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The Impact of EFL Teacher’s Nonverbal Communication and Interaction on EFL Learners’ Awareness for Increasing Learning Stimuli

A Case Study on Libyan Students at Elementary Sebha Schools, Libya

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Abstract

EFL teachers seek to make EFL learners learn the language at the same level. However, learning processes are different in classroom due to learners' individual differences. The aim of this study is to identify the influence of EFL teacher’s nonverbal communication and interaction on EFL learners’ awareness/sensation for increasing learning stimuli at elementary Sebha schools. This study also focuses on exploring the learners’ attitude and response toward learning English through nonverbal communication and interaction. Classroom observations were used in this study. The participants were 100 students from 5th and 6th grade who were randomly selected from different classes from two schools. The result revealed that many students were influenced by the English teacher’s nonverbal communication and interaction at both schools.

Keywords: *influence EFL teacher nonverbal communication interaction EFL learners awareness sensation*



Introduction

EFL learners' being aware toward learning can be beneficial to the English teacher for making stimulus in teaching and learning. Awareness can identify individual's behavior through stimulus. Awareness/sensation is an observing process about something that can be sensed (Megawati & Hartono, 2020). Awareness/sensation is the process which pushes an individual to decide do something or not. It is also the way in which one can obtain information from the surrounding, which is later interpreted after processing it.

It is necessary to have teacher-student communication and interaction as to observe learners behavior and attitudes. Therefore, nonverbal communication and interaction is very significant in classroom (Pan, 2014; Megawati & Hartono, 2020). Communicating or interacting without words is a nonverbal process encompassing body language and other behaviors such as facial expressions and eye contact. Nonverbal process can be useful if communication and interaction are arisen (Eaves, 2016; Pandey, 2017).

School 1 and School 2 are formal public educational institutions located in Sebha, which introduce English lessons to elementary stage. The classrooms in these two schools are learner-centered classes.

It has been noticed that many EFL students in Sebha elementary schools still have issues in learning English. It has been observed that EFL teachers communicate and interact well with their learners, verbally and nonverbally. They use body language and facial expressions. However, there are some learners who are not active and engaged may be due to individual differences.

According to some teachers, the students do not involve well during language learning in terms of communication and interaction. Some of the learners are interested to use books, while some others are not despite of the teacher's encouragement for them. According to Pan (2014), learners can be affected by teacher's stimulation and instructions. Learners' realization of their teacher's teaching process plays a major role in their attitudes and reactions which assists in identifying the way they respond, react, communicate or interact with their teacher. For instance, learners' stimulus toward learning may arise and develop if they sense that the way their teacher uses in teaching is motivating and interesting. In contrast, inactive teaching results in making learners tedious and unwilling to learn.

The objective of this study is to highlight on the impact of EFL teacher's nonverbal communication and interaction on EFL learners' awareness/sensation, response and attitude for



increasing learning stimuli at elementary Sebha schools. The questions of the study are as the following: (1) How does the EFL teacher's nonverbal communication and interaction at the 5th and 6th grade at elementary Sebha schools take place? (2) What is the EFL learners' awareness, response and attitude toward their teacher's nonverbal communication and interaction?

Literature Review

What is EFL Learner's Awareness/Sensation?

Awareness/sensation is the sense of noticing something or feeling it which occurs around an individual. Such awareness is related to all senses which trigger abstract and concrete sense (Goldstein, 2010; Marcora, 2010; Rezalou & Oktay, 2021).

Awareness/sense is a motivational instrument which is usually attached to something real including various self and social aspects. A real thing is known as a sense of an object which can be stimulating or motivational, and the social sense is related to the characteristics of human stimulus (Samsudin & Sukrisno, 2016).

Awareness or sensing could be developed and triggered since noticing is attached to them which enables an individual to sense the surrounding or avoid it. Teacher's and learners' awareness/sensation toward each other could influence teaching and learning processes (Ortaçtepe & Akyel, 2015; Zein, 2016).

According to Sato (2018), awareness/sensation is a means of making an individual behave in a particular way making him/her decide what to do or not according to a particular motive.

