

## Students' Responses to Teacher's Reinforcement: A Discourse Analysis

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### Abstract

Reinforcement is one of the important aspects in increasing students' motivation, to be more serious, and more focused during the teaching-learning process. This research is intended to know the kinds of reinforcement used by the teacher, how students respond to it, and how was their feeling about it. The design of this research is Discourse Analysis that focuses on the semiotic area. This research was conducted at one of the state junior high schools in East Java, Indonesia. The participant was chosen by using purposive sampling method and class 7F students were selected as the research participants. In conducting the research, the researcher did classroom observation, took video recording, and did an interview with the students to know exactly the meaning of students' responses. The finding showed that the teacher used verbal and non-verbal reinforcement. Mostly, the teacher praised the students for what they have done and students mostly showed their response using facial expression and sometimes using body gesture. Findings of the research provide actual evidence that the role of reinforcement is very important for students as reinforcement makes students feel appreciated, motivated and happy during the teaching-learning process.

**Keywords:** discourse analysis; junior high school; students' responses; teacher's reinforcement

### Introduction

Applying reinforcement during the teaching-learning process is one of the ways that teachers can do to arise students' motivation in English class. Reinforcement is needed in the teaching-learning process because it can increase the students' motivation, make students to be more serious, and focus when attending classes (Uno, 2010). Many studies had been done to reveal teacher's reinforcement and how students respond to the reinforcement. Studies discovered that students' responses can be seen from their facial expression, body gestures, and

oral expression. However, previous studies failed to uncover the compatibility and conformity between the meaning of students' responses and what they really feel and experience. This current research is intended to fill in this void.

Giving reinforcement to the students hopefully can arise students' motivation, and their understanding of the lesson will be better. In the context of this research, most students around the research area seemed not really interested in English. It is because they lack of English language skills, have few experiences in using English in their daily life, and are not expected to use it in their future (Astuti in Lestari, 2020).

Reinforcement from the teacher can be given in the form of verbal and nonverbal reinforcement. The response that the students show after receiving these kinds of reinforcement can be in the form of facial expressions, body gestures, and oral expressions. These three forms belong to the semiotic area in discourse analysis. Semiotics investigates signs (including visual images, facial expressions, body language, and so forth) and symbols and how they are used in a specific context to create certain meanings in the text. In analyzing and interpreting the semiotic data, discourse analysis is commonly used. As Kress (2011) emphasized that a multimodal social semiotic approach is inherently and inevitably an instance of discourse analysis (DA).

Some researchers have conducted research dealing with the implementation of reinforcement in the teaching-learning process to different participants with different subjects. For example, Maslichah & Haryono (2013) did it to Junior High School students in teaching Mathematic and Lestari (2020) did it to Senior High School students in teaching English. All of the researches showed the same results that the students give a positive response to any kind of reinforcement given by the teacher during the teaching-learning process. Those results give an overview of how reinforcement works at different levels of participants.

The researchers replicated all of the research above but with different levels of participants, variation, and subjects. This research focused on analyzing students' responses to the teacher's reinforcements during the English teaching-learning process in junior high school. A replication study in psychological research is important because the results of the researches done before will strengthen more the results and the conclusion of the new psychological research (Makel, et al., 2012 and Patil, et al., 2016).

## **Research Methodology,**

In line with the purpose of this study which is to analyze the junior high school students' responses to the teacher's reinforcements during the English teaching-learning process, the appropriate design of this research was discourse analysis which focused on understanding and interpreting students' facial expressions, body gestures, and oral expressions.

This research was conducted at one of the state junior high schools in Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia. This school applies the K-13 curriculum for the teaching and learning activities. The researcher chose the seventh grade students' level to conduct this study because they are in the transition period from elementary school to junior high school, where English in junior high school is more complicated than in elementary school.

