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TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTIONS IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

This study aims to identify Teacher-Child verbal and non-verbal interactions in learning activities at early childhood education centres. Verbal interaction encompasses praise, persuasion, instruction, prompting, pampering and advice. Non-verbal interaction encompasses language, touching and facial expression.

This study use qualitative data. A total of 10 teachers in Kedah, Malaysia were selected to complete a checklist related to verbal and non-verbal interaction during learning activities.

The findings show that, for verbal interactions, nine of teachers are not pampering children. All teachers give praise and advice and nine of teachers use persuasion, instruction and prompting on children during learning activities. In non-verbal interactions, all teachers use sign language, nine teachers use facial expressions and eight employ touch gestures with children.

In conclusion, verbal and non-verbal interactions play important roles in learning activities and assist the development of children, especially in terms of language and social skills.

INTRODUCTION

Verbal interaction encompasses praise, persuasion, instruction, prompting, pampering and advice while non-verbal interaction encompasses language, touching and facial expression. Both types of interactions used by preschool teachers in learning activities are channels for establishing a harmonious relationship between teachers and children. Teachers and children need to interact and be tolerant, understanding, supportive and respectful in learning activities. Children who can feel a teacher's concern and respect for them will

have a sense of being valued, accepted, and feel that they are taken care of and loved. Teachers who use smiles appropriately can encourage children and promote harmony between them and the children (Skinner, 2014; Loy, Aminah & Nordin, 2015; Neill, 2017; Mehrabian, 2017). The aim of this research is to investigate teacher-child verbal and non-verbal interactions in learning activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Siti Noor Fauzah and Nik Suryani (2013) and Norsita and Zainal (2014) found that non-verbal and verbal interaction between a teacher and children in learning activities starts with the preparation of lesson plans, teaching materials, strategy and process. Interaction in learning activities is a key process for a teacher to deliver skills and knowledge to children. Through interaction, a teacher can implement activity planning based on the learning outcomes. Most teacher conversations are in the form of lecturing in learning activities. The interaction between teacher and children is only one-way. Two-way interactions happen when teacher conversations focus on indirect effects such as conversation, questioning, accepting children's feelings and their opinions. Interactions play an important role in learning activities to engage in learning processes and enhance children's experience, skills and knowledge.

For verbal interaction in learning activities, children will be more amenable and susceptible to kindness and warmth in the teachers' voice tones. For better verbal interaction results, teachers can create suspense appropriately for children's attention and concentration. Teachers and children establish a positive relationship of mutual trust and respect through verbal interaction. Teachers should express their concern and love through various forms encompasses a smile, sympathetic words and appropriate touch gestures encompasses hugs and pats to make the child feel loved and cared for. Verbal interactions include face-to-face conversations and speeches. Teachers should pay attention to the standardization of speech and speak. The voice should be clear and smooth. Voice and intonation are important components of verbal interaction. When used properly, children can feel the beauty of language and interaction can happen effectively (Hruska, 2017; Remsperger-Kehm, 2017).

In non-verbal interactions in learning activities, teachers use body language that encompasses gestures, eye contact and facial expressions. Gestures refer to the transmission of information through hand and finger activities. The teacher's gestures not only have the function of emphasizing and demonstrating, but also more clearly expresses encouragement than just words. They also are more effective at discouraging or stopping children's behaviour. When teaching, the posture of the teacher while standing or walking needs to be confident. Eye contact is a particularly important non-verbal communication skill. The eyes reflect and express emotions. Teachers and children use eye contact to open communication, continue communication or terminate communication. Facial expressions are the most direct body language that children receive from a teacher. If the teacher's expression conveys something is wrong, the children will see it and react accordingly. Teachers' facial expressions can convey enthusiasm, appreciation and other information, which can give children social enhancement to enhance their positive behaviour (O'Kane & Goldbart, 2016; Mehrabian, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

This study use qualitative data. A total of ten teachers in Kedah, Malaysia were selected to complete a checklist related to verbal and non-verbal interactions during learning activities. This research instrument is partly derived from the research Development of a Comprehensive and Integrated Model of Quality Malaysian Early Childhood Care and Education-Project 3/TLA: Determining Contributing Factors of Quality ECCE. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A included verbal interaction and Section B included non-verbal interaction between teacher and children.

