

# A Survey of Classroom Misbehaviors of Central Asian Foreign Students in Shaanxi Province

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## ABSTRACT

Problematic behaviors occur frequently in foreign students' Chinese class, which affects the normal teaching order. After having observed and tracked some Central Asian students' classes for a long time, we have found five common undesirable phenomena: lateness, absence from class, over-using mobile phones, failing to respond to in-class tasks and talking when they are not supposed to do so. The causes of these misbehaviors lie in both internal and external aspects: the former includes students' Chinese level, learning attitude and living habits; the latter involved factors such as teachers' teaching attitude and methods of classroom management, teaching quality and skills, physical and psychological environment. To remedy the wrong behaviors of these students, the school should strengthen teacher's classroom management consciousness and update their teaching methods; teachers should attach great importance to formative evaluation; students should learn to self-monitor and self-motivate.

**Keywords:** *Central Asia, Foreign students, Chinese class, Misbehaviors*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the strategic concepts of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Silk Road Effect presents full vitality, the five Central Asian countries and China see more frequent cultural exchanges, increased trade contacts and ideological clashes. The five provinces in Northwest China have assumed a prominent role in the building of the Silk Road Economic Belt. As a province with geographical advantages, Shaanxi has made remarkable achievements and experienced a leap-forward development in cultivating Central Asian students in China in recent years. Shaanxi has created a set of "all-round, multi-level, wide-field, three-dimensional and large-pattern" training system assistance to help adapt to and assimilate to the new environment, including impressive student enrollment, good quality of foreign students, sound curriculum provision, excellent teaching staff, science-based study plan, thoughtful life help, political education as well as an ideological construction.

Amid the high-quality developments, there are still some hidden problems that will reduce the teaching quality of teachers and the acquisition effect of students and even trigger prejudice against and misunderstanding of Chinese civilization among foreign students in the process of cross-cultural communication. These problems are tolerance, and indifference to the classroom misbehaviors in Chinese class. The paper takes "classroom misbehaviors" as the starting point, "classroom misbehaviors in China" as the foothold, and takes Central Asian students in China as the research object, identifies

and analyzes the causes of possible misbehaviors, and proposes corresponding solutions in order to provide reference and help for the front-line teaching.

## 2. RELATED WORK

Classroom misbehaviors enjoy relatively rich research results by foreign scholars, involving the definition, classification, causes and other aspects. Domestic scholars mostly drew on the researches of foreign scholars and made some innovations in light of the teaching situation of local primary and secondary schools.

### 2.1. Classroom misbehaviors

Educators and psychologists have different views and attitudes towards the definition of classroom misbehaviors. Lindgre (1983) defined it as "troublesome behavior" or "trouble caused by behavior" [1]. Specifically, it refers to the fact that students or class collective play and lose an effective role. The misbehaviors not only cut off the learners' classroom learning, but also exerts a negative impact on other classmates, and even directly interferes with the classroom teaching effect. Li (1997) directly and clearly explained the consequences of classroom misbehaviors, namely, it will "influence oneself and disturb others"[2]. Other scholars, such as Yang (2005)[3], Peng (2008)[4], Wen (2013)[5], have also defined the phenomenon from different perspectives. Although these definitions are expressed in different ways, they roughly have the same meaning, that is: classroom misbehaviors

violate the rules of teaching and learning and affect the normal teaching order of teachers and the learning effect of other students.

**2.2. Classroom misbehaviors of foreign students**

Foreign students have increased with diverse origins, different levels of Chinese, unique learning motivation and methods, diversified cultural and language backgrounds, and tend to have classroom misbehaviors. Nevertheless, students of past researches focus on the primary and secondary schools and ignore this special

group. Chinese teachers (especially new teachers) pay more attention to completing the teaching content and imparting Chinese knowledge. In a bid to form a seemingly harmonious teaching relationship with foreign students, they often tolerate or ignore the classroom misbehaviors. As a result, teachers' classroom teaching management shows little effect, and their authority position in the traditional classroom is challenged or even deviated. According to the research results of some scholars in Chinese classroom, the frequent classroom misbehaviors of foreign students are mainly shown in the following Table.

