

تحديد استراتيجيات جذب الانتباه التي يستخدمها مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية

### Identifying EFL Teachers' Attention Getting Strategies

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تاريخ القبول

تاريخ الاستلام

٢٠٢٣/٥/٣٠

٢٠٢٣/٥/١٧

الكلمات المفتاحية: مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية، الانتباه، استراتيجيات جذب الانتباه، استراتيجيات جذب الانتباه الشفوية، استراتيجيات جذب الانتباه غير الشفوية

**Keywords: EFL teachers, attention, attention getting strategies, verbal getting strategies, nonverbal attention getting strategies**

### الملخص

تمثل عملية جذب انتباه الطلاب في الصف تحديًا مهمًا بالنسبة للمدرسين، لذلك يستخدمون تقنيات مختلفة، المعروفة باسم استراتيجيات جذب الانتباه، لتحقيق هذا الهدف. تركز الدراسة الحالية على دراسة استراتيجيات جذب الانتباه التي يستخدمها مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية. وتهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد وتقديم قائمة بالاستراتيجيات المستخدمة من قبل لمدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية على مستوى الجامعة. تم استخدام المقابلة كأداة لجمع البيانات، وتحديدًا المقابلة غير المنظمة. وقد أجرى الباحثان مقابلات مع ٥٠ مدرسًا للغة الإنجليزية في جامعة الموصل. تشير النتائج إلى أن بعض مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية لا يستخدمون استراتيجيات جذب الانتباه في حين يستخدم آخرون. يمكن تصنيف استراتيجيات جذب الانتباه التي يستخدمها مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية إلى استراتيجيات شفوية واستراتيجيات غير شفوية. تتضمن الاستراتيجيات الشفوية لجذب الانتباه التواصل اللفظي للتفاعل مع

الطلاب، بينما تتضمن الاستراتيجيات غير الشفوية استخدام حركات الجسم لجذب انتباه الطلاب. كما يمكن تقسيم استراتيجيات جذب الانتباه الشفوية وغير الشفوية إلى أنواع فرعية مختلفة. يمكن أن تكون الدراسة مفيدة لمدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية الذين يفتقرون إلى استراتيجيات جذب الانتباه المسبقة، حيث إنها توفر لهم طرق مختلفة يمكنهم استخدامها لتحسين تفاعلهم مع الطلاب. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يمكن أن تكون الدراسة قيمة للمدرسين بشكل عام حيث أنها تسلط الضوء على أهمية استراتيجيات جذب الانتباه في الصف.

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**Abstract**

Capturing students' attention in the classroom is a crucial challenge for teachers. Therefore, teachers use various techniques, also known as attention-getting strategies, to achieve this goal. The present study focuses on examining the attention-getting strategies employed by EFL teachers. It aims at identifying and providing a list of AGSs used by EFL teachers at the University level. An interview was used as a data collection instrument, namely an unstructured interview. The researchers interviewed 50 EFL teachers at Mosul University. The findings suggest that some EFL teachers do not use attention getting strategies while others do. The attention getting strategies used by EFL teachers can be categorized into verbal and nonverbal strategies. Verbal attention getting strategies involve manipulating verbal communication to interact with students, while nonverbal strategies involve using body movements to capture students' attention. Verbal and nonverbal attention getting strategies also can be subdivided into different subtypes. The study may be useful for EFL teachers who lack pre-determinate attention getting strategies as it provides them with different strategies, they can use to improve their interactions with their students. Additionally, the study may be valuable for teachers in general as it highlights the importance of attention getting strategies in the classroom.

## 1.0 Introduction

Most people consider that teachers have a significant role in the learning process, and many go further to believe that teachers alone are responsible for the educational outcomes of the students they teach. Although most teachers are effective, much of what they do is constrained by other factors such as students' attention in addition to other factors internally and externally related to students.

