach any pupil, hence he/she can have control over all learners. (Brady, 2003; Oliver & Reschly, 2007; Garrett, 2008)

Input Versus Output Theory

Second of all, the input that is presented to learners is another element that has an impact on the learners' feedback. Its difficulty or simplicity influences the way pupils perceive knowledge. The teacher's role is to facilitate, as possible as he/she could, information for learners to understand the lectures and respond to assignments respectively. An essential part in language development entails a transformation of the input into learner output. Thus, Adam (n.d.) claims that the learning outcome will be *"a mixture of knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and understanding that an individual will attain as a result of his or her successful engagement in a particular set of higher education experiences" (p. 2)* It is quite important to understand that the learning outcome is what the pupil is expected to do at the end of each lecture or course; his/her positive or negative feedback reflects on the extent to which the input is well acquired, understood or completed during the learning process period. (Adam, nd)

> *"In the context of classroom- based language to learning and teaching, it is the task of the teacher to help learners reach a desired level of linguistic and pragmatic knowledge/ ability that addresses their needs, wants, and situations. In order to carry out such a task, the teacher should be aware of the factors and processes that are considered to facilitate the language development" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 25)*

In fact, language input stands for a written or an oral data or corpus of the target language in which pupils are exposed to through various sources. This entails the existence of two conditions: availability and accessibility (Sárosdy et al. 2006). The input could be either available to learners at school by their teachers, or they should look for it themselves by making research through books or internet. Therefore, it is any information that the learner is exposed to, he/she is going to internalize, comprehend, retain or discard. In this vein, we recognize three types of input.

Inter Language Input

Speaking about the etymology of the term, it was coined by the American Linguist Larry Selinker; for clarity, inter language is a kind of linguistic system used by language learners who are learning a second or foreign language. It is the still developing language of learners. Psychologically speaking, it represents a framework that is activated in the brain when the individual is in the process of learning another language; as Tarone (2006) articulates: *"the adult second-language learner never achieves a level of facility in the use of the target comparable to that achievable by any child acquiring the target as a native language" (p. 747)*. Thus, the inter-language is perceived as an independent linguistic system, different from the pupil's 'mother tongue' and the language that is being learned, but associated to both of them by inter-lingual identifications in the brain of the learner. This latter cannot be performed or grasped as good as the first language and this is because the mother tongue is acquired unconsciously (Al Ghazali, 2006; Cruz, 2015) unlike the second or foreign language which needs

efforts and consciousness to use the language rules appropriately (Nation, 2014; Rezaee & Farahian, 2015)

Simplified Input

Not all information is easily understood, thus the simplified knowledge is a sort of language that is simplified grammatically and lexically in which teachers, textbook writers and competent speakers of the language use it in and outside the classroom while addressing language learners. This simplified version is understood by all pupils of high and mediocre level of the language. This latter is very significant among pupils when they are in the process of learning a foreign language that is distinct linguistically from their native language. It facilitates communication, comprehension and production. For this reason, language clarity is needed in a context where English is a foreign variety. Though it helps comprehension, but it has not yet been proven to facilitate language acquisition. (Ellis, 1993)

Non-Simplified Input

This type refers to the language of competent speakers or natives without any kind of simplification; that is to say, the variety which is generally used in the media (TV, radio, newspaper) each of these sources of input can have various forms: spoken, written, formal and informal. Individuals are exposed to this genre of input from these sources at different points in their learning experience and in varying degrees. Jones and Jones (2007) claim that the difference between teachers is not how the curriculum is followed, but in the process of organizing the learning activity; professional teachers concentrate on how to create an activity to enable learners to perform and interact, either through mastering a skill or the ability to express a concept.

In this vein, Jones (2007) have proposed two distinct methods that are followed by instructors to enhance the process of learning; the first way is as follows: Input, Input, Input, Input- Output, Meanwhile; the second method is sequenced as: Input, Output, Input, Output, Input, Output. They argue that it is preferable to opt for the second order to avoid problems of forgetting, misunderstanding and confusion; it helps learners to be more active and interactive in a way that raises their involvement in the classroom.

