

دور الاستراتيجيات اللفظية وغير اللفظية في استدامة الانتباه داخل الصفوف لدى الطلبة الدارسين
لغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة اجنبية: دراسة مقارنة

**The Role of Verbal and Non-Verbal Strategies in Sustaining Iraqi EFL Students'
Attention : A Comparative Study**

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بالرغم من أهمية انتباه الطلبة داخل الصف وعلاقته في انجازهم، فإن استدامة هذا الانتباه يعد التحدي الأكبر. لذلك، جاءت هذه الدراسة لفهم دور الإستراتيجيات اللفظية وغير اللفظية في استدامة انتباه الطلبة العراقيين داخل صفوفهم. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، تضع الدراسة الأسئلة التالية: (1) هل تؤثر الإستراتيجيات اللفظية وغير اللفظية في استدامة انتباه الطلبة داخل الصف؟ و (2) ماهي اراء الطلبة تجاه استخدام الإستراتيجيات اللفظية مقارنة باستخدام الإستراتيجيات اللفظية وغير اللفظية معا؟ لأجابة الأسئلة المذكورة انفا، تفترض الدراسة ما يلي: (1) تؤثر الإستراتيجيات اللفظية وغير اللفظية في استدامة انتباه الطلبة داخل الصف و (2) لا يوجد فرق احصائي مهم حول اراء الطلبة تجاه استخدام الإستراتيجيات اللفظية مقارنة باستخدام الإستراتيجيات اللفظية وغير اللفظية معا. تم اتباع نهج مختلط حيث تم جمع البيانات من خلال قوائم المشاهدة والاستبانات. اتبعت الدراسة التحليل الكمي والنوعي للبيانات حيث اثبتت النتائج ان دمج استخدام الإستراتيجيات اللفظية وغير اللفظية له الدور المهم في استدامة وتعزيز انتباه الطلبة ومشاركتهم داخل الصف. كلمات مفتاحية: الاستراتيجيات اللفظية، الاستراتيجيات غير اللفظية، استدامة الانتباه الطلبة الدارسين لغة الإنكليزية.

Abstract:

Although classroom attention is important for students' achievement, its sustaining forms a challenge. Thus, this study comes to understand how verbal and non-verbal strategies help in sustaining Iraqi students' attention. To meet its aim, it addresses the following questions: (1) do both verbal and non-verbal strategies affect EFL students' attention in the classroom? (2) what are the students' attitudes regarding the use of verbal only strategies vs. the use of verbal and non-verbal strategies? To answer these questions, it is hypothesized that: (1) verbal and non-verbal strategies affect EFL students' attention in the classroom and (2) there is no statistically significant difference between students' attitudes regarding the use of verbal only

strategies versus both verbal and non-verbal strategies. Following a mixed method, the data are collected using observation lists and questionnaires. Data analysis of the results proved that the combination of verbal and non-verbal strategies has the most effective role in maintaining students' attention where the non-verbal strategies complement the verbal ones.

Keywords: keywords; keywords; keywords; keywords; keywords.

1. Introduction

Maintaining students' attention is a major challenge in EFL classrooms. Teachers often succeed in capturing attention at the beginning of a lesson, but sustaining it throughout the learning process is a difficulty. This challenge is caused by distractions, limited motivation, and the cognitive demands of learning a foreign language.

To capture students' attention from the beginning to the end of the lesson, teachers use a variety of attention strategies ranging from verbal to non-verbal. (Negi, 2009). However, the extent to which each type of strategy contributes to sustaining students' attention has not been thoroughly examined and compared. Additionally, there is insufficient empirical evidence regarding which category of strategies, verbal or non-verbal, has a greater impact on sustaining EFL students' attention across the duration of classroom lessons. As a result, this study investigates the impact of verbal and non-verbal strategies on sustaining students' attention in EFL classrooms. By comparing the two strategies, it seeks to identify which strategies are more effective in maintaining students' engagement, offering both theoretical insights and practical implications for language teaching.

1.1. Questions of The Study

The present study addresses the following questions:

1. Do verbal strategies affect EFL students' attention in the classroom?
2. Do both verbal and non-verbal strategies affect EFL students' attention in the classroom?
3. What are the students' attitudes regarding the use of verbal only strategies vs. the use of verbal and non-verbal strategies?

