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Sous la direction du :

Dr Rissikatou MOUSTAPHA BABALOLA

Maître de Conférences des Universités (CAMES)



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La *Revue Internationale de Langage et de Pédagogie (RIL@P)* est une revue scientifique spécialisée qui couvre les domaines de recherche tels que les lettres, la linguistique, la sociolinguistique, la didactique, les sciences de l'éducation et les sciences sociales. Les articles que nous y publions peuvent être écrits en français, en anglais, en espagnol ou en allemand. Ces articles sont reçus au secrétariat du comité de rédaction de la revue et envoyés en évaluation. Ceux qui ont reçu un avis favorable à leur soumission sont sélectionnés pour une réévaluation par les membres du comité scientifique en raison de leur originalité, des intérêts qu'ils présentent aux plans africain et international et de leur rigueur scientifique. Après les travaux préliminaires du secrétariat, le spécimen du numéro à publier est envoyé au comité scientifique et de lecture pour des corrections éventuelles et la vérification de la conformité des articles aux normes de publication de la revue.

Notons que les articles que notre revue publie doivent respecter les normes éditoriales suivantes :

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Volume : 12 à 15 pages ; interligne : 1,5 ; pas d'écriture (taille) : 12 ; police : Times New Roman.

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Un **TITRE** en caractère d'imprimerie et en gras. Le titre ne doit pas être trop long (au plus 2 lignes);

Un Résumé est fait en français et en anglais ou en allemand (pour les articles rédigés en allemand). Le résumé doit comporter 50 à 200 mots maximum avec pour interligne 1. ;

Les mots clés au nombre de 05 font partie du résumé ;

Le second résumé ou abstract est juste la traduction du résumé original. Il est aussi fait de mots clés exactement comme dans le premier cas et suit les mêmes restrictions par rapport au nombre de mots ;

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Les articulations du développement du texte doivent être titrées et / ou sous titrées en trois niveaux au plus ainsi qu'il suit :

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- 2. Pour le titre de la deuxième section
- 2.1. Pour le titre de la première sous-section de la deuxième section
- 2.2. Pour le titre de la deuxième sous-section de la deuxième section etc.

Pour le Titre de la troisième section

- 3. Pour le titre de la troisième section
- 3.1. Pour le titre de la première sous-section de la troisième section
- 3.2. Pour le titre de la deuxième sous-section de la troisième section etc.

Conclusion

Elle doit être brève et insister sur l'originalité des résultats de la recherche

Bibliographie

Les sources effectivement consultées et citées dans le texte doivent figurer dans une rubrique, en fin de texte, intitulé :

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Le comité scientifique et de lecture est le seul organe capable de porter des jugements sur la scientificité des textes publiés. Le comité de rédaction de la revue s'occupe de la publication des textes retenus par le comité scientifique et de lecture.

Les avis et opinions scientifiques émis dans les articles n'engagent que leurs propres auteurs. Les textes non publiés ne sont pas retournés.

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DOMAINE DE RECHERCHE

La Revue Internationale du Langage et de Pédagogie (RIL@P) est un instrument au service des chercheurs qui s'intéressent à la publication d'articles et de comptes rendus de recherches approfondies dans les domaines ci-après :

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Au total, la *Revue Internationale de Langage et de Pédagogie (RIL@P)* se veut le lieu de rencontre et de dissémination de nouvelles idées et d'opinions savantes dans les domaines ci-dessus cités.

LE COMITE DE REDACTION

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La Revue Internationale de Langage et de Pédagogie (RIL@P), publiée par le Centre Béninois des Langues étrangères (CEBELAE), est ouverte aux chercheurs des institutions universitaires de recherche et enseignants-chercheurs des universités, instituts universitaires, centres universitaires et grandes écoles.

L'objectif de cette revue est de permettre aux collègues chercheurs et enseignants-chercheurs d'avoir une tribune pour faire connaître leurs travaux de recherche.

Le comité scientifique et de lecture de *RIL@P* est présidé par le Professeur Médard Dominique BADA. Ce comité une trentaine de membres dont onze (11) Professeurs Titulaires et vingt-trois (23) Maîtres de Conférences.

Aussi, voudrions-nous informer les lecteurs de *RIL@P*, qu'elle est multilingue avec des articles rédigés aussi bien en français, en anglais, en espagnol, qu'en allemand.

**Dr Rissikatou MOUSTAPHA BABALOLA,
Maître de Conférences des Universités (CAMES),
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THE IMPACT OF SMILES IN THE EFL TEACHING AMONG BENINESE INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS

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Abstract:

This mixed-methods research study aims to assess the impact of smiling on teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Semi-structured questionnaires, interviews, and class observations were used to collect data randomly from 90 EFL students and 12 of their English teachers at the secondary school "CEG SURU LERE" in Akpakpa, Cotonou, Benin. Descriptive statistics and induction techniques were used to analyse the collected data. The results indicated that 73.56% of the participants believed their teacher's smile helped them understand the course better, and 74.71% considered it a crucial factor in the teaching process. Therefore, this study suggests that the teacher's smile can be an influential motivational and developmental factor for EFL learners. The findings of this study support R.I.M. Dunbar's (1996) theory that language-related cues stimulate the production of opiates (antidepressant-like substances) produced by smiling. Suggestions and recommendations were made to promote teaching attitudes that foster learning English as a foreign language.