The Input Hypothesis

Krashen (1989), in his work, states that we acquire language when we comprehend messages. *"I argue that the best hypothesis is that competence in spelling and vocabulary is most efficiently attained by comprehensible input in the form of reading"* (p. 440) this hypothesis suggests that when we mention the device of language acquisition, language is acquired unconsciously; when this happens the learners will not realize that they are actually acquiring because one's conscious *"focuses on the message, not the form"* (p. 440). For this reason, the implicit

knowledge could be processed by an individual brain if the approach adopted to transmit this latter has the intention to raise the sense of reflection in learners, thus the *"acquired knowledge is represented subconsciously in the brain"* (ibid)

Similarly, in Alatis's work (1991) it is asserted that in order to acquire a language, the Input Hypothesis is compulsory *"we acquire language by understanding messages, that 'comprehensible input' (CI) is the essential environmental ingredient in language acquisition. Comprehensible input is necessary for language acquisition, but not sufficient" (p. 409)* the learner of a language should be open to the input in the sense that the acquirer has already the aspect of i+1 whereby he/she has a prior knowledge and he/she is ready to acquire or learn. In this prospect, the background knowledge is important in learning the language; at least it eases the process of introducing a foreign language into the learner's schemata. If learners already have access to the foreign language, the instruction of teachers will not seem complicated, if not, problems of misunderstanding might arise.

> *"If acquirers rely only on the informal environment, or readers read only authentic texts, progress at first may be slow, since very little of the input will be comprehensible. As acquirers make more progress, the input becomes more comprehensible, and the acquisition becomes more linear, until it flattens out again at the advanced level" (Alatis, 1991, p. 411)*

Output

Output is any information that a learner is able to perform or answer in oral tasks, written tasks, or even in physical motion (Bahrani, 2013; Younesi & Tajeddin, 2014). This latter enables him/her to repeat and recall the information that was already taught. Trial and error are a significant part of the learning process; throughout the action of producing, speaking or writing language, the learner will realize his/her errors to correct them and confirm the information for its validity. In this respect, the output is the only proof in which learners will be able to detect their level of comprehension. Therefore, Swain (1985), as cited in Donesch-Jezo (2011), assumes that *"it is only during the production of the second language (in speech or writing), that the learners can notice that they are not able to say what they want to say in the target language" (p. 11)*

Researchers like Nation (2007) and Schmitt (2008) explain that the interest of learners in learning any language is the process of comprehension and gaining knowledge, thus this latter could be referred to as 'meaning-focused'. A number of conditions are required in order for the 'meaning-focused' phase to be achieved. First, pupils should be familiar with the input, either through reading or listening. Second, the pupils are interested in the presented input and are willed to understand it. Third, only a small proportion of the language should be unknown, i.e. learners should have a rich linguistic background in the foreign language. Forth, pupils should be able to comprehend the ambiguous words in a given context. Fifth, pupils are exposed to many resources and large quantities of input. In this vein, Nation (2007) estimates that, *"The meaning-focused output strand involves learning through speaking and writing using language productively. Typical activities in this strand include talking in conversations, giving a speech or lecture, writing a letter,*

writing a note to someone, keeping a diary, telling a story and telling someone how to do something" (p. 3) For this reason, motivating pupils in performing different tasks that cover many competencies and skills and including all learners in classroom interaction are instances of encouragement to enable them produce language effectively.

Accordingly, the input and the output are strongly associated as they have a mutual influence on each other. Actually, Harmer (2003), as cited in Sarosdy et al. (2006), demonstrates this relationship claiming that information becomes stored in the learners' brain and turn to be an acquired knowledge, i.e. the output transforms to become an input in itself. This latter does not come from the teacher in form of feedback or introducing the topic only, but from learners as well when they participate in the classroom, when providing a comment or a feedback, from learners themselves when they are capable to correct their mistakes from the classroom discussion. The final cycle ends up by either producing a piece of writing or through participation to correct an oral activity.

