

Non verbal communication: An integral part of teaching learning process.

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Abstract: Communication plays a pivotal role in our daily lives. To articulate our ideas, feelings, emotions and skills we communicate not only with verbal but also non-verbal methods. These are essential in teaching learning process too. Teachers can utilize a variety of verbal and non-verbal skills to aid student's comprehension of difficult concepts. The use of non-verbal communication is more than verbal communication, which makes acquisition of its knowledge and its effective use much more necessary. Many studies show that the quality of classroom teaching can be improved by effective use of non-verbal communication. A famous scholar Cooper says that, if a teacher knows how to use non-verbal communication efficiently, the relationship between the student and teacher will be improved, and the cognitive ability and learning efficiency of the students will be developed. The important conclusions that we reach at the end of this research paper are largely based on the practical observation and experimental implementation of nonverbal techniques by the author in personal classroom teaching.

INTRODUCTION:

Communication is an integral part of our lives. We communicate in different ways to express our thoughts, feelings, knowledge, skills, and ideas. It is normally assumed that communication is identified with speech and sounds but communication is, in fact, the combination of verbal and non-verbal transmission of knowledge. Communication is the basis of all human contact, which is central to human life. People communicate in many different ways. One of the most important ways, of course, is through language. For a long time, only language occurs to us immediately when we discuss human communication, while non-verbal communication is neglected to a large extent. In fact, nonverbal communication plays a very important role in human social behavior. Its importance has been fully accounted for by communication theorists. “93/7 Rule: 93% of communication occurs through nonverbal behavior & tone; only 7% of communication takes place through the use of words.” — John Stoker, *Overcoming Fake Talk: How to Hold Real Conversations That Create Respect, Build Relationships, and Get Results*. Bi Jiwan states, “Western scholars believe that the role of nonverbal communication in classroom teaching is greater than that of formal teaching for students' learning. Research has indicated that teachers are required to learn to use Nonverbal communication to improve classroom teaching.” (1993:153) Communication is more than words and it is important for teachers to understand the non verbal messages they are sending and receiving in the classroom.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION:

Definition (CBC): “Nonverbal communication involves those nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source [speaker] and his or her use of the environment and that have potential message value for the source or receiver [listener]. Basically it is sending and receiving messages in a variety of ways without the use of verbal codes (words). It is both intentional and unintentional. Most speakers / listeners are not conscious of this. Non-verbal communication includes sounds, gestures, body movements, eye contacts, facial expressions, pitch or tone of a voice, spatial distance, apparent behavior, postures, and dress of an individual. According to Dilleo (1977) “Language comprises all forms of communication: crying, facial expression, gestures, touching, yelling, and also speech and writing.” Everything speaks in the process of communication including material objects and physical space but only speech sounds or verbal production is observed, **non-verbal cannot**, which is a valuable component of communication. It enhances the meaning of words. A speaker can raise the interest and curiosity of the listeners with the help of non-verbal communication. More often non-verbal communication occurs unconsciously. People are not aware of the fact that besides their verbal communication the nonverbal gestures also transmit a potent message. The body language, eye contact, physical appearance, and tone of voice provide meaningful information to the **audience**. Non-verbal communication is deemed

