University of Birjand

Faculty of Literature & Humanities

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN GENERAL LINGUISTICS

Title:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' METHODS OF USING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Supervisor:

Dr. Mohsen Mobaraki

Advisor:

Dr. Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Ghoreishi

By:

Aziz Yaghoobi

February 2014

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my family, my teachers, my friends, my colleagues, and to those who strive to make this world a better and peaceful place to live.

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First and foremost, all praise is due to Allah, the omnipotent, the omniscient, the most merciful, the most beneficent, the ultimate source of all knowledge and wisdom to mankind, who guides us in darkness and helps us in difficulties. He blessed me with everything and always helped me at every step of my life.

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To those who indirectly contributed in this research, your kindness means a lot to me. Thank you very much indeed.

Finally, as customary, the errors that remain are mine alone, and I hope that inadvertent errors will be forgiven by my readers.

ABSTRACT

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' METHODS OF USING NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Aziz Yaghoobi

Nonverbal communication (NVC) plays a vitally important role in classroom settings. Teachers' use of NVC skills enhances language learners' motivation and results in a more permanent learning. This study aimed to investigate, describe, and observe teachers' performance in EFL classrooms to record the nonverbal behaviors they exhibit, to measure the extent to which they use these skills, to identify the most and least frequently used NVC skills, and to offer teachers some recommendations for the effective use of NVC skills. Through convenience selection, 50 teachers participated in this study. The main tools of data collection were observation, interview, and a researcher-made questionnaire. The data from the questionnaire were fed into the computer and then analyzed using SPSS. First descriptive analysis of the results was performed, and then the inferential analysis (one-sample t-test). The findings of this study provided information on the NVC skills of teachers and suggested that teacher training course designers, curriculum planners, education policy makers, and others education leaders appreciate the importance of NVC and encourage teachers in the use of NVC skills. The study also recommended teachers to be concerned with the communication phenomenon and use NVC skills intelligently, consciously, and properly in the classroom.

Keywords: Body Language, EFL Classrooms, English Language Teaching, Nonverbal Communication

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.A. = Associate of Arts

B.A. = Bachelor of Arts

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

ELT = English Language Teaching

L2 = Second Language

M.A. = Master of Arts

n.d. = no date

NVB = Nonverbal Behavior

NVC = Nonverbal Communication

Ph. D. = Doctor of Philosophy

SPSS = Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

VC = Verbal Communication

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the statement of the problem, the significance, and the objectives of the study are presented along with the research questions and hypotheses, where the overall study focuses on. The limitations and delimitations pertaining to this study are also addressed. Then, definitions of the key terms of the study are provided.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

As a necessity of social life, human being needs to interact with other members of the society to fulfill the physical or moral wishes, but to do this, s/he needs a system (or medium) to communicate his or her intention and in this phase the role of language becomes evident as a unique phenomenon and as the primary communication system for the human species to convey thoughts through speech. As Knapp & Hall (2007) state there are two variables to convey the intention of human for communicating: Verbal and nonverbal communication (NVC). Verbal communication (VC) is the words or speech we use in our daily communication. NVC refers to communication which is produced by means other than words (eye contact, body language, or voice tone, for example). It is an agreed-upon fact that "enormous efforts have been undertaken in the past to understand the verbal channel, whereas the role of the nonverbal channel is less well understood" (Esposito, Faundez-zanuy, Keller & Marinaro, 2007. p. 1).

Teachers and students constantly communicate nonverbally and send messages to each other through nonverbal channels in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Mehrabian (1971) and Engleberg (2006) state that only about 7% of human communication comes from using words themselves, 38% of the remainder of all meaning in a social situation comes from how we say these words, and the 55% of communication comes from body language. Some other researchers such as Grant & Hennings (1971) and Kellogg & Lawson (1993) estimate that up to 82% of teacher messages are nonverbal, while 18% are verbal. Neuliep (2003) has postulated that as much as 90% of all communication occurs through nonverbal behavior (NVB). It makes sense therefore for teachers to use NVC to their advantage in the classroom.

NVC plays a vitally important role in classroom settings. Use of NVC is important in EFL classrooms because they communicate and signal the attitudes, feelings, emotions, and paravocalic cues that influence the meaning, understanding, and perception in communication process; therefore, they should not be ignored in classroom settings to send the right message, to attract students' attention to the subject matter taught, and to manage the classroom more effectively. Teachers' use of NVC skills enhances language learners'

long term retention, results in a more permanent learning, makes classroom environment alive, conducive to and comfortable for learning, makes the lesson more interesting and informative, makes the teaching more effective and efficient, and makes classroom activities more enjoyable (Butt, 2011).