1.2. Hypotheses

The current study poses the following hypotheses:

1. Verbal strategies do not affect students' attention in EFL classroom.
2. Verbal and non-verbal strategies affect EFL students' attention in the classroom.
3. There is no statistically significant difference between students' attitudes regarding the use of verbal only strategies versus both verbal and non-verbal strategies.

1.3. Attention in Language Learning

Attention has always been a cornerstone in learning theories. Early psychological models, like Broadbent's (1958) *filter theory*, in Moray (1995), proposed that individuals can only process a limited amount of input at once, filtering out what is irrelevant. Attention is a finite pool of mental resources that must be distributed among competing tasks. This framework sheds light on the following questions: why sustaining attention is especially challenging in language classrooms and why students are required to process meaning, form, and context simultaneously.

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Schmidt's (1990) *Noticing Hypothesis* is pivotal, claiming that conscious attention to linguistic form is necessary for acquisition. Without noticing, students cannot internalize features, underscoring the importance of teachers' strategies to direct attention. Ellis (2015) further argued that attention is not a single concept but a dynamic process that includes alertness, orientation, and detection. This requires teachers to consistently redirect students' focus to keep them engaged during lessons. In practical classroom setting, Wilson and Korn (2007) found that student attention tends to decline after just 10–15 minutes, suggesting that teachers must use various strategies to re-engage and re-orient students. In EFL contexts, the cognitive demands are even greater because students are processing information in another language, making failure more frequent. This underlines the critical role of verbal and non-verbal communication in refreshing students' attention.

1.4. Types of Attention Strategies

1.4.1. Verbal Strategies

Verbal strategies are widely recognized as the backbone of classroom communication and serve as the primary medium through which teachers deliver instruction (Cazden, 2001; Walsh, 2011). In EFL settings, where exposure to the target language often occurs mainly within the classroom, the way teachers use verbal strategies becomes particularly influential. These strategies not only transmit linguistic knowledge but also help sustain students' attentional focus.

Questioning is one of the major kinds of verbal which has been widely studied as a tool for promoting attention and interaction. Long and Sato (1983) differentiate between display and referential questions. The former aims to check students' knowledge while the latter invites authentic communication. Both serve complementary purposes in sustaining attention. Display questions ensure that students remain attentive to linguistic form and accuracy, while referential questions stimulate curiosity, encourage participation, and foster deeper cognitive engagement. As Walsh (2011) argues, well-structured questioning routines can create an interactive flow that keeps students cognitively and emotionally engaged, reducing the risk of attention lapses during lessons.

Furthermore, teachers rely on prosodic variation, humor, and storytelling as verbal strategies to maintain students' attention. Prosody, through variations in pitch, stress, rhythm and intonation helps signal important information and adds emphasis to key points. Rost (2016) finds that students are more likely to recall and process content when it is delivered with prosodic cues, suggesting that monotone delivery can hinder attentional focus. Humor, when used appropriately, has also been shown to reduce learner anxiety, foster a positive classroom atmosphere, and enhance attentiveness (Bell, 2009). Similarly, storytelling situates linguistic content within meaningful and memorable contexts, engaging both the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

Feedback and praise represent another vital dimension of verbal strategies. Feedback, particularly the corrective one, plays a central role in directing students' attention to linguistic form and in promoting noticing, which Schmidt (1990) identified as essential for second language acquisition. Lyster and Ranta (1997) classified six

different types of corrective feedback, ranging from explicit correction to more subtle recasts. Explicit correction may disrupt communication, whereas recasts offer a gentler form of feedback that draws attention without interrupting the flow of interaction. Praise, although less extensively studied, has a motivational value and can help sustain students' attention by reinforcing their sense of progress and achievement. Together, feedback and praise assure that students' attention is continually directed toward meaningful aspects of language and maintain their willingness to remain engaged.

Taken as a whole, verbal strategies highlight the active role of teacher talk in the EFL classroom. They serve as both an instructional resource and a mechanism for managing attention, making sure that students remain engaged in the demanding process of acquiring a foreign language.