much reliable and effective in comparison to verbal communication as it gives additional support to the verbal communication. For example, a mother asks her child, 'Have you taken your meal?' The child answers verbally 'Yes' but nods his head and gives a message of 'No'. The mother takes the non-verbal message of the child and ignores the verbal message. Givens (2002) stated, "A body movements, postures, or material artifacts which encodes or influences a concept, motivation, or mood (thus, a gestures is neither matter nor energy, but information). In its most generic sense is a sign, signal, or cue used to communicate in tandem with, or part from words. Gestures include facial expressions, clothing cues, and body movements". Calero (2005) stated, "One of the first researchers on nonverbal communication was Ray Birdwhistell, who used the term "kinesics" in 1952 when he wrote *Introduction of Kinesics*, "nonverbal communication" was used for the first time in 1955 by G.W. Hewes when he wrote *World Distribution of Certain Postural Habits*. This was followed by Irving Goffman's *Behavior in Public Places* which used the term "body idiom." That, in turn, led to Julius Fast in 1971 using the now common expression "body language" in the book he wrote by the same name. Mankind's knowledge of nonverbal communication would have progressed further if others, besides Ray Birdwhistell, had devoted more time to researching the subject. During the 1950s, Birdwhistell was just about the only person studying this method of communication. His effort has contributed greatly to our present day knowledge and understanding of nonverbal communication." Allan and Pease (2004) stated, "Albert Mehrabian, a pioneer researcher of body language in 1950s, found that the total impact of a message is about 7% verbal (words only) and 38% vocal (including tone of voice, inflection and other sounds) and 55% non-verbal." They further stated, "Anthropologist Ray Birdwhistell pioneered the original study of non-verbal communication-what he called 'Kinesics'. Birdwhistell made some similar estimates of the amount of non-verbal communication that takes place between humans. He estimated that the average person actually speaks words for a total of about ten or eleven minutes a day and that the average sentence takes only 2.5 seconds. Birdwhistell also estimated we can make and recognize around 250,000 facial expressions". Should be strongly aware of the importance of nonverbal communication, because nonverbal behaviors convey many messages in classroom, and become invaluable for teachers in getting the message across to class and understanding the messages of interest or messages of confrontation that students are sending. Their positive nonverbal cues can also influence the teacher's state of mind and the classroom atmosphere, and further improve the effect of classroom instruction. Generally speaking,

the students' involvement and interest in the subject can be detected from their relaxed faces and smiles. So we can say nonverbal communication between teachers and students plays an important role in classroom teaching.

ROLE OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN TEACHING LEARNING PROCESS:

Although nonverbal communication plays a central role in human behavior, it remains far from being well understood. Earlier approaches to foreign language teaching and learning, for example, were basically oriented to the development of grammatical accuracy rather than communicative skills. College English teachers used to focus on English grammar and vocabulary, ignorant of the practical application of nonverbal communication and therefore the students feel that the teachers' lectures are boring and they are frequently absent on purpose. With the advancement of linguistic science and teaching methodology research, the idea of developing learners' ability to use the target language for successful communication has become more and more popular. Experts and language teachers have become more and more aware of the effects of Nonverbal communication. More understandings can be achieved if nonverbal Communication accompanies the language. If the teacher's nonverbal communication is vivid and alive, it will be helpful for the students' understanding and command over knowledge in the classroom and it's also much easier for students to memorize. All these researches indicate that the teacher should be in high spirits and active. In my view also, when these non verbal attributes are identified and practiced they make productive difference in teaching learning process. Many western scholars hold that the nonverbal communication in the class is much more important for students' understanding of the subject than in the regular teaching. A vivid smile, an encouraging gesture, or a gentle expression in teachers' eyes can be effective tools for the improvement of the relation between teachers and students, which can also consequently improve classroom teaching.

THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN CLASSROOM TEACHING:

Teachers should be experts in communication, so it follows that they must know about Nonverbal communication which is also referred to as 'body language', and is a study in itself."

Miller (1988) stated, "Teachers should be aware of nonverbal communication for two basic reasons: (1) to become better receiver of student messages and (2) to gain the ability to send student positive signals that reinforce learning, and at the same time become more

adept at avoiding negative signals that stifle learning. Researchers suggest that a student's nonverbal expressions serve as an important source in the formation of teacher's impression, attitude, beliefs, and reciprocal behavioral expressions. Being a good message receiver requires more than just listening to words. Much is communicated by nonverbal means, such as feelings and values. Thus to be a good receiver of student messages, a teacher must be attuned to many of these subtle cues.”

A. Kinesics

The study of how movement communicates is called kinesics, or body language. As the most frequent use of Nonverbal cues in class, can lead to the level of effectiveness of teaching directly. Teachers' smile, nod and pat on students' shoulders can indicate praise, while frown, head-shaking and confusing look can mean “no”, and students' body language can convey their affection to the teacher and their attitudes toward the courses that they learn. Here we would like to look into some of the more significant parts of body language in details. They are facial expressions, eye contact, gesture, posture as well as touch.