The researcher used purposive sampling method in determining the research participants. From six classes, the students of the 7F class were selected as the research participants. Based on the teacher assessment, the English score of 7F class students is in the average score and they tend to be passive during the learning process. To collect the data, the researcher used three methods, they were observation, video recording documentation, and semi-structured interview. The questions used in the interview were based on the results of the observation. It seeks to get clarification directly from the students about the meaning of their response towards the teacher's reinforcement.

The implementation procedure of this research was: 1) The researcher observed the teacher's reinforcement and student's response to it and took a video recording during the teaching-learning process, 2) After gaining the data, the researcher analyzed the data by using the consideration from Patel (2014) and Noaimi (2019) that has been made in coding forms, 3) The researcher interviewed the students to get clarification directly from them for the response they have shown before, 4) The researcher combined the two results from the observation and interview process to get the answer of the research questions, 5) The researcher summarized and described the results of the overall data.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Findings**

This research analyzed kinds of reinforcements used by the teacher during the teaching-learning process and the student's responses to the reinforcements which focused on the facial expression, body gestures, and oral expression of the first grade of junior high school students by using the consideration from Patel (2014) and Noaimi (2019) as the basic references in analyzing the data.

*Kinds of Reinforcement Used by the Teacher*

From the data, it was found that the teacher used verbal and non-verbal reinforcement in the form of praise and a personal approach to increase the students' motivation and enthusiasm during the teaching-learning process.

*Kinds of Students' Responses*

The student's response that had been observed during three observations was in the form of facial expression, body gestures, and oral expressions. All responses are presented in coding form as follows:

Kinds of Student's Responses		
Facial Expression	Body Gestures	Oral Expression
Free Smile = FS	Shrugging Shoulders = SS	Thankyou = TY
Grim Smile = GS	Lowered Head = LH	Hurray = HUR
Grinning = GR	Head Nodding = HN	Yes = YS
Frown = FR	Touching the Nose = TN	Yeah = YH
Raised Eyebrows = RE	Prisk Rubbing of the Hands = PRH	
Fear = FE	Pulling an Ear = PE	
Furrowed Forehead = FF	Head Shaking = HS	
Neutral = N	Open Hands = OH	
	Closed Hands = CH	

*Observation 1*

Teacher's Reinforcement	Student's Number (Student's Response)	Researcher's Interpretation	Student's Clarification through Interview
Good	1-32 (N, LH, FF)	They were trying to focus on what was presented in the book.	They said that they focused on observing the picture and reading the explanation.
Very good	1-32 (FS)	They felt happy because they can answer the teacher's question (about the picture on the book).	They said they felt happy because they can answer the question from their teacher.
That's good	17 (FS), 31 (FS)	17: She felt happy that she could answer the teacher's question (relating to the picture on	17: She said that she felt happy and satisfied as she could answer the teacher's question and got praise from

		the book). 31: She felt happy that she could answer the teacher's question (relating to the picture on the book).	him 31: She said that she felt happy as she could answer the teacher's question.
Good	1-32 (N, FS)	They felt happy because they could answer the teacher's question (relating to the picture on the book)	They said they felt happy because they could answer the question from their teacher.
Touching the student's shoulder	4 (N, LH)	He was trying to focus doing the task on his book	He said he focused on doing the task
Walking around the class	1-32 (N, LH)	They were trying to focus doing the task on their book	They said that they feel frightened because they could not do the task, did not know what they had to write.
Good	13 (FS)	He felt happy because he could answer the teacher's question	He said that he felt happy as he could answer the teacher's question.
That's good	7(FS), 15(FS, LH)	7: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) 15: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard); she showed respect or shyness to the teacher at the same time	7: She said that she felt happy that she could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly. 15: She said that she felt happy as she could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly and was little bit shy being praised.
Very good	14(FS), 10(N), 3(N), 5(FS)	14: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) 10: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) 3: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) 5: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard)	14: She said that she felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly. 10: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly. 3: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly. 5: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly.
That's right	4(FS), 16(N)	4: He felt satisfied and happy because he could do the task (on the whiteboard) 16: He felt satisfied because he could do the task (on the whiteboard)	4: He said that he felt satisfied that he could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly. 16: He said that he felt satisfied that he could do the task (on the whiteboard)

			correctly.
Great	1-32 (N, FS)	They felt happy because they could answer the teacher's question (concluding what they had learned that day)	They said that they felt happy because the class was over