All teachers send nonverbal signals to students in the classroom. Therefore, it is essential for teachers not only to be conscious of the messages the students send to them but also of their own NVB to send the signals they mean to send to students in order to be more effective. The effective use of NVC by the teachers in EFL classrooms plays an important role. NVC in EFL classrooms affects the comprehension and perception of the students. Teachers can use NVC for better learning outcomes and understanding of the concepts. Teachers can also use it for the rapid learning of the students with minimum efforts (Akay, 2009).

NVC plays a pivotal role in EFL classrooms. Studies conducted in the classroom settings indicate that teachers' NVBs play a very important role on learners' motivation in EFL classrooms. NVC often impacts the behavior of teachers and students (Negi, 2009). In fact, both the student and teacher's success rely on the effective communication between them in the classroom. The fact that teachers exert a profound influence on the demeanor of students, either positive or negative, is undeniable. Some studies show that an important part of teachers' influence is through NVC; hence, NVC operates an essential role in the field of teaching in the classroom. If teachers' NVBs are positive, students enjoy the lecture and become highly motivated to the teacher and the subject matter, on the other hand if the NVBs are negative, students feel discomfort and may not be motivated to the subject matter and the teacher (Hassan, 2007; Negi, 2009).

NVC operates better in teaching and learning process in the classroom. The NVC technique improves the standard of teaching and ultimately leads to better learning outcomes of the students (Butt, 2011). The awareness of this skill among the teachers is a necessity, as they can consciously use this skill to students' advantage and to enhance the standard of teaching. Teachers can use their body movements, eye contact, facial expressions, voice tone, and spatial distance for better understanding of the concepts of students, affecting the learning outcomes of the students, and managing the classroom (Butt, 2011). The impact that a teacher can create by utilizing NVC in the classroom is much more efficient than a teacher's mastery on the taught subject and his/her fluency.

NVC is an important aspect to be taught to foreign language students if they are to communicate effectively in English (Schmidt-Fajlik, 2007) and since much of the communication is nonverbal (Mehrabian. 1972), the study of NVC should be included as part of language learning curricula. However, this feat will not be accomplished without contribution of trained teachers who themselves utilize NVC appropriately in classroom

context. Nonverbal skills are invaluable for teachers in 'getting the message across' to classes and understanding the messages pupils are sending (Neill & Casewell, 1993). Emphasizing the importance of NVC, Blatner (2009) asserted:

> *"How something is expressed may carry more significance and weight than what is said, the words themselves. Accompanied by a smile or a frown, said with a loud, scolding voice or a gentle, easy one, the contents of our communications are framed by our holistic perceptions of their context" (para. 3).*

According to the available literature review in this field, NVC has a significant impact on the student behavior and different theories confirm this. A large number of studies on NVC have been conducted in other countries in order to make use of it in educational settings, but unfortunately the number of the studies -according to the researcher's knowledge- conducted in Iran is too few and very little attention has been given in language teaching to NVC as a complement to verbal language and little progress has been made in this field in our country. Lack of such studies is very tangible in our country and there is a scarcity of research in the field of NVC, one which brings the teachers to the limelight.

Therefore, this study entitled "English Language Teachers' Methods of Using Nonverbal Communication" attempts to highlight the importance of the utilization of NVC in EFL classrooms by teachers and to make them aware of the conscious use of these skills in the teaching and learning process.

1.2 Significance of the Study

NVC appears to be as an inseparable part of communication process and confronting with this phenomenon is inescapable, this confrontation can take place in every situation, from formal to informal situation, in conferences, and even in educational set up, then in the field of EFL it will be useful to have an investigation on the teachers' methods of using NVC in EFL classrooms as a fundamental component of communication between teachers and students.

With the knowledge of the integration of verbal and NVC in classroom setting, using body language in teaching has not been neglected by methodologists in a search for a best method of teaching, for example, Freeman (2003) in her book points to the use of NVC in The Silent Way method of teaching by the teacher and explains the processes of use of NVC and gestures by teacher in this method of teaching for setting up situations to "force awareness."