1. Facial Expressions:

Facial expression is a look on a person's face, and facial clues are the first information that we give to or receive from others. People get information about the type of the person and many personality traits from face. Facial expression between teachers and students is one of the most important types of nonverbal signals in the classroom. In English class, the lively facial expressions can promote a supportive and non-threatening classroom atmosphere, which aids students' positive attitudes and corresponding achievement. When the teacher raises a question in English, an expected expression he shows can encourage students to think carefully and answer actively. Sometimes an unconscious frown can make sensitive student correct his answer immediately. It is much better than just saying “No” or “Wrong”, which can protect the students' proper pride. In addition, a teacher should often smile in class, a smiling teacher is thought to convey warmth and encouragement in all cultures, and will be perceived as more likable, friendly, warm and approachable.

2. Eye Contact:

Eye contact is another important aspect of kinesics. We communicate a great deal through our eyes, perhaps more than through any other part of the body. As the saying goes, “The eyes are the window of the soul.” The use of eye contact as an avenue of communication is relatively obvious. People are remarkably accurate in judging the direction of another person's gaze; psychologists have done experiments that have measured just how accurate such judgments are. In college, from an observation of where a student is looking the teacher can infer what the student is looking at, and from knowing what he is

looking at the teacher can guess what he is interested in, and from what he is interested in. Thus eye movements can be a rich and important channel of nonverbal communication. There are two kinds of eye contact that the teacher often uses in class. One is looking around, which plays a very useful role in classroom teaching. On the one hand, it can be used to get the students' attention, to encourage students to think carefully, and to find the students who nearly get the answer so as to put questions to. On the other, it can be used as a means in classroom control. Another kind of eye contact is looking attentively or gaze. When the teacher criticizes the student's bad behavior, his eyesight should put on the triangle part of the students' face. By doing so, the teacher will be regarded as serious, careful and honest. If a teacher looks at every student in the classroom or avoids looking at students, he conveys the attitude of intimacy, aloofness, depression or indifference. Teachers often watch their students carefully for the sign of fatigue, Boredom, confusion, or enthusiasm, for all these things will be communicated to the teachers through their eyes during the teachers' presentation.

3. Gestures:

Being the most common form of nonverbal behaviors in daily life, we need to understand the gestures of people. A gesture is an expressive motion or action, usually made with the hands and arms, but also with the head or even the whole body. Gestures can occur with or without speech. Some gestures are spontaneous; some are highly ritualized and have very special meanings. It is through gestures that the body speaks. In other words, gestures are closely related to speech, illustrating or supplementing it. Gestures are so common in daily life that they attract special attention of many experts. They are mostly concerned with speech and other ways of nonverbal communication, but sometimes they cannot stand alone. Generally speaking, a speaker uses gestures for two purposes: to reinforce an idea or to help describe something. Through gestures we can express our attitudes toward other. A teacher may be considered as boring, stiff and inanimate, if he or she fails to use gestures while speaking. Comparatively, a lively and animated teaching style captures students' attention, and makes the material more Interesting, facilitates learning and provides a bit of entertainment. In the process of the presentation, hand and arm movements are often employed to physically depict conceptual, intellectual, abstract, or narrative elements of the presentation.

4. Posture:

All humans use posture to communicate. There are numerous body postures which offer insight into a culture's deep structure. An individual postures in a specific culture can send off a strong message. Scholars have found at least 10,000 significant

different body attitudes capable of being maintained steadily. For a teacher, standing or sitting in relaxing professional manner, is a positive posture, which can arouse students' Positive attitude, and show that you are approachable, receptive and friendly. Being comfortably upright, squarely facing the students, and evenly distributing the weight are to change students' mood, draw students' attention, or reinforce some ideas.

5. Touch:

For blind and deaf people, touch is the principle means of communication. Even the average person without these handicaps relies heavily on touch to communicate. We know that a pat on the back can mean a touch of friendship or a sign of encouragement. Physical touch always communicates messages, especially emotional ones. Greetings and departures between friends and loved ones often involve touch in one way or another. Touch is also an efficient way of breaking down communication barriers. As the most extreme reduction of individual distance, touch is one of our most primitive and yet sensitive ways of relating to others, and plays a significant role in giving encouragement, expressing tenderness and showing emotional supports. It can be even more powerful than words sometimes, especially for establishing a link to students or conveying emotion. However, where these touches are directed is critical. Appropriate body contact means calmness, directness, belief and favor. The shoulders and arms are the most acceptable body areas to be touched, especially for boys, and the chest and legs the least, especially for older girls. Back, head and hands are intermediate areas, but the head and hands, which are frequently touched by teachers of very young children, become less acceptable from ten or eleven onwards, especially for girls. As might be expected, all groups of students disliked angry types of touch, such as being hit or having their head twisted round. Furthermore, it is not common for college teachers to touch students. Most College students do not like teacher's touch, except for some necessary or particular situations such as encouraging touch combined with words, which would be more effective than verbal encouragement alone sometimes.