1.4.2. Non-Verbal Strategies

Non-verbal communication, often referred to as paralinguistic features, plays a crucial role in human interaction and, in many cases, carries more weight than spoken language when it comes to expressing meaning and emotion. Scholars such as Mehrabian (2007) and Chaudhry and Arif (2012) highlight the idea that during face-to-face exchanges, much of the message is conveyed not through words but through non-verbal signals. In the classroom, these strategies are particularly valuable because they can clarify explanations, reduce misunderstandings, and maintain students' attention.

One of the most evident forms of non-verbal communication is body movement and gestures. Gestures act as visual reinforcements of meaning, illustrating verbal explanations when needed. McCafferty and Stam (2008) argue that gestures function as cognitive tools in second language acquisition, supporting both comprehension and production. Teachers either use iconic gestures, which depict concrete ideas (i.e. opening a book), or metaphoric gestures which make abstract concepts more tangible (i.e. showing expansion with hand movements). These physical cues bridge the gap between verbal explanation and students' understanding, allowing learning become more interactive and accessible.

Eye contact is another powerful form of non-verbal communication, functioning as a regulator of classroom interaction. As Gullberg (2006) explains, eye contact communicates attentiveness, guides turn-taking, and helps students to participate. In group settings, teachers who make an effort to distribute their gaze across the classroom can sustain collective attention, discourage side conversations, and make every learner feels acknowledged. This sense of being seen and included enhances motivation and creates a more cohesive learning environment.

The way teachers manage classroom space, known as proxemics, carries significant meaning. Proxemics demonstrates how spatial distance affects interaction and engagement. Teachers who move in front of the classroom, approaching students, circulating between rows or standing closer to groups, send strong signals of inclusiveness. According to Meyer (2014), proximity is particularly effective in minimizing off-task behavior and regaining lost attention. Moving closer to a distracted student often communicates expectations more effectively than words alone.

Facial expressions add another essential layer of communication. Ekman (2003) notes that changes in facial expressions can influence emotional engagement. Smiles, nods, raised eyebrows, or expressions of approval signal enthusiasm and support. While more neutral or disengaged expressions may unintentionally lower motivation. Teachers who show genuine interest through their expressions foster a positive classroom atmosphere where students feel encouraged and attentive.

Time management, or chronemics, represents a further dimension of non-verbal communication. The strategic use of pauses, silence, and pacing helps regulate the rhythm of classroom discourse. As Nakane (2007) points out, silence is not merely the absence of speech but a deliberate communicative tool. Pausing can highlight important points, build anticipation, or provide students with space to process new information. Similarly, varying the pace of speech keeps students engaged, while monotonous pacing risks disengagement. In this sense, effective use of time becomes as communicative as words themselves.

These strategies enrich communication by adding clarity, depth, and emotional resonance. They reduce cognitive load, as Sueyoshi and Hardison (2005) explain, by making messages easier to process and understand. Thus, the thoughtful integration of non-verbal strategies is a necessity for creating classrooms that are engaging, inclusive and effective.

1.5. Previous Studies

Recently, education and learning have gained a considerable attention in sustainable development. Being one aim of it, sustaining learning inside the classroom is a challenge. To overcome this challenge, language educators and scholars studied the different ways through which they can manage learners' attention in the classroom. In 2014, Behjat et al. conducted their study to examine the role of non-verbal strategies on students' learning. 70 B.A. English students of Islamic Azad university were the participants of their study. For data collection, the study followed a qualitative approach where a questionnaire was the main method of collecting data. The analysis of the questionnaire results showed that university students prefer teacher's non-verbal strategies in developing learning, especially teacher's body language. Sutiayatno (2018) examines the effect of verbal and non-verbal strategies on students' achievement in English. The study participants were students at the department of Informatics, college of STIMK, Indonesia. To collect data, the researcher followed a qualitative with a survey approach. Data were gathered using a questionnaire and scores of the final English test. The regressive analysis of the data proved that the use of both verbal and non-verbal strategies has its effective influence on students' achievement in English.