During the first observation, it was found that the teacher gave eleven reinforcements to the students, nine times using verbal reinforcements, which were "good", "very good", "that's good", "that's right", and "great", and twice using non-verbal reinforcements, which were touching the student's shoulder and walking around the class. Meanwhile, the students showed their responses in the form of facial expressions, which were neutral, free smile, and furrowed forehead; and body gestures like lowered head.

Observation 2

Teacher's Reinforcement	Student's Number (Student's Response)	Researcher's Interpretation	Student's Clarification through Interview
Thank you	2(LH), 12(LH)	2: He showed his respect to his teacher (cleaning the whiteboard) 12: He showed his respect to his teacher (taking the new markers)	2: He said that he lowered his head to show his respect and felt pleasure that he could help his teacher at the same time. 12: He said that he lowered his head to show his respect to his teacher.
Right	14(N), 4(N)	14: She felt satisfied that she could answer the teacher's question (repeating the lesson last week) 4: He felt satisfied that he could answer the teacher's question (repeating the lesson last week)	14: She said that she just tried to answer the teacher's questions about the last lesson. 4: He said that she just tried to answer the teacher's questions about the last lesson.
That's Right	16, 1, 11, 5 (N, FS)	They felt satisfied and happy to be praised by their teacher after answering the question correctly	They said that they felt happy that they could answer the teacher's questions
Personal approach (walking around the class, touching the student's shoulder & looking at student's worksheet	1-32 (N, LH)	They focused to do the task on their worksheet	Some of the students said that they focused on doing the task and for the rest, they said that they felt shy and a little bit afraid when the teacher took a look at their work personally.

personally)			
That's good	16(N), 4(FS), 21(N), 32(N)	16: He felt happy because he could do the task (on the whiteboard) 4: He felt happy because he could do the task (on the whiteboard) 21: He felt happy because he could do the task (on the whiteboard) 32: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard)	16: He said that he felt happy because he could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly. 4: He felt happy because he could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly. 21: He felt happy because he could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly. 32: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly.
Good	25(N), 17(FS), 9(FS)	25: He felt happy because he could do the task (on the whiteboard) 17: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) 9: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard)	14: He said that he felt happy because he could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly. 10: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly. 3: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly.
Very good	18(N), 3(FS), 5(FS)	18: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) 3: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) 5: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard)	18: She said that she felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly. 3: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly. 5: She felt happy because she could do the task (on the whiteboard) correctly.

During the second observation, it was found that the teacher gave seven reinforcements to the students, six times using verbal reinforcements, which were "thank you", "right", "that's right", "that's good", "good" and "very good" and three times using non-verbal reinforcements, which were walking around the class, touching the student's shoulder and looking to some students' worksheet personally. Meanwhile, the students showed their responses in the form of facial expressions, which were neutral and free smiles; and body gestures like lowered heads.