Keywords: Smile, EFL Teaching, Intermediate EFL learners

Résumé

Le présent travail de recherche axé sur une méthodologie mixte vise à mettre en exergue l'impact du sourire dans l'enseignement de l'Anglais Langue Etrangère (ALE). Des questionnaires semi-structurés, des entretiens et des observations de classe ont été utilisés pour collecter de manière aléatoire des données auprès de 90 étudiants d'ALE et de 12 de leurs professeurs d'anglais du "CEG SURU LERE" à Akpakpa, Cotonou, Bénin. Les données recueillies ont été analysées à l'aide de statistiques descriptives et de techniques d'induction. Les résultats indiquent que 73,56% des participants pensent que le sourire de leur professeur les aide à mieux comprendre le cours et 74,71% le considèrent comme un facteur crucial dans le processus d'enseignement. Par conséquent, cette étude suggère que le sourire de l'enseignant peut être un facteur efficace de motivation et de développement pour les apprenants d'ALE. Les résultats de cette étude soutiennent la théorie de R.I.M. Dunbar (1996) selon laquelle les indices liés à la langue stimulent la production d'opiacés (substances semblables aux antidépresseurs) produits par le sourire. Des suggestions et des recommandations pertinentes ont été élaborées au regard de ces résultats afin d'encourager la promotion d'attitude d'enseignement favorisant l'apprentissage de l'anglais, langue étrangère.

Mots clés : Sourire, Enseignement d'ALE, Apprenants de niveau Intermédiaire

Introduction

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) presents a great challenge, and EFL teachers must be devoted to confronting it. Life events can sometimes make it arduous to be amiable to others or exude a pleasant demeanour. Teachers must be emotionally mature enough to regulate their sentiments and not permit negative emotions to influence their work. Language teaching is indispensable in a person's life and necessitates intense commitment. Unfortunately, these objectives are not always accomplished due to various impediments. Fortunately, a potent instrument that can assist learners and teachers to succeed is the use of smiles by the teacher in the EFL classroom. This attitude is a pedagogical technique that is indispensable in the classroom.

Many EFL learners struggle to reach their full potential, which may be due to their teachers not displaying positive nonverbal communication, such as smiling. This situation raises the question of why teachers exhibit this behaviour and how it can be modified to create a more conducive learning environment. Smiling is an essential form of paralinguistic communication, which conveys love, kindness, and consideration to others, and is a critical tool for teaching and life.

The teacher-learner relationship should be based on mutual respect, encouragement, and understanding. It is an essential part of the learning process, and using the smile approach can be highly beneficial to this relationship. Unfortunately, teachers often fail to smile when addressing students, creating a barrier between the two. This lack of a smile can make students perceive their teacher as in a bad mood and affect learners' capacity to comprehend and internalise lessons. When teachers smile, they create an atmosphere of positivity and a more conducive learning environment. This attitude makes learners feel more at ease and more likely to absorb the material more effectively.

Despite the many theories and strategies developed by pedagogues and adopted by English teachers, many students still find it challenging to take an interest in what happens in class. Too often, teachers overlook the importance of facial expressions and their influence on learning. The teacher's mood is critical to teaching, and their smile should reflect that because it can help set the tone for the class. Therefore, this research explores the importance of smiling and its usefulness in effectively teaching and learning the English language. More specifically, it investigates why teachers do not smile to put their students at ease during instruction, the purpose of smiling in the classroom, the distinction between mood and smile, and the role of smiling in facilitating understanding among Intermediate-level learners. It also

examines the possible implications of not smiling in the classroom, such as its impact on student engagement and learning.

Based on these objectives, the present research attempts to respond to the following questions:

1. What is the relation between mood and smile?
2. To what extent does the teacher's mood influence his/her smile?
3. How is the teacher's smile related to the development of the academic performance of intermediate EFL learners?

The following hypotheses have been formulated to answer the research questions presented above:

- a) There is a strong positive correlation between one's mood and the act of smiling. This connection is beneficial for teaching English as a foreign language, as a positive mood can help sustain the act of smiling and create a more inviting atmosphere for learners.
- b) The teacher's mood significantly influences their smile. Their attitude and demeanour can substantially impact the joy and positivity they exude through their smile.
- c) There is a relationship between the teacher's smile and the development of intermediate EFL learners' academic performance

This study is of great value as it aims to motivate teachers to use their friendly faces to encourage and support EFL learners in their English studies, fostering student engagement and giving them the confidence and tools to succeed in school and their future careers. It could help spur learners' motivation to reach higher levels of English proficiency, pushing them to reach their academic goals with the help of a warm and inviting teaching environment.

This mixed-methods research study was limited to intermediate-level EFL learners from "CEG SURU LERE" Secondary School. Despite the difficulty of conducting this research due to uncooperative respondents, the researcher successfully guided them through the questionnaire and got the desired results with additional support and guidance.

1. Literature Review

There is no ban or eradication of the use of the smile throughout the world. Some literature focuses on its impact on the teaching of foreign languages. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive review of work directly or indirectly related to the various research questions. It also attempts to highlight the limitations of works related to the importance of

the smile approach in foreign language teaching and the impact of smiling in teaching English as a foreign language.

However you choose to define it, whether it's a smile, a chuckle, a laugh, a sneer, or a grimace, the positive impact of this pleasing facial expression is evident. We have the potential to smile from birth, but as we age, we are less likely to do so (E. Norwood, 2017). A smile conveys pleasantness, friendliness, pleasure, or joy to humans. Indeed, a smile can influence many aspects of life in many areas. In the following paragraphs, we will explore some areas where the smile approach is well-developed.

1.1. Smiling vs. Mood

Smiling has many positive benefits, such as boosting confidence, reducing stress levels, and improving mood and cognitive performance. It triggers the release of endorphins, hormones associated with happiness and pleasure, and can help create a more positive outlook and environment (Oxford Dictionary by A. S. Hornby, 2015). Smiling can be a simple way to help people feel better and more confident and ultimately improve their overall well-being.

To illustrate this point further, let's consider a powerful example. It is the story of a despondent young man who was set to take his own life, but his plans changed when he encountered a smiling 8-year-old boy begging for money. The child's smile made the man reconsider his plans. He then took the responsibility of caring for and providing the boy with an education. Such a situation illustrates the power of a cheerful attitude. That is why teachers often use smiling and engaging conversation topics to interact with children.