In their study Theyab and Hussein (2024), investigated the use of attention getting strategies (AGSs) by EFL teachers in their classrooms. The aim of their study was to find out the types of AGSs used by teachers to maintain learners' attention. To gather data, unstructured interview was used where the study interviewed 50 EFL university teachers from university of Mosul. The analysis of the results showed that not all interviewees follow AGSs in their classes. Teachers who maintain AGSs in their classes use different types of verbal and non-verbal attention strategies. Similarly,

Muhamad et al. (2024) examine the role of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies in EFL classroom. The aim of their study was to see which type of communication affect learning. A purposive sampling technique was followed for the sample of their study, where one teacher and students from an English class (SMA YPI Tunas Bangsa Palembang) were chosen. The data were collected through an interview and observation. The results indicated that teacher followed oral and written communication as types of verbal strategies and that gestures, eye contact and facial expressions are part of non-verbal communication strategies. The results also showed that the use of non-verbal strategies has participated in developing students' learning in their classroom.

In the light of the previous studies, it is clear that there is a dearth in research in Iraqi educational context regarding verbal and non-verbal strategies and their role in attention and enhancing the academic performance. Thus, this study comes to compare the role of verbal only strategies and its integration with the non-verbal ones in sustaining Iraqi EFL students' attention throughout classroom learning.

2. Methodology

2.1. The Population and Sample of the Study

The population of this study is represented by 134 female students at fifth preparatory grade, Mosul High School for Top Girl Students. They are chosen because they have good language knowledge and proficiency to participate in classroom activities following their teachers' attention strategies. Regarding the sample of the study, it consists of 70 female students who are divided into two classes.

2.2. The Study Design and Instruments for Data Collection

The present study follows a mixed method design. It combines both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. To collect data, two instruments are used, these are: observation lists (a qualitative method) and questionnaires (a quantitative method). To find out what types of verbal and non-verbal attention strategies that affect students' attention, observation lists are followed. In scientific research, observation is one method used to collect authentic and real time data. It is used in qualitative types

of research and helps researchers identify what they are looking for. In this study, two lists of observation are composed. The first one is used to determine what kinds of verbal only strategies are used in the classroom by EFL teachers, and the second one is used to determine what kinds of non-verbal strategies accompanied with verbal strategies are used by EFL teachers in the classroom. It seems significant here to mention that the process of observation is lasted for three weeks with three times per week for each group to reflect consistent teaching practices.

Turning to the second instrument of data collection, this study uses two types of questionnaires. As it is known a questionnaire is a qualitative study method used to collect data, but in the current study it is used quantitatively followed Likert Scale. Dörnyei (2007) mentions that a questionnaire is a group of questions or statements are directed to the respondents. It seeks to gather three types of data, namely: factual, behavioral and attitudinal, in one point or different points of time. In this study, the data are collected across one period of time. The first type of a questionnaire is used to find out students' attitudes towards the use of verbal strategies and their effect on sustaining their attention and learning, meanwhile the second type is used to see students' attitudes towards the use of non-verbal and verbal strategies and their effect on sustaining their attention and learning.

2.3. Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

To analyze the collected data, descriptive and inferential analysis are used. These two ways of analysis are found to be the most appropriate methods to interpret the qualitative and quantitative results. The next sub-sections will show and discuss the results of both the observation lists and the questionnaires.

2.3.1. Results and Discussion of the Observation Lists: A Descriptive Analysis

This section aims to determine the types of verbal only strategies and the combination of verbal and non-verbal strategies that are used in the classroom to compare them and show their association to students' attention. In this section, a

descriptive analysis is followed to analyze the two kinds of observation lists. In interpreting the first observation list, which is dedicated to identify the verbal only strategies, the descriptive analysis indicates that teacher always uses questioning strategies to maintain the attention of the students inside the classroom. This type of verbal strategy proves its powerful association to sustain students' attention. Throughout the observation, the teacher deliberately directs display and referential questions to invite students into classroom communication. Both types of questions increase students' attentiveness as indicated by their participation through raising hands and providing immediate responses. This verbal strategy appears to grow students' engagement in the lesson.

