

## **Students' affective learning factors in learning English on teachers' nonverbal immediacy**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims at finding out how the students perceive teachers' nonverbal immediacy that affects their attitude in learning English. Also, this study investigates how the students perceive teachers' nonverbal immediacy that affects their motivation in learning English. The researcher used observation and questionnaires to collect the data. The results of this study showed that fifteen out of sixteen teachers' nonverbal immediacy behaviors were perceived positively in affecting the students' positive attitude in learning English. Similarly, this study also showed that fifteen students perceived the teachers' nonverbal immediacy behavior affected their motivation in learning English. The researcher concluded that the students would have a positive attitude and high motivation in learning English if a teacher employs nonverbal immediacy behaviors suitably in her teaching or interaction with the students.

### **Keywords:**

Nonverbal immediacy; students' attitude; students' motivation

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Student achievement is one of the principal concerns to educators, including in English learning activities (Akib, Haryanto, Iskandar, & Patak, 2018). In order for the students to be successful in learning activities, then the teacher not only needs to pay attention to what the students know or what the students need to know but also on students' psychological condition. It is quite observable that some learners learn a foreign language more rapidly than others that is because they are successful based on their strong determination, hard work, and persistence. Some other learners are not that successful in learning another language, and it is clear that some crucial factors are influencing their success, which is mostly beyond the control of the learner. These factors can generally be categorized as affective learning factors.

Two affective learning factors seem to become the major problems for students; they are attitude and motivation. The students' negative attitude and lack of motivation, including in learning English seem to become a significant problem for any teacher. Some factors may cause the occurrence of this problem; one of them is the teacher. The teacher can make students feel bored, anxious or even afraid in following English teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

Based on this presumption, immediacy originally was constructed as behaviors which "enhance closeness to and nonverbal interaction with another" (DePaulo, 1992; Mehrabian, 1968; Richmond, McCroskey, & Payne,

1991), then researcher assumed that when teachers apply immediacy behaviors, then the teachers and students could become closer within acceptable social and psychological distance. When the relationship between teachers and students are closer, then the students can learn more comfortably. The teacher can do much to capture and maintain the students' motivation if he builds positive characteristics or utilizes immediacy behaviors (Baker, 2010; Christophel, 1990; Gorham, 1988; Hsu, 2010; Velez & Cano, 2008). This was also supported by some researches that proved nonverbal immediacy behaviors of teacher have shown to have a positive influence on student affective learning factors (Baker, 2010; Christophel, 1990; Hsu, 2010; Velez & Cano, 2008).

Immediacy is divided into two categories, verbal and nonverbal. Although these two categories can enhance closeness between people who employ it in their communication, however nonverbal immediacy seems to be more important. Richmond et al. (1991) said although immediacy is communicating both verbally and nonverbally, the nonverbal component is far more important in most cases. This is because the nonverbal immediacy may exist independent of any verbal message, but a variety of nonverbal messages usually accompanies verbal message.

Immediacy is communication behaviors that create closeness regarding social and psychological perceived distance between people who employ them in their communication. The concept of immediacy was proposed by Mehrabian (1968) who used this term to point to communication behaviors which "enhance closeness to and nonverbal interaction with another." Mehrabian (1969) and subsequent researchers Christophel (1990 and Gorham (1988) divided immediacy into two categories of communication; verbal and nonverbal.

Verbal immediacy refers to verbal messages that show kindness, humor, and praise. Verbal immediacy focuses on speaking behaviors such as including personal examples, using humor, providing, and inviting feedback (Gorham, 1988). Showing verbal immediacy behaviors when requiring to convey messages that transmit a feeling of warmth and a willingness to get in touch to the receiver of the message.

A simple example is the use of the pronouns "we" instead of using "you or I." For example, when we want to show this verbal expression to someone we know, we may say "we can overcome this problem together" rather than "you should overcome this." The utilization of plural pronouns such as "we" could make people closer, singular pronouns such as "you or I" tend to make people feel separated.

Language is not the only source of communication. Messages can be imparted not only by verbal expressions but also through motions and touch, by stance, by outward appearance and eye contact. Nonverbal Immediacy comprises a term used to describe nonverbal behaviors that communicate liking, a positive evaluation of others, or positive effect on others. Nonverbal immediacy refers to nonverbal behaviors that include smiling or looking toward someone when talking to him/her. Some studies were focusing on nonverbal behavior, which is considered as more powerful at conveying immediacy than verbal behaviors.

