Examining EFL teachers’ non-verbal behaviors in English-medium lessons

Rintaro Sato
Nara University of Education, Japan

In English-medium lessons in an English as a foreign language (EFL) environment, EFL teachers may simplify or elaborate their English when they speak to students so that students can receive comprehensible input. When speaking English, teachers often display nonverbal behaviors (NVBs) such as gestures, to facilitate learners’ comprehension. Although verbal input has been extensively examined in studies of second language acquisition (SLA), NVBs have not been well researched. This paper describes an observational study with three Japanese EFL teachers which examined: (1) the difference in the frequencies of NVBs according to a difference in the ratio of L2; (2) the kinds of NVBs (e.g., hand gestures such as iconics and metaphorics, head movements, and affect displays) the Japanese EFL teachers used in the classes; and (3) the difference in the frequencies of NVB use between when the same teacher used L1 or L2. An analysis of the findings indicates that: the higher the L2 ratio is, the more frequently teachers use NVBs; teachers use different types NVBs depending on the situations; and NVBs are more frequently used when the teacher speaks in L2, suggesting that NVBs play a crucial role in providing comprehensible input for EFL classrooms. In the presentation, pedagogical implications for EFL teachers will be also suggested.

Keywords: "Non-verbal behaviors", "English-medium lessons", "EFL teachers".