**Table 1.** Frequent classroom misbehaviors of foreign students

Researcher	Time	Classroom misbehaviors
Peng Li	2008	Talking casually, being absent from class, eating, being late, playing with mobile phones, dozing off, not following tasks, playing little tricks, leaving the classroom early, being absent-minded
Zou Dandan	2016	Being absent from class, being late, leaving the classroom early, leaving the classroom at will, talking casually, making noise, making irrelevant requests, walking around at will, playing with mobile phones, sleeping, eating, not following the task, playing little tricks

According to the above findings of the two scholars, we interviewed the Central Asian students in School of Chinese Studies of Xi'an International Studies University and found that all the students admitted that they had one or more classroom misbehaviors, and that being late, absent from class, talking casually, playing with mobile phones, and not following tasks are the most frequent and concentrated five misbehaviors. As such, the paper will conduct specific discussions on these situations, analyze the causes and propose corresponding solutions.

acquisition, scholars divide them into different contents: Altman (1980) summed up 12 categories like "age, gender, personality, linguistic ability, IQ", Skehan (1989) concluded 4 categories of "learning strategy, cognitive and emotional factors", and on the basis, Larsen Freeman & Long (1991) further adds "cognitive style, brain lateralization degree", and summarized 7 categories and 18 items[5]. Some specific manifestations and reasons for classroom misbehaviors of Central Asian students in China are as follows:

**3. CAUSES OF MISBEHAVIORS OF CENTRAL ASIAN FOREIGN STUDENTS**

The classroom misbehaviors in Chinese class are caused by many reasons, including external factors, such as the setting of classroom environment, and the teaching level of teachers, and more internal factors, like students' learning objective, emotional attitude, and strategic methods. As internal factors assume a decisive role, the root causes of misbehaviors will be first analyzed from this perspective.

**3.1. Internal factors**

There are common features in Central Asian students in Shaanxi. However, what is most worth exploring, as well as the most direct and obvious impact on the learning effect is the uniqueness of different individuals. With respect to the "individual factors" behind language

*3.1.1. The students' Chinese level is higher or lower than that of teaching content*

In the classroom, some students keep their heads down and engage in their affairs without following the teacher's classroom tasks. Some students rush to answer questions and show off. These two kinds of students are two extremes. The former students generally have a low Chinese level and find it difficult to understand the classroom content, while the latter students are often complacent because they have significantly higher level than other students in the class, and the teaching content is too simple.

### *3.1.2. Individuals have different learning motivation and attitude*

"Learning motivation" refers to a strong desire that drives learners to master a second language. Gardner (1985) divides it into two types: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation[6]. Foreign students with integrative motivation hope to assimilate into the Chinese environment and feel the charm of China. Therefore, they have strengthened internal motivation and correct learning attitude, which has a positive impact on language acquisition and they are more active and cooperative in the classroom. On the contrary, foreign students with instrumental motivation learn Chinese just to find relevant jobs, or obtain certain credit hours, so they are relatively loose, slack, sluggish and have strong negative emotions, not following the classroom tasks assigned by teachers, and conduct a series of misbehaviors in the classroom.

### *3.1.3. Different nations have diversified living habits and classroom norms*

This is not only embodied in individual learners, but also in the process of intercultural communication. When foreign students first arrive in a foreign country, they will inevitably face doubt, disapproval and inadaptation, and have difficulty accepting the most basic level of life, not to mention learning a language. The Central Asian countries are dominated by nomadic culture, and their people are open-minded, extroverted, and unrestrained and have relaxed requirements of classroom discipline. Since ancient times, China has valued the dignity and order of teachers, attached great importance to classroom discipline, and highlighted the absolute authority of "teachers" in the school. The Central Asian students who value equality and freedom fail to understand, accept and assimilate into China's traditional culture for a while. Therefore, when talking casually, walking around at will, being late and leaving the classroom early and other behaviors that are accepted in the classroom of their countries are regarded as major misbehaviors in Chinese classes, they will be confused and show little understanding.