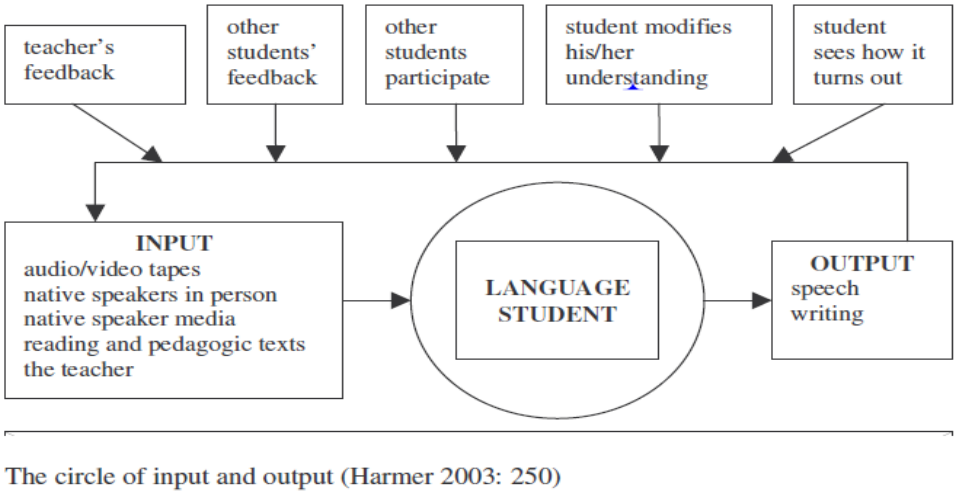


Figure 1. The input-output transformation cycle; cited in Sarosdy et al. (2006, p. 50)

Method

The current investigation used a survey design as a quantitative approach that is organized and focused; it enables us to collect reliable findings and replicable information. In this study, the data were collected from a questionnaire which was a mixture of close ended and open ended questions. The open-ended questions require the respondents to give answers from their own perspectives. Conversely, close ended questions are limited to yes/no questions and sometimes multiple choices are provided as well to serve the overall objective of this investigative work.

Aim of the study

The major purpose of this research work is to assess the extent to which failure in English classes exist in the secondary schools of Tissemsilt-Algeria; what factors might intervene in the process of learning and further we propose some recommendations for improving performance (written and oral) in our EFL context.

Within this pre-designed purpose, the researchers endeavor to answer the following questions:

- What are the major difficulties that English language teachers face?

- How performance is perceived from both genders (males, females)?

- Are there any differences among educators in teaching English in terms of teaching experience and gender?

Participants

Considering the whole population is intricate and sometimes impossible. This work has included forty six teachers out of the whole population from different secondary schools in Tissemsilt-Algeria. Their experience in teaching English diverges from one year to twenty two years; from novice to experienced teachers. Like pupils' number gap, females are more than males in the classroom; the female teachers of English outnumber males as well, in which 87 % are females whereas 13% are males. Their age is from 26 to 40 years old and their diplomas are distinct by system, some belong to the classical system and others hold LMD diplomas; that is to say, a classical promotion have studies for four years, whereas the LMD studies last for three years to hold a license degree in the specialty, or five years to obtain a Master degree.

Instruments

The choice of the questionnaire, as a research tool in this work, aims to provide opportunities for the researcher to obtain data concerning the performance of genders in the English language subject in secondary schools, especially in final classes. Thus, we administered a questionnaire to the teachers of secondary schools, especially those who teach English, which were selected randomly, from the province of Tissemsilt- Algeria. The questionnaire is split into two sections, the first section revolves around the teachers' experience and entry profile, and the second section concentrates on the difficulties they face in teaching English and the factors that could decrease learners' achievement.

Data Collection and Analysis

Actually, our population was selected during a training day in the city which was organized by the inspector of English in the province of Tissemsilt-Algeria. We first asked the permission of the inspector to give us some time to introduce our research topic. Later, we asked them to collaborate with us, and then we administered the survey to the sample which was present in this training. The necessary instructions and information was provided for them. It was ensured that their answers are used only for academic purposes and kept anonymous. The data were collected through two sections; the first section involves some descriptive information about the participants' age, gender, teaching experience and academic degree; whereas the second part includes their role in the classroom and the challenges they encounter in an EFL context.

Findings and Discussion

Prior to the main study, the copies of the questionnaire were given to 46 teachers of English in order to be familiarized with the difficulties they face in

teaching English, and what factors, from their perspective and experience, might contribute to the low performance of pupils in foreign languages. The questionnaires were completed fully and collected. The main findings of the research exhibit the interference of many variables beyond the variables that can be predicted in didactics. A quantitative analysis is counted upon to reach these results.

Table 1.Teachers' Selection of Codes

Languages	Number	Percentage
Arabic	29	63%
French	10	22%
English	07	15%
Total	46	100%