Prosodic variation, the second verbal strategy, is highly observed. It is found that when the teacher wants students focus on a specific point, that is related to their learning, she relies on prosodic variation by changing her tone. Classroom observations revealed that when the teacher changed her tone, i.e. raising, falling or stressing certain words, students appeared more focused. These tonal changes help students be active and attentive as they respond to the posed questions by teachers and stay on the task. Prosodic variation helps in preventing monotony by presenting the information in one tone and makes the process of learning boring. Overall, the analysis of the results indicates a strong relationship between changes in tone in one hand and active classroom engagement on the other hand.

Turning to oral feedback and praise, these verbal strategies are frequently noticed in the classroom. During observation, it is found that when the teacher provided corrective feedback to the errors or feedback to acknowledge responses, students are engaged in their learning. This kind of verbal strategies reduces students' anxiety and stress especially in oral communications. The observation signs that are observed, include listening carefully to the teacher's comments, participating in the activities and responding to the feedback. This suggests that feedback is associated and related to sustaining attention without distraction. Furthermore, praise also plays a significant role in EFL classroom attention. As the observation goes on, the teacher uses oral praise

to thank students for their effort, for example, or to praise their responses. This verbal strategy assists students keep their attention to the end of the lesson by maintaining eye contact and smiling. This reaction refers to the influence of praise on demonstrating and keeping on attention.

Although humor and storytelling are not frequently used, they still influence students' attention. Sometimes the teacher uses jokes, humorous remarks, short stories and real-life examples to make abstract ideas clearer and more understandable. This infrequent use helps in enhancing the moments of engagements where students are active and responsive. Thus, the limited appearance of these two strategies participates little in sustaining students' attention. During the observed 9 lessons, it is seen that the teacher adjusted her talk to deliver the message. It always happens that she changes her tone, uses feedback, praise and directs questions. Altogether, these verbal strategies form a good combination to keep, sustain and enhance attention.

The descriptive analysis of the use of both verbal and non-verbal strategies, the second list, reveals that pauses and silence are the most common followed strategies. Throughout the observation, the teacher uses pauses and silence when she sees that students are not following the lesson and instruction. Both pauses and silence serve a significant role in classroom interaction. The teacher does not imply these non-verbal strategies randomly but she uses them strategically. Pauses are mostly observed after the questions that are raised by the teacher to provide students with processing time before giving response. This deliberate waiting period is employed to encourage students increase participation and reduce pressure. This strategy is particularly used when the raised questions need thoughtful answers. The analysis of the observation also reveals that the teacher uses pauses when she wants to emphasize certain concepts and information.

Moving to silence, it is reported that many moments of silence are occurred throughout the different stages of the lesson. It has been noticed that when students become distracted, disengagements or talkative, the teacher relies on silence. This way helps students regain attention and keep the learning process on. The observation data

indicate that pauses and silence are used with the purposes of increasing students' participation, focusing on key concepts and redirecting attention to enhance attentiveness.

Following pauses and silence, gestures and movements are also highly observed. Data analysis of the second observation list shows that gestures and movements are consistently used in the classroom. It is seen that the teacher uses metaphoric gesture as presented by hand movement to illustrate abstract ideas, such as distances, size or directions. The teacher also uses her hand when she points to the board to explain specific concept. Using hands assists students maintain their attention. Teacher's movement is also noticed and reported. Walking around the classroom, between rows and in front of the students help in keeping students full alert and create a dynamic learning environment. It is noted that when the teacher moves towards students, they appeared not to be distracted and more focused as the teacher approaching their area. This suggests that walking is a powerful non-verbal strategy that is associated with students' attention. In general, using hands and moving during the lesson maintain students' focus that is related to their learning development.

During the process of the observation, eye contact is reported. It is found that the teacher deliberately follows this non-verbal strategy with different aims. It is identified that the teacher uses eye contact when she explains new concepts and asks questions. Eye contact invites students effectively to participate in the interaction. This strategy appears to increase students' attentions because they are personally addressed and it helps teachers monitor and check students' engagement in the classroom. It contributes to strengthen the interaction between the teacher and the students and creates a sense of inclusion in the classroom.

