

High School Students Perceptions: Inspiring and Uninspiring Teachers' Interpersonal Communication (IPC) in TEFL

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Abstract

This study examined high school students' views of their teachers using interpersonal communication in Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL). The respondents involved 38 students as reached saturated data, which were taken from six classes taught by two EFL teachers (male and female) at a high school in South Sulawesi province, Indonesia. A semi-structured interview was employed with students to collect the data. The semi-structured interview data were categorized and reported descriptively according to DeVito's (1997) effective interpersonal communication: openness, empathy, supportiveness, positive feelings, and equality. This study reveals that students' perception shows that both teachers conduct favorable and unfavorable interpersonal communication verbally or non-verbally in TEFL. This study also indicates that teachers' cross-gender using nonverbal communication perceives as an inconvenience, touch, and personal space. These contrarities propose that teachers consider their students' culture, beliefs, or preferences while utilizing interpersonal communication in TEFL, especially personal space and touch at the high school level.

Keywords: Students' Perception, Interpersonal Communication, Efl Teachers

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap persepsi siswa tentang komunikasi interpersonal guru mereka dalam mengajarkan Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Studi ini melibatkan 38 siswa sebagai responden yang telah mencapai saturasi data terpilih dari enam kelas berbeda yang diajar oleh dua orang guru Bahasa Inggris (laki-laki dan perempuan) pada salah satu SMA di provinsi Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia. Sebuah wawancara semi-terstruktur telah dilakukan untuk mengumpulkan data. Data wawancara semi-terstruktur dikategorikan dan dilaporkan secara deskriptif berdasar pada teori DeVito (1997), terkait komunikasi interpersonal yang efektif: keterbukaan, empati, dukungan, perasaan positif, dan kesetaraan. Studi ini menunjukkan persepsi siswa bahwa kedua guru melakukan komunikasi interpersonal yang mereka sukai dan tidak, baik secara verbal maupun non-verbal dalam mengajarkan Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Selain itu, studi ini juga menunjukkan bahwa siswa menunjukkan ketidaknyamanan saat guru lintas gender menggunakan komunikasi nonverbal berupa sentuhan dan memasuki spasi pribadi. Dari hasil tersebut guru sebaiknya mempertimbangkan kepercayaan, budaya, atau preferensi siswa saat menerapkan bentuk komunikasi interpersonal dalam mengajar Bahasa Inggris, utamanya, memasuki spasi pribadi dan menerapkan sentuhan pada tingkat sekolah menengah atas.

Kata Kunci: Persepsi Siswa, Komunikasi Interpersonal, Guru Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing.

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Received 11 March 2023, Accepted 18 March 2023, Published 20 March 2023

INTRODUCTION

Based on the role of teachers and students, it captures that teachers and students communicate intensively in the teaching and learning process. Nurturing communication during the class is essential in the role of interpersonal communication, both verbal and non-verbal. According to Gablinske (2014), interpersonal communication is vital to support smooth communication within the classroom. Good interpersonal communication will create a positive relationship between teacher and students that minimizes the gap within the teaching and learning process, such as distrust, anxiety,

boredom, suspicion among them, etc. Otherwise, a negative relationship causes a crack that leads to ineffective learning.

There are some components of interpersonal communication to be concerned. Hartley (1993) states it from some perspectives; first, a view of social context covers social norms, rules, and relations. Second, the communicant's air covers the message's sender and receiver. Third, a social identity perspective covers the personality, self-concept, social rules, and social perception. Forth, it is code and usage.

Benefits of applying interpersonal communication in EFL classrooms: EFL teachers can create a conducive learning atmosphere, which means teachers can create a conducive socio-emotional environment so students can learn in comfortable and enjoyable conditions. Interaction between teacher and students is more thoughtful, empathetic, and fun. In an EFL classroom, a teacher must choose an appropriate teaching strategy considering motivating learners in learning. A teacher strives to develop all students' potential, such as aptitude and interests. Thus, a teacher should consider what to do and say in an EFL classroom reveal as a must.

