

Teachers' Views on the Role of Non-verbal Communication in EFL Classrooms

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Abstract: Meaning conveyance is a fundamental goal in language teaching and learning. To accomplish this essential goal, effective communication should be mastered in EFL classrooms. It is well known that communication is divided into two forms; verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication is considered one of the most effective techniques in meaning conveyance. This study investigates the effects of non-verbal communication in conveying meaning in EFL classrooms. Conveying meaning in foreign language classes is a crucial issue because learning a language, whether native or foreign, cannot occur without effective conveyance of meaning. In teaching English as a foreign language, meaning needs to happen within levels, activities and functions. One of the most important activities is the presentation of new words and structures. There are many ways of doing this. Examples of these include providing definitions, explaining the meaning, giving example, miming, translation, synonyms and antonyms, and contextualization. A questionnaire for EFL teachers was used as a data gathering tool. Later the responses of the participants were analysed.

Keywords: Nonverbal communication, meaning, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Body Language facial expressions.

I. INTRODUCTION

There has been an apparent change in various fields and teaching and communication are not exceptional from this change. As communication divides into verb and non-verbal communication, but non-verbal communication is considered as the most effective aid in terms of comparison between the verbal communications. EFL teachers need to utilize effective communication to convey meanings to their students. The matter is not only concerned about the usage, but they should also be aware of the non-verbal messages they send and receive since they are mutual between the teacher and students.

Nevertheless, it seems that non-verbal communication has not been given sufficient attention in the practical field of teaching a foreign language. It has been observed that EFL teachers do not receive special training on non-verbal communication in its own in order to implement it in their teaching practice. The lack of this technique leads to the difficulties of students' understanding of new language items, such as new vocabulary, structure, grammar, and chunk. Although some studies have been conducted in this field, few of them addressed this problem. For example, ALDoumer (2017) and Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu (2008) conducted studies in the same field. The effect of body language in the classroom interaction was the focus of the former study. The latter study only covers the sociocultural impact of non-verbal communication and how teachers can use it appropriately to prevent inter-cultural misunderstanding or communication breakdown. Taking all these studies into account, the present study investigates teachers' views on the Role of non-verbal Communication in EFL Classrooms in enhancing students' understanding. Based on the above introduction, the study tries to answer the following questions:

- 1- To what extent does non-verbal communication help EFL teachers to convey the meaning of new vocabulary?
- 2- To what extent does non-verbal communication help EFL teachers to convey the grammar meaning?

II. THE DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal communication has been defined by various scholars according to their field and understanding to it. There are some common senses or sharing ideas that agreed to most extend to the denotation of nonverbal communication. Wang Haiyan (2009) states that nonverbal communication is defined in many ways by different western scholars. For example, Larry. A. Samovar (as cited in Wang Haiyan, 2009, 155) “nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment and that have potential message value for the source or the receiver” According to Richards and Schmidt (2010:97), *Communication is the exchange of ideas, information, etc, between two or more persons. In an act of communication, there is usually at least one speaker or sender, a communication message which is transmitted, and a person or persons from whom this message is intended (the receiver).* According to this definition, a confirmation can be drawn of the two kinds of communication, the verbal and nonverbal. Verbal communication as name suggests that the speaker uses words when communicating with others, but the question lies in nonverbal communication.

The definition of nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication is used in everyday communication, whether that happens consciously or unconsciously in order to convey the intended messages. EFL teachers depend much more on nonverbal communication than verbal communication because it helps the teachers to emphasise the explicit and implicit meaning of a message. Richards and Schmidt (as cited in Kałuska 2013, 219) defined it as a type of communication “without the use of words.” Verbal communication and nonverbal communication cannot be analysed separately when decoding the message(s) because these components are linked together. Neill and Caswell (1993:9) put it as “Nonverbal signals used face-to-face interaction, mainly actual behaviour, and signals such as dress and room arrangement, which you or the children may “set up” before meeting each other. These “set up” signals allow you, more or less consciously, to plan and alter what happens when you meet”. Based on the above definitions, nonverbal communication involves body movements. Hence body language is considered as a kind of nonverbal communication, and therefore in this research, the researcher uses body language and nonverbal communication interchangeably. Regardless of the differences and equivalents of body language and nonverbal communication, some writers defined body language from their views. Tracing back to Shakespearian literature, it is found out that Shakespeare used hints to reveal the role of body language in conveying messages in human communication. “Fie, fie upon her! There’s language in her eye, her cheek, her lip, Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out At every joint and motive of her body. O, these encounters, so glib of tongue,. . . .” (Johnston, 2016, 105) Shakespeare from this piece of writing indicates that messages can be conveyed through parts of the body movements and behaviour.

