

## TEACHER'S SCAFFOLDING MOVES IN COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN SECONDARY SCHOOL EFL CLASSES

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**Abstract:** Teachers have their own strategies in communicating their messages in EFL classes. The strategies may be in the form of verbal and nonverbal signals to get the message through to the students. The results of the study show that scaffolding moves were mostly used by the teacher, consisting of organizing and maintaining student's interest and motivation, modeling, code switching, explaining or elaborating, eliciting student's response, checking student's comprehension, and providing wait time. Non-verbal signals always occur for the accompaniment of the verbalization of the teacher's messages..

**Key words:** scaffolding, communication strategies, EFL

**Abstrak:** Guru memiliki strateginya sendiri dalam mengomunikasikan pesan pembelajarannya dalam kelas bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Strategi tersebut berbentuk verbal dan nonverbal agar pesan yang diberikan dapat diterima siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru selalu menggunakan *scaffolding* dalam verbalisasi pesan pembelajarannya, dalam hal mengatur dan memelihara minat dan motivasi siswa, memberi contoh, mengalihbahasa, menjelaskan, memancing jawaban siswa, mengecek pemahaman siswa, dan meng-alokasikan waktu tunggu. Tanda-tanda non verbal selalu muncul menyertai verbalisasi guru dalam menyampaikan pesan pembelajarannya.

**Kata kunci:** scaffolding, komunikasi, strategi, EFL,

To communicate what is in the mind, a speaker uses language. Language is used to convey meaning; it is used to present ideas, thoughts, opinions that are in the mind of the speaker. As long proposed by Stern (1983), language is often used with the purpose of making the recipients do something (instrumental use), for example, requesting, commanding, urging, or in some other way regulating his/her conduct (regulatory use). Instructing or teaching can be regarded as a type of communicative behavior intended to cause the addressee to do something, for example to learn.

Communication is a continuous process of expressions, interpretations and negotiations of meaning, which includes systems of signs and symbols of language, accompanied by body language (Savignon, 1983). The ways we stand, smile, listen, nod, pause, and so on all contribute to communication to others along with the sound of our voice and words to speak. The meaning we intend and the meaning we convey are often not the same that choices must be made of the symbolic systems we know. The meaning we convey also depends on others who share an understanding of these symbols

and who may or may not interpret them as we intend.

Based on the understanding that verbal communication is a continuous, two-way, ongoing process, Nadeau (1972) claims that a speaker may be regarded as conceiving ideas which he/she formulates into words (verbal signals) and/or signs (non-verbal signals) which are transmitted in whole or in part to the senses of the listener, who translates or decodes the message to come up with an idea which may or may not exactly match with the original idea of the speaker. Nadeau further stated that fundamentally, the message really passes between the speaker and the listener, in which the speaker tries, through manipulation of symbols of various sorts, to induce the listener meanings as close as possible to his/her own. Sometimes he/she succeeds and sometimes he/she does not.

Human communication is, of course, not simply a matter of a speaker's formulating a message and hoping that it will mean essentially the same thing to the listener.

Feedback is an integral part of the process; it may be described as consisting of return signals or responses which have a continuing effect on the speaker in the pursue of his message production. As shown in Figure 1 (adapted from Nadeau, 1972; Al Mulla, 1991; and Hyland, 1992), the speaker is shown to be receiving feedback from some of 'his/her own' stimuli (vocal apparatus), the sound of his/her voice, and the listener. An external source of feedback is the sound of the speaker's voice. He/she listens and uses what he/she hears to rephrase sentences, repeat significant words, increase volume, change rate and pitch. He/she also hears the message itself and may, in turn, be influenced by it. The listener also functions as a feedback source. Before the speaker actually keeps an appointment to meet a listener he/she is already (or should be) enjoying the advantages of feedback in that he/she is being influenced in the preparation for the perceptions of the 'audience make-up' – who will be in it, what their views and values are, etc.

