



Verbal and Nonverbal Reinforcement Skills in German Language Teaching Simulation

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Abstract. This study aimed to analyze the types of reinforcement used by students of the German Language Education Study Program at an Indonesian state university and their level of implementation in teaching simulations in the Microteaching course. This course provided a forum for prospective teachers to practice their teaching skills by conducting simulated learning activities. Learning reinforcement consists of two types, verbal and nonverbal. This research utilized qualitative action analysis method. The results of the study indicated that the students applied both types of reinforcement, namely verbal and nonverbal, in teaching without using negative reinforcement toward the learner practitioners. The teaching practitioners successfully implemented the skills of providing verbal and nonverbal reinforcement with a satisfactory level of implementation.

Keywords: Early German Language Education, Learning Simulation, Microteaching, Qualitative Action Analysis, Reinforcement.

1 Introduction

This study analyzed the skills in providing verbal and nonverbal reinforcement used by students of the German Language Education Study Program when conducting teaching simulations in the Microteaching course, recorded in video form. This research focused specifically on the verbal and nonverbal reinforcement skills demonstrated by the students. Additionally, the author provided constructive suggestions and criticism regarding the implementation of reinforcement skills during the teaching simulations of German Language Education students in the Microteaching course.

In the seventh semester of the 2022/2023 academic year, the author took the Microteaching course as a substitute for the Field Introduction Program of the Education Unit. This course was taught by a lecturer, with two parallel classes, class A and B, each taught by the same instructor.

The Microteaching course was one of the courses in the education study program that provided teaching simulation experience to prospective teacher students. In this course, students practiced teaching skills in front of a small-scale class called micro-learning. They received feedback from lecturers and peers regarding the quality of teaching. In the teaching simulation activity, roles were divided among students as

teachers, learners, and observers. The teacher and learner carried out teaching and learning simulation activities for ten minutes, while the observer evaluated the teacher's skills from a separate, designated room.

In assessing teaching skills, several skill aspects were evaluated, including the ability to ask questions, explain, use teaching variations, provide reinforcement, open and close lessons, teach small groups and individuals, and manage the class. Each of these aspects became the focus of assessments conducted by students acting as evaluators.

These assessment criteria were based on the Microteaching guidebook published by UPI, which also outlined the theoretical foundation for these teaching skills to aid students in conducting teaching simulations.

Of the various aspects, the author was particularly interested in the reinforcement skills aspect. Reinforcement skills refer to a teacher's ability to provide positive feedback, encourage motivation and self-confidence, and recognize students' achievements or efforts.

Based on these considerations, the author decided to research reinforcement skills in teaching simulations within the Microteaching course, specifically conducted by students in the 2019 German Language Education Study Program. Consequently, the author compiled the research results in a thesis titled "Analysis of Verbal and Nonverbal Reinforcement Skills in Teaching Simulations of German Language Education Students of the 2019 Class in the Microteaching Course."

Based on the background described, the author formulated the following research problems: First, what types of verbal and nonverbal reinforcement are used by the 2019 cohort of German Language Education students in the Microteaching course? Second, how is the level of implementation of reinforcement skills during the teaching simulations conducted by this cohort in the Microteaching course held in the 7th semester of the 2022/2023 academic year?

The objectives of this research, based on the problems outlined above, are twofold: to analyze the reinforcement skills of students using various theories related to learning reinforcement, and to assess the level of implementation of reinforcement during teaching simulation practice in the Microteaching course conducted by the 2019 cohort of German Language Education students.

2 Literature Review

Microteaching is a training method that enables novice teachers to practice specific teaching skills in a simulated classroom with direct feedback from peers and instructors (Allen, 1966). Allen's Microteaching theory emphasizes classroom simulation and feedback, while Lanker (1989) stresses the importance of training to move beyond the "injecting" mindset, where teachers simply deliver content without engaging in pedagogical techniques. Together, these theories underscore the role of training in enhancing teaching quality. Through Microteaching, novice teachers develop essential skills, refine techniques, and gain practical experience that improves their instructional abilities.