Brief account of Body Language

First of all, a clear definition of body language needs to be presented before shedding some light on the background of that. In research from Liu (2019, 962) “It refers to the patterns of facial expressions and gestures that people use to express their feelings in communication.” (<https://www.Merriam-Webster.Com/Dictionary/Body%20language>, 1828) argues that: “the gestures, movements, and mannerism by which a person or animal communicates with others”. It also has been defined in Collins English Dictionary as “how you show your feelings or thoughts to the other people employing the position or movements of your body, rather than with words.” (<https://www.Collinsdictionary.Com/Dictionary/English/Body-Language>, 2017). All these definitions focus on body language in terms of not using spoken words. Moreover, they focus on using body language to convey the speaker’s true feelings, whether consciously or unconsciously. Hence, conveying the actual emotional words is the most important to EFL learners; therefore, English language teachers should take care not only for the forms of new words in their English lessons but also for the meaning of those new words. Although sounds and verbal language is not included in the above definition, still some features of sounds are regarded as part of body language or NVC, such as tone of voice and intonation of sounds and utterances. Concerning its background, it has been stated that “the most famous work concerning the beginning of the study of language was perhaps Charles Darwin’s the expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals, published in 1872; Pease and Allan 1988; Hickson & Stocks, 1993; and Knapp and Hall, 1992” (Hişmanoglu, 2008, 166). According to Albert Mehrabian (as cited in Hişmanoglu 2008, 166) observed that the total effect of a message is about 7% verbal (words only), 38% vocal (comprising tone of voice, inflexion and other sounds) and 55% nonverbal. This is a brief background of body language. Kuhnke Elizabeth introduces her book, body language for dummies (2007:10) and argues as: *The science of body language, dating primarily from around 60 years age, although body language itself is, of course, as old as humans. Psychologists, zoologists, and social anthropologists have conducted detailed research into the components of body language. Part of the larger family known as nonverbal behaviour*

From Elizabeth's introduction, a clarification can be drawn that body language and nonverbal behaviour were being treated the same. Since nonverbal behaviour uses body movement to convey the message without words, this is considered nonverbal communication.

Types of nonverbal communication

When teachers communicate in EFL classrooms, they do not communicate only with words, but they use different body language to impart and convey the meaning of words. They use gestures, postures, facial expressions, eye contact, and how they view and use their personal space and extra-linguistic cues.

Kinesics

Kinesics is related to general body movements and it has been defined in research from Poyatos. (2002:185) as *Conscious and unconscious psychomuscularly –based body movements and intervening or resulting still positions, either learned or somatogenic, of visual-acoustic and tactile and kinesthetic perception, which, whether isolated or combined with the linguistic and paralinguistic structures and with other somatic and behavioural systems, possess intended or unintended communication value.*

Kinesics includes the following:

- A- Facial expression,
- B- Eye contact,
- C- Gestures, and
- D- Postures.

Facial Expression

The face is the most prominent part of our body, and a very significant feature of our body, especially in terms of nonverbal communication. Facial cues are the first information that we give to or receive from others. An influential English teacher is the one who usually uses facial expressions to convey the meaning of English vocabulary, structure, and chunks to s/his students. For example, an English teacher makes a sad facial expression when explaining sadness. He makes a happy facial expression when he explains happiness. When it is interesting, the teacher raises his eyebrows when it is difficult to concentrate, and in an exceptionally difficult point, he looks puzzled to signal that he has just asked a difficult question which the students need to think about. According to Duchenne et al (as cited in Moussaoui, (N.D)) *human face as a book to be read, having hidden pages and various secret tellers. The face is the ground where feelings raise individually, and only a few people can transform its secret pages into truths and insight. As it was known before in the science of physiognomy, the significant impacts on someone and his/her reaction are always on his/her face, which expresses how important having face-booked reading competence is.*

In general terms, facial expressions mainly serve to support verbal communication and clarify the intended messages. The listener or the receiver of the message always takes the facial expressions as grantee and authentic. If some contradictions occur between the verbal and nonverbal one, the listener is likely to take the nonverbal communication. For example, the teacher says to the students, “who knows the answer to the question” and one of the students answers the wrong answer. The teacher says “yes” with sad facial expressions, and the students are likely to take the facial expression rather than the verbal “yes”. The facial expression has sub-features; one of them is smiling. A smiling teacher is thought to convey warmth and confidence in the classroom. S/he promotes a supportive classroom atmosphere, which aids students’ positive attitudes and corresponding achievement. If a teacher smiles frequently, he/she will be perceived as more likeable, friendly, warm and approachable. Smiling is often contagious, and students will react favourably and learn more.

Eye contact

As an old saying goes, “eyes are the window of the soul”. From this saying, many meanings can depend heavily on the eye. According to Atta. M., & Ayaz. M (2014), eye contact means looking into another’s eye, which means meeting the eyes of two persons. Eye contact occurs when “two people look at each other’s eyes at the same time”. Eye contact plays a crucial role in classroom teaching and management. It is the utmost practical tool in classroom teaching.

