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## Explorations in Teachers' Misbehaviors and Students' Willingness to Communicate

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**Abstract** (12 point, bold, centered)

This study examined teachers' misbehaviors in relation to students' willingness to communicate in English in the English classes. A sample of 326 students was drawn from a midsize university in central Taiwan. The participants were asked to respond to instruments designed to measure the frequency of teachers' misbehaviors observed and perceived from the perspective of Taiwanese college students that further influenced students' willingness to communicate in English classes. The results of the Pearson correlation indicated a minor relationship, however, when regression analysis was computed, it was found "teacher derisiveness", "teacher incompetence", and "teacher irresponsibility" predict students' willingness to communicate to a significant level. Five specific behaviors were identified, they are, and teacher always thought he/she is correct, teachers compared the students' grades, teachers didn't prepare for class, teachers explained unclearly, and teachers dozed off during students' report and/or test. Though it doesn't imply a cause-and-effect relationship, a statistically significant relationship has appeared in this study. Pedagogical implications on how English teachers could modify their communicational behaviors are addressed. Limitation of this study and suggestions for future research are provided at the end.

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*Keywords:* teacher misbehaviors, willingness to communicate, English learning

## INTRODUCTION

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### Statement of the Problem

College students' classroom participation in English classes is inexorably applauded, yet the extent to which classroom interaction is successful may rest with the degree of student's willingness to communicate in English (Peng, 2012). English is not only seen as a means to connect Taiwan with the world but also as a gatekeeper to higher education and employment prospects (Benjamin & Chen, 2003; Bi, 2011). English serves as a tool for the exchange of knowledge and information in the areas of technology and business (Savignon & Wang, 2003). As Huang (1998) stated, Taiwanese students' view of the ideal way to learn English is through the practical use of English in real-life situations. Students would like their English teachers to create an atmosphere that encourages English use in class and allows more opportunities to practice the language with their peers (Kang, 2005). Nevertheless, the competence level of oral communication has not been raised as expected (Chang, 2002; Peng, 2012). The causes that hinder Taiwanese college students from productively learning English are worthy of examination.

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### Tendency of Unwillingness to Communicate

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Taiwanese students' unwillingness to communicate in the class far exceeds a language phenomenon. Students' reluctance to communicate in English is deeply rooted in and affected by traditional cultural values (Hsu, 2012). This can be seen in the educational setting that teachers tend to play an authoritative role in the classroom and usually embrace a larger power distance between the teacher and students (Andersen, 2000). Additionally, in the cultural view the status of teachers is higher than students (Fwu & Wang, 2002). This mentality results in students' unwillingness to ask questions, express opinions, and/or participate in classroom discussions (Hsu, 2012).

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### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' inappropriate teaching behaviors or (so-called misbehaviors) in relation to students' WTC in English classes by examining its relationship with four types of teacher misbehaviors and its prediction when exploring which particular misbehaviors would have the most impact on students' WTC.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

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### Teacher's Role in Taiwanese English Classroom (level 2 heading 12-point, bold, capitalized first letter)

Taiwan is known to be influenced by Confucianism in social, economical, and educational

realms (Fwu & Wang, 2002; Hsu, 2012; Shuter, 2000). Traditional cultural values have placed great emphasis on submission to authority. These impacts have influenced teachers to embrace a large power distance in teacher-student relationships and reinforced their preference for a teacher-centered classroom (Li, 2003). In a teacher-centered classroom, the teacher is not seen as a facilitator but a presenter of knowledge (Campbell & Zhao, 1993). To date, the research on teacher misbehavior and its effect on students' WTC are limited to Taiwanese college classrooms.

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### **Teacher Misbehaviors**

Teacher misbehaviors were originally conceptualized as “those teacher behaviors that interfere with instruction and thus, learning” (p. 310) (Kearney, Plax, Hays, & Ivey, 1991). Kearney et al. (1991) initiated the line of teacher misbehavior research by investigating the specific teacher misbehaviors that interfere with teaching and distract students from learning in U. S. college classrooms.