Reinforcement is feedback provided by a teacher, peer, or other sources to inform or correct a learner's understanding and behavior, serving as a consequence of their performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It encompasses verbal and nonverbal responses that teachers use to guide behavior, offering encouragement or correction (Usman, 2010). While Hattie and Timperley focus on various reinforcement sources, Usman emphasizes the teacher's role in behavior modification. Together, these theories illustrate reinforcement's purpose in motivating learners, reinforcing desired behaviors, enhancing learning effectiveness, fostering a positive environment, and improving retention and engagement.

Verbal reinforcement, including praise, recognition, and approval, motivates learners by enhancing their satisfaction and engagement (Usman, 2010). Reitzer (2014) adds that positive comments are vital for effective reinforcement, and teachers' enthusiasm helps create a welcoming classroom atmosphere. Together, these theories emphasize the role of positive verbal reinforcement in motivating and engaging learners.

According to Barnawi and Arifin (2012), four methods enhance reinforcement: targeting reinforcement at specific individuals, reinforcing groups, providing immediate reinforcement, and using varied forms to prevent monotony. Additionally, Sa'ud (2009) outlines principles for effective reinforcement, including warmth, enthusiasm, meaningfulness, and avoiding negative responses. Both experts agree that diverse methods and positive principles help build constructive teacher-student relationships, fostering a supportive learning environment and encouraging active participation.

Nonverbal reinforcement consists of communication methods without words, such as facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and physical proximity, to provide feedback or encourage learner behavior. Usman (2010) categorizes this into six types: gestural reinforcement (e.g., nodding, smiling), proximity reinforcement (e.g., standing near a learner), contact reinforcement (e.g., shoulder patting, with cultural sensitivity), activity reinforcement (using enjoyable tasks as rewards), token reinforcement (offering tangible rewards like badges), and partial reinforcement (acknowledging partially correct answers). These nonverbal methods can motivate learners and boost engagement when used thoughtfully within cultural and situational contexts.

According to Martin et al. (2005), nonverbal reinforcement, including body language, enhances the quality of learning by fostering participation and engagement, with a focus on both process and outcomes. Proper use of these varied reinforcement types supports a productive learning environment where learners feel encouraged to participate actively and complete tasks promptly. Together, Usman and Martin emphasize that nonverbal reinforcement, applied with awareness and flexibility, contributes significantly to effective teaching and learner motivation.

3 Method

This study employs a qualitative action analysis research method, aimed at examining the implementation of specific skills during learning activities (Hopkins, 1993). The

author uses this approach to investigate the reinforcement skills demonstrated by German Language Education students during teaching simulations in the Microteaching course.

The research focuses on a group of students who completed two recorded teaching simulation sessions. The first recording captures their initial teaching session, while the second records their performance after receiving feedback from lecturers and peers. Each group includes two members acting as teachers in both sessions. For analysis, the author selects three videos from the second session, chosen for their clear documentation of reinforcement techniques.

The research was conducted through several stages: First, data collection took place during teaching simulations of class A, cohort 2019, in the seventh semester of the 2022/2023 academic year for the Microteaching course. Second, a literature review was conducted to gather relevant theories from books and data sources. Third, three videos were randomly selected from 17 recorded second session teaching practices, focusing on analyzing reinforcement aspects through descriptive observation. Finally, the data analysis involved identifying reinforcement indicators, categorizing reinforcement types, analyzing aspects of reinforcement, providing feedback, and drawing conclusions based on the findings.

The authors use and develop the observation table based on the theory of verbal and nonverbal reinforcement outlined in the Literature Review chapter. The description section in Table 1 provides a brief analysis of each student group. The “Type of Reinforcement” column classifies the types of reinforcement used by participants, while the “Implementation” column compares the most frequently used types. This table is included in each subchapter of the participant group reinforcement analysis, providing a brief description to support the analysis.