Facial expressions are also frequently recorded. Being a kind of active facial expression, smiling is frequently noted during the observation. When students provide correct answers and participate actively in the tasks, the teacher smiles. This non-verbal strategy reduces anxiety and increases participation. It helps sustain attention by making the classroom a comfortable learning environment. In the course of the

observation, raising eyebrows is rarely used. This facial expression is sometime noticed during the lessons. Raising eyebrows is related to emphasis and surprise and the teacher relies on this non-verbal strategy after addressing questions to the students. If the student's answer is incorrect, the teacher raises her eyebrows to indicate surprise. Here, students have to be more attentive and focused to avoid such expression. This is one case. Another noticed case is that when the teacher wants to focus on some key concepts, she raises her eyebrows accompanied by changing intonation and pitch. This mixture encourages students to maximize attention that will effectively enhance their learning. The highly sustained attention is achieved by the combination of both verbal and non-verbal strategies. The verbal strategies form the foundation, while the non-verbal strategies work as supportive behaviours that enhance and reinforce engagement.

In the light of the above discussion, it is necessary to recall the research questions and their related hypotheses. The first and second research questions that say "Do verbal strategies affect EFL students' attention in the classroom? and Do both verbal and non-verbal strategies affect EFL students' attention in the classroom?" are answered during the descriptive analysis of the observation lists. As for the hypotheses, the first hypothesis that says "Verbal strategies do not affect students' attention in EFL classroom" is rejected since the results prove that verbal strategies affect students' attention and learning. The second hypothesis that reads "Verbal and non-verbal strategies affect EFL students' attention in the classroom" is verified in the sense that the combination of both strategies positively affects and enhance students' attention and learning.

2.3.2. A Comparative Analysis of Verbal-only Strategies and the Combined Verbal and Non-verbal Strategies

After the descriptive analysis of the observation during the 3 weeks, it is essential to compare the final outcomes. The descriptive analysis of the results reveals that there is a clear difference in the use of verbal and non-verbal strategies and their association

to sustaining attention. In comparing the two classes, questioning and prosodic variations are the dominate verbal strategies of the verbal-only class that is class 1. These two strategies help the teacher in sustaining learning when she sees that students lost their attention. Additionally, feedback and praise are also frequently used to reinforce participation and engagement. Humor and storytelling are infrequently used and their occurrence happened in certain moments.

In contrast, class 2 integrates both verbal and non-verbal strategies to improve attentiveness. While the verbal strategies are used to guide interaction, the non-verbal ones are combined with the verbal strategies to support, enhance and maintain the classroom interaction. In this class, pauses and silence are used to give students time to think critically before delivering their answers. Gestures help in empowering engagement while the proxemic movements allow students still alert. Eye contact strengthens engagement and smiling creates a more positive and relaxing environment. Raising eyebrows is rarely observed indicating that the teacher conveys information through the other strategies. The types of verbal strategies form the core of the instructional talk whereas the use of different types of non-verbal strategies helps in regulating attention and creating a more interactive classroom. This combined approach is more associative to sustaining attention and learning than the single approach, i.e. the verbal strategies.

2.3.3. Results and Discussion of the Questionnaires: An Inferential Analysis

This section is used to discuss and analyze the two questionnaires results using t-test analysis. Following Likert Scale, each set of a questionnaire includes 15 items divided into different variables. The aim of the questionnaires is to examine students' attitudes regarding the association of the use of verbal only strategies and both verbal and non-verbal strategies to sustaining attention. Table 1 shows the statistical results of the questionnaire of verbal-only strategies class.

Table 1

Results of the T-test of the Attitudes of Verbal-only Strategies class

The Role of Verbal and Non-Verbal Strategies in Sustaining Iraqi EFL Students' Attention: A Comparative Study

Variables	Class	N		SD±	"t" Value	Sig	Significant Difference	
Prosodic Variation	Verbal only Strategies	35		4.10	0.47	9.77	0.003	Significant
Questioning				3.90	0.50			
Feedback and Praise				3.71	0.52			
Humor and Storytelling				2.00	0.60			
Total				3.42	0.54			

***t. test is significant at the 0.05 level**

To interpret the results of the above table, four variables are implemented. These variables represent the verbal strategies and how they are related to maintaining students' attention. It is clear that the used verbal strategies are different in their mean scores and standard deviations (SD) according to the different attitudes of students. The highest mean score goes to prosodic variation strategy which records (4.10) with SD (0.47). These results indicate that students view variations in tone and emphasis as a particularly effective strategy for maintaining attention. When the teacher wants to direct her students' attention toward some key concepts, she starts changing her tone. Here, students will focus their attention which will help them direct their learning. Questioning strategy gained the second highest mean score. It records (3.90) with SD (0.50). This reveals that students significantly see questioning as a powerful and meaningful strategy that helps them sustain their engagement which affects the learning process. It is clear that directing display and inferential questions is fruitful. This verbal strategy keeps students ready for classroom participation that reflects their attention.