## **3.2. External factors**

The external factors of misbehaviors in Chinese classroom include two aspects: teachers' factors and learning environment. "Teachers' factors" mainly refers to teachers' teaching ability, management method and problem-solving behavior. "Learning environment" covers two aspects of physical environment and psychological environment.

### *3.2.1. Teachers' factors*

Teachers assume a leading role in the classroom, and the guide for students, the initiator of knowledge, the creator of environment and the maker of rules. Wen (2013) summarized that a qualified international Chinese teacher shall enjoy seven abilities: teaching ability, cross-cultural communication ability, Chinese talent ability, ability to do numerous kinds of work, foreign language communication ability, ability to use modern educational technology, ability to coordinate and cooperate with other disciplines. [5] Here, she didn't regard classroom management ability as a necessary ability. However, in actual teaching, classroom management directly determines the teaching effect and the evaluation of students. As such, in the face of "students with misbehaviors", teachers should strengthen education, communication and guidance as managers.

#### *3.2.1.1. The frequency of students' misbehaviors varies with attitudes and methods of classroom management*

Some new teachers negatively deal with the misbehaviors, such as turning blinding a blind eyes to being late, eating in class, sleeping, spending too much time on their mobile phone in order to get along with the students and create a good and harmonious relationship between teachers and students. Teachers believe that focusing too much on discipline will not only disrupt the normal teaching progress, but also hurt students' self-esteem. Faced with teachers' indifference to the misbehaviors, students may think that their actions are justified. However, with the increase of teaching age, the proficiency of content and the attention to effect, skilled teachers become strict in classroom management. Students also hold in awe towards such teachers, and are less possible to conduct classroom behaviors.

#### *3.2.1.2. Teachers should fully improve the teaching skills and teaching levels, and strengthen the interest and practicability of curriculum content*

"Teaching skills" include whether teachers fully prepare for lessons, whether teaching methods are vivid and interesting and close to the reality of life, whether teachers grasp the key and difficult points of teaching, etc. Some foreign students think that the reason why they talk casually and treat tasks passively in class is that the teaching is dry and dull, namely, teachers have boring teaching content, outdated teaching methods, backward ideas, and hardly know what the students need. Therefore, students can do nothing but sleep or read unrelated books to spare the boredom. The establishment of teachers' professional and authoritative image shall be realized by improving their teaching level and arousing students'

interest in learning. Therefore, teachers should stick to lifelong learning first.

### **3.3. Environmental factors**

Environmental factors include the physical environment of teaching and the psychological environment between teachers and students.

#### **3.3.1. Physical environment**

The physical environment in the classroom includes the arrangement of seats, the surrounding of the classroom and the indoor temperature. Teachers usually notice a general rule that the students who sit in the front rows are more active and enthusiastic in learning, while the students who sit in the back rows often have classroom misbehaviors such as talking casually, sleeping and arguing. Central Asian students have a strong sense of nationality, so they prefer to sit with their nationals in fixed seats in the back two rows of the classroom. The close space distance provides convenience and conditions for them to communicate in their native language in class. The light and temperature in the classroom sometimes interfere with students' normal study. In the mixed class, students from different countries have diversified requirements for temperature. Students from Southeast Asia in the tropics have a higher tolerance to high temperatures. Students from five Central Asian countries with the temperate continental climate are afraid of heat. Therefore, the two groups have hidden contradictions in the use of air conditioning and temperature regulation.