Senior High School level, teaching students at this level is challenging. The condition of high school students is stepping into the adolescent phase. According to Rumini & Sundari (2004: 53), adolescence is the transition from childhood to adulthood that has developed in some aspects, namely physical aspect, cognitive aspect, emotional aspect, moral, and social parts. 1) Physically, students have rapid physical growth, but not proportionally. 2) Cognitively, they develop the ability to think logically, giving a level of moral judgment and a new social consciousness. In addition, as young men who can understand their thinking and others, adolescents begin to think about how others perceive them. 3) Emotionally, adolescents experiencing the peak of emotion mean a high level of emotional development. The nature of adolescent emotional development is being sensitive, strongly reactive, and having negative emotions and temper (irritability, anger, sadness, and moody). 4) Morally, adolescents are already capable of behaving that not only pursue physical satisfaction but increase in psychological order (to feel accepted, respected, and positively assess others). 5) Socially, adolescents have developed the ability to understand others (social cognition) and make friends. Adolescents choose a friend who has the natural and psychological qualities relatively the same as he/her. Having an attitude of conformity is a tendency to follow what their peers do. According to Erikson (1968), adolescence is a crisis of identity. It means students seeking self-identity are emotionally unstable, which will be reflected in their thinking and attitude daily.

Teaching EFL in high school to enable positive interaction or to create a conducive learning atmosphere within a classroom, teachers should consider students' perceptions. Perception is becoming a factor in believing in the quality of the teaching and learning process. Many scholars have proven that students' perceptions of their teachers can influence classroom learning quality. Perception is the impression individual gains through the senses that will then be analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated so that individuals acquire meaning. Robbins (2003: 97). Since

interpersonal communication takes the focal core in classroom teaching, the student's perception cannot discard the students' views. It is to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers' interpersonal communication.

According to Devito (1976), cited in Suciati (2015), effective interpersonal communication generates a climate of openness, empathy, supportiveness, positive feelings, and equality. 1) Openness means being open to whom the communicant interacts, which does not mean that people should share all the history of his life. It relates to the willingness of communicators to react honestly when a stimulus comes. We want people to respond openly to what we say. 2) Empathy is the ability of a person to know what is being experienced by others at a particular moment from another person's perspective. 3) Being supportive while communicating means being descriptive, not evaluative, spontaneous, strategic, provisional, and not very confident. 4) Positive feeling refers to a positive attitude towards themselves and positive feelings toward the situation. 5) Equality means that there must be an implicit recognition that both parties are equally valued and that each party has something important to contribute. Therefore, the researcher uses openness, empathy, supportiveness, positive feelings, and equality to indicate students' perceptions of their teachers' interpersonal communication.

In sum, the following points became this study's investigation areas: high school students' perceptions towards their teachers' interpersonal communication in EFL classrooms instrumented by direct observation and administering the interview.

METHOD

This study employed qualitative research to understand and describe students' views towards their teachers' interpersonal communication in TEFL at a favorite state high school in Makassar, Indonesia. The respondents were thirty-eight students. These numbers appeared as gathered the data saturation. Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data on students' perceptions of inspiring and uninspiring teachers' verbal and nonverbal interpersonal communication. The interview was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to avoid miscommunication and was analyzed qualitatively. The data is transcribed, translated, and classified into specific themes based on the interview's content, focusing on five effective IPC indicators, according to DeVito (1997). The participants' verbal data from the excerpts presented in this paper were translated from Bahasa Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

High School Students Perceptions towards Their EFL teachers' IPC

The gathered data reflects the following points: students' viewpoints on the inspiring and uninspiring teachers' interpersonal communication in TEFL. Students' perception of their favorable and unfavorable EFL teachers' IPC. Students' perception of their favorable and unfavorable EFL teachers' IPC. The semi-structured interview data reveal several themes showing students' perceptions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Perspectives towards their Teacher's IPC