Feedback and praise received the third highest mean score when it records (3.71) with the SD (0.52). These results show that giving corrective feedback and praise to

correct answers assist students to engage in their learning by raising the level of attention. Although humor and storytelling are used infrequently, they still significant. These two verbal strategies received the lowest mean score and among the other strategies. They recorded (2.00) and (0.60) as mean score and SD, respectively. These results prove that some students are interested in the way the teachers deliver information. Some students are engaged in the jokes and short stories that their teacher tells. In this way, students increase attention to raise focus.

Inferentially speaking, the total mean score is (3.42), the SD is (0.54) with the t-value (9.77) at the significant level (0.003) which is smaller than (0.05). These outcomes say that students do not receive verbal strategies neutrally but rather positively. Among the used verbal strategies, tone variations, questioning and feedback are the most influential. This suggests that EFL teachers have to use and prioritize systematic questioning, tonal changes and consistent feedback and praise to retain attention from the beginning to the end of the lesson.

Going through the analysis of the questionnaire results of the second class, i.e. the combined verbal and non-verbal strategies, table 2 shows the statistical results of the questionnaire of the combined verbal and non-verbal class.

Table 2

Results of the T-test of the Attitudes of Verbal and non-verbal Strategies class

The Role of Verbal and Non-Verbal Strategies in Sustaining Iraqi EFL Students' Attention: A Comparative Study

*t. test is significant at the 0.05 level

Variables	Class	N	\bar{X}	SD±	"t" Value	Sig	Significant Difference
Pauses and Silence	Verbal and Non-verbal Strategies	35	4.60	0.29	11.82	0.001	Significant
Gestures and Movement			4.52	0.33			
Eye Contact			3.75	0.42			
Smiling			4.29	0.30			
Raising Eyebrows			2.75	0.55			
Total			3.98	0.37			

Table 2 above, shows the statistical results of the five variables that are employed in class 2 with the verbal strategies. The findings reveal that pauses and silence, when combined with the other verbal strategies, form a powerful instructional technique to sustain attention. These two non-verbal strategies record the highest mean score (4.60) with SD (0.29). These results show that pauses are used to give students time to process and arrange thoughts, especially after questioning. They act as an effective tool that assists students internalize key concepts. Also, silence records the same mean score and SD to indicate that it serves as a meaningful technique to maintain attention. Students report that when their attention is lost, silence works as an alert to redirect their focus during the lesson. The interruption of the flow of speech highlights classroom awareness and engagement.

The questionnaire results also reveal that gestures and movements, as non-verbal strategies, gain (4.52) and (0.33) as mean score and SD, respectively. These outcomes mention that these strategies purposefully affect the classroom attention. Gestures, as reported by students, help in making abstract ideas clear which enhance attention and retention. Similarly, the teacher's movements inside the classroom plays a significant role in attention dynamics. Being close to students encourage participation, while

taking strategic positions in various areas raise students' alertness. Together, gestures and movement with verbal strategies sustain and maintain attention by providing visual, spatial and auditory interaction. Additionally, the inferential analysis of the students' responses to the questionnaire items reveals that students see smiling as a significant pedagogical non-verbal strategy. The mean score is (4.29) and the SD is (0.30) indicating that students feel more comfort when the teacher rely on smiling. This non-verbal strategy brings its benefit in reducing the psychological barriers that hinder and affect communication. Notably, the highest mean score associate students sustaining attention to teacher's smiling. Students found that smiling is more than facial expression, rather, it contributes to increasing engagement and contribution. Therefore, smiling as a kind of non-verbal strategies helps in minimizing EFL classroom anxiety and enhancing teacher-students' interaction.