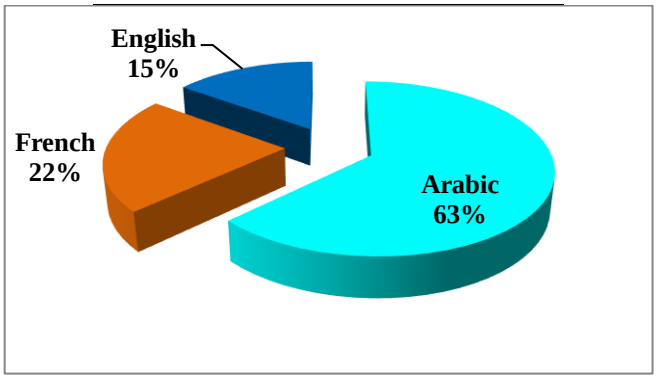


Figure 1.1 Educators' Language Choice in the Classroom

In order to teach a foreign language, the educator should be qualified in using the language, but teaching this latter to pupils, who the English language is not their mother tongue, and are already familiar with other varieties, sounds challenging. First of all, as clarified in Figure 1.1 above, 63% of teachers chooses Arabic as an alternative code to explain the lecture if some concepts are not well understood; 22% of the sample selects French to explain ambiguity; meanwhile, only 15% uses English. Arabic and French are alternatives which are parts of the Algerian pupils' identity; in other words, they represent distinct codes which are engraved in pupils' and teachers' linguistic repertoire; they always go back to these previously mentioned varieties in order to clarify any implicature. It is noteworthy to mention that not all Algerian pupils' are well versed in French especially in rural areas or even learners who have a poor linguistic background; for this reason, instructors find themselves obliged to use Arabic (the mother tongue) and not MSA (Modern Standard Arabic) to clarify ambiguities and ease the process of learning.

Second of all, when teachers were asked about whether they use information and communication technologies or not, 85% notes that they use them whereas 15% does not. Table 2 below clarifies teachers' technology frequent usage in the classroom. Even though, the majority leans on technological aids, but not always in which 70% sometimes backup the lecture with ICTs, mainly the projector and the

laptop. Meanwhile 28% rarely uses it but only 2% always does. The majority of teachers thinks that it is difficult to use ICTs in a crowded classroom; more than that, it is a waste of time because the projectors are not fixed in the classroom, but need to be brought from the administration and take a lot of time to turn them on in the classroom. Further, the overhead projectors are limited only to the teachers of sciences and physics who use it often; in this regard, their accessibility is not always available for the teachers of English.

Table 2. ICTs Regular Utilization in the Classroom

Frequency	Rarely	%	Sometimes	%	Always	%
ICTs Degree of Use in the Classroom	13	**28%**	32	**70%**	1	**2%**

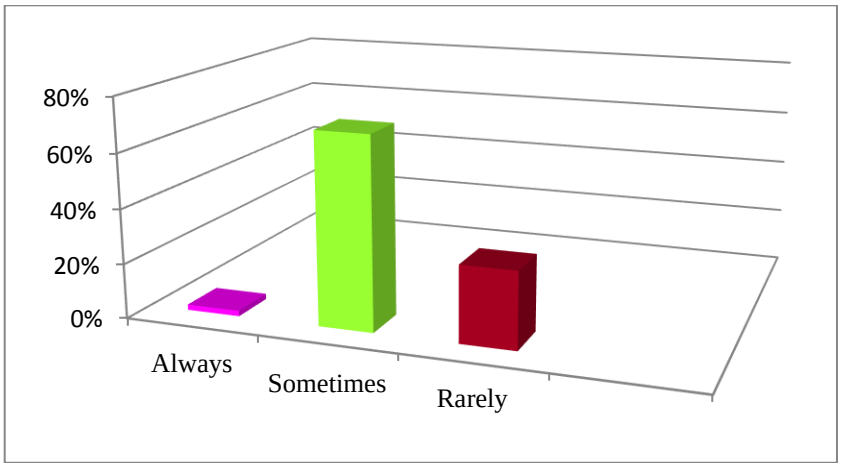


Figure 2.1 ICTs Usage in Class

Third of all, the first step in learning any language requires the mastery of the four skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Our sample insists on the fact that not all these skills are well improved by the language learners. They are weak in the written production in terms of lexis and grammar**.** In this perspective, all teachers agree with the fact that speaking is better than reading, writing and listening. Thus, 74% indicates that oral participation is acceptable in comparison to written contribution in which only 26% opts for it; though, their oral contribution is not satisfactory to a great extent, especially in terms of pronunciation. According to teachers, pupils misspell words, and that is why they prevent participating in order not to be embarrassed in front of their classmates. Figure 3.1 below clarifies the pupils' best classroom skill performance.