It is easy for students to pay attention to tasks that they enjoy and are exciting to them, whereas it is difficult to pay attention to tasks they are not interested in. To attract their attention, teachers use different strategies in the classroom. These are called attention getting strategies (henceforth AGSs).

AGSs are those different ways used by teachers inside academic institutions to capture students' attention. Montoya-Rodriguez and Awbrey (2011) define AGSs as plans or actions created for information processing to trigger sensory registers, voluntarily or involuntarily, to select the desired input and move it on to memory. To Rosegard and Wilson (2013, p. 4), AGSs are intended to focus the students' attention on class external stimuli.

AGSs refer to the actions used to transfer new information from sensory memory to working memory and then to long-term memory, to be analyzed and added to new information. All information entering human beings is subject to decay in sensory memory unless they attend to what happens around them. Therefore, AGSs are ways of making the right decisions about a course, an individual class, or even an entire curriculum, beginning with an analysis of key variables in the teaching situation. Without AGSs, it is difficult for information to be processed and analyzed properly.

The teacher is not only able to control the learning topics provided to students but also, he can manage the class fittingly. Richards (2010, p. 102) views the teacher's role in three dimensions. The teacher is a mediator, facilitator, and monitor. As a mediator, the teacher is the one who is responsible for transferring knowledge to his students. The teacher, as a facilitator, tries his best to facilitate the lessons to his students helping them overcome problems in the classroom depending on many strategies. The teacher is the monitor in the classroom. He has to use different strategies to keep the classroom controlled. Similar ideas are carried out by Megawati, Basikin, and Wibawa (2020, p. 22). They posit that the teacher usually carries out a physical environment and a psycho-social environment in addition to managing and monitoring classroom activities. All these activities are strategies applied by the teacher to control the classroom and make their students pay attention during lecturing them.

### **1.1 Research Problem**

Students' attention is one of the biggest challenges teachers face in the classroom. The previous studies focus on investigating and identifying AGSs at the school level whereas the current one is focused on the university level. It aims at identifying and providing a list of AGSs used by EFL teachers at University of the Mosul.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

The present research tries to answer the following questions:

1. What are the different types of AGSs used by EFL teachers at Mosul University?
2. Do all EFL teachers at Mosul University use AGSs?

## 2. Literature Review

Teachers have the primary role of keeping students on task and attentive. To do so, scholars comprise many different strategies teachers may follow in the classroom to make students attentive.

A study made by Cabanova (2013, p. 521) tries to identify the best AGSs that capture students' attention. Cabanova asks 188 students and 68 teachers about the best AGSs. She comes up with the following results:

1. Use of auditive stimuli (change of voice and tone). This strategy contains answers related to the style of speech but also includes answers related to capturing attention through audio tools.
2. Use of visual stimuli (visual aids, technology). This category contains answers related to the use of information communications technology aids, projectors, and other tools used by teachers in the teaching process.
3. The transition from one activity to another. One of the most crucial things in the transition is providing classroom activities to the students. Transition is one of the aspects included under the umbrella of classroom management. Transition is a change from one activity to the next activity that occurs in the classroom, for example: after the teacher gives explanations, he instructs the students to conduct discussions or do the tasks (Fauzia,2013, P. 212).
4. Answers related to the teacher's personality such as his appearance, expressing emotions, and expressing approval. It also includes answers related to a positive evaluation of students by teachers, motivation toward better performance, and expressing positive emotions.

5. Interesting presentation of teaching material. Many studies confirm that students are highly attentive when the topic is interesting to them.

Based on the data gained from her observations and interviews, Fauzia (2013, p. 209) finds out that the teacher applies different strategies to get students' attention. These strategies are categorized based on their characteristics. Accordingly, the teacher applies five different types of strategies to get the students' attention during the teaching and learning process. These strategies are desisting, sound, chanting, clapping, and singing a song.