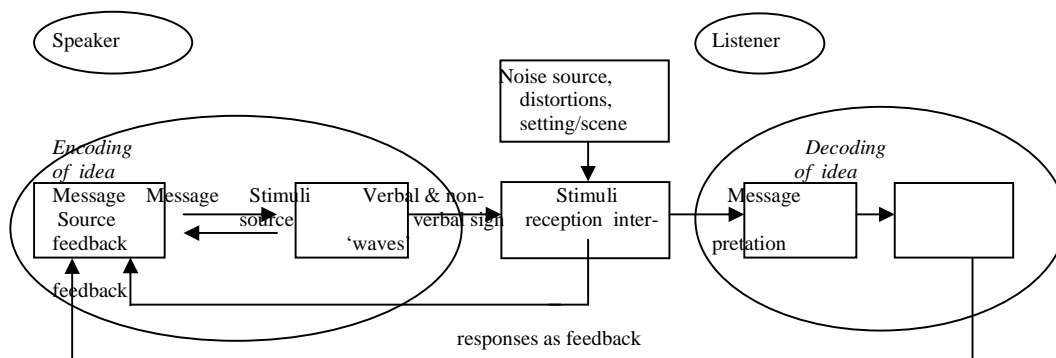


Figure 1 The process of speech-communication (adapted from Nadeau, 1972; Al Mulla, 1991 and Hyland, 1992)

Later the speaker also modifies his/her on-the-scene behavior in the light of the interpretation of signs from an individual, a group, or an entire audience. At the same time that the speaker is sending messages,

he/she is constantly receiving verbal and/or non-verbal signals from the listener. As the speaker transmits his/her messages, then he/she simultaneously receives and interprets signals coming back to him/her, and

he/she tries to use those interpretations to improve the efficiency of his/her communication.

A more realistic view of interpersonal communication is that it is dynamic (Hylland, 1992). Messages are shared rather than sent. In classroom interaction, an appropriate model of communication shows that communication is not merely through a 'pipe' but through an 'awkward spiral'; a message is negotiated between the sender and the receiver. A received message can never be identical to the one sent as it has to pass through the recipient's sensory and cultural filters. This implies a more receiver-oriented approach to communication, and it means that the sender must consider more than 'getting the words right'.

From the above discussions, it can be stated that the function of language is as a tool to communicate. As also happens in an EFL class, there should be a speaker (in this case a teacher) a message, and a listener (in this case the students) in the process of communication. The teacher tries to conceive ideas, who formulates them into words (verbal signals) and/or signs (non-verbal signals), which are transmitted in whole or in part to the students, who decode the message to come up with understanding. Language, in the forms of messages, functions as a tool to convey meanings from the teacher to be understood by the students. There must be several strategies used by the teacher in his/her communication in order to 'get the words right' to the students.

## METHOD

This study is classroom research with the purpose to investigate the aspects of verbal and non verbal signals used by the teacher in his strategies to communicate messages in secondary EFL classes. A qualitative approach was used to obtain data of the teacher's verbal and non verbal signals during his teaching and learning processes.

The primary source of the data was one teacher teaching English at a senior high school in Malang, East Java, Indonesia.

The Procedure followed Miles & Huberman (1994) in the form of data collection, data reduction, data display, triangulation/verification, tentative conclusion, and final conclusion. Analytical induction was employed in the study based on Bogdan & Biklen (1998) with snowballing effects in collecting the data, that is, by using exhaustiveness principles. All of these steps were repeated until the data were exhaustive and saturated. When a certain phenomenon occurred, this was pursued further in the following observations of EFL class activities to verify the occurring phenomenon. The data consist of the transcriptions of the teacher's verbalizations compounded by non verbal signals used in the teacher's strategies in communicating his messages in EFL classes. These data were taken using a tape recorder Sony type TCM 313 Cassette Recorder and a video recorder Sony Handycam. They are coded following Allwright (1991) with some modifications. Analysis was done by transcribing the data and categorizing them based on the verbal and non-verbal communication signals to know the communication strategies used by the teacher in secondary school EFL classes.

In order to maintain the trustworthiness of the data, preliminary observations were done several times in the teacher's EFL classes to minimize biases on the part of the teacher being observed and to familiarize the presence of the researcher in the class. Triangulation and verification of the study was done by observing the source of data many times until he produced the same expressions on a certain phenomenon observed.

## FINDINGS

The study reveals that the teacher's strategies in communicating the messages

are mostly in the form of scaffolding moves. They are always in congruence with non-verbal communication signals. Many of the scaffolding moves occur simultaneously with each other in various sets of taking and giving turns. Learning occurs as a result of inter-psychological support coming from the more knowledgeable other that leads the learners to internalize what is being learned (Bruner in Ko *et al.*, 2003). This is termed as 'scaffolding', in which the teacher as the 'more knowledgeable other' helps the stu-

dents step by step until the students really understand the teacher's intention.

