

## The use of non-verbals with disruptive students

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Analysis of the implementation and calibration of Michael Grinder's non-verbal model in secondary schools, Barcelona, Spain

For this work not all of the techniques have been chosen, since it is not easy to use so many of them in a reduced period of lesson implementation time (three hours). For this

reason, the strategies that are going to be analysed are: the *basic technique* for gathering

attention; the *frozen arm*, the use of incomplete sentences, the use of visual instructions

and the use of numbers and statistics for the refinements during the lesson; and finally there will be some comments regarding the strategies for the task and the transitions before and after it.

The use of the techniques was not programmed within the structure of the teaching unit and the lesson plans. As a consequence, I used them arbitrarily during the three hours of teaching. After their implementation, the distribution of the chosen techniques was the following one:

**1st session:** frozen arm and visual instructions

**2nd session:** basic technique

**3rd session:** use of incomplete sentences and use of numbers

In order to describe both the teacher's and the students' attitudes during the implementation of the technique, the next outline will be followed:

In this outline the breathing aspects regarding the students will not be taken into account since it became impossible to calibrate such aspect in a class and without an individual approach to the students. On the other hand, regarding my breathing, as I have perceived during my stay with the group (and at the school, in general, during the internship) I can affirm that my breathing is generally low, since I do not easily feel stressed, nervous or anxious when managing the classroom. However, as happened with the students, it is more difficult to recall the type of breathing in every technique implementation, especially if the use of such techniques was not expressly programmed.

For these two reasons I have decided not to add the breathing aspects of the teacher either.

### **Name of the technique**

*Comment or contextualisation*

*(Number of students in class)*

### **What I did**

Visual non-verbals:

Auditory non-verbals:

Kinaesthetic non-verbals:

### **How students responded**

### **Calibration of attention**

### **Basic technique**

*As has been explained in the introduction, the students in this class show severe problems on the very basics dynamics of school, such as paying attention, keeping the working rhythm and the concentration, being respectful, etc. The beginning of the lesson is always complicated since students tend to show interest for things that are not related to the subject. This technique was implemented during the second session in order to initiate the lesson and proceed to explain the activities that had to be done.*

### **What I did**

Visual non-verbals: Stand up straight and in balance in front of the class.

During the pause I looked at the class, moving my head from side to side to check on all of the students.

Auditory non-verbals: Greet with a volume of voice that is louder than the surrounding noises. Pause for approximately 10 seconds and resume the speech in a whisper and raise the volume gradually.

Kinaesthetic non-verbals: Stand still in the same position.

### **How students responded**

Most of the students who were not looking at me before the technique did look when I greeted. However, as soon as I paused most of them resumed their conversations with the classmate. A couple of them were paying attention and one student asked the others to look at me because I was talking.

### **Calibration of attention**

Before the technique was implemented none of the students were paying attention and after it between 6 and 7 of them were attentive. Approximately the 65% of the class responded to this technique.

### **The frozen arm**

*This technique was implemented during the beginning of the first session in order to have students paying attention to the instructions. The activity took place in the upper terrace of the school, a place often used as a patio and seen by the students as somewhere to play.*

### **What I did**

Visual non-verbals: While giving the instructions, stand still in front of the students with the frozen arm position: arm laying horizontally in an angle of 90 degrees (during the minute the time of giving the instructions, which was approximately one minute).

Auditory non-verbals: Use of normal tone of voice with no changes on the speed or the volume.

Kinaesthetic non-verbals: Stand up position, with no movement during the explanation.

### **How students responded**

Six students were already waiting for my instructions before I did the technique. While I was talking four of the others progressively directed their attention to me. One of them was still not paying attention at the end of the technique.

### **Calibration of attention**

Before the technique, the 54,5% of the students in the class were paying attention. After it, the 90,9% were doing so, with an increase of a 36,4%.

### **Incomplete sentences**

*I was trying to provide some theory reviewing the use of modal verbs that we had seen during the previous sessions. While giving some information, most of the students were*

*not concentrated at all and talked to each other almost the whole time.*

### **What I did**

Visual non-verbals: While presenting the theory I was standing straight and also using the keeping a calm and serious face.