Researchers examining the impact of NVC on the development of the classroom have also reported that different NVBs have different impacts depending on the situational needs which arise in the classroom. Sime (2006) argues that teacher's nonverbal responses reinforce classroom processes in three specific areas. First, NVC can be used to reinforce cognitive learning. Second, NVC reinforces emotional connections between the student and the teacher. Finally, NVC sets an organizational tone for the classroom i.e. with respect to the management of the classroom.

It seems that being a teacher at a language teaching setting entails having a good knowledge of NVC to create better transaction and interaction in a classroom setting. Darn (2005) believes that teachers should always remember that the meanings of gestures and other nonverbal cues need to be taught in the same way as the meaning of essential classroom language, although a number of nonverbal techniques already exist in their repertoire.

NVC is considered to play a central role in interpersonal relationships, particularly in the communication of emotions (Duncan, 1969; Ekman & Friesen, 1968, as cited in Kazdin & Clock, 1973, p. 644). Teachers need to establish a friendly relationship with their students and as such use of NVB can expedite building this rapport between teachers and students. It has also been found that the use of gestures by both teachers and learners improves the atmosphere in the classroom (Lakin et al., 2003; as cited in Brown, n.d. p. 3). The findings of this research may prove helpful for teachers to set up a more understanding bond with their students.

This research study may be significant in that it may increase teachers' awareness of their performance in terms of utilization of NVC. Additionally, it may offer the syllabus designers and teacher trainers some recommendations on the appropriate use of NVC in EFL classrooms and appropriate tasks which need nonverbal interaction be included in the EFL syllabi, respectively.

Moreover, this study may also be helpful for students. Watching their teachers employ NVC skills reasonably and appropriately, students also learn to use these skills effectively in their in-class interactions as well as their daily encounters, both in ESL and EFL contexts.

It seems to be a fact that if a teacher creates an atmosphere that is welcoming to all students by using positive body language and voice tone encourages students to participate; the students in that classroom will be more willing to take risks increasing their knowledge, motivation, and achievement. One possible outcome of this study may be to offer insights to the effective use of NVC by teachers which would end up in higher risk-taking rate of students in classrooms.

Furthermore, the study may provide a kind of feedback to teachers who are eager to have a report of their capacities and abilities as teachers in effective use of all aspects of a full-fledged communication (i.e. utilizing both verbal and nonverbal channel proportionately and smoothly) as well as policy makers to permanently include a component of NVC in teacher training programs. Furthermore, the findings of this research may be addressed to inexperienced teachers, teacher trainers, especially at school levels, and other professionals who have communication problems.

Finally, depending on the linguistic competence of students, teachers may exploit different degrees of NVC. In other words when dealing with beginners, teachers may need to utilize more bodily signals than when with higher levels. Thus, teachers may gain insight on how to behave with learners at different levels of language competency.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To make teachers aware of the intelligent use of their body language
2. To actually observe teachers' performance in EFL classrooms to record the NVB they exhibit
3. To find out if English language teachers use NVC skills in their EFL classrooms
4. To measure the extent to which they use these skills
5. To identify the most and least frequently used NVC skills by these teachers
6. To make an analysis of NVC in EFL classrooms
7. To find out how NVC contributes to better learning outcomes of students
8. And finally to make some recommendations for teachers to improve their body language in order to leave a better impression and prove more effective.

1.4 Questions of the Study

This research study focused on the following questions:

1. What NVBs are displayed by English language teachers in EFL classrooms?

2. To what extent do English language teachers use NVC skills in EFL classrooms?
3. What are the least and the most frequently used NVC skills used by English language teacher?
4. What are the functions of NVC skills used by teachers in EFL classrooms?

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

1. Many NVBs may be exhibited by English language teachers in EFL classrooms including nodding or shaking head, making gestures, smiling or frowning, invading student's territory.
2. English language teachers use NVC skills to a great extent.
3. Haptics and oculesics are the most and the least frequently used NVC skills by English language teachers.
4. NVC skills may serve many functions such as managing the classroom, emphasizing a point, sending a message of interest, approval, ignorance, anger, and/ or showing influence, power and authority.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

The scope of the study was delimited to kinesics, posture, facial expressions, proxemics, haptics, oculesics, paravocalics, and chronemics.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study had a numbers of limitations as follows:

1. Participants of the present study did not show any interest in being videotaped by the researcher for further analysis of the NVBs they displayed during teaching and learning process in the EFL classrooms.
2. Local, ethical and cultural restrictions may have affected the results of the study because the researcher could not attend the female teachers' classes regularly.