Scaffolding moves done by the teacher in this study are, among others, organizing and maintaining student's interest and motivation, modeling, code switching, explaining or elaborating, eliciting student's response, checking student's comprehension, and providing wait time. Table 1 presents the frequency of types of verbal strategies, under the classification of scaffolding in the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

Table 1 Frequency of occurrence of the teacher's verbal strategies classified under scaffolding moves

No.	Strategy	Frequency	%
1	Organizing and maintaining students' motivation	20	11
2	Modeling	5	3
3	Code Switching	34	18
4	Explaining/elaborating	37	20
5	Eliciting	47	25
6	Providing wait time	42	42
	Total frequency	186	100

## DISCUSSION

From the observation on the types of strategies in this study, it is obvious that all of the above scaffolding moves are used by the teacher. Discussion on the communication strategies used by the teacher in EFL classes is presented below.

### Organizing and Maintaining Students' Motivation

Stern (1983) stipulated that language is often used with a purpose, among others, to make the recipients do something. Findings of the study reveal that in organizing the classroom activities, the teacher mostly used English. As shown in Table 1, there

are 20 moves or 11% found in the study for organizing and maintaining students' motivation. The teacher attempted to make his language comprehensible such as by emphasizing his pronunciation 'divide', slowing his speech rate and making pauses, looking at the whole class, and pointing to the intended students. Of the five opening channels observed, no L1 words slipped among his utterances. He did that with the intention of maintaining the students' interest and motivation in his English class and highlighting or emphasizing his message to the students whether they were ready to start the lesson, while at the same time ex-

celling their agreed commitments to speak English as much as possible.

### **Modeling**

It is clearly seen that the teacher also used another scaffolding move, that is, modeling. For example, the teacher also modeled several pronunciations of vocabulary items. Surprisingly, of the total of 185 moves stated in Table 1, modeling ranks the last with only 6 moves or 3%. Among others, the data show modeling of the pronunciation of a new vocabulary item 'sophomore'. He spelled the word first and then pronounced it to model. Meanwhile, the teacher also gave modeling moves by asking the students to follow after him for pronouncing several words. In congruent taking and giving turns, he modeled and emphasized the sounds of the words to make them internalized by the students. Although it seemed unnatural to emphasize the sounds, it is still permissible, however; to make the correct sounds immersed in the students' mind. If errors in pronunciation are let go by without being checked, it may interfere the students and the incorrect pronunciations may be considered correct, which in turn may be internalized incorrectly in the students' mind that they may produce them unnoticeably. Modeling is intended to lead to internalization of the correct ones to the students that they are able to benefit from that scaffolding support. It is realized that providing an L2 model may be quite helpful not only for the students' production value, but also for its role in providing useful input. In other words, modeling can serve the students in positive ways for L2 production.

### **Code Switching**

Code switching is popular among non-native speaker-teachers teaching a second language. It was believed that the use of L1 appears to have an increasing effectiveness

to facilitate L2 learning in the classroom, and according to Schweers (1999) effective teaching means triggering effective learning. In order to cause learning to take place, communication strategy in teaching should be effective. This effectiveness can be made, among others, by code switching or using L1 in the classrooms. As found by Kasim (2003) in his study, code switching showed its effectiveness in explaining important concepts or content. The findings of this study show that there are 34 code switching moves or 18% as stated in Table 1. Code switching to L1 can be seen to have a scaffolding function when it follows a student's incorrect response. It functions to reformulate non-target utterances produced by the students. As evidenced, when the teacher heard incorrect grammar, he used English in combination with L1 to explain it in congruence with several non-verbal signals like pointing the words and circling them. This is in line with Usadiati (2009) who stated that interchanging explanation in English with L1 is done to anticipate the student's difficulties with English in their beginning period of their EFL classes.

Code switching did occur in concomitant with the moves to organize the class. The teacher slipped L1 phrases in his command. However, it seemed that code switching to L1 was not fully intentional as the teacher continued his talk by turning back to use English. His use of L1 was merely to emphasize his demand for the students and this might not impede his commitments with his students to always use English. The teacher realized that the students might get bored with the lesson, and to revive the students' attention back on the track he used L1. It is argued that after such a long period of taking and giving turns, the class may be so tense that boredom may occur, and the use of L1 to organize the class may provide a more relaxed and permissive environment.