Smiling has the potential to affect one's emotional state positively. According to S. Stevenson (2012), it can be both the source of one's joy, as well as the result of it. This "mental medicine" is an accessible and socially accepted way to improve one's mood, even if it is a fake smile. Although genuine smiles are best, even fake smiles have benefits.

M. Selig (2016), an expert in academic counselling, has identified nine "superpowers" of smiling based on research from the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) and other sources. These superpowers are increased optimism, improved mood, resilience, relationships, self-esteem, communication, productivity, physical health, and reduced stress.

Smiling can be a powerful tool for creating connections and providing comfort and security. According to R.I.M. Dunbar (1996), language development triggers the release of endorphins, which may explain why smiling and laughing are crucial for the health and foreign language learning. R.J. Stanborough (2019) explains that smiling helps us connect

with others and build trust, while J. Hoggins (2011) suggests that it can build children's confidence. Teachers should use a welcoming attitude and a friendly smile to create a safe, comfortable environment for students to ask questions and express themselves (W. Ghiora, 2010).

A good smile can be a valuable tool for creating a positive learning environment. Still, it should be used strategically to maintain an authoritative presence and encourage a deeper understanding of the material. Too much smiling can affect learning (W. Ghiora, 2010).

1.2. The impact of the teacher's mood on their smile.

A smile is primarily created by flexing the muscles on the sides of the lips. A Duchenne smile, as first described by P. Ekman, R. J. Davidson, and W. V. Friesen (1990, p.342), is characterised by the contraction of the muscles around the corners of the eyes and mouth, resulting in the lifting of the corners of the mouth and eyes, as well as the contraction of a number of muscles such as the large zygomatic muscles (which lift the corners of the mouth to create a smile) and the orbicularis oculi muscles (which lift the cheeks and close the eyelids to form crow's feet).

The human smile is one of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal to improve mood, elicit empathy, and calm a racing heart (R. J. Stanborough, 2019). It is linked to lower blood pressure, improved endurance, reduced stress and pain, and enhanced immune system functioning (E. Norwood, 2015). In the ordinary, young people smile 400 times a day, happy adults smile 40-50 times a day, and 'normal' adults smile 20 times a day.

Smiling is a powerful tool for physical and mental health, especially for those in the field of education who often face draining and demanding work. It releases hormones such as endorphins and endocannabinoids, strengthening the immune system and helping teachers manage their stress and their students' deviance.

1.3. Relationship between the Teachers' Smile and the Development of Intermediate EFL Learners' Academic Performance

Research by R. Seebruck (2015) has shown that teacher quality can positively affect student academic performance. Through multilevel fixed-effects modelling, the study on 951 California high schools revealed that teacher certification is linked with increased student achievement. This finding is supported by other studies (L. Goe and L. M. Stickler, 2008; E.

A. Bonney et al., 2015) on education, demonstrating teacher quality's vital role in students' success.

On the other hand, teachers are the most vital factor in influencing learner outcomes. This situation has prompted state leaders to focus on improving educator effectiveness over the past decade by introducing new teacher evaluation systems. These systems use objective learner data and observational rubrics to distinguish between high and low-quality instruction. E. Workman (2012) argues that bridging the achievement gap necessitates every classroom having a good teacher who sets high expectations for all learners. These teacher attitudes, such as smiling, can positively impact learners' academic performance.

A study by R. A. Allday and K. Pakurar (2007) revealed that greeting learners at the door with a positive message, such as a smile, could benefit both learners and teachers. Their study found this led to a 27% increase in academic engagement. This finding was further supported by Y. Terada's (2018) study, which used a time-lapse sample to measure learners' task behaviour of three participants (learners) within ten minutes of the class.

Furthermore, Y. Terada (2018) reported on C. R. Cook et al.'s (2018) study of 203 students in 10 classrooms, which aimed to investigate the Positive Greetings at the Door (PGD) strategy to improve middle school learners' classroom behaviour. Results showed that PGD was feasible, reasonable, and acceptable and could help create a positive and supportive atmosphere, increase commitment, and lower disturbing behaviour. Y. Terada (2018) concluded that taking a few moments to greet learners would foster a sense of belonging and provide them with the necessary social and emotional support to be invested in their learning.

Y. Terada (2018) suggests that the initial few minutes of an EFL lesson can be chaotic due to learners having difficulty transitioning from their first language to the target language. However, a proactive classroom management approach and a warm welcome from the teacher can help the learners adjust and be ready to learn.

In their study, C. R. Cook et al. (2018) randomly assigned ten middle school teachers to either an experimental or control group. The experimental group began lessons by greeting and shaking hands with learners, calling them by name, and swiftly reviewing the previous course content. They were also instructed to maintain a favourable attitude and smile to make learners feel confident and encouraged. On the other hand, the control group of teachers, who had not received any prior instruction, proceeded as usual, following the academic programme provided by their institution. C. R. Cook et al. (2018) reported that teachers who implemented Positive Door Greetings (PDG), a strategy designed to prevent classroom disruptions, ended up saving time downstream. These teachers spent less time reacting to

their students' problematic behaviours and more time teaching compared to the control group of teachers who did not receive any prior instruction.

This exploratory study aimed to replicate previous findings such as C. R. Cook et al.'s (2018) to examine the validity of Positive Greetings at the door (PGD), which is based on the theory that smiling and warmly welcoming learners have a positive effect. It also sought to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of Positive Greetings by exploring the learner's perception of the greeters and the overall impact on the classroom atmosphere.

2. Methods and Procedures

This section describes the research methodology used to collect, analyse, and interpret data to solve the problem under investigation. It outlines the research design, method, population, setting, participant, instrument, data procedure, and data analysis, as well as the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data collected. This methodology ensures the credibility, validity, and reliability of the study's conclusions (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2016).