Themes	Inspiring IPC	Uninspiring IPC
Openness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Putting ears to students 2. Being friendly/associated with their students 3. Confirming students' understanding 4. Correcting students' errors in a manner 5. Involving students in decision making 6. A warm welcome to start the class 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Showing ignorance while students talking 2. Setting extended boundaries for students 3. Giving no reasons for instruction/ command 4. Grumpy and rigid
Empathy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interactive activities, for example, games or group works 2. Using humor to release tension 3. Facilitating students' difficulties 4. Providing time to take a break in an intensive class 5. Building eye-contact 6. Aware of students' potential problems 7. Recognizing students' different abilities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Impromptu task or instruction 2. No repetition for explanation 3. Several studies per day
Supportiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Giving positive admonition 2. Grading objectively 3. Every lesson with a feedback 4. Explaining in concrete 5. Highlighting every essential point 6. Bilingual language in teaching English 7. Having a session for vocabulary enrichment 8. A simple and understandable explanation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fast talker 2. Physical punishment 3. English is dominantly used without confirming students' understanding 4. Difficult English diction in explaining 5. Unclear articulation, subtle, and monotonous voice 6. Coming late or skipping class 7. Comparing students 8. Being sarcastic
Positive Feelings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being kind, humble, and smiley 2. Tidy 3. Conducting group work 4. Wise 5. Thanking after a student doing something 6. Calling students as sons/daughters instead of you 7. Giving response/ feedback pleasantly 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoiding questions 2. Coming too close to the students' personal space 3. Being intense in teaching 4. Fast task deadline 5. Using student grades to control students' behavior 6. Sitting down passively while teaching 7. Writing disorderly on the board 8. Touch to show support 9. A chronic complainer
Equality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appreciating students' opinions/ ideas/ tasks 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Giving more attention to the intelligent/ the front seat students 2. Treating students were the ones who were lower than the teacher in authority

The way a teacher communicates with students will determine the future of teaching and learning effectiveness, considering many significant roles of teachers. Muhayyang (2010) states that a teacher plays three interrelated parts in the classroom: manager, instructor, and administrator. The

managerial role of the teacher is to direct students to undertake activities to change behavior toward maturity academically and socially. The teacher as a manager includes planning the lesson to serve the teaching purposes, organizing means of connecting all resources in the teaching and learning process, controlling the class means the teacher's attitude to overcome problems that appear in the teaching and learning process, creating a learning environment to motivate learners. The instructional role of the teacher is to teach the subject matter required for all students based on the goal-oriented in a set of curriculums and to facilitate the students in the learning process. The administrating role of the teacher is to collect data or information about the effectiveness of the teaching that has been done. It is meant for a better upcoming set of learning.

Inevitably, effective interpersonal communication plays a paramount role in succeeding in achieving the target. In the field of business or company has been proven that effective communication enhances job performance, particularly in managerial functions, Wulandari (2014). Forwardly mentioned, teachers have three interrelated roles as manager, instructor, and administrator in the teaching and learning process. In this study, the data reveals the students' expectations towards their EFL teachers in playing two roles as an instructor and a manager.

Based on the interviews, several factors were found that needed to be a primary consideration for teachers to apply interpersonal communication in teaching Indonesian students, one of which was the student's gender. Teachers must consider students' pluralistic culture and beliefs, especially concerning non-verbal interpersonal communication in touch and personal space. It was found that male students tended to have no problem with touching, such as a pat on the shoulder by a teacher of any gender to encourage students to do the assignments given at that time because they felt their teachers were their parents. However, several female students expressed discomfort with this, including when teachers of different genders were too close to them. On the other words, male students tend to be okay with this but not so for female students.

Furthermore, student perceptions based on interview results has been divided into five categories. The students conveyed things that were instinctive and not done by the teachers in the teaching English. The author classifies the findings into five indicators: openness, empathy, supportiveness, positive feelings, and equality.