The teacher intended to use English as much as possible in his explanations of a certain construction of grammar: comparative adjective. Despite this effort, for this purpose in fact he chose a topic in L1, that was about the current legislative assembly meetings. In this case, he did not use L1 in explaining the concept of adjective comparative, instead, he just took it as an example from the Indonesian situation. The teacher's aim was not so much at provoking a response from the students, rather, at providing additional input to the students to renew their interest. It is realized that the use of a topic which was still current might boost the students' interest; moreover, by using a topic in L1 as an example it might be clearer for them to internalize the concept. Rather than explaining the comparative adjective elaborately in L1, the teacher may use an informal L1 '*semangkin*' (means 'the more') instead of the formal one '*semakin*' with the intention to provide a clue that could be reproduced more easily by the students when later they come over the same construction. A single clue is more effective than a full sentence because the latter is in a greater chunk that is more difficult to memorize.

Still, another finding of this study does not show the full use of code switching to L1 in the explanation. For example, most of the students have understood the term 'contempt of court' because of their familiarity with that term, which occurred many times in various newspapers and television broadcasts at that time. Because the above term was still popular at that time, most of the students were able to answer in L1. Although L1 was used by the students, the teacher did not want to have the synonym of 'contempt' in L1; therefore, instead of just asking them to find it in the thesaurus, he used a game to have the students participated more. He invited the students to play Hangman to make English learning more

fun for his students than just being passive listeners.

Meanwhile, L1 seemed to be used by the teacher with the intention to maintain the classroom, get the students' attention, or monitor their understanding. Code switching to L1 to get the students' attention back to the class was a move done by the teacher when he realized some students were more attracted to something happening outside the class. This code switching is not to scaffold internalization but to organize students and maintain their motivation.

It is also shown that the students' attention to still tune into the mainstream of the class lesson seemed to be sustained by the teacher's use of L1. He realized that when a school errand came, there would be cliché announcements that the students disliked, such as, among others, announcement about names of students who were late to pay their school fee that they were ordered to go to the headmaster's office. In this situation, to renew the students' attention back to the class discussion, the teacher used code switching to L1.

The data above reveal that L1 was not used intensively, rather, it was used as a variation among the English utterances. In addition, the teacher did it by doing kinesics as well, such as uttering the sentences with soft voice, coming closer to the students' row, leaning on a student's desk, and looking at the student sternly to accompany his verbal utterances. With all these moves, the final intention is to arouse the students' willingness to verbalize their comprehension by answering the teacher's questions.

In other words, it can be stated that for the students to follow the lesson, the teacher used various types of organizing moves consisting of verbal as well as non-verbal features. They both occur in congruence, which means that the verbalizations of the organizing moves always occur with the accompaniment of the non-verbal actions that function to intensify the demand of the

teacher. These moves may not be separated from other moves like code switching, complimenting, explaining, and other moves due to the fact that the final purpose of all of them is to give scaffolding help to the students.

### **Explaining/Elaborating**

When considering the teacher's communicative functions, other important patterns also become evident. One important feature was pervasive in the teacher's verbalizations throughout the class activities: explaining and elaborating. This was evidenced by 37 moves for explaining/elaborating or 20% in the teaching and learning process as stated in Table 1. During explaining the teacher did most of the talking while the students did most of the listening and taking notes. In his elaborations the teacher talked much with the intention that a long explanation is to make the students internalize the material so that well-formed productions may be expected later from the students.

Even a larger chunk of elaboration, with the accompaniment of code switching, was found in the study. It was used to explain a grammar construction of double comparative in a similar way with the one stated previously. By taking and giving turns, singing, code switching as well as doing kinesics teacher intended to internalize the concept into the students' mind. The utterance in L1 '*semakin cakep seorang cewek semakin banyak cowok merindukannya*' ('the more beautiful a girl the more boys come to her') was purposively used to maintain the students' attentiveness to be still on the route of the lesson; the statement was uttered jokingly by the teacher. Examples in L1 were shown to be more effective in the elaboration, since the students responded by giggling, which means that they were following the teacher's elaboration and still engaged to the classroom discus-

sion. This gives the evidence that to make it more effective, the verbal strategy of elaboration cannot occur by itself; it should be used simultaneously with examples in L1 as well as kinesics in congruent moves.