B. Paralanguage

Paralanguage is the way we vocalize or say the words we speak. The full and correct use of paralanguage in class is a powerful tool for effective teaching and learning. Pitch in the voice can play a very significant role in teaching learning process. With the rise and fall of pitch a complete meaning of a word can be changed. Teachers can utilize this technique in the understanding of the meanings of different words. Givens (2002) stated, "Tone of voice reflects psychological arousal, emotion,

and mood. It may also carry social information, as in a sarcastic, superior, or submissive manner of speaking." Effective teachers are more likely to be good at varying their voice or convey different messages in different situations for different purposes. Observations reveal that presentation with a loud voice, a high pitch and a fast rate is more likely to draw students' attention than that with a relatively quiet voice, a low pitch and a slow rate. Generally speaking, when there are key points in the process of teaching, or there exists some problems needing being emphasized, the teacher can raise his tone and slow down the speed.

C. Spatial Language

Space here refers to the distance between teachers and students. The spatial distance between a teacher and his students in class is appropriate or not may affect positively or negatively on teaching and learning activities. Some students think the teacher who walks around the room or stands closer to them is perceived as friendly and can make students more involved in class activities. On the other hand, it has also been found that teachers do stand further away from poor students or put them in the far end of the classroom. The teachers who conduct their classes while standing or walking among their students are viewed more positively than those standing at the front of the classroom, and are seen friendlier and are more effective than those who stand further away from the students. If a teacher just stands behind the teacher's desk throughout the process of class, he neglects the fact that "motionless teachers can bore students".

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS AND SELF PRACTICE:

On the basis of personal experience, after consciously following the non verbal aspects, I could derive a few conclusions:

1. Non-verbal communication is a skill, which should be utilized by teachers at all levels of education.
2. Teachers at all levels should be given an orientation in non-verbal communication and the skills thus acquired should be utilized in their teaching methodologies.
3. Teachers should be encouraged to use this skill in order to enhance the interest of the students and make them attentive in the class.
4. Facial expressions are the primary type of non-verbal communication, which, if utilized properly by teachers, can enhance the understanding of the students about the concepts taught in the classroom.
5. Teachers should use facial expressions for transmitting the messages of anger and happiness to the students in order to improve teaching learning process.
6. Eye contact with the students in the classroom is very pivotal for active participation of the students.

7. Students can lose interest and attention in the teaching-learning process due to the lack of eye contact; hence teachers should ensure the utilization of eye contact.

8. Body movements of the teachers create interest and attentiveness among the students and especially in the teaching of stories; therefore, teachers should purposefully use their body movements in their teaching.

9. Teachers should be aware of the fact that body movements are used where and when required because excess of body movements can spoil the purpose of its utilization.

10. Rise and fall in the voice of teachers help the students in understanding the theme, setting, and beauty of the poems. It is highly recommended that teachers should exercise intonation or rise and fall in the pitch of their voices in the teaching of poetry.

11. Proper distance between teachers and students in the classroom is very sensitive; hence should be taken into consideration. Teachers should be aware of the proper distance with the students and keep it active in the classroom.

12. Proper distance between teacher and students make the students at ease during the learning process and they feel better at receiving the given knowledge.

13. It is recommended that curriculum planners and policy makers should also recognize the importance of non-verbal communication and make it a part of the teacher education programs so that prospective teachers are trained in this important technology.

CONCLUSION:

The important conclusions indicate that teachers can make the learning environment active through their non-verbal communication whereby students feel alert in the classrooms and participate in the learning process, which consequently will enhance the level of their retention and understanding. Proper use of facial expressions, body movements, eye contact, pitch of voice, and spatial distance helps the teachers to provide better understanding to the students in the attainment of their learning outcomes. To the contrary the teachers who do not properly use non-verbal communication in the classroom may not be able to motivate the students for effective learning. Not only should college English teachers be equipped with knowledge of nonverbal communication, but also the students in colleges should be encouraged to improve their nonverbal communicative competence.

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