Observation 3

Teacher's Reinforcement	Student's Number (Student's Response)	Researcher's Interpretation	Student's Clarification through Interview
Good	5, 13, 7 (N)	5: She felt satisfied as she could answer the teacher's question (repeating the	They said that they just tried to answer the teacher's questions about the last

		lesson last week) 13: He felt satisfied as he could answer the teacher's question (repeating the lesson last week) 7: She felt satisfied as she could answer the teacher's question (repeating the lesson last week)	lesson.
Personal approach (asked students directly to read in pairs) (reading section)	32 (FS), 25 (G), 28(FS), 27 (N), 21 (N), 31 (N)	They felt happy as they could be noticed by their teacher	Some of them said that they were happy as they could be noticed by their teacher and some of them said that they got a little bit upset (not ready) being asked by their teacher directly.
That's good	4 (FS), 7 (N)	4: He felt happy because he could answer the teacher's question 7: She felt happy because she could answer the teacher's question	They said that they felt happy as they could answer the teacher's questions
That's right	15 (FS), 31 (N)	15: She felt happy because he could answer the teacher's question 31: She felt happy because she could answer the teacher's question	They said that they felt happy as they could answer the teacher's questions
Very good (writing sec.)	10, 11, 7, 6 (FS, N)	They felt happy to be praised because they could do the tasks correctly.	They said that they were happy as they could do the task correctly
Good (writing sec.)	15 (FS), 3 (FS)	They felt happy to be praised because they could do the tasks correctly.	They said that they were happy as they could do the task correctly

During the third observation, it was found that the teacher gave six reinforcements to the students, five times using verbal reinforcements, which were "good", "that's good", "that's right" and "very good" and once using non-verbal reinforcements, which was asking students directly to read a conversation presented on the book in pair. Meanwhile, the students showed their responses in the form of facial expressions, which were neutral, free smiles, and grinning.

#### *The Interpretation of the Meanings of Students' Responses*

Based on the data obtained, the students' responses were interpreted by using Patel (2014) and Noaimi's (2019) consideration. Referring to the fact that one response could possibly have multiple meanings, in interpreting the students' response, one meaning that best fitted with the situation or happening was chosen. For the example in observation 1 point 3, the condition was the teacher asked the

students about something related to the picture presented in the book. Two students can answer the question then the teacher praised them by saying "That's good" and both of the students showed "free smile" response. This "free smile" expression could mean the expression of happiness, friendliness, and affection. Then the researcher interpreted students' responses as a happiness expression because they can answer the teacher's questions correctly.

#### *The Students' Clarification about Their Responses*

The students' clarification about the real meaning of their responses had been explained in the research table column 4 (students' clarification through the interview). It was found that some of the students' clarification of their responses matched with the researcher's interpretation. One of the examples was in observation 1 point 3. Two students showed "free smile" responses and the researcher interpreted it as their happy expression because they could answer the teacher's questions. During the interview, both of the students clarified that they showed "free smile" response because they were happy that they could answer the teacher's questions.

However, it was also found that some of the students' clarification had different meanings from the researcher's interpretation. One of the examples was in observation 1 point 6. The condition was the teacher walked around the class (non-verbal reinforcement) to monitor and check the students' activities. The students' response was "lowering their head". The researcher interpreted it as they were trying to focus on doing the task in their book. When it came to the interview, it was different. They said that they feel frightened because they cannot do the task and did not know what they had to write.

## **Discussion**

### ***Types of Reinforcement Used by the Teacher***

Based on the findings above, the teacher used reinforcement to make students feel comfortable and enjoy the class. The teacher did not only use one type of reinforcement but he also used both of them at the same time, verbal and non-verbal reinforcement. In general, however, based on the result of the observations, verbal reinforcement was the type of reinforcement that was mostly used by the teacher. It is supported by Diedrich (2010) that praise is a specific type of positive reinforcement (verbal reinforcement) that many teachers regularly use in their

classrooms when interacting with students. It is also strengthened by Conroy et al. (2009) that many teachers consistently utilize praise to increase the occurrence of their students' use of positive social and academic behavior.

#### *Students' Responses to the Teacher's Reinforcements*

Based on the results of the three times observations above, most of the time the students showed their responses by means of facial expressions like smile, neutral, grinning, furrowed forehead, and sometimes by means of body gestures like lowering their head and these findings answered the second research question. It is supported by Patel (2014) that during communication, only 7% of the information human transmits to others is in the language we use; 38% in how people speak which includes quality of voice, accent, voice projection, emphasis expression, pace, volume, pitch and so on; and 55% through body language which includes posture, position, head & body movements, gestures, eye contact, facial expression, touch and so on.

