

The Use of Non-verbal Communication in the classroom

Salah Ali Mohammad Ali
Tabuk University, KSA

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study:

Good communication is the foundation of successful relationships, both personally and professionally. But we communicate with much more than words. In fact, research shows that the majority of our communication is nonverbal. It includes our facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, and even the tone of our voice.

The field of nonverbal communications has grown rapidly over the last few decades, and it has applications in business, media, international relations, education, and indeed any field which significantly involves interpersonal and group dynamics. Certainly there is a need for more psychological mindedness in all these realms.

More than three-quarters of communication is non-verbal. We all use no-verbal communication every time we talk to someone throughout the tone of our voices, our body movements, and our gestures to express our feelings and thoughts. Actions speak louder than words. Teachers would know more about their students by watching their actions than by listening to what they say.

Problem of the Study:

Body language plays a great role in having a successful communication inside and outside the classroom. However, it is worth noticing that through our experience, classes with low percentage of using body language have difficulty in communication and thus have unsuccessful outcomes. Teachers should know about the importance of body language and how it affects communicating with their learners. In multinational classrooms, for example, the less you use body language in the classroom, the less successful your class is.

Purpose of the Study:

We are conducting this study to:

1. Highlight the importance of using body language in the classroom;
2. Make it clear that body language is a must in the classroom; and
3. Raise the teacher's awareness of how the effective use of body language can facilitate the learning process and encourage them to apply it.
- 4.

Research Question:

What is the influence of the use of non-verbal communication in the classroom?

Does body language play an important role for having a successful communication inside the classroom?

Do teachers who use body language effectively have better communicative classrooms than those who do not apply it?

Research Hypotheses:

1. Educators, psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists define body language or nonverbal communication as communication without words. It includes overt behaviors such as facial expressions, eye contact, touching and tone of voice. It can also be less obvious, however, as through dress, posture and spatial distance. The most effective communication occurs when verbal and nonverbal messages are in sync, creating communication synergy.
2. Nonverbal communication has implications for the teacher as well as the learner. It is often said that one can always recognize a language teacher by their use of gesture in normal conversation, while it is certainly true that a system of gestures has evolved which allows a teacher to perform aspects of classroom management quickly, quietly and efficiently.
3. It is not only what you say in the classroom that is important, but it's how you say it that can make the difference to students. Nonverbal messages are an essential component of communication in the teaching process.

Significance of the Study:

By conducting this research, teachers, students, and administrators will benefit from it, for it will contribute to have a successful and easy communication in the classroom. In addition to that, administrators will benefit concerning good reputation and having more money.

Research Delimitations:

1. This study will take three months (about 30 sessions). Each one is about fifty minutes.
2. We will collect data from both governmental and private schools/ Universities in Tabuk, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (We will choose six schools/Universities randomly; three public and three private schools/Universities).
3. We focus only on both elementary and pre-intermediate students.
- 4.

Key Concepts:

1. Non-verbal communication: communication throughout the tone of voices, body movements, and gestures.
2. Actions speak louder than words: (idiom) People would know about you by watching your actions than by listening to what you say.
3. Multinational classrooms: classrooms involving people from different countries.
4. Facial expressions: The human face is extremely expressive. Unlike some forms of nonverbal communication, facial expressions are universal.
5. Eye contact: Eye contact is also important in maintaining the flow of conversation and for gauging the other person's response.

Review of the Literature:

Theoretical Framework:

Body language in the classroom

Communication is more than words, and it is important for teachers and administrators to understand the nonverbal messages they are sending and receiving in the classroom.

Article Excerpt

Ralph Waldo Emerson and Mae West would seem to have little in common, but there is one thing they both understood—the importance of body language.

"The telltale body is all tongues," Emerson once said, while West famously noted, "I speak two languages, body and English."

Educators, psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists define body language or nonverbal communication as communication without words. It includes overt behaviors such as facial expressions, eye contact, touching and tone of voice. It can also be less obvious, however, as through dress, posture and spatial distance. The most effective communication occurs when verbal and nonverbal messages are in sync, creating communication synergy.

Just how important is nonverbal communication? Some research findings suggest that two-thirds of our communication is nonverbal. Other experts suggest that only seven percent of a message is sent through words, with the remaining 93 percent sent through facial expressions (55 percent) and vocal intonation (38 percent).

In the classroom, teachers and students--both consciously and unconsciously--send and receive nonverbal cues several hundred times a day. Teachers should be aware of nonverbal communication in the classroom for two basic reasons: to become better receivers of students' messages and to gain awareness of the student's communication.

(I think that the role of non-verbal communication is so important in the classroom because both teachers and students send and receive messages through body language).

http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-5060801/Body-language-in-the-classroom.html

Nonverbal communication has implications for the teacher as well as the learner.