2.1. Research design

This study employs a descriptive survey research design to investigate the impact of a teacher's smile on the quality of EFL learners' academic performance (D. De Vaus, 2001; W. M. Trochim and J. P. Donnelly, 2001). This method combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect and analyse data through descriptive statistics and inductive techniques. It is well-suited for this purpose as it allows for considering uncontrolled variables and creating a database for further research. Additionally, it focuses more on the what than on the why of the research topic.

This research was conducted during the 2020-2021 academic year and involved gathering feedback from questionnaires distributed to students and teachers from "CEG SURU-LERE", a secondary school in Cotonou-Akpakpa, Benin. Participants were briefed on the importance of the research before receiving their questionnaire. The target population was randomly selected from tenth (10th)-grade and lower sixth (6th) students, as they are seen as more experienced and, therefore, more likely to provide reliable and accurate responses. The sampling technique used was a random selection, and the data collection process took approximately two weeks.

This case study combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques to gain an in-depth understanding of the beliefs and perceptions of EFL respondents at "SURU LERE"

Secondary School about the educational value of smiling in EFL instruction. As a result, the study's main objective is to get quantitative and qualitative data on various factors related to the issue under investigation.

This study posed three hypotheses to determine the research problem's scope and link research questions to theories. These hypotheses guided the choice of observations, procedures, and questionnaires. They helped analyse and interpret the results to explain the impact of smiling on the academic performance of EFL learners and test the relationships between research variables. This study examines the potential connection between the independent variable, "the smile," and the dependent variable, "academic performance", of EFL learners.

The present research also used qualitative methods such as interviews and natural field observations to gain in-depth information about the secondary school, "SURU LERE," that could not be conveyed quantitatively or statistically. The mixed methodology provided flexibility and openness to variables since the interviews and observations were not codified or standardised.

2.2. Population-based Sampling and Research Participants

Sample testing is a component of any scientific investigation that is both crucial and highly significant. A Study population is a subset of the sample's target population (S. Hu,2014). A research participant is a person who freely engages in human subject research after being given informed permission.

A population of EFL instructors and intermediate learners from the secondary school "SURU LERE" was selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The population was stratified by proficiency level, with intermediate learners targeted due to their excellent English experience and familiarity with the teaching process. A basic random sample was obtained by compiling a list of each research population's individuals and selecting a necessary sample from each batch.

This study included ninety (90) EFL learners, forty-four (44) of whom were female and forty-six (46) male. It also included twelve (12) EFL instructors, seven (7) of whom were female and five (5) male. A t-test was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the research instruments, involving fifteen (15) learners and five (5) teachers who were interviewed.

2.3. Research Instruments and Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

This investigation used Questionnaires, Interviews, and Classroom Observations to examine the impact of a teacher's smile on the EFL learner's academic performance. The Questionnaires were distributed and collected, with a 3.34% non-response rate. Classroom Observations occurred in five intermediate classes, and the respondents were then interviewed face-to-face to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

The questionnaires administered to the respondents (EFL teachers and learners) were subdivided into two parts: the background information and the information concerning the study. Each of them was composed of eleven (11) semi-structured questions. It is important to mention here that the identity of the respondents remained anonymous.

This research took place during the academic year 2020-2021, with 90 questionnaires distributed to students and 12 to teachers. Teachers helped students complete the questionnaires, which were returned within two weeks. 87 of the 90 questionnaires given to students were returned (96.66%), while 9 out of 12 of the teachers' questionnaires were returned (75%). The respondents were keen to provide answers to the research questionnaires after being informed of the purpose and importance of the research, indicating that the topic is relevant to their daily academic life.

This study analysed quantitative data collected through questionnaires and qualitative data collected through interviews and classroom observations in the "SURU LERE" secondary school. Difficulties such as choosing meeting times, filling out questionnaires, and returning them on time were encountered. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics (Microsoft Office Excell 2021 spreadsheet), induction technique (Cf. figure 1), and graphs were generated. The results of this study were presented using percentages, statistics, tables and interviews. The following section presents the results of this study.



Figure 1: Steps in an inductive research approach as observed in V. Sheppard (2020, p.25) referring to A. Blackstone (2018, p.20).

Source: Blackstone, A. (2018). Inductive or Deductive? Two Different Approaches. [Figure 2.5 Inductive Research]. In *Principles of sociological inquiry: Qualitative and quantitative methods*. Saylor Academy Open Textbooks. Retrieved from https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_principles-of-sociological-inquiry-qualitative-and-quantitative-methods/s05-03-inductive-or-deductive-two-dif.html

2.4. Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of the Results.

This subsection presents the results from the three research instruments (questionnaire, classroom observations, and interviews) used to answer the three research questions that guided this study. The data gathered from each instrument were analysed and interpreted to understand the research topic comprehensively.

2.4.1. Data Collected through Questionnaires

The data obtained from the questionnaires administered to students and teachers were analysed and interpreted using statistical estimates, presented in table form with percentages. This analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the opinions expressed in the survey.

Teachers Questionnaire

Many EFL teachers at CEG SURU-LERE have been reported to lack smiling in the classroom, which may contribute to students' reluctance to follow the course. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to twelve teachers, resulting in a response rate of 75% to investigate this issue further. This response rate may indicate a lack of understanding or interest in the topic, suggesting that teachers should be better informed about the importance of smiling in the classroom.

Data N°1 (1st series): Statistics of EFL teachers' responses to the question "Do you smile while teaching"?

Table 1: Statistics of EFL teachers' responses to the question "Do you smile while teaching"?

Question	Answer	Respondents	Percentages
Do you smile while teaching?	Yes	4	44.44%
	No	3	33.33%
	Not always	2	22.22%
Total		9	100%

The data from Table 1 suggests that the majority of teachers at the "SURU LERE" secondary school smile while teaching, with 44.44% of respondents indicating that they do.