#### **The Interpretation of Students' Responses**

In analyzing students' responses to the teacher's reinforcement, Patel (2014) and Noaimi's (2019) considerations were used as the basic reference. In observation table 1 point 1, the students showed "lowered head" and "furrowed forehead" responses. It also happened in observation 1 point 6, point 8 (students' number 15), observation 2 point 1, and point 4 where the students showed "lowered head" and "furrowed forehead" responses. According to Patel (2014) and Noaimi (2019), "lowered head" could mean someone is hiding something, keeping distance from another person, showing disbelief, shyness or timidity. Then "furrowed forehead" could express worries, anxiety, considering, or focus on something. The researcher's interpretation was that they used these responses because they focused on their book and doing the task.

Most of the time, students showed "free smile" responses. According to Patel and Noaimi, a "free smile" response expresses happiness, friendliness, and affection. When it was related to the context of its use, the researcher interpreted it as a happy sign. The students were happy because they could answer the question or the task correctly. However, in addition to "free smile", "neutral" responses was used by the students most of the time. According to Patel and Noaimi, a "neutral" face or

response indicates ambiguity, lack of emotion, or it could mean someone was hiding or controlling their emotion. When the context of its use was taken into account, this response meant that the students were lack of emotion.

### **Students' Clarification of Their Responses**

Some of the responses that the students showed have the same meaning as what was described in Patel (2014) and Noaimi's (2019) theory. One of the examples was in observation 1 point 8, student number 15. The student showed "free smile" and "lowered head" responses because she felt happy and a little bit shy at the same time to be praised by the teacher after doing the task correctly. This condition was because the female students were quite shy to show their expression and it was also influenced by the Indonesian culture where children are likely to be shy when they are praised.

At the same time, it is also found that some of the responses have different meanings to what is presented in the theory. It is because every human's response would mean different based on the situation and context of its use. Understanding the fact that each country has different culture, it is very possible that it affects the meaning of every human's response. In this case, this research was conducted in Indonesia that involved Indonesian culture in the process of analyzing the data. In the observation table 2 point 1, the students showed the same response, which was "lowered head" after receiving reinforcement from the teacher. The context was that the teacher asked 2 male students to help him clean the whiteboard and take new markers in the class service room. The teacher said "Thank you" to them and both of them showed the same response. After asking the confirmation directly to them, they meant the same. They lowered their head to show respect to their teacher and felt pleasure that they could help him. They showed one of the Indonesian cultures that when someone talks to an older person, they tend to lower their head to show their respect.

Different response might be given by students from other countries due to cultural differences. The rest responses that the students showed during the three times observation were "free smile", "neutral", and "grinning" expression. After getting confirmation directly from the students about the meaning of responses they

showed, it was found that all of them have the similar meaning with what has been described by Patel (2014) and Noaimi (2019) that was showing happiness.

### Conclusion and Suggestion

Verbal reinforcement was mostly used by the teacher during the English class interaction. The students agreed that the teacher often praise them for what they had done and they always showed good responses to any reinforcement that the teacher gave to them. Students said that reinforcement from the teacher makes them feel appreciated, motivated and happy during the teaching-learning process. there were some limitations of this research.

Though this study successfully reveals the kinds of reinforcements used by the teacher during the teaching-learning process and the student's responses to the reinforcements, the findings might not be very convincing as the study was done during the pandemic covid-19. During the pandemic students must follow the health protocol, keeping physical distance, wearing a mask, and the learning time must be shortened. Future researchers are recommended to conduct this kind of research by replicating it or conducting relevant research dealing with the students' responses to teacher's reinforcement during the normal and healthy time so that students' responses to teacher's reinforcement can be observed brightly.

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