English as a Target Language (TL)/Foreign Language (FL)

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL)/target language (TL) means teaching it in formal settings (schools) not in social real life (Broughton, 2003; Vijayalakshmi & Babu, 2014). Therefore, learners study as an EFL or TL for specific purposes and for particular goals such as preparing for an exam and pass it for employment and so forth. English is mandatory in the education system for many countries which introduce it to schools only as an EFL or TL (Alshibany, 2017). Hence, English is not a means of every day communication and interaction.

EFL Learners' Awareness/Sense of Teacher's Stimulus

Awareness/sense is a process to responding to something through noticing and feelings where a stimulus can arise. That motive can be related to sensing something physical or social (i.e., human) (Rezalou & Oktay, 2021). Awareness/sense may be considered as an instrument



which either makes an individual take a positive side or a negative one (Alharbi, 2022; Habók, Magyar, & Molnár, 2022). Awareness/sense is the understanding of the things which motivate individuals and which they receive from sensation. This means that these individuals have a full response toward the things they had sensed (Santos, 2022).

Awareness/sense is a sort of stimulating instrument connected to sensing, noticing the surrounding or avoid it. Teacher's and learners' awareness/sensation toward each other could have an impact on teaching and learning processes (Ortaçtepe & Akyel, 2015; Zein, 2016). According to Sato (2018), awareness/sensation can make an individual change his/her behavior in a particular way where s/he decides what to do or not according to a certain incentive.

One' s sensation could be affected by other individuals through nonverbal communication and interaction. For example, when communicating and interacting with others intentionally or spontaneously, nonverbal communication and interaction is controlled in an organizing way. According to Husna, Hartono and Sofwan (2015), when individuals communicate, it essential to focus on the way they talk, pace, stopping at sentences, phrases or words, body language and facial expressions, eye contact, distance, positions of sitting and standing.

Awareness/sense therefore refers understanding something which can be an image, or an opinion about things or people.

EFL Teacher's Nonverbal Communication and Interaction

Nonverbal communication and interaction occurs when individuals behave collaboratively with others. They behave through body language, facial expressions and eye contact. On contrary, verbal communication and interaction occurs between the teacher or the students and vice versa through oral processes, such as asking and answering questions, making comments and participating in discussions (Tuan, 2010; Ubaedillah & Hartono, 2016). Therefore, nonverbal communication and interaction includes several behaviors (Zorić, 2010; Hess, 2016). For example, meaning is produced through a particular behavior rather than using words (Nigussie, 2015). So this could raise learners' motivation toward learning.

Nonverbal communication and interaction is a communicative interactive process by transmitting and receiving silent, visual signals between individuals. Thus, messages can be conveyed through body language such as motions, touch and as well as facial expressions (Zorić, 2010; Nigussie, 2015; Eaves, 2016).

Discourse also involves nonverbal aspects such as voice quality, rate, pitch, intonation, stress, etc. Likewise, some writings also include nonverbal aspects, for example, the shape of writing,



the place of words, or the design of a cover or a page. However, much research about nonverbal communication and interaction has focused on face-to-face communication and interaction, which consist of three types, environmental conditions in which correspondence and physical qualities of the communicators take place, and their practices which occur during collaboration (Ubaedillah & Hartono, 2016).

