

Effect of Eye Contact on Academic Anxiety of Learning Disabled Students in Inclusive Classroom



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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to explore the effect of eye contact on academic anxiety of learning disabled students. The sample of learning disabled students included 22 students of class 8th. Pre-post experimental design was used for present study. Establishment of eye contact during teaching session has been created intentionally with learning disabled students in experimental session. After treatment of 20 days, the difference has been measured between pre and post test scores on academic anxiety test. The post evaluation results show that learning disabled students reduced their academic anxiety up to optimum level after experimentation.

Keywords: Learning Disabled, Inclusive Education, Eye Contact.

Introduction

Education is not just about traditional classroom learning. It is a process of change in behavior of students. There are two main dimensions of education; teaching and learning. Teaching is a process of communicating and imparting basic knowledge and skills with the purpose of bringing about change in the behavior of the students. It is an interactive process between the teacher and the taught. Learning is defined as a process of pursuing meaningful goals, exploring and constructing meaning from information and experience filtered through the learner's unique perceptions, thoughts and feelings. Presently, there is wide variety of classrooms which involves different types of students in same class. Effective teaching involves acquiring relevant knowledge about students and using that knowledge to inform our course design and classroom teaching.

Learning disabilities are the problems that affect the brain's ability to receive, process, analyze or store information. These problems can make it difficult for a student to learn as quickly as someone who isn't affected by such disabilities. Learning Disabled students have difficulty in receiving basic academic skills during the early developmental stage of their life. Several terms were used synonymously, such as, "Minimal brain injury", "Minimal brain dysfunction", "Psycho neurological deficit", "Educational Handicaps", "Under-achiever" etc. The area of Learning Disabilities is very vast, it includes educational disabilities, cognitive, perceptual and motor disabilities, language disabilities, social, emotional disabilities and many other behavioural disabilities (Prasad and Srivastava, 1992). Dobson, C. (2012) explored that academic anxiety is a most common problem in learning disabled students. It is a mental feeling of uneasiness or distress in reaction to a situation and environment that is perceived negatively by them. It is a problem which mostly affects the students during school-related situations.

Nadeem, M. et. al (2012) and Das, S.K. et. al (2014), conclude in their researches that LD student's perceived their educational environment negatively and become very anxious for their academic progress. It converts into the academic anxiety of LDs which affect their academic progress in the classroom.

Non-Verbal Communication (NVC) is communication without words it involves exchange of information, feelings, ideas, emotions etc. without the use of words e.g. gesture, posture, facial expression, eye-contact, body language, smile, clothing, hairstyle, symbols etc. Mehrabian (1981) suggested that "only 7% of message is sent through words, with remaining 93% sent through nonverbal expressions" Balzer (1969), reported that "approximately 75% of classroom management behavior was

nonverbal.” “Teacher Expectations for the Disadvantaged” Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) suggested that, through nonverbal behavior, teachers’ expectations for the progress of their students become self-fulfilling prophecies.

In classroom teaching non verbal communication is an important tool but it is difficult to manage in classroom teaching. Teacher’s ability to manage stress, recognizes emotions and understand the signals sent and received make him effective communicator. Non-verbal communication is also called silent language. It is all about what and how you say in the classroom, can make the difference to students. Eye contact is a powerful tool of NVC it can influence the students in various ways. It opens a new channel of communication. It can reinforce student towards the right action and a frown eyebrow can demoralize the undesirable activity of the student in the class.

In the words of Miller (1988), Non-Verbal communication as ‘communication without words...it includes overt behaviors such as facial expression, eyes, touching and tone of voice, as well as less obvious message such as dress, postures and spatial distance between two or more people (p.3).’

Need of Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is a fundamental aspect of human life from the moment we enter the world. Teacher can create more impression through NVC in the classroom than his knowledge of subject matter and verbal fluency. Non-verbal communication is beneficial for students it has been supported by so many studies i.e. Watson, John, L. (2009) and Helmer, S. & Eddy, C. (2003) Teacher’s NVC may affect many aspect of learning disabled students. Ronald, B. Straub and Dennis M. Roberts (2008) also supported that Non-Verbal communication is effective in the progress of social interaction ability of learning disabled students.

According to a study conducted by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) and reported in their book, *Pygmalion in the Classroom* Non-Verbal cues may play a significant role in effective classroom teaching. Furthermore, Woolfolk and Brooks (1983) indicate that non-verbal behaviour often influence the outward behaviour of teachers and students

Eye contact is a strong component of NVC in classroom. Eye contact opens a new channel of communication between senders and receivers. More positively, a teacher making eye contact with individual students who are answering a question or making some other contribution to the learning is a positive way of reinforcing the student to give response. Students like to be looked at when they have something important to say or do in the class.

Temptation of rolling eyes gives message of disapproval of student or his response. Teacher’s eye contact with learning disabled children and other differently abled students may improve their participation in classroom teaching. Teacher’s eye contact with a student doing something undesirable may discourage his act.

Justification of Study

Sakhuja (2004) Specifies that ‘Education for all’ still remains a distant dream for disabled and is even worse in India. She reported in her study that in India around 13-14% of all school students suffer from learning disorders. Unfortunately, most schools fail to lend a sympathetic ear to their problems. A recent survey of the National Center for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP, 2007) revealed that only 1.2 percent of the disabled in India has had any form of education. Teachers are not doing extra effort for the progress of these children. Review of related literature leads to conclusion that eye contact is very powerful kind of non-verbal communication. It is very effective in the learning of students so it generate an idea that it could be effective in the progress of learning disabled students.

The above analysis raised some questions in the mind of the researcher such as;

1. Is eye contact effective on Academic Anxiety of Learning Disabled students?
2. Is there any relationship between eye contact type non-verbal communication of teachers and progress of learning disabled students?