Table 1. Observation table

No.	Type of Reinforcement	Implementation
1	Verbal	
2	Nonverbal	

4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Lecture Procedures

Since the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in 2022, the Microteaching course in the German Language Education Study Program has provided students with opportunities to practice teaching skills in simulated learning environments. The 2019 cohort participated in this course during their seventh semester.

Initially, the instructor assigned a discussion on syllabus and lesson plan differences. Students then formed pairs, creating 17 groups, with each group selecting sub-chapters from a guidebook to present. Following these presentations, further discussions covered

Arbeitsanweisung (task instructions) from specific textbooks and *Lehrersprache* (teacher language) from an online resource.

The lecturer provided a syllabus of German language topics for high school, allowing each group to create and present a lesson plan for feedback. In teaching simulations, each pair had 15 minutes, with other students acting as learners or observers. Observers assessed one teaching skill aspect using modified observation sheets.

4.2 Research Limitations

This study used recorded teaching simulation videos as the objects of analysis; however, these videos had certain limitations. One issue was the use of only one microphone for audio recording, held by the participant. Observers might interpret this as a form of proximity reinforcement.

4.3 Microteaching Simulation Video Analysis

The author analyzed videos of learning simulations conducted by students in the German Language Education Program, focusing on verbal and nonverbal reinforcement. This analysis aligns with the thesis objective, which is to assess the reinforcement skills demonstrated by students using various theories of learning reinforcement. Additionally, the author examined the extent to which reinforcement was implemented in Microteaching sessions by the 2019 cohort.

Ana and Ani (Pseudonyms). The following is an analysis of reinforcement skills in Group I, consisting of two students Ana and Ani (pseudonyms), who taught a lesson on the theme “*Körperteile*” (body parts). Ana began the lesson by leading a prayer, greeting the class, checking attendance, and introducing herself. At 2:09, she asked learners to identify the day’s topic. She provided verbal reinforcement, praising each learner who responded. When a learner answered “*anggota tubuh*” (body parts), she replied with “*iya betul*” (yes, correct) and encouraged responses in German. After another learner responded with “*Körperteile*,” Ana reinforced this with “*Gut*” (good). Following Usman’s (2010) theory on partial reinforcement, she then continued the lesson by introducing vocabulary for body parts in German, asking learners to repeat each word’s pronunciation, and providing verbal reinforcement in the form of group praise. Afterward, Ana switched roles with Ani, who continued with verbal reinforcement by thanking learners who participated in the activities. At the 6:51 mark, Ani expressed appreciation by saying “*Danke*” (thank you) to a learner for coming forward and participating in a matching activity, in which she attached a piece of paper with the correct answer to an image on the display board held by Ana. Ana and Ani demonstrated strong abilities in providing verbal reinforcement to the learners. They actively gave praise and expressed thanks to the learners who participated and answered questions correctly. These actions helped create a positive and motivating learning environment, boosting the learners’ confidence and engagement. Ana and Ani effectively used verbal rein-

forcement as a tool to increase motivation and enhance the learners' efforts in the learning process. Ani demonstrates strong nonverbal reinforcement skills, frequently smiling and giving enthusiastic thumbs-ups to show appreciation for learners' efforts and participation, effectively encouraging them to stay engaged, in line with Schweer's theory (2000). Ani also provides activity reinforcement by guiding learners through a matching exercise with German body part vocabulary, likely using proximity to prepare them, which aligns with Usman's (2010) concept of activity reinforcement. On the other hand, Ana supports nonverbal reinforcement by encouraging learners to engage in short dialogues using slides, also a form of activity reinforcement that fosters active interaction. Both Ana and Ani effectively use nonverbal reinforcement, though Ani is particularly consistent and expressive with smiles and gestures like thumbs-up, which helps create a positive, motivating environment that enhances learner interaction and participation. Ana and Ani showed good ability in giving nonverbal reinforcement, especially in terms of activity reinforcement. Aliyah was more dominant and clearer in using smiling facial expressions and gestures as a form of nonverbal reinforcement. This helps to create a positive and motivating environment for learners, increasing interaction and participation in the learning process. Table 2 summarizes the analysis of the abilities of interns Ana and Ani.