It is often said that one can always recognize a language teacher by their use of gesture in normal conversation, while it is certainly true that a system of gestures has evolved which allows a teacher to perform aspects of classroom management quickly, quietly and efficiently. Gestures for 'work in pairs', 'open your books', 'listen' and 'write' are universal, while individual teachers have developed nonverbal repertoires involving the use of fingers to represent words, expressions to denote approval/disapproval

and gestures to indicate time, tense and other linguistic features, and hence systems for instruction, correction and management which well-trained learners respond to immediately. The effective use of nonverbal cues assists in a wide range of classroom practices by adding an extra dimension to the language:

- reducing unnecessary teacher talking time
- increasing learner participation
- confidence building
- reducing fear of silence
- clear instructions
- efficient classroom management
- classroom atmosphere
- improving listening skills
- improving performance in pair and group activities
- self and peer correction
- avoiding misunderstandings
- improving intercultural competence

Teachers, however, 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, also that a number of nonverbal techniques already exist in their repertoire, such as the use of Cuisenaire rods, colors and charts, adapted from the Silent Way. Make sure that the learners understand your codes, and teach them to use them themselves.

(We can notice that non-verbal communication has an implication for both teachers and students)

It is not only what you say in the classroom that is important, but it's how you say it that can make the difference to students.

Nonverbal messages are an essential component of communication in the teaching process.

Teachers should be aware of nonverbal behavior in the classroom for three major reasons:

- An awareness of nonverbal behavior will allow you to become better receivers of students' messages.
- You will become a better sender of signals that reinforce learning.
- This mode of communication increases the degree of the perceived psychological closeness between teacher and student.

Obviously, adequate knowledge of the subject matter is crucial to your success; however, it's not the only crucial element. Creating a climate that facilitates learning and retention demands good nonverbal and verbal skills. To improve your nonverbal skills, record your speaking on video tape. Then ask a colleague in communications to suggest refinements.

(It is obvious that teachers should be aware of non-verbal behavior in the classroom and this is due to: allow you to be better receivers of students' messages and to reinforce learning in addition to increasing the degree of the perceived psychological closeness between teacher and student.

Research Methodology: Research Design:

Survey Research

Subjects:

Elementary and pre-intermediate students in addition to teachers

Research Instruments:

- Observation
- Survey
- Video taping
- Interviews
- Note taking

Research Procedures:

1. The first step: choosing six schools randomly (three public and three for private).
2. The second step: attending classes; each class 4-5 sessions. Observing and videotaping and taking notes (for three months).
3. The third step: interviewing both teachers and students.
4. The fourth step: distributing questionnaires to some students and teachers.

References:

- ✓ -Barnett, Marya A. (1983). Replacing teacher talk with gestures: Nonverbal communication in the foreign language classroom. *Foreign Language Annals*, 16, pp: 173-176.
- ✓ -Pennycook, Alastair (1985). Actions speak louder than words: Paralanguage, Communication, and Education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19, pp: 259-282.
- ✓ -Miluse Soudek and Lev I. Soudek. Non-verbal Channels in Language Teaching. *ELT Journal*, Volume 39/2 April 1985. 109-114.

Appendices:

Survey:

We are a team doing the survey about body language in the classroom. We are studying the use of non-verbal communication in the classroom. Would you please answer the questions below?

1. How much do teachers move around? Do they stand? Sit? Where?
2. Gestures how much do teachers move their hands? What do these movements mean? Do any gestures differ in meaning in the two countries?
3. Eye Contact Where do teachers look when teaching? If they make eye contact with students, do their eyes sweep across the group or focus on individuals? If they focus on individuals, how often and how long do they make eye contact?
4. Facial Expressions and Head Movements how often do teachers smile? How do they show anger? What do they do when students ask questions? How do students indicate dissatisfaction? Boredom? Interest? Confusion? Understanding? How do teachers indicate agreement disagreement? confusion? Understanding or unhappiness before the students in class?
5. Touching Do teachers ever touch students? What does it mean if a teacher touches a student? In what situations, if any, would a student touch a teacher? In what situations, if any, would students touch each other?
6. Time How late to class can teachers be without offending the students? How late to class can students be without offending the teacher? What do people do or say when they are late?
7. Classroom Behavior Do students or teachers smoke, drink or eat in class? How do students sit? How do Students get the teacher's attention? Under what circumstances do students leave the class while it is still in session? What do they do or say if they want to leave?
8. Dress and Cleanliness How do teachers dress for class? How do students dress for class? How important is cleanliness or the lack of body odor?
9. Manner of Speaking How loud a voice is appropriate for lecturing? Does appropriate loudness of voice differ for men and women? What speed of speaking is appropriate for lecturing?