Objective

To study the effect of eye contact on academic anxiety of learning disabled students in classroom teaching.

Hypothesis

There will be significant difference between pre-post eye contact experiment test scores of academic anxiety of LD students.

Methodology

The methodology of the study has been stated in the following heads:

Research Design

Single group pre test-post test experimental method of research was used in present study. According to John W. Best (2001) “experimental research is the description and analysis of what will be or what will occur under carefully controlled conditions.”

Sample

The sample of present study consists total 22 learning disabled students of 8th class of a normal girls school of Agra city, age range 11-15. Learning disabled students have been selected by the purposive sampling technique.

Tools

Following tools were used in present study:

1. Self made Learning Disabled identification Scale.
2. Academic Anxiety Scale for Children(2009) developed by A.K. Singh and A. Sen Gupta

Procedure

Agra city of Uttar Pradesh state was selected purposively for carrying out the research work. Only girl’s school was selected for the study to minimize the effect of sex on dependent variable. After selection the institution the principal of school was requested to permit to conduct the experiment in 8th class for 20 days. After the favorable response of principal self constructed learning disability identification scale was administrated on all the

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Table 1.0
Showing the Mean, SD and T-Test on the Pre-Post Test Scores of Academic Anxiety of Learning Disabled Students

Statistical Measures	N	Mean	S.D	T-value	Significance Level
Pre Test	22	36.23	8.55	5.12	P< .01
Post Test	22	32.55	8.68		

The preview of table 1.0 reveals that the mean of post-test was higher than the control group. Mean and standard deviation of pre-test were 36.23 & 8.55 and of experimental it was 32.55 & 8.68 respectively. Calculated t-value 5.12 is higher than the table value 2.54 at 0.01 level of significance (at 21 df) so, the alternative hypothesis that There is significant difference in pre-post experiment scores of academic anxiety of LD students. Academic anxiety scores have been reduced due to the experiment, hence it can be concluded that there is a significant reduction is found in pre and post scores of academic anxiety. This observation led us to the conclusion that the eye contact has a positive effect on academic anxiety. Intentional attention given to LDs through eye contact by the teacher helps in reducing their academic anxiety as they feel more comfortable with their teacher, class, peer group and the subject.

This is also supported by Ledbury R. et al (2004), One aspect of non-verbal communication is the use of the eyes to convey messages. The eyes are a powerful tool for both the teacher and the learner. Researchers and practitioners in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) have brought the notion of body language and eye contact back to the attention of language teachers, but largely in the context of providing clues to the nature of the learner rather than in terms of a teaching tool.

Eye contact of a teacher can motivate his students to do better. He can understand the problems of his student and can provide the appropriate solutions of that problem. Through eye contact the teacher can easily see everybody else and he can scan the room continuously, not only as a way of monitoring student behavior but also as a way of making all students feel included in the interaction and this is the reason we can see a remarkable progress in the experimental group of learning disabled students.

Conclusion

Nonverbal signals are much more difficult to capture, describe and rationally explain because we necessarily have to use words to do that but only words are not enough tools for this. So, finally it can be concluded that academic anxiety is can be reduced through eye contact of a teacher with learning disabled students. Intentional eye contact by the teacher helps in reducing academic anxiety of students.

students of class 8th of the school. The students scored less than 100 marks out of 250 on learning disabled identification scale, treated as learning disabled. After selection of learning disabled students pre test of academic anxiety was administrated on learning disabled students. After pre test of academic anxiety the experimental teaching of 20 days on the selected topics was done in class 8th. In the experimental session of teaching special efforts were made to have more and more eye contact with the LDs while teaching researcher tried to establish eye contact specifically with the identified LDs. After the experiment of 20 days post test was administered on same group to see the effect of eye contact type non verbal communication on academic anxiety. Mean, Standard Deviation and t- test were used to draw the inferences.

Experimental Session

1. **Classroom Experimental Phase:** Pre test- post test single group design.
2. **Duration of Total Experiment:** 20 days, 1 Period of 40 minutes per day.
3. **Classroom Preparatory Phase:** 05 minutes
4. **Classroom Teaching Phase:** 35 minutes
5. **Establishing Eye Contact:** Researcher was more attentive towards LD students and intentionally tried to establish more & more eye contact with them during teaching.

Classroom Setup for Experiment of Eye Contact

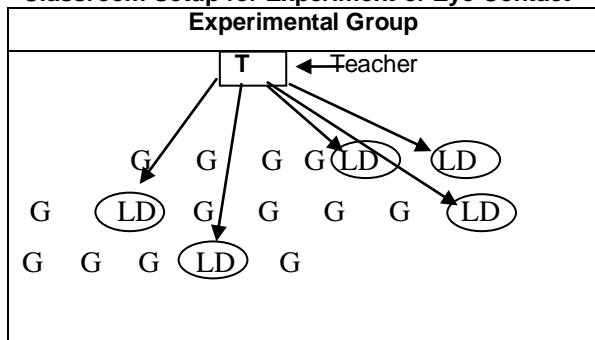


Figure 1.0 is Showing the Classroom Setup for Effect of Eye-Contact

Although there were random seating arrangement for learning disabled students in inclusive classroom but there was a clear identification of learning disabled students with whom researcher has to establish eye-contact while teaching, explaining, at the time of questioning, and receiving answers. Eye-contact was established intentionally with learning disabled students so that they can feel very easy, relaxed, included, attentive and confident in the classroom.

Result and Discussion

To study the effect of Eye-Contact on academic anxiety of learning disabled students pre test was administered on LDs. After treatment of 20 days experimental teaching post test of academic anxiety was administered on the same group. Pre and post test means, standard deviations and t- values have been given with table 1.0.

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