However, 33.33% of respondents stated that they do not smile while teaching and 22.22% mentioned that they do not always smile. These imply that although most teachers at this school smile while teaching, there is still potential for improvement in encouraging more teachers to use facial expressions in their teaching. Consequently, teachers should be encouraged to smile more during their classes and to create a more inviting atmosphere in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers should be allowed to receive training on effectively using nonverbal communication in the classroom to create a more engaging environment.

Data N°2 (1st series): EFL teachers' responses to the question "Does your smile draw students' attention?"

Table 2: Statistics of EFL teachers' responses to the question "Does your smile draw students' attention?"

Question	Answer	Respondent	Percentage
Does your smile draw students' attention?	Yes	5	55.55%
	No	1	11.11%
	Not always	3	33.33%
Total		9	100%

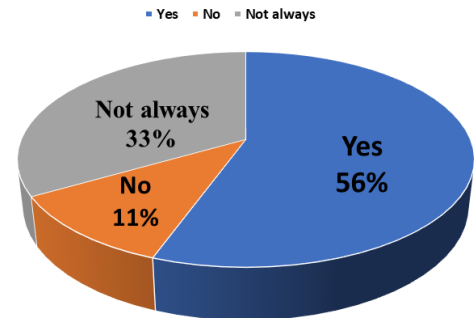


Figure 1: Illustration of the EFL teachers' responses to the questions "Does your smile draw students' attention?"

The data presented in Table 2 and displayed in Figure 1 indicate that most respondents (55.55%) agree that their smiles can draw their learners' attention during the lesson. In contrast, a minority (11.11%) strongly disagree, while the remaining 33.33% believe it cannot always do so. This result suggests that many teachers perceive their smiles as an effective means of influencing their learners during teaching.

Data N°3 (1st series): EFL teachers' responses to the question, "Do you think your course objective is reached when you smile at your students?"

Table 3: Statistics of EFL teachers' responses to the question, "Do you think your course objective is reached when you smile at your students?"

Question	Answer	Respondent	Percentage
When you smile at your students, do you think your course objective has been reached?	Yes	4	44.44%
	No	4	44.44%
	Not always	1	11.12%
TOTAL		9	100%

Table 3 reveals that most respondents (88.89%) agree that a teacher's smile helps achieve course objectives. Of the 9 respondents, 4

(44.44%) thought that smiling at students was beneficial, while 4 (44.44%) thought the opposite. Only one respondent (11.12%) believed that a teacher's smile does not always help them reach their objectives. These results suggest that a teacher's smile can be an effective tool in achieving course objectives.

Data N°4 (1st series): EFL teachers' responses to the question, "Do you think your smiling is a strategy to involve students in the teaching?"

Table 4: Statistics of EFL teachers' responses to the question "Do you think your smiling is a strategy to involve students in the teaching?"

Question	Answer	Respondent	Percentage
Do you think your smiling is a strategy to involve students in the teaching?	Yes	4	44.44%
	No	3	33.33%
	Not always	2	22.22%
TOTAL		9	100%

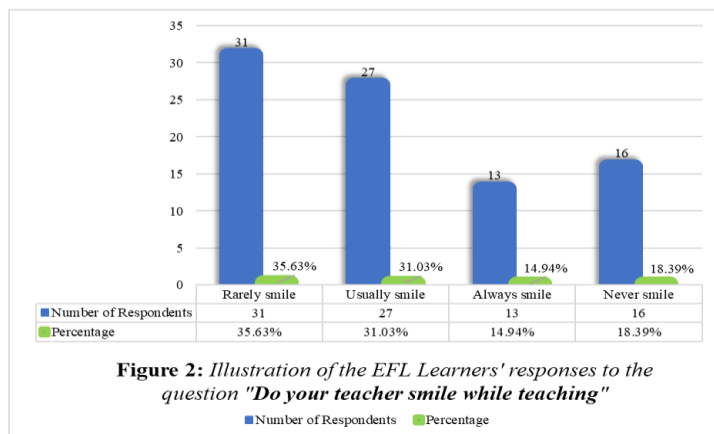
Table 4 suggests that most respondents (44.44%) perceived smiling as an effective strategy to engage students in teaching, while one-third (33.33%) disagreed, and

the remaining 22.22% were ambivalent. These suggest that a teacher's smile could be a powerful tool to involve students in teaching, although opinions are divided.

✚ Students Questionnaire

The second phase of this research work saw the selection of ninety (90) students, from which three (03) failed to return their questionnaire forms. As a result, the second data set was collected from eighty-seven (87) respondents.

Data N°1 (2nd series): EFL learners' responses to the question "Do your teachers smile while teaching"?



The findings depicted in Figure 2 reveal that a majority of respondents (54.02%) reported experiencing infrequent smiles from their EFL teachers during instruction. This trend suggests a potential lack of enthusiasm, joy, and encouragement within the classroom environment. Specifically, 31 respondents (35.63%) indicated rare instances of teacher smiles, while 27 (31.03%) noted occasional smiles. Moreover, 13 respondents (14.94%) perceived consistent teacher smiles, whereas 16 (18.39%) reported never observing their EFL teachers smile during lessons. Overall, these results underscore a prevalent absence of teacher smiles, indicating a potential area for improvement in fostering positive learning experiences among EFL learners.