Teachers' openness is believed to ignite students' self-efficacy in learning. Students expectation show that the teacher is expected to be friendly or associated inside and outside the class, confirm their understanding, correct their errors in manner, involve them in making decisions, and give a warm welcome when starting the class. In contrast, students show inconvenience when their teachers showing ignorance, set extended boundaries, instruct a thing without reason, and are grumpy and rigid. However, teachers should be careful, over transparency can lead to a decrease relationship satisfaction which indicates potentially decreasing students' interest in learning. Students expectation show that listen mindfully and let them know that you are listening is matter.

In the point of empathy, a teacher is expected to know what is being experienced by their students at a particular moment while teaching through the eyes of students. The students expect that their teacher applies interactive activities such as games or group work, be humorous, facilitate their difficulties, give time to break for a while, build eye contact when talking, be aware of students' potential problems, and recognize their students' different abilities. Vice versa, they showed unfavorable when teachers gave impromptu tasks, had no repetition in explaining, and had several studies per day. Empathy is believed can help students in learning through the side of their emotion. It is supported by Zhang (2022) stated that teachers' empathy lead to students' self-confidence and engage more in learning.

In supportiveness, the teacher is being descriptive, spontaneous, and provisional, not evaluative, not strategic, and not very confident while communicating. The students expect their teacher shows appreciation and is kind, humble, smiley, wise, and tidy. Thank them after a student does something, addressing them 'son or daughter' instead of you, and give feedback, not being sarcastic, addressing students as stupid/rude, or commenting on their poor handwriting. Supportiveness is believed can motivate students in learning. It is supported with a research conducted by Fanggidae (2020), he found that there is a positive relationship between teacher's support and students' motivation of achievement.

Positive feeling, the teacher expresses a positive attitude and encourages their students, who become teacher partners in the interaction. Many things affect the positive atmosphere of learning, but in this study, we focus on English teacher's IPC. The students expect their teachers to be kind-hearted and humble, smiling, relaxed, cheerful, and tidy, grouping students, answering every question, giving simple and understandable explanations, and calling students 'son/daughter instead of 'you.' Vice versa, their teachers unexpectedly come too close to the students in their personal space, sitting down passively while teaching, writing disorderly on the board, using monotonous voices, tapping students' shoulders, complaining in class, and having unclear articulation/pronunciation while speaking. Considering students' views of having positive feelings, students' sense of comfort may contribute well to learning. It is also supported by Zhang (2022) that EFL students' academic self-concept can be remarkably influenced one of them is students' positive mood.

Teachers and students are equally valued in interaction in the teaching and learning process, and each party has something essential to contribute to the teaching and learning process. The students expect their teachers are allowing students to express their opinions. Vice versa, they expected their teachers to treat students lower than the teacher in authority and pay more attention to specific students. In contrast, the students expected their teachers to perform with pleasant personalities, be intellectual, and implement an interactive teaching method. A survey also showed that most students expected their teachers to be humorous, creative, and master the lesson they taught. Vice versa, they unexpectedly find their teachers are bored, have an unclear explanation, and show favoritism while teaching, NAASP (1997). The teacher considers students' feelings, needs, thoughts,

ideas, wishes, and preferences. Santrock (2009) emphasizes that students are motivated when they experience something based on their preferences. In addition, students expect their teachers to minimize the gap among them in the teaching and learning process.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that students interpret teachers' interpersonal communication into two categories inspiring and uninspiring to do in TEFL. This study also shows the need for teachers to understand students' preferences and ways of teachers' interpersonal communication that consider students' gender, such as personal space and touch. English teachers could use the results of this study to teach Indonesian students. Since this study was limited to a small number of students at a high school in South Sulawesi province, further investigation on students' perceptions towards teachers' interpersonal communication related to gender is called for a better picture of the effectiveness of teachers' interpersonal communication in TEFL. Quantitative methods such as surveys are suggested as a helpful tool to see how aspects of subjectivity, beliefs, and culture play a role in gender traits related to interpersonal communication in TEFL.

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