Again, immediacy affects people relationship varied from culture to culture. The example of the effect of culture on nonverbal immediacy is the use of touch. In western country, the use of touches such as patting the shoulder of someone or hugging is perceived as the way of communication that sends a message of empathy. However in another country, like Indonesia, such behavior is perceived as inappropriate behaviors, especially when the person touched is the opposite sex of the person that does the touch and they do not have any relationship that makes the touch is acceptable by their culture.

Based on the background, the research questions of this study are as follows:

- How do the students perceive teachers' nonverbal immediacy that affects their attitude in learning English?
- How do the students perceive teachers' nonverbal immediacy that affects their motivation in learning English?

The researcher used quantitative study using observation checklist and questionnaire to collect the data from respondents (Hinton, McMurray, & Brownlow, 2014). The researcher used the Purposive Sampling Technique taking one class from one of the secondary school in Makassar city, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The researcher chose the class after conducting a preliminary observation and found that the English teacher who teaches in that class used many immediacy behaviors in her teaching and the students responded the teacher's immediacy behaviors by actively involved themselves in classroom activities and paid attention to the teacher's explanation.

## **2.1 The Instruments of the Study**

There were two kinds of instruments used in this research, namely observation checklist and questionnaires.

### **2.1.1 Observation checklist**

The researcher started the procedures of collecting data by observing three sessions of teaching and learning processes to record the teacher's immediacy behaviors and the students' behaviors. The researcher observed the three phases of teaching and learning activities, from beginning the class, running the class, until closing/ending the lesson.

### **2.1.2 Questionnaires**

The researcher distributed attitudinal and motivational scale to the respondents of this research to obtain data about the teacher's immediacy that affects the students' attitude and motivation in learning English. The scales were made based on the data obtained from the observation that was about the kinds of teacher's nonverbal immediacy that teacher used in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Each of the scales will use a 5 point Likert scale (1=very low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high, 5=very high).

## 2.2 Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, identified and classified the teacher's nonverbal immediacy used in the classroom. Microsoft Excel program was used to analyze the data obtained from attitudinal and motivational scale. The teacher's nonverbal immediacy had 16 items of nonverbal immediacy behaviors. The questionnaire that was used in this research used a 5 point Likert scale, namely 1=very low, 2=low, 3=moderate, 4=high, 5=very high. The data were in nominal scale.

Table 1. The score range

| No. | Interval Mean Score | Category  |
|-----|---------------------|-----------|
| 1   | 4.2 – 5.0           | Very High |
| 2   | 3.4 < x ≤ 4.2       | High      |
| 3   | 2.6 < x ≤ 3.4       | Moderate  |
| 4   | 1.8 < x ≤ 2.6       | Low       |
| 5   | ≤ 1.8               | Very Low  |

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 How do the students perceive teachers' nonverbal immediacy that affects their attitude in learning English?

Table 2. Nonverbal immediacy behavior on learning English attitude

| No | Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors   | Phases (meetings) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Mean | Category |    |
|----|---|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|----------|----|
|    |   | 1                 |   |   | 2 |   |   | 3 |   |   |      |          |    |
|    |   | B                 | R | C | B | R | C | B | R | C |      |          |    |
| 1  | Smiling at an individual student while talking to him/her             | √                 | √ |   | √ | √ |   |   |   | √ | 4.64 | VH       |    |
| 2  | Smiling at the class while talking                                    | √                 | √ |   | √ | √ |   |   | √ | √ | 4.61 | VH       |    |
| 3  | Using gestures while talking to the class                             | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4.61 | VH       |    |
| 4  | Being enthusiastic about teaching                                     | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ |   |   | √ | √ | √    | 4.44     | VH |
| 5  | Giving the reward to the student as an appreciation of student effort |                   |   |   |   |   | √ |   |   |   | 4.38 | VH       |    |
| 6  | Having a relaxed body posture while talking to the class              | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4.26 | VH       |    |

|    |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |      |    |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|----|
| 7  | Nodding along students' responses  | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |   | √ | 4.26 | VH |
| 8  | Coming closer to students when teaching  | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4.26 | VH |
| 9  | Looking at the class while teaching  | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4.23 | VH |
| 10 | Using vocal variety (non-monotone) when talking to the class   | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4.23 | VH |
| 11 | Looking very little at board or notes while talking to the class   | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 4.05 | H  |
| 12 | Dressing neatly  | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 3.97 | H  |
| 13 | Having eye contact when calling on a student's name  | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 3.85 | H  |
| 14 | Looking at the individual student while talking to him/her   | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | 3.79 | H  |
| 15 | Shaking hands with students  |   |   | √ |   |   | √ | √ | 3.7  | H  |
| 16 | Walking from back to the front and side-to-side between rows when teaching (moving around the class when teaching) | √ | √ |   | √ | √ |   | √ | 3.32 | M  |