Expanding or modifying a student's answer, as part of elaborating move, is another communication strategy used by the subject teacher in his classroom teaching. In this case he responded to a student's vague or incorrect answer by providing more information, or rephrasing his own words. For example, as evidenced, the teacher gave responses to the incorrect production of the students and elaborated more. This large chunks of elaboration seemed like a think-out loud move of the teacher; what was in his mind was verbalized with the accompaniment of kinesics like drawing boxes and looking around the class. In order that the students still attend to his lengthy elaboration, he used a mock word in L1 '*amburadul*' (means 'in a mesh') because he realized that large chunks of words in his elaboration would just come in one ear and disappear from the other ear when there was nothing interesting. Code switching was intended to maintain and renew the students' attention, and this time mocks seemed to work well. And once again, the internalization of a concept into the students' mind was verbalized with the accompaniment of code switching – mocks in L1 – as well as kinesics.

### **Eliciting**

As cited by Kasim (2003), eliciting is a communicative act that intends to invite the on-going speaker to continue talking, or to stimulate passive students to take part in the discussion. According to Rudder (1999), eliciting is done by taking and giving turns in a talking circle. The talking circle is a communication event with specific demands and participation rules. As stated in Table 1, of the 185 scaffoldings, there are

46 or 25% classified as eliciting moves. As the analyses of this study indicate, when the teacher assumed the role of initiator, the students assumed the role of respondents; when the teacher asked questions, the students responded, and their responses were usually brief. Richards & Lockhart (2002) suggested to use questioning move to elicit the students' response. This is with the considerations that questions stimulate and maintain students' interest, encourage them to think and focus on the lesson, as well as enable the teacher to check the students' understanding.

Almost all of the other data on the teacher's elicitation moves reveal that the teacher did much of the talking with the intention to elicit students' response, while students did much of the listening to the teacher's explanations. Most eliciting moves were accompanied by elaborations to prompt the students. Even if the students, as the respondents, did say something, it was mostly brief.

Apparently, the above phenomenon assert that the student participation and language use were restricted or facilitated depending on the questions the teacher asked and the organization of turns. In this case, the role of the teacher with his communication features can be decisive in enhancing or constraining the students' language use; they function more as devices to control the interaction. Altogether, these features are intended to maintain the class in such a way that students understand what the teacher explains.

### **Checking Comprehension**

Checking the students' comprehension is also done various times by the subject teacher to support the students to move through. It was found out that this move always occurred in tandem with other verbal scaffolding moves like code switching, complimenting, repeating, elaborating, as

well as with non verbal moves like backchanneling, emphasizing, looking at the students sternly, walking around the class, and many others. Several conventional comprehension checks like 'Do you understand?' 'Right?', 'Do you follow?' occurred in this study. Some examples show that in checking the students' comprehension, the teacher used them while at the same time he elaborated his talk using various other moves in congruent with kinesics.

In checking the students' comprehension, the teacher also provided moves to compliment the student by backchanneling followed by a question. Another move to check the students' comprehension, that is, repeating, also occurs in congruence with non-verbal signals. As revealed in the data, the teacher repeated and stressed the student's answer and nodded to agree with it. The repetition and emphasis of the student's utterance 'correctly' was with the intention to compliment implicitly the student's correct answer. Furthermore, comprehension checks are continuously given by the teacher with the intention to elicit the student's understanding and response.

All of the above examples support the argument that in checking the students' comprehension, verbalization only is not enough. It should always be in congruence with other moves, like, among others, complimenting, eliciting, code switching, explaining/ elaborating, and all of them are with the accompaniment of non-verbal moves like nodding, backchanneling, circling several words on the board, and looking at the students. With all of these in tandem, full comprehension of the students may be expected.

### **Providing Wait Time**

The issue of wait time is obviously important in language classrooms. This is because of the two-fold benefits that can be obtained from wait time: more time re-



quired to comprehend the question, and its facilitation towards the students when they are pushed to the limit of their competence (Panova & Lyster, 2002). As depicted in Table 1, moves to provide wait time pose the second rank with 42 moves or 23%. By providing sufficient wait time it was expected to get an increasing amount of student participation in the classroom activities. Almost all of the teacher's questions in the study reveal several pauses for wait time. On the average, the teacher waited more than a second before calling on a student to answer, and a further second was then allowed either by supplying the required responses themselves, rephrasing the questions, or calling some other students to respond. Several pauses were also provided before the teacher commanded a student to answer the problem with a purpose to allow him to think first what to respond. The teacher's kinesics of looking at the student also supported his verbalization while at the same time waiting several seconds to get the student's response.