Misbehaviors represented by *Derisiveness* reflect the lack of teacher sensitivity. Derisive teachers criticize students directly and indirectly in front of the class by using hurtful, sarcastic, critical, picky, and rude language to put down students. These same teachers are also impatient, subjective, and cold when answering students' questions. Students report that teachers of this type are comparing their grades with other students as well as looking down on their opinions and performance in class. Apparently, a derisive teacher doesn't encourage students nor acknowledge their achievement. The profile of derisiveness is extended further to those teachers who lack passion when answering students' questions. Teacher *Incompetence* includes a number of misbehaviors implying that the teacher doesn't organize nor plan for giving his/her lecture, uses word-for-word translation teaching techniques, but doesn't translate smoothly, or is even self-contradictory in his/her own explanations. These same teachers may also teach lessons that are too difficult or too easy and not appropriate to the students' level, use the same teaching materials year after year, or can't control the class nor create interest for learning.

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### **Willingness to Communicate**

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is a recent addition to the affective constructs rising as a concept to account for L2 communication (Hashimoto, 2002; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, Donovan, 2002; Yashima, 2002; Yashima, Zenuk-Zishide, & Shimizu, 2004). Research suggests that learners who engage in more L2 communication in class are likely to show more improvement in L2 (second language) proficiency (Hashimoto, 2002). Waldeck, Kearney, and Plax (2001) also confirm that students with a higher level of WTC tend to be more effective in terms of communication and learning. Accordingly, researchers believe that WTC is a potential variable that stimulates language learners' communication in L2 and leads to better oral communication proficiency. Yet, earlier related studies stated that L2/FL (foreign language)

learners tend to avoid using the target language (English) to communicate not only inside the classroom but also outside the classroom (Dörnyei, 2003; Kang, 2005; Tabatabaei & Jamshidifar, 2013). As soon as students' WTC was facilitated and enhanced, then students' became more involved actively both inside and outside the classrooms. Kang (2005) stated that a student with high WTC is more likely to use L2/FL in authentic communication settings, thereby eventually becoming an autonomous language learner. It can't be overstated that the importance of WTC is the ultimate goal of teaching L2/FL.

Based on the rationale, the following research hypotheses are plausible:

H1: Students' WTC is negatively correlated with teacher's derisiveness.

H2: Students' WTC is negatively correlated with teacher's incompetence.

H3: Students' WTC is negatively correlated with teacher's irresponsibility.

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## **METHODOLOGY**

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This research was conducted quantitatively by administering two self-report instruments to college students in central Taiwanese colleges. Self-report research is one common approach when conducting a descriptive research, or so-called a survey research. A self-report research requires the collection of standardized, quantifiable information from all members of a population (Gay & Airasian, 2003). The validity of student self-report has been repeatedly confirmed in Astin's studies (Astin, 1977, 1985, 1993), which showed patterns of self-reported outcomes that vary consistently by major field and other measured levels of exposure. McCroskey, Sallinen, Fayer, Richmond, and Barraclough (1996) stated that students generally had a good sense of what they had learned and were willing to self-report their perceptions in educational research.

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### **Participants**

Three hundred and twenty-six participants were drawn from central universities to participate in this research (250 female, 77%, and 76 male, 23%). Participants included a wide range of the study body, from freshmen to seniors, from several different programs, such as traditional students and non-traditional students, including daytime, nighttime, and weekend programs.

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### **Instruments**

In order to measure students' perception of teachers' misbehaviors, Hsu's (2013b) Taiwanese Teacher Misbehavior Scale, a newly developed TTMS was used to measure Taiwanese teachers' misbehaviors. There are four different types, consisting of 28 descriptions of teacher misbehaviors assessed in this instrument, they are: teacher derisiveness, teacher incompetence, teacher irresponsibility, and teacher non-immediacy. Participants indicated the

frequency of teacher misbehaviors using a five point Likert-type (1=never, 5=very often) scale. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability of this instrument showed in this study was .968.