Arifadah, Rio, Sholehuddin, and Paramita (2019, P. 285) identify three main AGSs teachers use during lecturing their students in the classroom. These strategies are as follows:

1. The first strategy is sounding: According to this strategy, the teachers are usually knotting things around them. For example, the teacher is knocking on the table or the whiteboard using a marker or pen. The teacher will tap the marker once more to make a louder noise if the first attempt fails to get students' attention. It is applied if the teacher feels that the students drift from the materials, and they do their job and do not pay attention to the teacher who explains the materials. This strategy is also applied during a transition period from one activity to another. It helps the teacher to make the students pay attention again and listen to the teacher.
2. The second strategy is hissing: Hissing is one of the common teachers' AGSs to grab students' attention in the teaching and learning process. Examples of hissing are "Listen to me!", "Attention, please!", "silent, please!" " Ssssst....." and other words. The use of this strategy is almost the same as sounding because attention grabber has similar purposes in the teaching and learning process.

3. Shouting is the third AGSs that teachers use in the classroom. When some teachers want to explain or give instructions but the students do not pay attention, they shout at their students. But, this kind of AGSs is only used when the students are noisy and when hissing or sounding fails. The teacher usually shouts the name of the students or say "Listen to me!" "Quiet!" and other words. It is true after the teacher shouts at them, the students directly become silent and pay attention to the teacher.

Gerschler (2018, PP. 11-114) introduces other different AGSs that capture students' attention in the classroom. These AGSs are "teaching relevant material", "showing enthusiasm", "use a sense of humor", "teaching at an appropriate level of difficulty", "use variety when teaching", "carefully planning and structuring lessons, but maintaining flexibility", "encouraging student participation", "minimizing criticism, maximizing positive reinforcement", "making lessons clear" and the last one is "dividing learning tasks into smaller sub-skills".



### **3.0 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Data Collection Instrument**

The present research uses qualitative research methodology. The data collection instrument used in the present research is an interview, viz an unstructured interview. The researchers interviewed 50 EFL teachers at Mosul University asking about attention getting strategies used by them in the classroom.

#### **3.2 Participants and Population**

The present research was conducted at Mosul University. The participants were selected EFL teachers at Mosul University. The Population of the study is EFL teachers at Mosul University for the academic year 2022-2023.

#### 4.0 Findings and Discussion

The present research is a qualitative study by which the researchers identify AGSs used by EFL teachers. This study adopts interviews as an instrument to collect the data. The researchers used an unstructured interview in which they asked EFL teachers what types of attention getting strategies they use in the classroom. Two types of answers were obtained from the researchers' questions:

1. I do not use specific AGSs.
2. Yes, I use AGSs.

The first group whose answers were "I do not use specific AGSs", clarified that it depends on the situation. It means that their behavior is a reaction to inattentive students. On the other hand, the other group whose answers were Yes, I use AGSs" varied in using AGSs. Generally speaking, AGSs used by EFL teachers at Mosul University can be classified into two types: verbal and nonverbal.

Verbal AGSs involve manipulating verbal communication to interact with students. Based on the data obtained, Different types of verbal AGSs are used by EFL teachers at Mosul University. These AGSs are as follows:

1. *Role play*: Role play is a speaking activity in which the students put themselves in other people's positions and interact using the features of those people such as age, gender occupation. Role play includes a specific communicative task that stands for an authentic situation to be acted in the classroom.
2. *Asking sudden questions*: Teachers use this strategy to keep students attentive. They continuously ask their students questions during lecturing them to maintain their attention. Some teachers use argumentative questions and others use direct related questions.