FINDINGS

Verbal interactions between teacher and children in learning activities.

Table 1 VERBAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND CHILDREN										
CONSTRUCT	T 1	T 2	T 3	T 4	T 5	T 6	T 7	T 8	T9	T10
PRAISE	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
PERSUASION		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
INSTRUCTION		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
PROMPTING	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
PAMPERING				√						
ADVICE	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Table 1 shows the results of verbal interactions between teacher and children in learning activities. For verbal interactions, nine of teachers are not pampering children. All teachers give praise and advice and nine of teachers use persuasion, instruction and prompting on children during learning activities.

For the construct praise, all teachers stated that praise should be used on children in learning activities. Teacher 1 gives praise to children when the children finish doing activities. Teacher 2 praises with words like good, clever and wise. During learning activities, Teacher 2’s interaction with children in construct praise takes place if the child does something. Teacher 3 gives praise to children who are good at the activity. During musical activities, Teacher 3 praises children who perform well in them. Teacher 4, Teacher 5, Teacher 8 and Teacher 9 stated that praise should be given in learning activities. During storytelling and singing activities, Teacher 4 will use techniques that contain praise elements such as praising when the children perform the songs and stories well. During the singing activity, Teacher 6 gives praise to the children. Teacher 7 also often gives a word of praise when the child finishes a given schoolwork. Teacher 10 praises the things done by giving rewards. Children are happy when they’re praised by the teachers.

Nine teachers provide interaction to persuade children in learning activities. Teacher 2 persuades children to read with words like read-write and they can read story books later. Teacher 2 also persuades children if they do not want to do something. Teacher 3 states that persuasion should be provided to children who do not want to play. Teacher 4, Teacher 5, Teacher 6, Teacher 7 and Teacher 10 unanimously stated the need to persuade the child in the right way. Teacher 8 persuades children who do not want to engage in activities by attracting their interest or attention. Teacher 9 persuades a child who does not want to follow the activity with words.

Nine teachers provide instruction in learning activities. Teacher 2 gives instructions like “listen to teacher”. Teacher 3 instructs children who do

not comply with the rules. Teacher 3 states that if a child does not comply with the rules, for example making noise, the teacher should give instructions to the child. Teacher 4, Teacher 5, Teacher 6 and Teacher 7 state that teachers need to give clear direction in learning activities. Teacher 7 states that during the learning activities, the teacher gives the correct instruction to the children so they are eager to join the activity. Teacher 10 gives instructions that can be understood by the children, so that the activities carried out can be continued. There are children who cannot hear the instructions and disturb their friends.

Nine teachers encourage prompting in learning activities. Teacher 1 gives prompting so that children can do it again. Teacher 2 gives prompting with words like “write well, later will be clever”. Teachers prompt children to continue their efforts. Teacher 3 prompts children who lose in the game so they will not be discouraged. Teacher 4 prompts children to do something better. Teacher 5 prompts children to play or share toys. Teacher 6, Teacher 7, Teacher 8 and Teacher 9 unanimously stated that during the learning activity, the teacher should prompt the child to take the initiative to carry out the activity.

In the pampering construct only Teacher 4 spoils the child in the right way and reminds the child what is good and what is bad. Other teachers do not give spontaneous interactions to children in learning activities.

All teachers state that it is important to advise children in learning activities. Teacher 1, Teacher 4, Teacher 6, Teacher 8, Teacher 9, Teacher 10 advise the children to study hard. Teacher 2 advises children to come to school every day. Teacher 3 provides good advice to children who do not comply with the rules. Teacher 5 advises children not to throw toys. Teacher 7 states that during learning activities, children are less focused and then the teacher will advise them to focus properly.