## RESULTS

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To test the first hypothesis, the Pearson’s correlation coefficient (*r*) was computed to examine the relationship. Hypothesis 1, the *r* value was .092, which didn’t reach to a statistical significant level, therefore, H1 was rejected. Hypothesis 2, the *r* value was .072; it was also rejected. However, hypothesis 3 stated that students’ WTC is negatively correlated with teacher’s irresponsibility. The correlation coefficient *r* value was .135,  $p < .05$ , so the hypothesis was supported. The hypothesis 4 stated that students’ WTC is negatively correlated with teacher’s non-immediacy; the *r* value was .032, and didn’t reach to a statistically significant level either, so H4 was rejected. In order to find the overall relationship between teacher misbehaviors and students’ WTC, the Pearson’s correlation coefficient (*r*) was computed again to examine the relationship in H5. The result indicated the *r* value was .088, which means its relationship didn’t reach to a statistically significant level, so the hypothesis was rejected as well. Table 1 displayed the inter-correlation between teacher misbehaviors and students’ WTC.

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Table 1. Inter-correlation between Teacher Misbehaviors and Students’ WTC

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Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Teacher’s derisiveness	--	.743**	.617**	.699**	.092
2. Teacher’s incompetency		--	.668	.813	.072
3. Teacher’s irresponsibility			--	.672	.135*
4. Teacher’s non-immediacy				--	.032
5. WTC					--

Notes. \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$

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In order to understand which particular teacher misbehaviors have the most impact on students’ WTC, multiple regression was computed to examine its prediction. The dependent variable was students’ WTC, and the independent variables were teachers’ misbehaviors. Four different types of teacher misbehaviors were entered individually into a linear regression equation in a stepwise manner. Except for the non-immediacy teacher misbehaviors which did not show any significant prediction of students’ WTC, the other three types of teacher misbehaviors showed different degrees of prediction to students’ WTC to a significant level. Two teachers’ derisiveness misbehaviors, “the teacher always thinks he/she is correct and students are wrong,” and “the teacher compares the students’ grades”, accounted for 2-3% of the variance in WTC. Two teacher incompetence misbehaviors, “the teacher has not prepared for class before he/she teachers the class” and “The teacher’s explanations are not clear, or his/her explanations are self-contradictory”, accounted for 4-6% of the variance in WTC. One percent of the variance was accounted for by teachers’ irresponsibility, “the teacher dozes off during students reports or when monitoring exams.” Table 2 presents detailed results.

Table 2. Multiple Regression Results

Teacher Misbehaviors Descriptions	R	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F ratio	Beta	Sig.
/teacher always thinks he/she is correct	.137	.016	6.167	.235	.014
/teacher compares the students' grades	.193	.031	6.246	-.168	.002
/teacher has not prepared for class	.198	.036	13.153	.320	.000
/teacher's explanations are not clear	.244	.054	10.215	-.188	.000
/teacher dozes off during students reports	.127	.013	5.310	.127	.022

Notes. \*\*\* p < .001, \*\* p < .01, \* p < .05

## DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' misbehaviors in relation to students' WTC in English classes by examining its relationship with four types of teacher misbehaviors and its prediction to examine which particular misbehaviors would have the most impact on students' WTC. This study proposed four hypotheses and one research question. No significant correlated relationship was found between students' WTC and teacher misbehaviors ( $r = .088$ ). However, it is too early to conclude that teacher misbehaviors won't have any impact on students' WTC.

## LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Some limitations to this study need to be addressed. First, there was a disproportionate ratio of female students (77%) to male students (23%). However, this ratio reflects the reality that a majority of English majors are female. Based upon the findings of this study, the following suggestions for future studies are presented:

1. Future studies should take into account participants' gender balance in ratio.
2. Future studies should also consider replicating a similar study in other countries, especially, Asian countries that are also more teacher-centered in their teaching approach.
3. Future studies should examine the outcome of students' WTC English oral proficiency actually produced from WTC in English classes.

Above all, the finding of this current study provided a fresh concept for English education, that is, the correlations between teacher misbehaviors and students' WTC is worthy of all English teachers' attention. We, English teachers, should not only be more sensitive but also wiser to monitor and examine our teaching and communicating behaviors in the classroom, hopefully, reducing some inappropriate teaching behaviors, meanwhile, producing a more fruitful, joyful, and successful teaching outcome. It is suggested that enhancing students' WTC be a primary concern, thereby improving students' oral proficiency in English.

The reference entries are in hanging  
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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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**APPENDIX A**

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Appendix A(or B or C, etc.)

**Questionnaire**

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