Note: B: beginning the class; R: running the class; C: closing the lesson; VH: very high; H: high; M: moderate

Table 2 showed that there are fifteen teacher's nonverbal immediacy behaviors that were positively perceived in affecting the students' positive attitude in learning.

### 3.2 How do the students perceive teachers' nonverbal immediacy that affects their motivation in learning English?

Table 3. Nonverbal immediacy behaviors on learning English motivation

| No | Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors  | Phases (meetings) |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Mean | Category |   |
|----|--|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------|----------|---|
|    |  | 1                 |   |   | 2 |   |   | 3 |   |   |      |          |   |
|    |  | B                 | R | C | B | R | C | B | R | C |      |          |   |
| 1  | Smiling at an individual student while talking to him/her  | √                 | √ |   | √ | √ |   |   | √ |   |      | 4.61     | V |
| 2  | Smiling at the class while talking   | √                 | √ |   | √ | √ |   | √ | √ |   |      | 4.58     | V |
| 3  | Being enthusiastic in teaching   | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |      | 4.5      | V |
| 4  | Using gestures while talking to the class  | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |      | 4.44     | V |
| 5  | Giving the reward to the student as an appreciation of student effort  |                   |   |   |   | √ |   |   |   |   |      | 4.38     | V |
| 6  | Having a relaxed body posture while talking to the class   | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |      | 4.29     | V |
| 7  | Nodding along students' responses  | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ |   |   | √ |   |      | 4.26     | V |
| 8  | Coming closer to students when teaching  | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ |   | √ | √ | √ |      | 4.26     | V |
| 9  | Using vocal variety (non-monotone) when talking to the class   | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |      | 4.23     | V |
| 10 | Looking at the class while teaching  | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |      | 4.17     | V |
| 11 | Dressing neatly  | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |      | 4.11     | H |
| 12 | Looking very little at board or notes while talking to the class   | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |      | 4.05     | H |
| 13 | Having eye contact when calling on a student's name  | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ |   | √ | √ |   |      | 4        | H |
| 14 | Looking at an individual student while talking to him/her  | √                 | √ | √ | √ | √ |   | √ | √ | √ |      | 3.94     | H |
| 15 | Shaking hands with students  |                   |   | √ |   |   | √ |   | √ |   |      | 3.82     | H |
| 16 | Walking from back to the front and side-to-side between rows when teaching (moving around the class when teaching) | √                 | √ |   | √ | √ |   | √ | √ | √ |      | 3.26     | M |

Note: B: beginning the class; R: running the class; C: closing the lesson; VH: very high; H: high; M: moderate

Table 3 showed that fifteen teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors were perceived positively and rated high in affecting the students' motivation in learning English.

## **4 DISCUSSION**

This section provides interpretation and arguments in this study based on Table 2 and Table 3. The two tables indicate the teachers' nonverbal immediacy that affects the attitude and motivation of students in learning English. This section describes the students' attitude and motivation based on the category of perception.

### **4.1 Very High Category**

#### **4.1.1 Smiling at the individual student while talking to him/her**

Smiling is defined as a nonverbal expression that communicates happiness, friendliness, warmth, and liking. This makes the students feel more comfortable and relax and also far from the feeling of anxiety in following the English teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

#### **4.1.2 Smiling at the class while talking**

The teacher that always smiles at the class while talking is perceived by the students as a friendly teacher. By smiling, the students will think that the teacher enjoys her teaching activities and ultimately will also make the students enjoy their learning activities as well.

#### **4.1.3 Using gestures while talking to the class**

This means teacher uses their hands effectively and meaningfully to facilitate their students to understand what the teacher says. This behavior is conducive for the students to understand teacher verbal expressions. Gesturers communicate and help clarify the verbal expressions. Using appropriate gestures facilitate students' understanding (Den Brok, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2004; Hargie, 2016; Rasyid, 2016). This nonverbal immediacy could also give variation to the teacher's teaching activities so the students will not feel bored or sleepy.