Non-verbal interactions between teacher and children in learning activities.

Table 1 VERBAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER AND CHILDREN										
CONSTRUCT	T 1	T 2	T 3	T 4	T 5	T 6	T 7	T 8	T9	T10
SIGN LANGUAGE	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
TOUCHING	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	
FACIAL EXPRESSION	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Table 2 shows the results of non-verbal interactions between teacher and children in learning activities. The table shows that all teachers use sign language, nine of teachers use facial expressions and eight teachers use touching or touch gestures with children.

For the construct sign language, all teachers use this type of interaction in learning activities. Teacher 1 gives applause to a child when the child has successfully completed the activity. Teacher 2 and Teacher 8 state that during the learning session should the children make noise in the classroom, a teacher should use hand to lips sign language. Usually the children will understand that the teacher is telling them to be silent. Teacher 3 states that during games activity, the teacher can utilize sign language for example by using the hand to tell the children not to be noisy. Teacher 4, Teacher 5, Teacher 6 and Teacher 7 state that non-verbal interactions are also needed during learning activities.

Teachers will use their sign language to tell the children things they cannot do. Teacher 9 describes sign language such as knocking on the table and ringing the bell if they find the condition of the class to be somewhat uncontrollable. The purpose is for the children to know that the classroom situation is quite unpleasant. Teacher 10 gestures using facial expressions and using gestures with fingers for children. Especially when it's time to eat and go home.

For the construct touching, Teacher 1 shakes hands with children. This indicates that the activity has been done well. Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 5 and Teacher 6 use pat and greet children to increase their confidence in safety. Teacher 2 adds a touch that makes the child feel calm and able to continue the learning session comfortably, without fear and achieving learning objectives. Teacher 4 says they use a touch gesture in guiding a child to do the right thing. Teacher 8 touches the child gently or lovingly if the child rebels. Teacher 9 states that they will perform non-verbal interaction of contact type if the child is found to be fit to follow or listen to the instructions.

For facial expression Teacher 1 constructs a happy face expression when the children finish doing activities. Teacher 2 uses facial expression when angry. He added that when he was angry he did not like to raise his voice, instead he tries to shake his head or roll his eyes up. Usually children will understand that the teacher is scolding them. Teacher 4 uses their facial expression to convey their feelings. Teacher 5 states that during learning activities, if children are less focused, teachers should make facial expressions showing a dislike for the less-focused children. Teacher 6 states that during learning activities using or playing musical instruments, teachers use facial expressions that indicate not to make noises. Teacher 7 states during study time, if the child does not focus, a teacher should use facial expressions showing anger to show what the teacher feels. Teacher 8 utilizes facial expressions when the child makes a mistake or is noisy. Teacher 9 shows expressions such as eye kissing, facial expression, showing anger or anger towards children so they understand that the teacher does not like what they have done. Teacher 10 states that children will be silent when they see the teacher's expression when they get noisy.

DISCUSSION

In terms of verbal interactions, nine of teachers are not pampering children during learning activities. All teachers give praise and advice and nine of teachers use persuasion, instruction and prompting to children during learning activities. Teacher-Child verbal interaction uses sounds and words to express themselves.

In terms of non-verbal interactions, all teachers employ sign language during learning activities. Nine of teachers use facial expressions and eight of teachers use touching on children during learning activities. Teacher-Child non-verbal interaction encompasses facial expressions, the tone and pitch of the voice, gestures displayed by Teacher-Child through body language and the physical distance.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings show that, for verbal interactions, the majority of teachers are not pampering children. All teachers give praise and advice and the majority of teachers use persuasion, instruction and prompting on children during learning activities. In non-verbal interactions, all teachers use sign language. The majority of teachers wield facial expressions and touch gestures

on children. The findings have been consistent with those established by Siti Noor Fauzah and Nik Suryani (2013) and Norsita and Zainal (2014) that non-verbal and verbal interaction between teacher and children play an important role in learning activities to engage in learning processes and enhance children's experience, skills and knowledge.

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