Eye contact is a tool teachers use to control, manage, and help students be at ease and express emotion. The teacher uses his/her eye contact to improve his teaching. Eye contact is considered communication between the teacher and students. That is to say, teachers’ eye contact helps in teaching. If some students do not listen earnestly, the teacher can prompt

their attention by eye contact. Teachers' eye contact serves several communicative functions ranging from regulating interaction, monitoring interaction, conveying information to establishing interpersonal connections. In EFL classrooms, teachers use eye contact to regulate their classes, signal to students to take turns in speaking, and so on. According to Harrison (as cited in Rahmat 2018, 82), besides "looking", eyes can serve:

1. To seek feedback or to monitor follow interaction,
2. To exercise control over communication channels,
3. To convey specific relationships particularly dominance or submission, liking or disliking.

Khan and Akbar (as cited in M., & Ayaz. M 2014: 92), "in the teaching-learning process, eye contact is perhaps the most powerful way we communicate. More extended eye contact is associated with trust, good feelings and participation of students. Eye contact is vital in keeping a class focused". Richmond & McCroskey (as cited in Gregersen, T. S 2007), Through the use of our eyes, we can control interaction, elicit the attention of others, and show interest or lack of it. In terms of expressing emotion, eye contact is considered as a primary source of conveying emotion, whether inside the classroom or outside the classroom. Language learners always give much attention to eye contact, and so do teachers. Gregersen (2005) argues that the nonverbal behaviour of high anxious and low anxious foreign language learners differed and that those learners suffering from foreign language anxiety maintained less eye contact with the teacher.

III. DISCUSSION

Based on the hypothesised two questions, the researcher formulated a questionnaire for the teacher to check their views on the role of nonverbal communication in EFL classrooms. (1- To what extent does non-verbal communication help EFL teachers to convey the meaning of new vocabulary?

2-To what extent does non-verbal communication help EFL teachers to convey the grammar meaning?). Four statements were formulated for the hypothesis one and five statement for hypothesis two.

The Study and Procedures of Teachers' Questionnaire

This section discusses and studies the procedures of the teachers' questionnaire, and it has the following sub-sections:

First: population and sample of the study

Table (1) The Frequency and Percentage of the Teachers' Questionnaire by Sex.

sex	Frequencies	Percentage
Male	39	68.4%
Female	18	31.6%
Total	57	100.0%

Source: IBM SPSS 24 package

Table and graph (1) illustrate the views of the distribution of the sex sample. Males by (68.4%) and females by (31.6%).

Table (2) the Frequency and Percentage of the Teachers' Questionnaires by Ages

Age	Frequencies	Percentage
From 20 to less than 30 years	7	12.3%
From (30 to less than 40)	17	29.8%
From (40 to less than 50)	18	31.6%
From 50 to less than 60 years	11	19.3%
More than 60 years	4	7.0%
Total	57	100.0%

Source: IBM SPSS 24 package

Table (2) illustrates the distribution of the sample by age (12.3%) of the participants are from 20 to less than 30 and (29.8%) of them are from 30 to less than 40 while (31.6%) are from 40 to less than 50. On the other hand (19.3%) are from 50 to less than 60. Finally, there is (7.0%) under the category from over 60.

Table (3) The Frequency and Percentage of Teachers' Questionnaires by Academic Qualification.

Academic Qualification	Frequencies	Percentage
Professor	0	0.0%
Associate Professor	6	10.5%
Assistant professor	2	3.5%
Lecturer	45	78.9%
Assistant lecturer	4	7.0%
Total	57	100.0%

Source: IBM SPSS 24 package

Table (3) displays the percentage and frequency of the respondents according to the academic qualifications. The majority of the respondents are lecturers by the percentage of 78.9. The second percentage is an associate professor, which is by (10.5%). The third percentage is an assistant lecturer by (7%). On the other hand, there is (3.5%) assistant professor. Yet, there is no professor which is (0%).

Table (4) The Frequency and Percentage of the Teachers' Questionnaire by Experience

Experience	Frequencies	Percentage
From 1 and less than 6 years	21	36.8%
From (6 and less than 11) years	13	22.8%
From (11 and less than 16) years	4	7.0%
More than 16 years	19	33.3%
Total	57	100.0%

Source: IBM SPSS 24 package

Table (4) shows the distribution of the respondents by experience. Most of the participants are from 1 to less than six years of experience, which is by (36.8%). While those who have of more than 16 years come second by (33.3%). On the other hands, those who have experience from 6 to less than 11 come in the third grade by (22.8%). Finally, teachers who have experience from 11 to less than 16 years come on the final grade (7%).