#### **4.1.4 Being enthusiastic about teaching**

Enthusiastic is a hypothetical construct that shows someone is interested in doing something. By being enthusiastic, the teacher shows to the students that she is not only interested in her teaching activities but also to the students in the classroom. That is why a teacher who is enthusiastic will also make the students enthusiastic about learning activities in the classroom.

#### **4.1.5 Giving the reward to students as an appreciation of student effort**

This means the teacher gives something to students because the teacher appreciates what the students' have done. By doing this, the teacher could make students feel that every effort that they have done will not end up in vain, it is because the teacher appreciates their efforts both in the form of rewards or just applause. This behavior can also create competition atmosphere within the classroom since all students will compete with their peers in order to get the reward the teacher promised.

#### **4.1.6 Having a relaxed body posture while talking to the class**

This means the teacher can control every action that she will do and every word that she will say to her students. A teacher who has a relaxed body posture is

more capable of providing learning materials to students in the classroom. The words the teacher will say can be controlled, so it gives a good impression to the students.

#### 4.1.7 Nodding along students' responses

A teacher who seems indifferent when a student is stating his opinion may make that student consider that his teacher does not value him so the student will become lazy not only to respond to the teacher's question but perhaps to participate in learning activities. By nodding, the teacher shows not only she pays attention to the students' words, but it also can be a form of agreement for student statement. Nodding along students' responses creates the perception of engagement and agreements in the sense that the teachers are paying attention to and agree with the students and to their ideas (Rasyid, 2016).

#### 4.1.8 Coming closer to students when teaching

By coming closer to students when teaching, the teacher not only can create a good rapport with the students but also will help the students to hear what the teacher says in the classroom.

#### 4.1.9 Looking at the class while teaching

This means teacher pays attention to every verbal and nonverbal behavior of students by looking at them. A teacher who utilizes more eye contact can more easily monitor and direct their students, and they also transmit more warmth and involvement to their students.

#### 4.1.10 Using vocal variety (non-monotone) when talking to the class

This means teacher uses a variety of vocal expressions, such as changes in pitch and tempo on the teacher's voice. By varying the voice, the teacher can liven up the classroom atmosphere so students will not feel bored or sleepy while participating in the learning activities in the classroom.

### **4.2 High Category**

#### 4.2.1 Looking very little at board or notes while talking to the class

This means the teacher has mastered the learning materials that she will bring into the classroom so she can focus on monitoring the students while teaching. It shows the readiness and professionalism of teachers in teaching.

#### 4.2.2 Dressing neatly

The outer appearance is the first indicator of someone inner characteristics. The way the teacher dresses can determine the way students judge their teacher. The teacher who dresses neatly shows the professionalism of that teacher.



#### 4.2.3 Having eye contact when calling on a student's name

By doing this nonverbal immediacy, the teacher sends the message that the teacher wants to know about the presence and condition of the student. The students like a teacher who cares about them. They feel more comfortable to interact with the teacher who cares about them.

#### 4.2.4 Looking at the individual student while talking to him/her

Eye contact is one form of nonverbal communication that sends a message of interest. Students consider a teacher who rarely makes eye contact with the students, especially when talking in the classroom to the students as a teacher who is not interested in communicating with them.

#### 4.2.5 Shaking hands with students

Students feel closer to teachers if they are allowed to shake hands with the teacher, which ultimately will make the students feel more comfortable while participating in English teaching and learning activities in the classroom.

### 4.3 Moderate Category

#### 4.3.1 Walking from back to the front and side-to-side between rows when teaching (moving around the class when teaching)

This means the teacher walks around the classroom to check the students' work and the extent to which the students have understood the lesson that the teacher has explained.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The results of this research showed that 15 out of 16 items of teacher's nonverbal immediacy behaviors were perceived positively and rated high in affecting the students' positive attitude and motivation in learning English. Based on the findings above the researcher concluded that the students would have a positive attitude and high motivation in learning English if a teacher employs verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors properly in her teaching or interaction with the students. The teacher should be aware of using immediacy behaviors when talking or teaching in the classroom to foster the students' positive attitude and nurture their motivation in learning English. However, the teacher should know which immediacy behaviors to be used in order to help students perform better during teaching and learning process.

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