3. *Changing the tone and pitch of the voice:* During lecturing students, teachers change the tone and pitch of their voices. This strategy means that the teachers try to change the tone and the pitch continuously from normal to abnormal to keep their students attentive.
4. *Daily quizzes:* Some teachers claim that when telling the students that a quiz will be conducted at the end of the lecture, they will be more aware and attentive.
5. *Positive reinforcement:* Teachers who use this strategy say that they promise students to give them additional marks if they are attentive and answer questions continuously. Cherry (2018) maintains that positive reinforcement takes place as a particular behavior results in a positive outcome, making the behavior likely to be repeated in the future. This behavioral psychology concept can be used to teach and strengthen behaviors.
6. *Sense of humor:* This strategy means that teachers tend to tell funny cases in the classroom, provide funny examples and illustrations, and encourage students to use humor frequently. It has been reported that students will be much more motivated to learn if they are happy and cheerful than if they feel worried and failed. Jalilovna and Uktamovich (2020, P. 29) state that scientists suggest that humor in the classroom helps reduce tension, stress, anxiety, and boredom, improves the relationship between the student and the teacher, reduces the students' fear of classes, makes learning enjoyable, creating positive attitudes toward learning, increases interest and attention to the material taught, develops understanding, memorization, and promotes creativity.

In addition to verbal communication with students, EFL teachers sometimes try to communicate with their students nonverbally. They use body movement to attract students' attention. Different types

of nonverbal AGSs were documented during the interview made with EFL teachers. The following are nonverbal AGSs used by EFL teachers in the classroom.

1. *Knocking on the board*: EFL teachers claim that when they feel that students' attention begins to decrease, they knock on the board more than one time to make students pay attention and not lose attention. This strategy is widely used among teachers in general.
2. *Clapping*. Another nonverbal AGSs used by EFL teachers is clapping. Instead of raising their voices, some teachers prefer to clap. Teachers clap from one period to another to warn students whose attention begins to decrease.
3. *Changing students' seats*: This strategy is used when the teacher notices some students are inattentive. the teacher changes their seat to recover their attention. It is known that students whose seats are in the front row are more attentive than those in the back. However, some EFL teachers who have been interviewed state that they bring inattentive students who occupy seats in the back row to the front one to make them pay attention periodically.
4. *Sudden silence*: Sudden silence is a preferred strategy for a group of teachers in the classroom. Teachers argue that when using this strategy, students will wonder about what happens and the result is that all of them pay attention. It is also used when teachers feel their class is noisy during the lecture, they stop lecturing and keep silent for a while. This strategy makes students wonder about what happened and the result is that all the students will be attentive.
5. *Keep moving*: To make the classroom more active, some teachers keep moving during lecturing. When the teacher moves between seats and in front of students, students will be active and ready for any task teacher asks them to do. Therefore, they stay attentive.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The study aims at finding answers to two questions. The first is whether all EFL teachers use AGSs or not. The second is about the types of AGSs used by EFL teachers. The study was conducted at University of Mosul in 2022-2023.

It was found that not all FEL teachers use attention getting strategies. It also was found that EFL teachers who use AGSs employed two types namely; verbal and nonverbal. The verbal AGSs are role-playing, asking sudden questions, changing the tone and pitch of the voice, daily quizzes, positive reinforcement, and a sense of humor. The nonverbal AGSs are knocking on the board, clapping, changing students' seats, sudden silence, and keep moving.

EFL teachers and teachers, in general, may find this paper useful in developing their ways of behaving in the classroom concerning their AGSs. It may be useful to those teachers who do not have pre-determinate AGSs.

## 6.0 Recommendation

In adopting AGSs, teachers have to take into consideration the diversity among their students. Some students may be attentive for a longer period than others. This is due to the differences in their attention spans. Also, students vary in the type of style they prefer, so it would be helpful if teachers take into consideration their students' style when applying AGSs. The teacher has to provoke students' interest in the subject they are teaching because it is known that students stop paying attention in class when the topics or the teachers are boring. Therefore, involving students in the teaching/learning process as much as possible is highly recommended so that teachers do not lose their students in the classroom.

Overall, the findings of this study can serve as a starting point for further research on attention getting strategies used by EFL teachers and their impact on student learning outcomes.

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