Table 2. The summary of Ana and Ani's analysis

No	Type of Reinforcement	Implementation
1	Verbal	Ana began the lesson with a prayer and interacted with the students, checking their attendance and introducing herself. She gave verbal reinforcement by praising students who answered questions correctly and used reinforcement to strengthen vocabulary and pronunciation of body parts in German. Subsequently, Ana allowed Ani to continue the lesson, and Ani provided verbal reinforcement by thanking students who actively participated in matching answers with pictures. Together, Ana and Ani successfully created a positive learning environment through the effective use of verbal reinforcement.
2	Nonverbal	Ani and Ana demonstrated strong abilities in providing nonverbal reinforcement to students. Ani consistently used smiles and thumbs-up gestures as expressions of appreciation and motivation, while Ana reinforced learning through brief dialogues using slideshow media. Their actions created a positive learning environment, encouraging active interaction and participation from the students.

Tuti and Tati (Pseudonyms). Tuti provided verbal reinforcement by discussing the material with learners, asking questions, and giving praise. For example, at 02:41, Tuti approached a learner and asked what they typically buy when shopping. When the learner responded with "clothes," Tuti confirmed by saying "*Kleidung?*" and, after the learner replied "*Ja, Kleidung,*" Tuti praised them with "*gut*" (good). Here, Tuti could have used partial reinforcement by encouraging the learner to answer in German. At

minute 3:51, Tuti praised two learners who came forward to practice a conversation in German about buying and selling clothes with “*Sehr gut*” (Very good). She then explained the function of *Modalverben* (modal verbs) in German, assigned a fill-in-the-blank task, and invited learners to explain *Modalverben*. When one learner explained, Tuti praised them with “*Genau*” (exactly). Both Tuti and Tati demonstrated strong verbal reinforcement skills, avoiding negative language and creating a positive learning environment that encouraged learner participation. At the start of the lesson, Tuti demonstrated nonverbal reinforcement by using proximity reinforcement, walking among the learners, and approaching those willing to answer questions. While explaining the material, she positioned herself close to learners to enhance engagement. Tati provided nonverbal reinforcement through activity reinforcement by encouraging learners to create a German dialogue about shopping. After introducing the module, she monitored their progress as they worked in pairs, offering encouragement and positive feedback as needed. Tuti and Tati effectively used proximity reinforcement, encouragement, and feedback to support the learners’ efforts. However, at minute 14:21, only one pair had time to practice their dialogue due to time constraints, though Tati still offered verbal reinforcement to that pair. At the end of the lesson (minute 15:35), Tati asked a learner to review the material, and after a successful response, she led the class in a round of applause as nonverbal reinforcement, recognizing the learner’s effort and understanding. Table 3 summarizes the analysis of the abilities of interns Tuti and Tati.

Table 3. The summary of Tuti and Tati’s analysis

No	Type of Reinforcement	Implementation
1	Verbal	Tuti provided verbal reinforcement to the learners by discussing the material, asking related questions, and offering praise. She used phrases like “ <i>gut</i> ” (good) and “ <i>Sehr gut</i> ” (very good) to acknowledge correct answers and active participation. Meanwhile, Tati reinforced learners verbally by praising their correct pronunciation of vocabulary. Both Tuti and Tati demonstrated strong skills in providing verbal reinforcement, creating a positive and motivating learning environment.
2	Nonverbal	At the start of the lesson, Tuti provided nonverbal reinforcement by using physical proximity and approaching the learners to enhance engagement. Tati offered nonverbal reinforcement by monitoring their progress, giving encouragement, and providing positive feedback. Although time constraints allowed only one pair to practice, Tati still provided verbal reinforcement to them. At the end of the lesson, she invited a learner to review what had been learned, followed by nonverbal reinforcement from the entire class. Tuti and Tati demonstrated strong performance in providing verbal reinforcement to the learners.