Furthermore, the statistical analysis of the questionnaire shows that most of the students agreed that eye contact is an active classroom strategy as indicated by the mean score (3.75) and SD (0.42). Students reported that when the teacher uses eye contact, they are highly focused. This suggests that maintaining eye contact motivate students intrinsically, i.e. they have the desire to communicate effectively in the classroom. Moreover, students reported that using eye contact by the teacher in explaining new concepts helps to clarify meaning and sustain retention. This statistical analysis, which is on agreement with the observational analysis, indicates that eye contact functions as visual communicative behaviour and instructional important strategy that maintains attention and learning. Following the interpretation of eye contact, raising eyebrows seems a less dominate but a noticeable strategy in the classroom. This non-verbal facial expression records (2.75) and (0.55) as a mean score and SD, respectively. The students' answers suggest that raising eyebrows sometimes makes students feel uncertain about its meaning. Some students reported that they are unsure whether raising eyebrows by the teacher indicates an emphasis, a question or a respond. This distraction guides students to confusion. Therefore, instead of fully strengthen students' attention this non-verbal strategy distracted students. The

variability in students' interpretation reduces the significance of combining this non-verbal strategy with other verbal strategies to ensure its effectiveness in supporting sustained attention and learning.

Inferentially, the total mean score is (3.98), the SD is (0.37) with the t-value (11.82) at the significant level (0.001) which is smaller than (0.05). These results reflect the fact that students in class 2 take the combination of verbal strategies with non-verbal ones as a powerful strategy to enhance and sustain attention. Students acknowledge the combination of pauses, silence, gestures and eye contact with other verbal strategies. This acknowledgement helps EFL teacher improve their classroom strategies to achieve attention throughout the lesson.

From the above inferential analysis, it is important to revisit the third research question and the third hypothesis. Research question 3 "What are the students' attitudes regarding the use of verbal only strategies vs. the use of verbal and non-verbal strategies?" is answered when the findings show that students of both classes reveal positive attitudes. Regarding the third hypothesis "There is no statistically significant difference between students' attitudes regarding the use of verbal only strategies versus both verbal and non-verbal strategies" is not confirmed as the statistical results indicate the existence of a meaningful difference.

2.3.4. A Comparative Analysis of the Students' attitudes to the Questionnaires Items

This section aims to investigate how students in class 1 (verbal only strategies) are different in their attitudes from students in class 2 (vernal and non-verbal strategies). To get this aim, an independent t-test is followed to show the difference in the overall mean scores and the SD between the attitudes of the two classes. The statistical results reveal that the overall mean scores of students' attitudes in class 1 is (3.49), while it is (3.98) for class 2. This statistically significant difference indicates the following:

1. Students in class 2 show engagement with the combination of verbal and non-verbal strategies as compared to students in class 1.

2. This meaningful difference is not due to chance. It reflects the effective association of the combination of both types of strategies to students' attention.

Regarding the difference in the SD results of both classes, they are (0.54) and (0.37) for class 1 and 2, respectively. These results indicate variability in students' responses. The responses of students in class 2 are more consistent and homogenous, showing stronger agreement and similar attitudes. In contrast, responses of students in class 1 are less consistent and less homogenous, demonstrating that students' attitudes are not similar and more varied. Overall, the t-value of class 1 is (9.77) with the significance level (0.003) and the t-value of class 2 is (11.82) with the level of significance (0.001). The high mean score and t-value accompanied with the low SD reveal that students in class 2 are more interested in the way the teacher sustain their attention and this interest affects their future learning outcomes.

3. Conclusions

The current study has reached the following conclusions:

1. Verbal and non-verbal attention strategies play an important role in the process of EFL learning. Verbal strategies have a significant role in language learning. They provide students with the oral input that helps them focus attention and increase interaction. These strategies contribute directly to sustaining students' attention.

2. The combination of verbal and non-verbal strategies has the most effective role in maintaining students' attention where the non-verbal strategies complement the verbal ones. Together, these strategies act as a powerful channel that facilitates classroom attention and interaction.

3. The inferential analysis of the questionnaires refers to the existence of a significant difference between the two groups (see tables 1 and 2). This suggests that the meaningful difference is not attributed to chance and that the combined strategies create a supportive and encouraging learning environment.

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