Besides giving wait time to individual student, the teacher also provided wait time to a group of students. He switched his attention from a student to the whole class purposively: he paused several seconds and talked much to provide wait time to invite other students to participate. In other words, the wait time is not only in the form of pauses, but also in several expressions as a filler of wait time with the final intention to spark the other students to participate.

Meanwhile, wait time is also available in another form. An example shows that repeating an expression is also used to provide wait time. The expression in the latter part of the teacher's utterance was a repetition of an expression previously stated by the teacher. He repeated the same expression to refresh the students' mind so as to give wait time for the students to retrieve. In other words, the expression functions as a filler of wait time; instead of just blank

pausing, filling in the pauses by repeating an expression also provides wait time for the students to think harder. So, as wait time is, as the definition says, the amount of time the teacher pauses after a question or before pursuing the answer with further questions, then wait time allows students to have better opportunity to construct their response. In order that wait time is not left blank, several expressions could be used to fill the pauses.

Further analysis of the data led to some insight that wait time is important for several reasons. First, by extending wait time, for example, about three to five seconds, there would be more participation by more students. This is because of the greater processing time required to comprehend and interpret the teacher's questions. Furthermore, during wait time the students have more time to think, while the teacher has time, for example, to move around the class to see whether the students are attentive to the class discussion. In other words, wait time is beneficial for both the teacher to manage the class and the students to think harder to produce correct and thoughtful responses.

Nevertheless, a lengthy repetition used as a wait time filler sometimes fails to evoke the students' response, because it does not contribute anything to make the elicitation comprehensible either in terms of language or in terms of content difficulties. But sometimes it succeeds because the complete repetition results in the prolonged wait time and provides a second chance for the students especially for those who do not hear the elicitation or who do not hear clearly at the first time it was produced. To prolong wait time, repetition could be used as pause filler to clarify the previous elicitation.

It can be further phrased that it is important for the teacher to provide sufficient wait time for the students to think about the answers to the questions after they have been asked. This allows them time before

attempting to answer them. As Nunan (1991) pointed out, if the teachers really manage to extend their wait time several seconds after asking a question, then there would be more participation by more students. In terms of sufficiency of wait time however, whether it is up to five seconds, or less than five seconds, it is perceived that the length of wait time is not necessarily fixed, instead, it depends on the degree of difficulty of the question.

All in all, scaffolding, as a method to support the students to internalize what is being learned, is more preferred than spoon-feeding. In scaffolding moves the teacher is expected to scaffold the students step by step with the intention to make them understand until they do their own self repair for accurate response. These moves need more time and patience for the teachers. Psychologically scaffolding is more beneficial than spoon-feeding since the students may realize their own error and be willing to correct it by themselves. In other words, self repair scaffolded by the teacher is more profitable for their accurate final production.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of the study show that scaffolding moves are mostly used in the teacher's communication strategies in EFL classes. The scaffolding moves include: (1) organizing and maintaining student motivation, (2) modeling, (3) code switching, (4) explaining/ elaborating, (5) eliciting, (6) checking students' comprehension, and (7) providing wait time. All of the verbal signals used to verbalize his messages occur in combination with each other and in congruence with non-verbal signals, and they are implemented in the teacher's explanations and examples which are recent, interesting and tactful with the final intention to scaffold the students to produce correct responses.

Findings of the present study also show that non-verbal signals always occur for the accompaniment of the verbalization of the teacher's messages. In other words, nonverbal signals always occur to accompany verbal signals, with the final intention to support the verbal signals in the teacher's messages in order to scaffold the students to do better. When one congruent verbal and non-verbal signal is not effective in that it cannot elicit the students' response, the teacher uses other concomitant signals to elicit the students' correct production exhaustively.

From the above findings, it is suggested for the teachers to be able to make advantage of their autonomy to select the most suitable strategies in communicating their message to their own classroom. They should scaffold, rather than spoonfeed, their students to make them understand until they do their own self repair for accurate response.

Teachers should also realize that non-verbal features are not a frill but a must, which will greatly enrich the classroom situations and increase communicative competence. The teachers should be aware of the multi-channeled nature of communication – through verbalizations as well as kinesics and paralinguistics. When they are able to use them effectively they will be able to facilitate the students toward better comprehension. That is why teachers should be aware of not only spoken language but also paralinguistic phenomena if they intend to consider the total system of communication in the classroom.

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