Table 3. Pupils' Best Classroom Contribution

The Language Skill	Pupils' Performance	Percentage
Oral skill	34	74%
Written skill	12	26%
Total	46	100 %

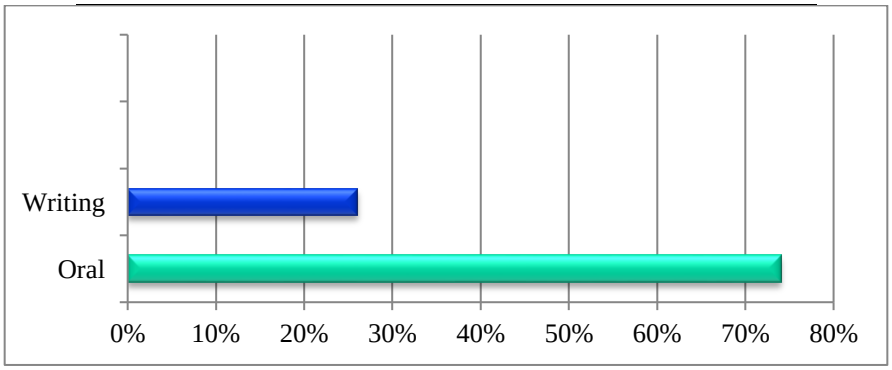


Figure 3.1 Learners' Best Skill Performance

Forth, in the classroom context, pupils are expected to respond to their teachers' questions or comment on any topic that is raised. To assess learners' comprehensibility of the input, they are required to have a written examination to be evaluated upon. Notably, the majority of teachers believes that performance is not alike between male pupils and females, in which 87% argues that females achieve better than males in English, whereas 13% states that males are good performers. They link this high performance of females to their number in the classroom and their interest in learning. By contrast, males' mediocre performance is due to their indifference, especially if their number in the classroom is low. They refuse participating in order not to be resembled to females and be marginalized by their male counterparts respectively. Table 4. and figure 4.1 below show the gap of performance among female pupils and male pupils from the perspective of our selected population.

Table 4. The Genders' Performance

Gender	The Pupils' Participation	Percentage
Female pupils	40	87%
Male pupils	06	13%
Total	46	100%

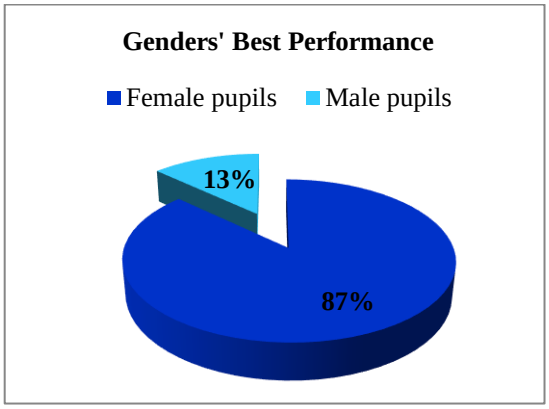


Figure 4.1 The Participation of Males and Females in English Classes

As long as classroom management is concerned, male pupils are categorized to be the most discipline problem contributor in the classroom in comparison to female pupils. 85% of teachers points out that whenever there is a discipline problem, males are the reason; they sit at the back of the classroom to disrupt. 13% of teachers indicates that both genders are involved in the discipline problem, whereas 2% blames females. The goof-off pupils in this context are males; their attitudes in the classroom are an impediment for the teacher to create a suitable atmosphere where the pupils could feel comfortable in learning. This latter is associated to the large number of pupils in the classroom which is an obstacle for teachers to transmit the message appropriately and be able to reach all pupils in traditional seating arrangements. Figure 5.1 below determines the higher rate of male pupils who are responsible of disruptive attitudes in the classroom.

Table 5. The Classroom's Most Disobedient Gender

Options	Genders' Disruptive Behavior	%
Male pupils	39	85%
Female pupils	01	2%
Both genders	06	13%
Total	46	100%

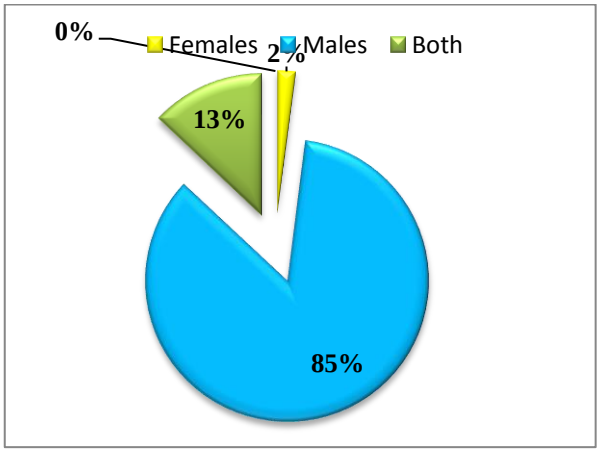


Figure 5.1 Genders' Classroom Discipline

First of all, On the basis of our work, 76% of teachers agrees with the fact that Algerian secondary schools could witness a future gender gap, whereas 24% disagrees with this latter. Their arguments are distinct though they all cast in the same mold. They clarify that girls are more enthusiastic and interesting in learning the English language subject. Their number might promote their performance and excludes boys from classroom participation and academic accomplishment. All teachers link this latter to male pupils' delinquency and absence of interest in learning, because they have other expectations different from that of females.