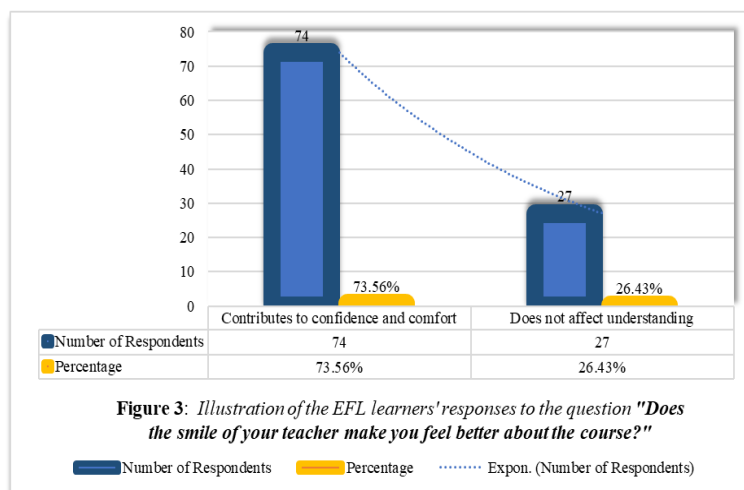
Data N°2 (2nd series): EFL learners' responses to the question, "Are you one of those students who like the smile of their teachers when they are teaching"?"

Table 5: Statistics of EFL learners' responses to the question "Are you one of those students who like the smile of their teachers when they are teaching?"

Question	Answer	Respondent	Percentage
Are you one of those students who like the smile of their teachers when they are teaching?	Yes	65	74.71%
	No	22	25.28%
TOTAL		87	100%

Table 5 reveals that out of 87 respondents, 65 (74.71%) affirmed that they appreciate their teachers' smiles during instruction, suggesting that a positive affective state, including comfort, relaxation, and confidence, can be fostered by the EFL teacher's smiling behaviour during the learning process. Conversely, 22 respondents (25.28%) indicated otherwise. These data underscore the potential impact of teacher demeanour on student attitudes and preferences in the classroom, emphasizing the significance of cultivating a positive and engaging learning environment through teacher-student interactions.

Data N°3 (2nd series): EFL learners' responses to the question, "Does the smile of your teachers make you feel better about the course?"



The data illustrated in Figure 3 suggest that most EFL learners (73.56%) perceive their teacher's smile as a factor contributing to their confidence and comfort in English classes. This result indicates that a teacher's smile is a salient factor in creating an effective learning environment and aiding comprehension of the lesson. However, the remaining 26.43% of respondents indicated that smiling does not affect their understanding of the lesson, implying that while a teacher's smile can be beneficial, it is not the only factor affecting the learner's ability to comprehend the material.

2.4.2. Data Related to Classroom Observations

This research study employed classroom observation as a research instrument to gain insight into the issue under investigation. Five classes of intermediate-level English learners (lower 6th: 2nde and 1^{ère} in the Francophone system) with their EFL teachers were observed. It was observed that the teacher's affective state significantly impacted the learning atmosphere, making it either stimulating or dull. The attitudes of both teachers and students were also noted during the observations. The observations yielded valuable information about teaching and learning English and revealed several noteworthy attitudes.

Table 6: Summary of the Analysis and Interpretation of the Data Related to Classroom Observations

- The teacher of the first class observed classes entered the classroom with a stern demeanour. He immediately began teaching the lesson without engaging the students by asking about their feelings and what they remembered from the last lesson. He instead pressured them, saying, "Hurry up and take note of what I write on the board. We are running late in the course programme". This approach did not motivate the students to be interested in the day's lesson. The atmosphere in the classroom had become tense and uncomfortable due to its overly serious nature. Everyone seemed to be involuntarily engaged in the teacher's presentation, with no smiles, jokes, or words being exchanged. After thirty minutes, some students were found reading other lessons that were more interesting to them. When asked what they had understood from the course at the end, only twelve out of the fifty-five students present raised their hands.
- The second classroom observed had a different atmosphere than the first. The EFL teacher entered with joy and a smile, joking and teasing the students about their attire. Many students wore oversized coats to protect themselves from the cool weather. The students seemed to enjoy the presence of their teacher and asked questions about the lesson being taught and personal development and relationships. The atmosphere was vibrant and full of joy and motivation. At the end of the lesson, most of the class had a good understanding of the day's topic of "QUESTION TAGS" and the teacher's tips. The students expressed their appreciation of the lesson and the effort they put in to learn. Some made the following statements, "Today, I learned a lot, and liked all the useful tips the teacher"; "Today's class on Question Tags was enjoyable. Every time I come here, I am not bored at all, even though I know I still have to make a lot of effort to improve".

Overall, of the five intermediate EFL classes observed, only one was particularly impressive due to its teacher's approach. The teacher made his learners love his class through his pleasant demeanour, attentive attitude, and humorous disposition. These results align with the findings from the first two data sets, suggesting that the teacher's smile is an integral part of successful foreign language teaching.

2.4.3. Data Related to Interviews

The fourth data set was collected through individual interviews with EFL learners and teachers on the importance of smiling in EFL teaching.

Student Interviews

Many interviewees at CEG SURU LERE Secondary School believe it is vital for their teachers to smile in class, mentioning that it gives them a sense of security, confidence, and comfort.

Table 7: Summary of the Analysis and Interpretation of the Data Related to the Student Interviews

- Some pointed out, "Our teachers should smile while teaching because it gives us security and confidence and makes us feel comfortable in the classroom". However, some argued that excessive familiarity between the teacher and student could lead to disrespect for the teacher and indiscipline in school. Some of them made the following statement. "By smiling at his learners, the teacher can not only fall into prohibitions such as going out with his learners or dealing with them as equals, sharing secrets with them, smoking or drinking together". "Such a situation may result in the learner no longer showing respect to the teacher". Both sides of this issue were discussed, with the results of the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the learners being highly convergent. The individual interviews gave valuable insight into the effect of a teacher's smile on English language instruction.
- The outcomes of these interviews were in line with those of the second series (questionnaire) and classroom observation data collected from learners, indicating that the results are trustworthy. They suggested a strong connection between the teacher's smile and the student's attitude toward the language taught. These results imply that the teacher's smile significantly affects the learner's attitude and should be utilised for successful language instruction.