The teacher's nonverbal communication and interaction plays a major role in human correspondence. For example, facial show activities, eye contact, way of dressing, hairstyle can mean more than saying and uttering words loudly and frequently assist learners judge about others contemplations, emotions, and goals because they prepare a scene for what may be added to correspondence. There are nonverbal communication and interaction types compatible with teacher's nonverbal communication and interaction. First, visual communication and interaction which deals with visual symbols and signs and their use during communicative and interactive operations (Thorne, 2012; Rizki, Rukmini, & Sutopo, 2013). Visual communication and interaction is based on vision and visual aids or technology. It involves subcategories such as facial expressions (e.g., smiling), sign language (e.g., a happy wave), body language (e.g., nodding head), body movements (e.g., tapping fingers), pictures (e.g., drawings), signals and signs (e.g., traffic lights, flags) (Thorne, 2012; Rizki, Rukmini, & Sutopo, 2013). Second, acoustic nonverbal communication and interaction which is related to linguistic and non-linguistic aspects, for example, tone, rhythm, accent) that can be heard (Thorne, 2012; Rizki, Rukmini, & Sutopo, 2013). Moreover, it deals with sounds other than speech, and their use and interpretation in communicative and interactive processes. This types includes human sounds (e.g., humming), human speech (e.g., intonation), non-human sounds (e.g., bird songs, siren), music (e.g., national anthems), silence (e.g., pauses). Third, communicating and interacting with others through touch which is a human natural operation. It involves movements which are acceptable among individuals such as friends or those individuals who know each other very well. These movements are such as placing a hand over a shoulder to show support or sympathy, warm applause on the upper back to express congratulations (Thorne, 2012; Rizki, Rukmini, & Sutopo, 2013). In this type, touching may not be acceptable to people who do not know each other well.

EFL Teacher's Nonverbal Communication and Interaction Influence on EFL Learners

EFL teachers' nonverbal communication and interaction can affect their learners positively in social settings. This is because the learners consider themselves as important members in the (academic) community where they can develop their learning (Wijaya, Sudjimat, & Nyoto 2016).



Appropriate nonverbal communication and interaction such as eye contact, body language, facial expressions, various intonation, and sense of humor, are all considered highly effective teaching behaviors (Hsu & Roso, 2006). Teacher's nonverbal communication and interaction can assist in enhancing positive and effective instructional communication and interaction, which directly influences the students' attitudes towards the teacher and their willingness to learn (Samsudin & Sukrisno, 2016). Hence, it could be inferred that teachers' nonverbal communication and interaction can be a helpful tool for EFL learners. It can create a positive atmosphere in the classroom, help the learners learn and focus on certain points. Besides, it can facilitate teaching and learning processes which may enhance the quality of English teaching and learning.

Methodology

Design of the Study

The design of this study is to observe and explore a phenomenon. It focuses on exploring possibilities related to what may cause something happen (Cohen et al., 2005). The study aimed at exploring the impact of EFL teacher's nonverbal communication and interaction on EFL learners' awareness/sensation for increasing learning stimuli at elementary Sebha schools. It also highlights exploring the learners' attitude and response toward learning English through nonverbal communication and interaction.

Participants of the Study and Sampling

The participants were 100 students from 5th and 6th grade who were randomly selected from different classes at two elementary schools, School 1 and School 2. Random sampling technique was used for selecting the population because this can provide a chance to the population to be a part of sampling process (Creswell, 2012; Taherdoost, 2016).

Instruments and Data Collection

Classroom observation only was used to gather data which aimed at observing teachers' and students' behaviors or activities taking place in the classroom. Each classroom observation took 40-45 minutes of total of 8 sessions. There was a checklist to mark out the learners' behavior, response and attitudes toward their teachers' nonverbal communication and interaction. The observation was used to gather primary data about nonverbal teacher communication and interaction toward students' awareness (Angrosino, 2007; Creswell, 2012).

Data Analysis and Findings



The data gathered from the observation were analyzed by using discourse analysis method. It involved the relationship between the collected information and its context (i.e., nonverbal teacher communication and interaction toward students' awareness/sense). Based on the observation checklist, the students' behavior, response and attitudes toward their teachers' nonverbal communication and interaction were different. Most of the students in both schools were very positive toward teachers' nonverbal communication and interaction perhaps because of visual aids or teachers' body language. However, some of them did not show any positivity because they may not have been nonverbally motivated. Hence, it can be said that the classes who had been exposed to nonverbal communication and interaction were eager toward learning because they were stimulated. Moreover, their response and attitude toward their teachers were high in terms of awareness and sense of their teachers' teaching process. For the students who had not been exposed to nonverbal teacher communication and interaction were not positive. They appeared to lack motivation and irresponsive toward learning. This can be attributed to the teachers of being unacknowledged to nonverbal teaching. Therefore, nonverbal teacher communication and interaction appeared significantly influenced the students' awareness/sense toward their teachers' nonverbal behaviors in terms of response and attitude.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to explore any significant influence of EFL teacher's nonverbal communication and interaction on EFL students' awareness/sensation for increasing learning stimuli at elementary Sebha schools as well as their attitude and response toward learning English. According to the findings, the majority of the students in both schools, that School 1 and School 2, whose teachers used nonverbal communication and interaction had stimuli for learning. Their behavior and response toward their teachers were positive as their motivation increased. This means that the students' awareness/sense was influenced by teacher's nonverbal communication and interaction. While some other students who were stimulated appeared to be influenced other factors.