Second of all, males, according to many teachers, are becoming lazy and less interested in learning; all they are searching for is the easiest and the quickest way to gain money. Hence, they copy what other males do -the category that is excluded from school- to feel independent and self-satisfied. Male pupils have negative attitudes toward English, which is the most affective and psychological factor that results in their poor performance in English. They are unresponsive because they think they will not have the opportunity to find decent jobs and contest females in the workplace; for this reason, they think about joining the army.

Third of all, the majority of teachers in this work complains from discipline problems and how to manage the classroom, though the number of pupils in the class is not shocking, but "Goof-offs" as Jones (2007) labeled exist. The majority of respondents disapproves male pupils' behavior in the classroom arguing that they are not motivated to learn the languages basically because their social status and linguistic background do not help. Speaking about the linguistic background, the pupils' level in English is mediocre, what proves this is their misunderstanding in the classroom which compels the educator to use other varieties to explain the lecture other than English. When the pupils find it difficult to understand what their teachers are speaking about, they feel bored and lose attention; consequently, they make troubles in the classroom to break monotony.

Since ICTs are not used all the time and not in an effective way, classrooms can be considered as a "traditional setting" whereby pupils feel tiresome and disinterested. As long as the input comes from limited resources, though simplified, but this might reduce the chances of learners to improve their English language skills. Pupils are skillful in using digital tools; we can say that there is a cultural

collision between the 21st century learner and the school in which it provides courses which are most of the time traditional. In fact, the input is provided via the use of ICTs, it is clear for pupils who have a high level in English, otherwise the teachers attempt to simplify the information using different varieties as French and Arabic; however, the use of the Arabic language (first language) is higher in comparison to French and English.

In the light of all that has been found, to improve pupils' performance in the English language subject in the secondary schools, and based on the findings of this work, our sample is proposing the following:

1. A better contact should be established with pupils and their parents, as well as be familiar with their cultural background and social situation.
2. The teaching strategies should be differentiated; sticking to one approach might create a mediocre level and monotony among pupils. Using visual aids and establishing games and quizzes are essential.
3. The addition of extra hours after school to cover the weaknesses of learners.
4. Communication is a must between the educators and their learners; this could create a bridge to minimize misunderstanding.
5. It is prerequisite to sensitize pupils about the reason behind teaching this foreign language to attract their attention.
6. Integrating learners in classroom activities through linking the tasks with real life situations.
7. Providing secondary schools with laboratories and amphitheatres to teach the different skills of language, especially listening.
8. Minimizing the number of pupils in class is a first step of amelioration.
9. Involving male pupils is difficult especially with their small number, thus establishing classes for males separated from females would help in enhancing their achievement.
10. Creating more innovative and engaging learning environments.
11. Creating new teaching techniques and methods that encourage male pupils' involvement and participation in class activities.

Conclusion

Actually, teaching is a sacred profession but a challenging mission. Educating a foreign language like English is a difficult task, especially if pupils' status and social background do not help. Thus, our work is an endeavor to search for the difficulties that the teachers of the secondary schools in Tissemsilt encounter when teaching English. The majority of our sample puts emphasis on the high performance of females and the low performance of males. Goof-offs are shaped by male pupils in the classrooms, they are considered as a delinquent category whose job is to distract their teachers from transmitting the message. Though ICTs are used, but not all the time, this is due to their unavailability in the school. More importantly, pupils' linguistic background does not assist their educators to use only English during lectures, but Arabic and French are used alternatively to simplify the input. It is noteworthy to mention that separating male pupils from females is a suggested solution that could help in motivating males to perform better in learning a foreign language. This latter is proposed because all teachers agree with the fact

that disinterest is what describe male pupils' psyche at the secondary schools of Tissemsilt. In a nutshell, teachers and parents play a significant role in the lives of learners, they need motivation and encouragement to perform better, but most importantly communication, because this latter could break the ice and enable both genders to do their best.

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