#### **3.3.2. Psychological environment**

"Psychological environment" is also called "psychological atmosphere", which refers to the comprehensive performance of teachers' and students' attitudes and emotions towards the classroom. A sound psychological environment and atmosphere can promote the interaction between teachers and students in the classroom. On the contrary, a bad psychological environment will hinder the communication between the two sides and even trigger confrontation and tension. According to the actual relationship between teachers and students, classroom atmosphere can be divided into four types: i. Democratic type. Students are willing to participate in group activities, and active, relaxed, pleasant and interactive classes can achieve ideal results. ii. Laissez-faire type. Students are negative, lax, lack of responsibility. As classroom discipline is poor, teachers' classroom management often fails to produce effectiveness. iii. Serious type. The teacher's behavior, eyes and tone will give some hints to the students and require them to observe the classroom discipline, which often causes certain emotional tension and great pressure. iv. Boring type. Faced with boring

teaching content, students are less motivated for learning and progress, extremely lack interest in learning, and thus absorb very limited knowledge even when teachers input more content.

Based on the above four types of classroom atmosphere, we can clearly find that the building of a harmonious relationship between teachers and students, the creation of a lively classroom atmosphere, and the stimulation of teachers' willingness to teach and students' interest in learning assume great significance for the prevention of students' misbehaviors and the improvement of teachers' teaching level.

## **4. REFLECTION AND SUGGESTIONS**

Classroom misbehaviors of foreign students directly affect Chinese teachers. In a bid to ensure classroom discipline, cultivate a good style of study and improve the teaching effect, it is necessary for schools, teachers and students to work together to reduce relevant classroom misbehaviors.

### **4.1. Schools should enhance teachers' awareness of classroom management and ensure excellent logistics services**

At present, most teachers focus on the teaching content and tasks, think classroom misbehaviors are none of their concern, and thus don't intervene or stop the misbehaviors. Even if they have the intention to stop the misbehaviors, they don't know how to do it appropriate. Schools can provide more classroom management training for teachers, and formulate a combination of targeted learning programs and codes for foreign students, so as to ensure that "there are laws to follow, and the laws are observed". Schools shall clearly point out misbehaviors, and strengthen the interaction between teachers and students in the classroom. Besides, schools also need to consolidate and strengthen logistics support and see to it that the measures can satisfy the justified needs of foreign students, and provide a comfortable living and learning environment before enrolling students.

### **4.2. Teachers should improve teaching skills, strengthen classroom management and assessment**

Teachers can distinguish themselves from others with unique teaching style. Some teachers are passionate. In the classroom, they comprehensively use non-body language and body language to attract students' attention, mobilize their emotions and stimulate their interest in learning. Some teachers use their personality and hobbies such as singing, dancing, calligraphy and other traditional skills to create a new world of Chinese class so as to guide students to learn language elements of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and others. The creative classroom

is sure to be embraced by students. Meanwhile, as a direct participant in the classroom, teachers should strengthen the management of foreign students and understand the real situation of each student based on the roll call, assessment, homework, rewards and punishments.

#### ***4.3. Students should work to break away from classroom misbehaviors and strengthen class supervision mechanism***

Students should correct their learning attitude, set clear learning motivation, adjust negative emotions, reduce individual consciousness, adapt to cultural differences, and conduct learning more actively and harmoniously. As a whole, the class should establish a set of "student management" mechanism besides the supervision and management of teachers, strengthen the building of team spirit, enhance cohesion, resolutely put a stop to classroom misbehaviors of individuals, thus achieving the ultimate goal of self-monitoring and self-management.

### **5. CONCLUSION**

Classroom misbehaviors take a toll on the quality of teaching and the listening effect of other students. At present, the common misbehaviors are lateness, absence from class, overusing mobile phones in class, failing to respond to in-class tasks and talking when they are not supposed to do so. Both the internal reasons from students, and the external reasons out of teachers and classrooms can result in them. Schools, teachers and students should work together to put an end to them, thus ensuring normal classroom order and a harmonious classroom atmosphere as well.

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