Auditory non-verbals: The tone of voice was normal and the speed was medium before using the technique. At the time of using the incomplete sentence, I raised the volume of my voice a bit, in order to make sure that students could listen to me. I said "You know? Sometimes I think that..."

Kinaesthetic non-verbals: I was standing still while providing the theory, but when I proceeded to use the technique I used a more relaxed position and gestured slightly with my hands.

### **How students responded**

Some of the students stopped talking just after I used the incomplete sentence technique and looked at me waiting for me to continue with the sentence. However, the rest of them continued talking and did not respond to this strategy.

### **Calibration of attention**

Before the implementation of the technique there were 5 students paying attention, which means a 38,5% of the class. Just after it, three more students concentrated on me, which is a 23,1% more than before. This makes a total of 61,6% of students paying attention, with a remaining 38,4% that did not pay attention.

### **Visual instructions**

*Visual instructions are a key element in a classroom where the attention rate is generally low. Students had often shown a tendency to visual instructions rather than the oral ones.*

*This technique was used before doing some grammar exercises. With this group it is always necessary to repeat the page, the exercise number and even the instructions of the task, which are already written down.*

### **What I did**

Visual non-verbals: I had been presenting modal verbs in class. To support the oral speech, I wrote some key aspects on the black board before the beginning of the class, so that the students could look at it while I was giving the explanation. After that, there was time for practising, so I wrote the page of the dossier and the exercise number on the blackboard, next to the theory we had just been looking at, so that I could point at it whenever they asked what they had to do.

Auditory non-verbals: I did not use any special auditory strategy. The volume of the voice while using the visual aid was average and I did not change the pitch of voice.

Kinaesthetic non-verbals: Whenever I was asked about something that had already been said (theory aspects, examples or exercise number) I just pointed at the blackboard where everything was written down.

### **How students responded**

Some of the students who normally showed more difficulties when paying attention to oral instructions did improve their attention or concentration whenever there were visual instructions, images or other type of visual aid (such as cards with words, or posters). In this case, by the use of the instructions on the blackboard. One of the students in the class had a much better understanding of the lesson whenever there were visuals, given or not oral instructions.

### **Calibration of attention**

It becomes very complex to calibrate attention based on a single time using the technique. Plus, it is better to observe it and analyse individually, since students with different kinds of learning styles may respond differently to visual instructions.

### **Using numbers and statistics**

*I was trying to provide some theory reviewing the use of modal verbs that we had seen during the previous sessions. Only three of the thirteen students were following me, while the rest were talking to each other.*

### **What I did**

Visual non-verbals: While presenting the theory I was standing straight and also using the frozen arm.

Auditory non-verbals: The tone of voice was normal and the speed was medium before using the technique. While using it by saying "There is a 2% of the class that is not paying attention to me" I raised the volume of my voice so that all of them could hear what I said.

Kinaesthetic non-verbals: Before the technique I was pointing at the blackboard or looking at the students. Just before using it I was standing still and when I used it I was making some short vertical gestures with my hands to emphasize what I was saying.

### **How students responded**

Students quietened just after I used the number technique. Most reacted and asked "what?" or answered "Everyone is paying attention" or "no, more than a 2%". Their response was immediate.

### **Calibration of attention**

Before the implementation of the technique there were a 23,1% of the students paying attention. Just after it, the whole class (100%) did pay attention. The technique increased the attention rate in a 76,9%.

### **The task and its transitions**

Very few students participated actively in task when they were grammar centred. For this reason, having them working on exercises was often difficult. Following the instructions given above, for the transition to task it was very useful to provide written materials (theory, verbs, etc.) as well as it was useful to have the explanation on the blackboard. Students in general were more eager to have visual information than auditory, since they were talking most of the time. That is why very often instructions had to be repeated (in this case, having everything on the board made this part much easier). While doing the task, the approach to address inattentive students was most of the time direct, but students who were often directly managed lost their concentration on the activity short after the approach. In this sense, indirect approach was more effective since students often remained on the task for longer periods of time. Going back to the teacher was usually easier in general, since students preferred explanations (where they can talk to each other) rather than activities, since during this last part the teacher is constantly monitoring their performance.