Teacher Interviews

The results of both the learners' and teachers' Interviews revealed similar findings regarding the importance of smiling in the EFL classroom. Learners felt that smiling created a sense of comfort and increased motivation. At the same time, teachers saw it as a way to make a positive learning environment, bridge the student-teacher gap, and reduce tension.

Table 6: Summary of the Analysis and Interpretation of the Data Related to the Teacher Interviews

- Many believe smiling is a key and beneficial tool when teaching English as a foreign language. It can help foster a friendly bond between teachers and students, enabling successful instruction and comprehension. One teacher expressed, "Though I don't usually smile in class, I do acknowledge that smiling in front of learners can act as an incentive for language learning." Another teacher commented, "As women, we generally find it easier to smile than men, which gives us a slight advantage when teaching languages. This issue might be an interesting topic to explore further." Therefore, a simple smile can help capture learners' attention, spark their interest, and engage them in the lesson.
- The outcomes of these interviews align with those of the first series (questionnaire) and classroom observation data collected from teachers, indicating that the results are consistent and reliable.

3. Discussion of the results

Teaching and learning English as a foreign language is a complex endeavour, requiring considerable effort, tact, and self-denial. This research explores the potential benefits of a centuries-old approach, the smile, which may seem innocuous but can be effective in foreign language learning. After analysing and interpreting the data collected from various research instruments, the results are discussed in light of existing or previous research. Suggestions and recommendations are made to promote teaching attitudes that foster learning English as a foreign language.

3.1 What factors cause teachers' bad moods that likely influence their smiles?

This sub-section examines the correlation between teachers' affective states and their ability to smile authentically to their students. It elucidates how the teacher's attitude can considerably influence their communicative proficiency. It delineates the various factors that can lead to teachers experiencing negative emotions and stress, such as family-related issues, work-related matters, emotional causes, and educational matters. It underscores how a teacher's negative mood can detrimentally affect their teaching and the necessity for teachers to be in a positive frame of mind to interact with their students productively.

M. Boudarene (2005) and A. Benhamouche (2014) posit that the teacher's emotional state is not always a conscious choice but is often a consequence of the daily socioeconomic and psychological pressures they face. Benhamouche (2014) further suggests that many teachers live in precarious financial conditions and have difficulty making ends meet, particularly those with large families. Additionally, they are subject to interprofessional conflicts, administrative challenges, and the pressure to fulfil the academic programs of their primary and other educational institutions where they may work part-time. Benhamouche (2014) portrays the teacher as a scapegoat, bearing the brunt of the multidimensional crisis of the education system rather than the true actors or politicians responsible for it. As a result, work can be a source of stress for many teachers, leading to worries, tensions, or even severe health risks in certain circumstances.

A. Benhamouche (2014) and L. Brunet (2018) argue that teaching is a mentally taxing job due to the pressures of the socioeconomic and educational systems. Stress can result in a lack of motivation, feelings of incompetence, and unhappiness, which can manifest in the teacher's behaviour. Therefore, teachers must be provided with strategies to manage stress and ensure their well-being to perform their duties effectively.

L. Brunet (2018) highlights that the attainment of social competence can be impeded by obstacles such as a lack of resources, limited time, and the complexity of the problems faced by students. This situation can lead to teacher burnout, where they lack joy and initiative, leading to stress and helplessness. The study's results showed that without the weapon of a smile and a sense of fun and optimism, EFL teachers were more likely to fail in their duties, demonstrating how important it is for teachers to have these traits to be successful.

L. Brunet (2018) and A. Benhamouche (2014) identify stress as a significant factor in the teaching profession, with L. Brunet (2018) listing four sources of teacher stress (*psychosomatic, social, psychological, and occupational*) and warning signs (Physical, Emotional Behavioral Symptoms) such as headaches, colds, weight loss, chronic fatigue, chronic anxiety, depression, aggressive reactions, etc. A. Benhamouche (2014) further suggests that a lack of recognition increases teachers' vulnerability to stress.

In short, the teacher's mood is a critical factor in the success of their mission to teach foreign languages. Various elements from their socioeconomic and professional environment, physical, emotional, and cognitive state can influence this. Research by L. Brunet (2018) shows that this lack of enthusiasm is particularly pronounced in teachers with more than 10 years of experience and those aged 30-40 and is more common in male teachers than female teachers. In Benin, socioeconomic and professional factors are likely to be the root cause of the lack of enthusiasm that impacts the quality of EFL teaching, which can be particularly devastating for teachers who have invested professionally and emotionally in their student's academic performance yet have not seen any success.

Furthermore, Benin's youth (20-35) suffer from high unemployment and lack of professional experience, hindering the country's development. With few job opportunities, many university graduates are forced to take up teaching positions, even if it is not their desired career. Teaching jobs in sub-Saharan Africa often come with low pay, and teachers may not have the necessary qualifications or training, leading to an uninspiring learning environment for students. The young people of Benin must be given the skills, support, and resources to pursue meaningful, fulfilling careers to ensure the country's progress.

3.2. Is there any relationship between the teacher's smile and the development of intermediate EFL learners' academic performance?

The mood is an internal state of emotion reflected outwardly in facial expressions, such as smiling when in a good mood. Maintaining a positive demeanour when feeling down

is difficult, as it is challenging to force a smile. However, when in a positive mood, smiling is a natural response that reflects the inner contentment of the individual.

This study suggests that smiling is associated with mood and that a person's bad mood can be improved by using a smile. To investigate the relationship between a teacher's smile and the academic performance of their learners, intermediate EFL learners were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire, individual interviews, and in-class observations. The results of the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected were mainly consistent, indicating a positive correlation between a teacher's smile and their learners' academic performance.

The results of the seventh and eighth questions of the questionnaire indicate that most students (73.56% and 74.71%, respectively) appreciate the teacher's smile during the learning process and find it beneficial for understanding the course material. This finding is in line with behavioural psychologist S. Stevenson's (2012) and M. Selig's (2016) conclusion that smiling improves our mood, creates a feeling of well-being, and makes someone successful in their profession. Thus, the teacher's smile appears to be an essential factor in the development of intermediate EFL learners.