Mela and Meli. At minute 05:29, Meli taught the learners to spell “Reisen” (travel) and invited a learner to try spelling it. When the learner correctly pronounced “Reisen,” Meli approached and praised them with “*Wunderbar, sehr gut*” (wonderful, very good). She continued using this method with other terms, asking a learner at minute 06:33 to spell “*Tanzen*” (to dance) and praised them with “*gut*” (good) after a correct response. Meli also provided group verbal reinforcement while teaching activity-related vocabulary in German, after which Mela took over the lesson. At minute 08:07, Mela offered verbal reinforcement following a lesson explanation by inviting a pair to practice a dialogue about hobbies in German. After their performance, Mela praised them with “*Danke, sehr gut*” (Thank you, very good). Both Meli and Mela effectively used praise as positive reinforcement, fostering a positive and motivating learning environment. Mela also kept learners engaged with humor, asking, “How’s German? Easy, right?” to which the learners responded with laughter and answered “Eaaaasy.” Meli began the lesson by reviewing the previous session’s material, checking attendance, and encouraging the class to applaud to boost energy. She provided nonverbal reinforcement through activity by introducing Mentimeter, an interactive platform that allowed learners to input their favorite activities, creating a word collage displayed in the room to reinforce engagement and participation. At minute 07:25, Mela frequently smiled while explaining the lesson, using friendly expressions to boost learner enthusiasm—a form of nonverbal reinforcement conveying warmth. At minute 11:14, she organized learners into pairs for a German dialogue on activities, promoting interaction and practical language use as proximity reinforcement. Later, at minute 14:02, Mela invited a learner, Farah, to summarize the lesson; after Farah’s response, Mela led the class in applause as verbal reinforcement, acknowledging Farah’s contribution with a supportive gesture. Both Meli and Mela effectively used nonverbal and activity reinforcement, utilizing interactive media, positive expressions, and structured group work to create an engaging and active learning environment. Table 4 summarizes the analysis of the abilities of interns Mela and Meli.

Table 4. The summary of Mela and Meli’s analysis

No	Type of Reinforcement	Implementation
1	Verbal	Meli taught the learners how to spell words like “Reisen” (to travel) and praised a learner who pronounced it correctly. She continued with other activity-related terms, providing praise when learners successfully completed each task. Mela also offered verbal reinforcement, asking learners to practice German dialogues and praising them afterward. Both Meli and Mela demonstrated strong skills in providing verbal reinforcement, creating a positive and motivating learning environment.
2	Nonverbal	Meli began the lesson by acknowledging the learners’ attendance with applause. Both Meli and Mela used the interactive platform Mentimeter to engage the learners and provide activity reinforcement. Mela, in turn, used

her smile and friendly expressions as nonverbal reinforcement while forming pairs for dialogue practice, giving learners the chance to contribute and share knowledge. She also provided verbal reinforcement by supporting and acknowledging learners' contributions, such as Farah's. Meli and Mela successfully created an active and motivating learning environment by using a range of nonverbal, activity, and verbal reinforcement techniques.

5 Conclusion

The three groups effectively implemented reinforcement strategies without resorting to negative actions, such as punishment or language that could be considered negative reinforcement. Ana and Ani demonstrated strong nonverbal reinforcement skills, especially in activity reinforcement. Ani, in particular, used clear smiling expressions and hand gestures, creating a positive and motivating atmosphere that enhanced learner interaction and participation. Tuti and Tati performed well in providing verbal reinforcement, using strategies like proximity reinforcement, positive feedback, and recognition of learners' efforts. Meanwhile, Meli and Mela excelled in both nonverbal and activity reinforcement, incorporating tools like Mentimeter, positive facial expressions, and pair work to increase engagement and enthusiasm. Together, these verbal and nonverbal strategies fostered a positive and active learning environment across all groups.

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