Second: reliability and validity**Table (5) The Cronbach's alpha Method**

No	Hypotheses	Reliability	Validity
3	Non-verbal communication helps EFL teachers to convey the meaning of new vocabulary	0.76	0.87
4	Non-verbal communication helps EFL teachers to convey the meaning of grammar	0.77	0.88
Total		0.87	0.93

IV. ANALYSIS**Table (6) The Frequency and Percentage of the Items in Hypothesis One (Non-verbal Communication Helps EFL Teachers to Convey the Meaning of New Vocabulary)**

No	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	hand gestures help to convey the meaning of shape-related word	28	23	5	1	0
		49.1	40.4	8.8	1.8	0.0
2	hand gestures illustrate the meaning of sizes	30	26	1	0	0
		52.6	45.6	1.8	0.0	0.0
3	Hand gestures are helpful to convey directions-related words. e.g., north, south...etc.	34	20	3	0	0
		59.6	35.1	5.3	0.0	0.0
4	Gestures reinforce the conveyance of basic meaning of words. e.g., point, clap...etc.	32	25	0	0	0
		56.1	43.9	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: IBM SPSS 24 package

The above table illustrates the redundancy and percentage of the items in hypothesis three. According to the figures, most of the highest percentages are under the option of strongly agree between (59.6 to 32%). The first item, which suggests hand gestures, helps to convey the meaning of a shape-related word. Almost half of the respondents strongly agree with that by the percentage of (49.1), and (40.4%) agree with that, while (8.8%) undecided. However, (1.8%) disagree. And (0%) strongly disagree.

The second item proposes that hand gestures illustrate the meaning of sizes. More than half of the participants strongly agree with the suggested item by the percentage of 52.6 and (45.6%) agree while (1.8%) undecided. On the other hand (0%) disagree and strongly disagree, respectively.

The third item states that hand gestures are helpful to convey directions-related words. (59.6%) The respondents strongly agree with the proposed item, and (35.1%) agree while (5.3%) undecided. On the other hand (0%) disagree and strongly disagree, respectively.

The last item illustrates that gestures reinforce the conveyance of the basic meaning of words. (56.1%) of the respondents strongly agree with that, and (43.9%) agree. However, (0%) undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree, respectively. From examining the findings, most of the options selected by the respondents range from strongly agree and agree, which means achieving the study's objectives.

Table (7) The Frequency and Percentage of the Items in Hypothesis Two of Teachers' Questionnaire (Non-verbal Communication Helps EFL Teachers to Convey the Meaning of Grammar)

No	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Pitch of voice helps to convey the grammatical category of the words. e.g., noun, verb.... etc.	10	29	14	3	1
		17.5	50.9	24.6	5.3	1.8
2	Intonation helps to convey the category of the sentence. E.g., question or affirmative.	36	17	3	1	0
		63.2	29.8	5.3	1.8	0.0
3	Teacher's vocal variations help emphasize a particular part of message in sentence.	26	27	4	0	0
		45.6	47.9	7.0	0.0	0.0
4	Teacher's hand gestures are helpful in explaining prepositions of place.	35	18	4	0	0
		61.4	31.6	7.0	0.0	0.0
5	Teacher's body language is helpful to convey the meaning of adverb of manner. E.g., slowly.	29	25	3	0	0
		50.9	43.9	5.3	0.0	0.0

Source: IBM SPSS 24 package

The above table displays the frequency and the percentage of the selected items in hypothesis four. Firstly, item number one suggests that the pitch of voice helps convey the words' grammatical category. The most selected option was (agree), which was by 50.9 per cent, followed by undecided by (24.6%). On the other hand, there was (17.5%) strongly agree while (5.3%) disagree and (1.8%) strongly disagree.

Secondly, item number two suggests that intonation helps to convey the category of the sentence. More than half of the respondents strongly agree with that by (63.2%) and (29.8%) agree while (5.3%) undecided. However, (1.8%) disagree and (0%) strongly disagree.

Item number three states that the teacher's vocal variations help emphasize a particular part of the message in a sentence. (45.6%) of the respondents strongly agree and (47.9%) (Agree) while (7%) undecided. On the other hand, (0%) disagree and strongly disagree, respectively.

Item number four proposes that teacher's hand gestures help explain prepositions of place. (61.4%) The respondents strongly agree with the suggested item and (31.6%) agree while (7%) undecided. However, (0%) disagree and strongly disagree, respectively.

The last item states that the teacher's body language is helpful to convey the meaning of the adverb of manner. (50.9%) of the respondents strongly agree with that and (43.9%) (Agree) while (5.3%) undecided. On the other hand (0%) disagree and strongly disagree.

According to the given frequencies of the percentages, most of the selected options supports the interest of the study and the proposed hypothesis.

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