M. Selig (2016) even highlighted that smiling is contagious, with respondents revealing that when a teacher smiles in an environment, it positively affects all those around them. This effect is so strong that it can even improve academic performance, as the learner is motivated to emulate the teacher and attend class regularly. The teacher's smiling face encourages the learner to be more engaged and interested in the lesson.

Similarly, the learner is more likely to be more receptive to a teacher with a pleasant, encouraging demeanour than one with a negative, disheartening, repulsive, uninviting, or scowling expression. When learning a foreign language, such as English, the learner needs to have a positive attitude and strong motivation to succeed. A teacher with a pleasant, encouraging demeanour or as a role model is more likely to foster a supportive learning environment and help the learner remain motivated. It can give the learner the self-confidence to persevere and believe in their abilities, even in the face of personal and external difficulties. Through the teacher's mentorship and encouragement, the learner can unknowingly develop the habits, reflexes, and thought processes necessary for success, leading to academic and professional success.

The present study hypothesises, as did R.I.M. Dunbar (1996, p. 191, as observed in C. Jones and J. Van den Heever, 2021), that language development can lead to a physiological impairment in the learner, as language-related signals stimulate the production of opiates,

similar to those found in opium. To replenish the chemical depleted by this process, the learner must smile, which has a similar effect to morphine or other opiates but without the risk of addiction or negative side effects. Furthermore, M. Selig (2016) argued that smiling could rejuvenate, reducing stress, anxiety, and depression and making the individual look younger and thinner.

M. Selig (2016) identified nine significant benefits of smiling discussed in the literature review that are consistent with the findings of this study and insights from R. J. Stanborough (2019), R. Seebruck (2015), and Y. Terada (2018). These benefits include connecting interpersonally with others, feeling cherished, having greater self-assurance, and improving academic performance. The outcomes of various research studies, such as those conducted by the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC), Wayne State University in 2010, and British researchers reviewed by R. Gutman (2011), further corroborate the potency of smiling.

3.3. Recommendations and Suggestions

The issue of students not comprehending their course material and having difficulty concentrating in EFL classrooms can be attributed to teachers' negative affective states. The government and educational authorities should provide teachers with training to help them maintain a positive affective state before, during, and after class to address this. Additionally, teachers should be selected based on their pedagogical knowledge and personality, and regular classroom inspections should be conducted. Furthermore, incentives should be provided to teachers who demonstrate exemplary performance. School authorities should ensure that teachers are qualified and experienced to ensure high standards of teaching. This can be achieved through professional teacher training and internships. Ultimately, educational institutions must ensure that teachers possess the linguistic and pedagogical skills to provide quality instruction.

J. Rogalski and J. Leplat (2011) define "professional experience" as a polysemous term with three distinct meanings: material or symbolic activity, the body of knowledge and skills acquired, and an event that can leave an impression on someone. This experience does not require formal training or trade to be acquired but rather the application of the principles of the practice. It involves dimensions beyond cognitive and requires more than knowledge acquired in training. To gain experience, teachers must question their teaching, try different approaches, and receive support from their institution. Educational institutions should ensure teachers have the necessary knowledge and experience to help learners develop language

skills and should also declare “smile days” to create an atmosphere of joy and relaxation. This action can be taken with the help of regulatory ministries.

To create a thriving learning environment, teachers should strive to maintain a positive and engaging atmosphere in the classroom. It can be achieved by entering the classroom with a smile, avoiding personal issues, and warming up the class with activities. Additionally, teachers should ask for students’ perspectives, share their own experiences, provide clear instructions, give students freedom of choice, remain respectful, and actively engage students in debate and discussion. Learners should reciprocate this respect by engaging in the lesson, asking questions, and expressing their opinion. Furthermore, they should make an effort to be cheerful and smile to elicit a positive attitude from their teacher. This attitude will help create an enjoyable and exciting atmosphere in the classroom, which is essential for student success and preventing them from dropping out.

Conclusion

This study employed a mixed-methodology approach to investigate the impact of smiling on teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the secondary school “SURU LERE” in Akpakpa, Cotonou, Benin. Quantitative data was collected from 90 intermediate-level EFL learners and 12 of their teachers through individual interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, and classroom observations and analysed using descriptive statistics (Microsoft Office Excell 2021 spreadsheet) and an induction technique (Cf. A. Blackstone, 2018, p.20). The results showed that a teacher’s smile positively affects EFL learners’ academic performance, with 73.56% of students noting it helps their understanding and 74.71% appreciating the gesture during class. This finding is in line with previous research from S. Stevenson (2012) and M. Selig (2016), which suggested that smiling could improve mood and even help someone succeed in their profession.

Moreover, this research has demonstrated that teacher quality, such as smiling, positively affects learners’ academic performance (S. Stevenson, 2012; M. Selig, 2016; R. Seebruck, 2015; C. R. Cook et al., 2018; Y. Terada, 2018). Additionally, it has been hypothesised (R.I.M. Dunbar, 1996; Jones & Van den Heever, 2021) that language development can lead to the production of opiates (such as morphine), which can cause physiological impairment in the learner. However, smiling is the only way to produce these opiates naturally and it can act as a natural painkiller. This note suggests that learning a language, mainly English, can create physiological impairment in the learner, which smiling can naturally counteract. The study recommends that the government, secondary school

authorities, and education sector management authorities recruit teachers based on their recruitment test scores, work experience, and personal qualities (requiring a character survey).

Future research should explore the potential for generalizability of these findings by examining them in different populations and contexts. Additionally, further research should be conducted to ascertain the full range of benefits associated with smiling and investigate methods of enhancing teachers' emotional and physiological well-being.

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