The limitations in this study was related to gathering the data where the time was very limited and short.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that EFL teachers apply nonverbal communication and interaction to raise their learners awareness/sense as well as to trigger the learners' positive response and attitude toward them. This can increase learners' motivation where learning goals can be accomplished. Further research is also needed for investigating this phenomenon as to cover any missing gap which assist in developing teachers' teaching and learners' learning.



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تأثير التواصل والتفاعل غير اللفظي لمعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على وعي متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لزيادة محفزات التعلم

دراسة حالة عن الطلاب الليبيين في مدارس سبها الابتدائية ، ليبيا

يوسف الحضيري

قسم اللغة الانجليزية، جامعة سبها، ليبيا

الملخص

يسعى مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية إلى جعل متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يتعلمون اللغة على نفس المستوى. ومع ذلك ، تختلف عمليات التعلم في الفصل الدراسي بسبب الفروق الفردية بين المتعلمين. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تحديد تأثير التواصل والتفاعل غير اللفظي لمعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على وعي / إحساس متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لزيادة محفزات التعلم في مدارس سبها الابتدائية. تركز هذه الدراسة أيضًا على استكشاف المتعلمين الموقف والاستجابة تجاه تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال التواصل والتفاعل غير اللفظي. تم استخدام الملاحظات الصفية في هذه الدراسة. كان المشاركون 100 طالب من الصف الخامس والسادس تم اختيارهم عشوائيًا من فصول مختلفة في مدرستين. كشفت النتيجة أن العديد من الطلاب تأثروا بالتواصل والتفاعل غير اللفظي لمعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في كلا المدرستين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تأثير التواصل والتفاعل غير اللفظي معلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية إحساس بالوعي

Abbreviations and Acronyms

EFL English as a foreign language

TL English as a Target Language



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Appendix

Observation

Observation sheet when observing EFL teacher's nonverbal communication and interactions

Serial No.	Items statement variables of English teacher nonverbal communication and interaction	Categories				
		1= Negative	2= Negative	3= Neutral	4= Positive	5= Very Positive
		1	2	3	4	5
1	The teacher smiles at the student when explaining the materials					
2	The teacher raises eyebrows when talking to friends					
3	The teacher tells to go to the front of the class while waving the hand					
4	The teacher says "stop it!!" and raises hands when the students are noisy					
5	The teacher hangs head down when explaining the material					
6	The teacher does not hang head down when explaining the material					
7	The teacher comes to the students and strokes the student's shoulder					
8	The teacher uses photos as his/her media when explaining the materials					
9	The teacher does not use photos as his/her media when explaining the materials					
10	The teacher explains the material with clear intonation					
11	The teacher explains the material without clear intonation					
12	When the teacher explains, the students become noisy					
13	When the teacher explains, the students do not become noisy					
14	The teacher uses music as a medium when teaching in class					
15	The teacher does not use music as a medium when teaching in class					
16	The teacher remains silent before a student answers a question					
17	The teacher does not remain silent before a student answers a question					
18	When students are able to answer questions, the teacher invites other students to give applause					
19	When students are able to answer questions, the teacher does not invite other students to give applause					
20	The teacher touches gently on student's shoulder who comes in front of the class					
21	The teacher does not touch gently on student's shoulder who comes in front					



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